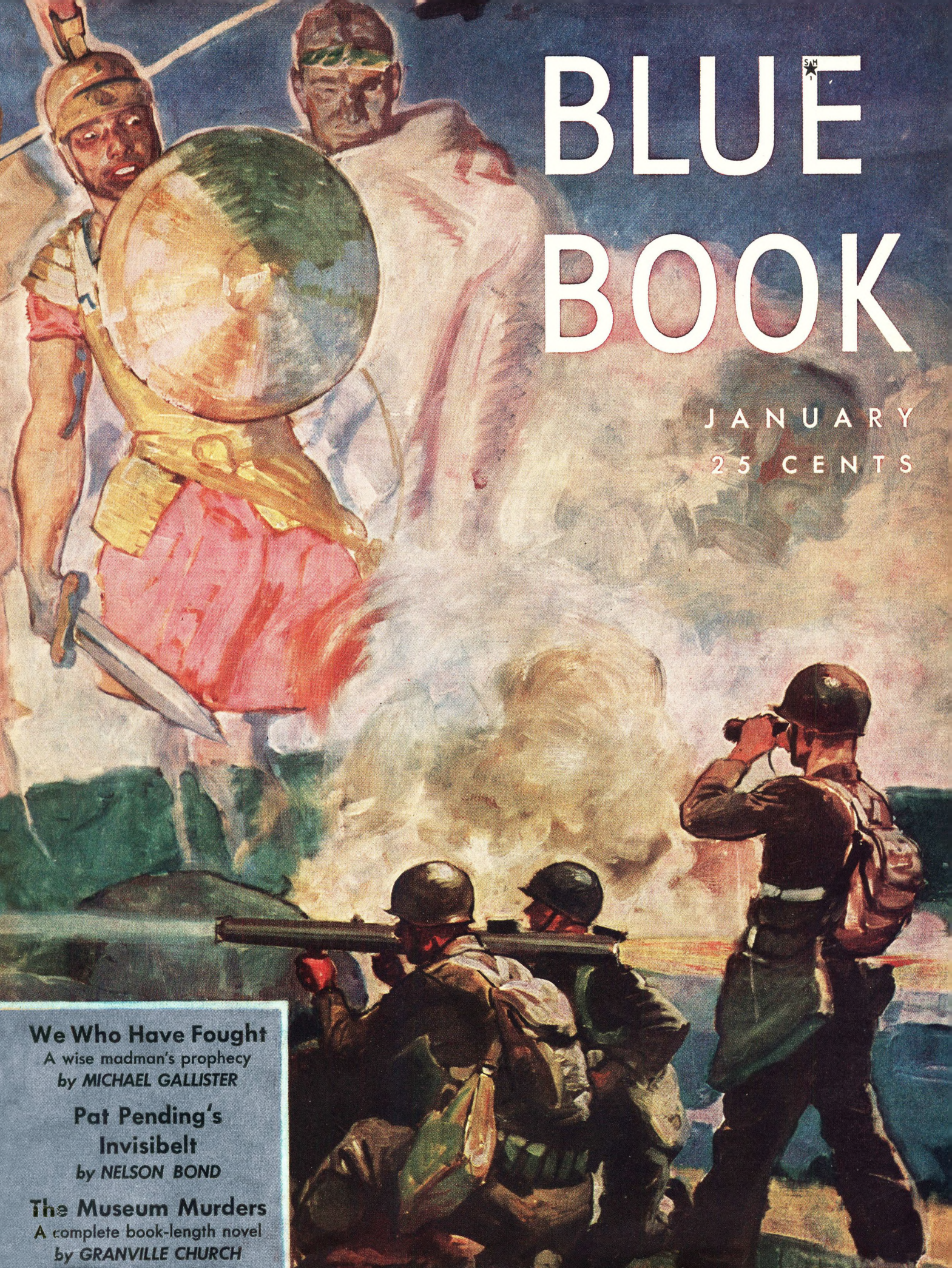
BLUE BOOK

JANUARY
25 CENTS



We Who Have Fought
A wise madman's prophecy
by MICHAEL GALLISTER

Pat Pending's Invisibelt
by NELSON BOND

The Museum Murders
A complete book-length novel
by GRANVILLE CHURCH

Who's Who *in this* Issue

Peter W. Rainier

PETER RAINIER was born in a tent in Swaziland; ox wagons are his first recollections, and Zulu kings his first boyhood heroes. From the grounds of his school in Natal he witnessed his first skirmish of the Boer War, and shortly thereafter as a trooper came in active contact with those heroes of his earlier days. He traveled with Chris Human, the elephant man, in search of diamonds; he made an expedition in search of King Gungunyana's buried treasure; he traveled to Mozambique in search of gold and through the Mpunga forest in search of rubber.

When World War I came, Major Rainier was organizing for a German firm the transport of machinery through the tsetse fly belt. During the German-Northwest-African campaign, Peter Rainier became one of Demilion's troop of scouts, and took part in the epic ride of three hundred miles in seven days on one day's rations, which caught the Germans unprepared and ended in the fearful Gibeon fight. Readers of *Blue Book* will remember the foregoing from Major Rainier's autobiography "African Pioneer," which we published in the winter of 1939-'40. . . .

For Peter Rainier, still in his early twenties, the end of the war was not a return to peace. Adventures followed quickly, culminating with the death of his wife and child in an epidemic that accounted for many thousands. Later in South America, he made a new career for himself as an emerald miner; and he has given us vivid episodes from that extraordinary story under the title "Green Fire" in our September to December 1942 issues.

In June 1940 Peter Rainier was gazetted a lieutenant in the Royal Engineers, and was detailed to a Railway Sapper company. He was in the advance guard that entered Sidi Barrani, Tobruk and Bengasi in the first British drive across Libya. Early in 1941

he was elevated to the rank of Captain. In May 1941 he was raised to the rank of Major and became associated with the general staff of the British 8th Army.

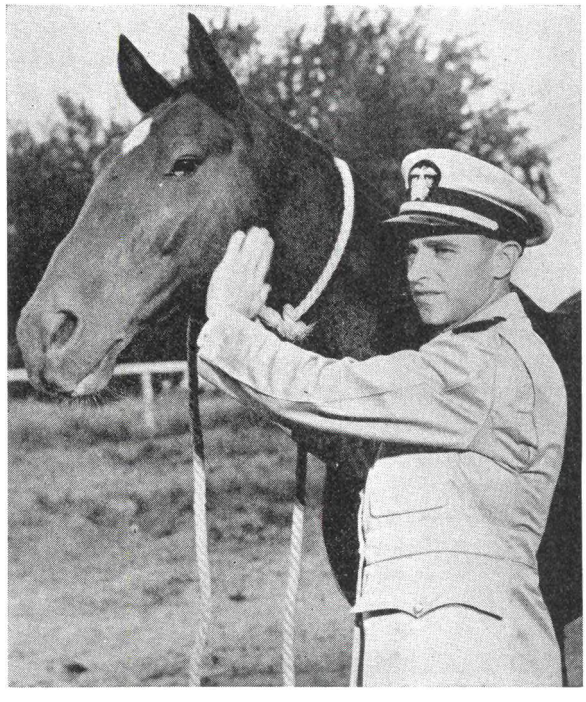
At present Major Rainier is in the United States on a lecture tour; his remarkable account of the Battle of Alamein—much of which he saw; part of which he was—appears beginning on page 8 of this issue. It will form a chapter in his forthcoming book, to be published this spring by Random House, under the title of "Pipeline to Battle."

Richard Dempewolff

RICHARD DEMPEWOLFF was born in New York City, attended grammar and high school there, then went to Middlebury College in Vermont. His city upbringing was varied with summers spent in the Poconos; and it was there, near the Delaware Water Gap, that he first developed the interest in animals and pets which is now revealed in his entertaining survey of animals at war, "Animal Reveille," from which we reprint (by special permission of Doubleday Doran & Co., the publishers) an extensive excerpt beginning on page 26. In the Pocono days, any animal was of interest to Richard and his three brothers, and one can well believe that Mrs. Dempewolff had a trying time, for everything from hedgehogs to salamanders to giant sugar-eating ants came into the house with her three young sons.

After graduating from Middlebury College in 1936, Richard Dempewolff did graduate work at New York University, then at Columbia. His first job was on the clip-desk of the old *Literary Digest;* he subsequently did editorial work for this magazine, then for the *Review of Reviews* and *Newsweek.* In 1942 he published his first book, "Famous Old New England Murders."

Ensign Dempewolff is now stationed at the Naval Air Technical Training Center in Norman, Oklahoma. Before entering the service, he visited most of the training depots for animals, gathering material for "Animal Reveille." His wife, formerly with *Newsweek,* is his severest critic, but also his indefatigable checker-of-facts and expert at deciphering cryptic manuscript pages.



BLUE BOOK

January, 1944 MAGAZINE Vol. 78, No. 3

A Complete Book-length Novel

Eight Short Stories

A Serial Novel

Special Features

Except for stories of Real Experiences, all stories and novels printed herein are fiction and are intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or to actual events If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence

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READERS' COMMENT*

ONE CONSOLATION

It was dark, and outside it had been raining. I was on my way to the Induction Center; the train was slow, and I was depressed. That is, until the big hulking fellow across the aisle from me, touched me on a shoulder and said: "Here, son, see if this won't help." He poked a magazine into my hand. It was BLUE BOOK, *the November issue. And, too, my introduction to a future "ally."*

The next two days were one continuous time of waiting, and had it not been for such thrilling tales as "The Devil Calls on Susanna," and "Boogie Beat," I'd have gone politely nuts.

Yes, I was rejected (due to a minor disorder) and even though I had been depressed while on the train, I was sincerely sorry that I had been turned down. But I have one great consolation, it means I'll have a lot more time to spend on future issues of BLUE BOOK—*the best yet!*

David Ragan,
Jackson, Tenn.

WHO MARCHES CAN READ

Corporal Roberts, in his letter to you recently, stated that "It isn't the action that gets you; it's the eternal waiting." He also says that reading is one of the best things that a fellow can do for relaxation. True.

While marching thirty-two miles to the rifle-range last month, I noticed that a fellow in the next squad was reading a magazine. He never seemed to tire of walking, and he was by no means a Hercules or Mercury.

After I had watched this fellow read all day, apparently without even feeling the fatigue of an all-day march, I asked to borrow the magazine. It was a BLUE BOOK.

A magazine such as yours can, and does, keep a great number of fellows occupied while waiting, or hiking or any number of other things that would otherwise be a menace to the morale of the service man.

Because of the great variety of stories in BLUE BOOK, *it is best suited to groups of men who cannot be expected to have the same literary tastes.*

Charles Ray, S 2/c.

*The Editors of BLUE BOOK are glad to receive letters of constructive criticism and suggestion; and for the ones we publish each month we will pay the writers ten dollars each.

Letters should not be longer than two hundred words; no letters can be returned; and all will become property of McCall Corporation. Address: Editor of Letters, Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Ave., New York 17, New York.

Non-coms don't get in brawls, except—well, sometimes a lot of ugly faces appear around a guy, and he has to do something about 'em; and then there was this time the Colonel's daughter got herself in a jam.

by PHIL MAGEE

The Rose-

WITH Tony Milano and Big John Ross beside him, Sully stood at attention before the commander's desk. Towering a foot above Sully's head, Big John dispelled an aura of injured innocence, while soldierly virtue radiated from every one of Tony's two hundred and thirty pounds.

Ignoring the two big soldiers, the Colonel stared at the little man. "Sullivan," he said, "for your information, we came to California solely to assist in the training program, not to get into brawls."

"But Colonel," Sully began, "we were just—"

"Minding your own business," the Colonel interrupted, "when suddenly large ugly faces appeared before you, like spots before the eyes. I've been listening to that story for four years now, Sullivan. The fine edge is gone."

He leaned across the desk. "We're raising a great civilian army," he said. "It's the biggest job the regular establishment has ever undertaken. You three men are the best soldiers in this regiment. But you can't train one section of our citizens by day, and terrorize the balance of the population by night. I'm making you a sergeant again, Sullivan," he added, "and I'm promoting Ross and Milano. Think it over."

A lump in his throat, Sully looked at this man who'd been a father to them for the better part of two enlistments. As if the Colonel didn't have enough worries, with a motherless daughter to care for, and a regiment of doughboys to keep in line!

Sadly the little man contemplated the fact that this was the third time he'd been reinstated as sergeant, and that once Big John had been reduced from corporal while the ink on his warrant was still wet. No use to explain to the Old Man that they never bothered legitimate citizens, that they only slugged when in the right. Trouble was trouble, no matter how you got into it.

Quickly he resolved that for the duration at least they'd no longer spend their evenings slicking slickers and softening hard guys; just as quickly, he offered to stay away from any place the boys might be tempted to take apart.

The Colonel frowned. "Don't hide," he said. "Go anywhere. Just remember that you're a soldier, and not the public avenger. I am counting on you to keep out of fist-fights and trouble."

The Old Man's right, Sully thought; and for people like him, you do it the hard way. "We will, sir," he said. "We're on pass tonight. We'll go to Nick's, for a nice quiet evening."

The Old Man raised his brows. "Nick's Napoli? I'll be in town tonight. I may drop in and see how you're doing. I am depending on you to be quiet and orderly, and not clean out any more bars."

THUS it came about that in a burst of enthusiasm for the new way of life, Sully brought the boys to Nick's—Nick's Napoli, where their status was that of preferred customers, in that Nick preferred that they'd go elsewhere.

The music started, and Sully watched the dancers leave their tables. He ran a finger over a scar on his face, reminding himself of the advantages of lofty isolation. Nice people, he thought—the fight mob and the race-

Colored Scarf

track crowd. But the Old Man was right; you can't lick a thing by hiding from it.

"Let's hoist the banner," he said, waving his beer. "After all, this *is* a celebration."

"Some celebration," Tony grumbled. "You get your sergeantcy, and John and me are made corporals, but with morals clauses."

"We can still have fun," Sully insisted. "It might cramp our style some. But as representatives of the Regular Army, we will conduct ourselves with dignity, like the Old Man said." He nodded toward the dance-floor and ordered: "There's a couple of girls, over by Nick's table. Go on out and dance."

Sully's momentary sympathy for the departed troopers was soon lost in his own more weighty problem. Minding their own business was a worthy aim. Still, it might have been smart to start somewhere else, and sort of work up to Nick's.

Abruptly the music ended. Shuddering, the little man closed his eyes. He opened them to find the waiter beside him.

"Beer," he ordered. "Three."

The waiter leaned over the table to pick up the empty glasses. As he straightened, a corner of his mouth lifted slightly. "Nick says to tell you he's got three extra bouncers tonight, in case you and your bodyguard get any ideas."

Bowing acknowledgment of the compliment, Sully watched the crowd move off the dance-floor. He saw Big John's head and shoulders high above the others, and he smiled warmly at the broad wake that indicated Tony's progress.

Hoisting his feet up on the chair beside him, he sipped his beer. He rubbed the scar on his cheek—the scar that was supposed to remind him to keep his own nose out of other people's business. He grinned. Who knew that they'd renounced the old ways?

AGAIN the floor filled with swaying couples.

Tony threaded through the dancers and joined him at the table.

"We're doing all right," Sully announced. "Look at John."

Tony nodded. "But I wish I felt easier about John, Sully. If he was more like me, you know, more easy-going—"

The little man grinned. "Let's go," he said.

They moved toward the dance-floor, Tony in the lead, still complaining. Turning to speak, he collided heavily with a burly individual in a flaming sports-coat. "Sorry," he mumbled.

"Sorry, are you?" the burly one bellowed. "What's that do for my shine? You're the second soldier that's walked on my dogs tonight. And I don't like it, see?"

"Don't crowd your luck, Mister," Sully murmured. "He said he was sorry."

"Who asked you anything, Boy Scout?"

The little man held his breath as Tony's hands closed on the lapels of the gaudy sports-coat. Tony raised the burly one until startled eyes were on a level with his own. "I am a non-commissioned officer in the United States Army," he said softly. "And non-coms don't get in brawls. 'Cause if they do, they aint non-coms any more."

He raised the burly one still higher. "So if you open your chopper just one more time, I'll lose my stripes. And if I lose my stripes," he boomed, "I'll tear your ears off!"

He released his hold, and the burly one faded quickly into the crowd.

A corner of the waiter's mouth lifted slightly. "Nick says he's got three extra bouncers, in case you get any ideas."

Sully wiped the moisture from his brow. "Delicate restraint is a lovely quality," he sighed. "Well, it's too late for that dance. Here's John."

Big John Ross sprawled at the table. "It's a cinch, Sully," he beamed. "It don't cramp your style any, and you can have lots of fun."

"So I noticed," Sully said. "Sit tight. We have company."

Nick Napoliana stood watching them from unsmiling eyes—eyes that gleamed like buttons in the olive-hued face.

He was an attractive sort of a heel, Sully admitted to himself, and probably considered quite good-looking by very young and very old ladies. "Sit down, Nick," he invited. "Nice of you to drop over. Make room for Nick, boys."

The night-club proprietor remained standing. "I told you guys not to come here any more," he stated.

Sully fingered the scar on his cheek. "You did, Nick," he said. "And it hurt me. I said to myself: 'Sully, Nick doesn't want us. We'll go elsewhere.' Then I thought of you, Nick, all alone, with no one to bring in the carriage trade. No one to lend a little tone to your joint. And I said: 'We can't let old Nick down; we'll come anyway.' "

"Let's skip the clowning, Sullivan. Take your gorillas out of here right now, and I'll pick up your tab."

Smiling up at the night-club proprietor, Sully leaned back in his chair. "I don't get it, Nick," he grinned. "Give out."

Nick Napoliana swayed slightly forward. "This is my joint," he said. "And I run her to suit me. I got business tonight, and a special reason why I'd feel better if you boys were somewhere else."

He nodded toward the dance-floor. "I got extra men on the sidelines, and my pals are all over the place. Spoil my play tonight, and you'll never *walk* out of here!"

"John! Tony!" snapped Sully.

They dropped back in their chairs, Big John mumbling angrily, Tony rubbing a broad fist along his jaw.

Confident of his control, Sully chuckled happily. His glance passed Nick's table, and the smile vanished.

"What's the matter, Sully?" Tony asked anxiously. "You sick?"

The little man's hand crashed to the table, his knuckles pounding out the cadence of his words. "Sit down, Nick," he breathed. "We'll talk a bit."

The night-club proprietor turned to go. "I had my say," he shrugged.

BIG JOHN moved easily. His left leg hooked the empty chair. His left arm shot out, fingers clutching.

Spinning in a dizzy circle, Nick Napoliana landed in the chair. "Sully says we'll talk a bit," the big one explained.

Tony stared across the room. "It was nice being a non-com," he announced flatly.

Big John twisted in his seat, and saw for the first time the girl who had just been ushered to Nick's private table by Nick's private waiter. "The Old Man's kid," he roared. Again the left arm shot out, the fingers closing tightly on Nick's collar.

Nick gulped for breath, a dull red pattern spreading over the olive cheeks.

"Let him talk," the little man ordered. "Talk fast, greaseball," he said.

Nick Napoliana wet his lips. The button eyes were hot, but he spoke calmly. "I know what you're thinking, Sullivan. But you're on the wrong foot."

Sully's eyes roamed slowly over the night-club. A minute ago it had been all right, even exciting; but now the air was thick and redolent of beer and the careless use of cheap perfume. He looked at the sweaty orchestra, and the wet-faced couples who pranced to the tinny rhythm. Nice place for the Old Man's daughter. Nice place for them too, after promising the Old Man they'd stay out of trouble.

His finger moving up and down the scar pressed hard against the flesh as he remembered the Old Man's words: "I'll be in town tonight. I may drop in and see how you're doing."

The little man looked at Nick. "I'm waiting to hear what Colonel Henderleigh's daughter is doing in your deadfall," he said.

In studied nonchalance, Nick leaned an elbow on the table. "We're doing each other favors," he answered. "That's all, Sullivan."

"You don't seem to get the idea, Nick," Sully said. "Army girls aren't seen in dumps like this. I'll give you five minutes to put her in a taxi. Tony'll go with you, just so you'll have company on the way back."

"I thought you were supposed to be a smart guy, Sullivan?"

"I am," the little man said. "But only in a small way."

"I'm accommodating Miss Henderleigh," Nick put in angrily. "I met her at the Durango Club, and suppose I did give myself a bit the best of it? She wanted to see a joint. Okay—none of her crowd come here, and nothing short of a riot'd bring in the cops."

"A riot could be arranged," Sully murmured.

"All right, smart boy," Nick scoffed. "Go ahead. Raise a stink. That'll give your Army girl's reputation a real boost." Rising, he signaled to his floor-men.

The little man nodded, and Tony dropped a heavy hand on Nick's shoulder. "Sully'll tell you when to leave, Nick," he growled.

Nick smiled expansively. "I told you, Sullivan," he said. "We're doing each other favors." He lowered his voice confidentially. "I'm coining dough in this trap, but what I really

want, is a class joint on the West Side, like the Durango or the Hunt Club. But you can't do it cold. You got to be seen places with the right people. This town's Army crazy, Sullivan. After they see me waltz Miss Henderleigh through a few of the best spots tonight, they'll break the door down when I open my new joint."

"The best spots!" Sully said. "You couldn't get in—" His finger pressed on the scar. So that was it! Sure, Nick could get in anywhere, with Miss Henderleigh. And from then on she'd be "that Army girl" who'd sponsored Nick Napoliana. Kids under twenty should be on leashes.

He knew Big John and Tony were watching him—watching for a signal to go into action. Which would be worse—sit tight and let the Old Man find her here? Or hope he didn't make it, and let Nick parade her through the West Side? Damn all kids, anyway!

Big John broke the tension. Waving toward the group of muscle-men clustered around Nick's chair, he asked: "What do your chorus boys do, Nick? Sing, dance or juggle?"

Sully laughed, but the eyes he turned on Nick were shot with red. "Don't let us keep you," he said.

NICK pushed back from the table. "Okay, boys, back on the floor," he ordered. Sure of his victory, he lingered to savor it. "Don't let this throw you, Sullivan," he gloated. "Miss Henderleigh doesn't mean a thing to me."

Sully picked up his drink. The glass was cold against his palm, soothing to the tingle in his fingers. He saw the wonder in Tony's eyes, the smug sureness in Nick's.

Temptation clawed at him with eager fingers. A word, an impatient gesture or an angry look, and this place would be a madhouse. He glanced up at the haze of tobacco-smoke that hung like clouds of dirty cotton just below the ceiling. "Good night, Nick," he said softly; "we'll be seeing you."

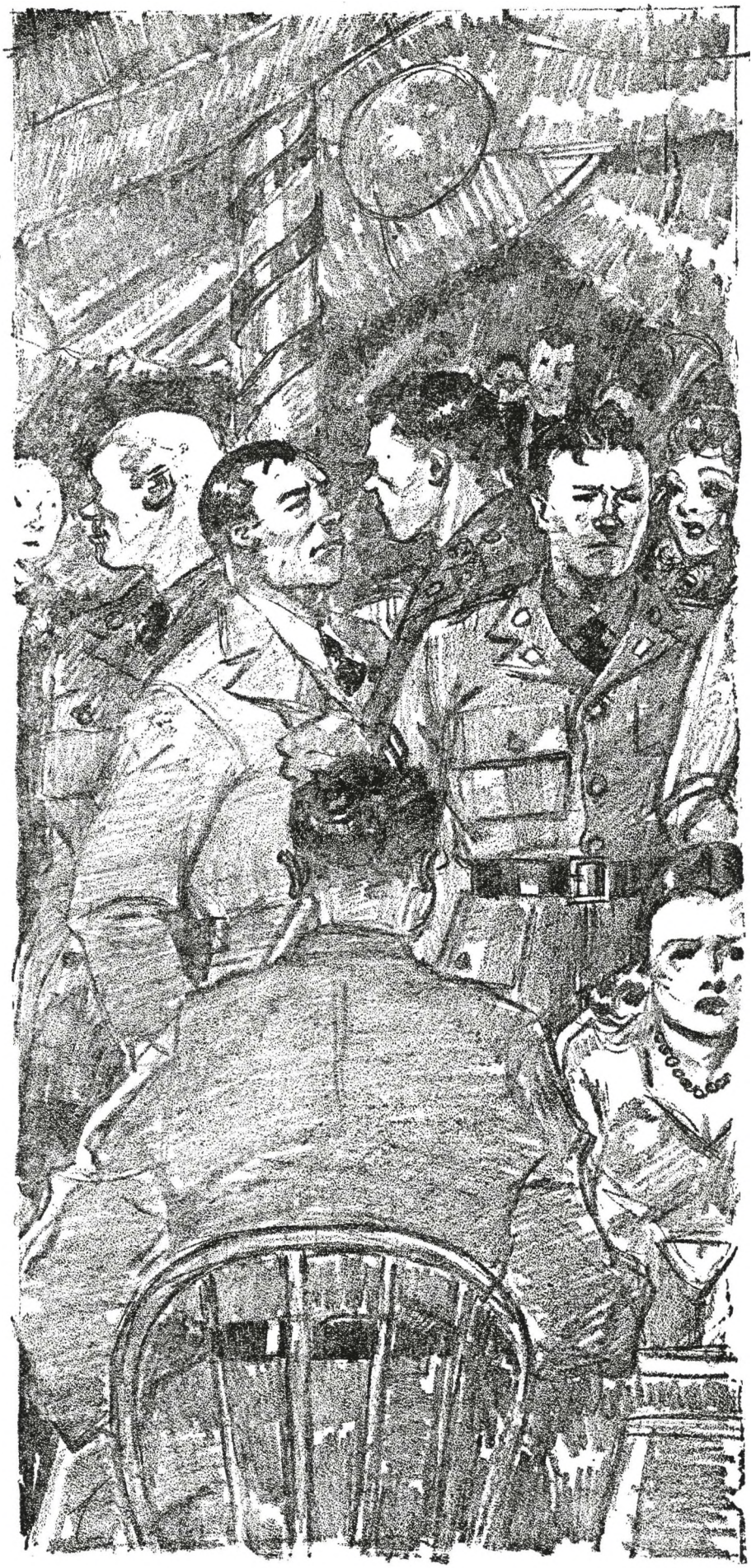
The two big soldiers watched Nick's jaunty progress as he crossed the dance-floor. They turned to Sully.

"I don't get it, Sully," Big John said. "Do we have to stand for this, just to keep our stripes?"

"Shut up, John," Tony said. "It aint the stripes; it's the Old Man's kid."

"Oh," Big John nodded. "I get so mad, looking at Nick, I almost forget about her. What do we do now, Sully?"

A nice question, the little man thought. "Think it over," the Colonel had said. This was their last chance, all right. One more jam, and they'd be a trio of rear-rank Rudys for keeps.



"If I lose my stripes," Tony boomed, "I'll tear your ears off!"

Aloud he said: "Go on over to that booth and wait for me. Maybe I'll think of something."

He waited until they disappeared behind the curtains; then skirting the dance-floor, he brushed hurriedly past Nick's table, trying not to look at the Old Man's daughter.

Her voice stopped him. "Why, Sergeant Sullivan," she called nervously, "what are you doing here?"

"Good evening, Miss Henderleigh," he said. "I'm in considerable demand for my nuisance value."

"Don't know what I'd do without you, Sullivan," Nick bantered. "I been telling Miss Henderleigh about the odd characters that come here."

The little man bowed slightly. No use to bluff unless you're willing to make the call.

"I really didn't expect to meet anyone," the girl faltered.

Sully smiled encouragement at the slender figure in the tea-rose dinner-dress. "Of course," he murmured. "Would you care to dance?"

Under Nick's threatening glower, they moved slowly to the music.

THE girl's eyes were anxious. Her cheeks were pink above the tea-rose scarf that matched her dress. "I wouldn't want Dad to know I'd been here," she suggested. "He wouldn't like it."

A marvelous piece of understatement, Sully thought. The Old Man'd blow out his seams.

Guiding her deftly through the crowd, he smiled wistfully as he remembered where he'd seen that scarf before—and how embarrassed the Old Man had been, when they walked into the shop just as the saleswoman was demonstrating it around the Old Man's neck.

"What do you know about Nick Napoliana?" he asked.

"He's a restaurant man," she said. "I met him at their convention at the Durango Club. All the post mess officers were there. And when I found out he owned the Napoli, I just had to see it."

"I've known you since you were a freshman in high school," Sully said. "And frankly, I thought you had more sense. Nick's restaurant activities consist of two dirty tables in a beer joint on Fleet Street." Quickly he related the night-club proprietor's plans, together with the probable consequences.

"You mean Dad's coming here?" she gasped.

The little man nodded. "And if you leave now, you're liable to run right into him. Besides, Nick may get a trifle nasty about it."

The Old Man's daughter recovered her composure. "If this were a tactical problem," she smiled, "Dad would depend on his non-coms."

"We fight *with* women," the little man said, "not over them."

The music stopped, and he took her back to Nick's table. "Just act as if you're having a pleasant evening," he whispered. Excusing himself, he hurried to the booth.

Carefully closing the curtains, he said: "We may be pushed for time . . . John, open that window."

They looked out on the street. "Two stories down," Big John said. "Do we throw Nick out, Sully?"

Ignoring him, Sully watched two pinpoints of light cut through the darkness as a taxi rounded the corner and pulled to a stop below them. Colonel Henderleigh stepped out of the cab.

"And we're the cause of this," Tony said heavily.

"There comes a time in every man's life when he must choose between the path of rectitude and eternal sorrow," the little man said. "Let's go!"

"You mean?"

"Exactly. I'm taking Miss Henderleigh out the back way. It may be necessary to create a slight diversion."

Brushing through the curtains, he strode to Nick's table, Tony and Big John behind him. "Sorry, Nick," he said, "but Miss Henderleigh is leaving."

Nick scrambled to his feet, yelling for his floor-men.

"Jerry! Pete! Frank!" he cried.

The little man moved swiftly. "We'll pay plenty for this," he snapped. "Bring home some skin!" In one angry movement, he kicked the table over. Turning his back on the charging floor-men, he hustled Miss Henderleigh through the kitchen and down dark winding stairs.

Behind him heavy bodies crashed against the furnishings as Big John and Tony stemmed the charge.

At the corner Sully hailed a cruising cab. "Push off, driver," he shouted, the battle-urge high in his voice. "The lady'll tell you where."

Hurriedly he retraced his steps, fumbling in his pocket as he ran. Lovingly his fingers closed over a dollar's worth of nickels, neatly rolled in paper.

He pounded up the stairs and through the kitchen, the Treasury's aid to the very small clutched tight in his fist.

Three of the floor-men and two of Nick's friends had already lost interest in the fight. Nobly the little man resisted an impulse to leather the fallen foe. Instead he swung a service shoe against the closest stern,

Illustrated by Raymond Sisley

The little man moved swiftly. He hustled Miss Henderleigh through the kitchen and down dark winding stairs.

then smartly clipped the owner with a currency-laden fist.

Stepping through the opening thus created, Sully took his rightful place between the two big soldiers.

Side by side they moved forward, and the ranks of those who battled at Nick's bidding dwindled rapidly. Big John swung arms like cargo booms, havoc in their wake. The smack of fists on flesh beat a steady accompaniment to Tony's accurate punching. Men who'd swaggered through the pool-rooms broke before these three who fought because they loved it.

Friends fled or fallen, Nick mounted his hatred from behind two wobbly floor-men. "Hold it," Sully ordered. "We've had our fun." He grinned at Nick from a battered face. "Nice party," he acknowledged.

Nick's foot shot out in a vicious effort.

Sully whirled away from the kick; then pivoting sharply, he crashed his loaded fist against Nick's nose.

"He isn't as good-looking as I remembered," the little man murmured. He looked up and saw Colonel Henderleigh leaning on the cashier's desk, just inside the entrance. "Let's go," he said wearily.

"This is it," Tony whispered.

"But we oughta get all we can," Big John insisted. Quickly he seized the two remaining floor-men. Swinging them apart, he brought them smartly together again, their heads ringing very nicely. "Never been in a fight yet I didn't crack a conk or two," he muttered.

"A stirring exhibition," the Old Man conceded. "I have a taxi downstairs. Wait for me. And Sullivan," he added coldly, "we'll save our discussion until morning."

IN the dismal gray of the early morning, they stood again before the battalion commander's desk. The Old Man was on his feet, one hand thrust in his field jacket, the other pounding the desk. "Milano," he barked, "how did this row start?"

"Dunno, sir."

"Ross!"

"Dunno, sir."

"Sullivan!"

The little man thought of the platoon they'd been so proud of. He wondered who the new sergeant would be, and where the Old Man would ever find two corporals like Big John and Tony. "The large ugly faces again, sir," he said miserably.

The Colonel looked from the little man to Big John, and Tony, then back again. "As your commanding officer," he said, "I should be reaching for your stripes."

Shoulders back and eyes straight to the front, they awaited his pronouncement.

Slowly the Old Man withdrew the hand from his field jacket, a tea-rose scarf balled in his fist. "But as one gentleman to three others," he added softly, "I bid you all good morning."

The Decisive Victory

AT nine-thirty P. M. of October 23rd, 1942, I climbed up the steep steel ladder which gave access to a high water-tower at Alamein station. A few minutes later Brigadier Kisch and his aide, Major Clive Tandy, appeared in the bright moonlight below. The brigadier climbed slowly, placing his feet carefully and heaving his heavy body from rung to rung. Clive came up like a lamp-lighter. Poor Clive. He lies in Tunisia. He drove over a Teller mine in a jeep and had the unbelievable luck to escape unscathed although he was thrown many yards by the force of the explosion. But his number was up. A few days later he stepped on an "S" mine and was shattered. After Kisch and Tandy, came Sergeant Wilson of the New Zealand Sappers who ran the pumping station. The four of us had taken this vantage point to watch the opening barrage of the battle of Alamein . . . the Battle of Egypt they call it now, I believe.

At nine-forty a proportion of our guns was scheduled to open counter-battery fire. Ten o'clock was zero hour. On the stroke of ten a hundred thousand bayonets would emerge from their cover and follow squads of mine-lifting Sappers across the enemy's first mine-field. On the stroke of ten also would hurtle a barrage from our sixteen hundred guns. By dawn the infantry were scheduled to have reached their objectives beyond the first enemy mine-field, and at dawn our armored forces were due to pass through the gap behind the infantry and to fan out beyond for their protection.

It was a clear night with brilliant stars and a full moon. A chilly breeze from the Mediterranean presaged the near approach of winter. Our side of the front seemed strangely quiet except for the rumble of returning lorry convoys which had conveyed the attacking infantry to their jumping-off positions, the positions from which they were soon to roll forward in a slow-moving but irresistible advance. But now and then from the enemy lines behind the Tel-el-Eisa ridge would come the distant reflection of a flash, followed many seconds later by the dull thud of a distant gun as the enemy kept up his desultory shelling. We liked to hear that intermittent shelling. It confirmed us in our belief that our attack would take the enemy by surprise. It showed that conditions were normal on the enemy front behind the dark mass of the western horizon . . . the occasional shell is as normal to static warfare as is breath to human life. We hoped fervently that our attack would be a surprise. If it wasn't we should have the devil of a butcher's bill to pay by morning.

By my watch it showed nine-thirty-five P. M. when I took a flask of rum out of my pocket. We drank *"To Victory"* and then looked at one another a little shamefacedly, as though our toast had been too theatrical. Then we compared watches . . . I had set mine only an hour before by the New Zealanders' radio.

Ten-forty P. M.! On the exact second a sputtering line of flame broke out in front of us as we faced the enemy—westward. Far down to the southern horizon extended that line of flame and beyond the horizon we could see the reflection of gun flashes in the sky. For a few uncanny seconds it was silent while the line of flame flickered and wavered like a horizontal strip of sheet lightning laid flat on the ground. Then the sound reached us in a bellowing roar. Almost simultaneously with the arrival of the sound our eyes began to distinguish the lurid burst of shells behind the enemy lines. Our counter-battery fire had opened. A proportion of our guns had ranged on enemy gun positions and was plastering them with high explosive to take the edge off their accuracy before our infantry should advance—a gunner is not in his best form when his battery has just been unexpectedly struck by a blast of steel and flame from a peaceful star-lit sky and he is momentarily expecting another such visitation while he is working his gun. For fifteen minutes exactly that counter-battery fire lasted, almost without reply from the enemy. Then it ceased suddenly, so suddenly that our eardrums were outraged by the abrupt stoppage of the vibration.

The silence lasted for exactly five minutes. Our guns which had been firing at the enemy battery positions were now ranging themselves on the enemy front line to join in the barrage which would move ahead of our advancing troops in a deadly protective curtain.

At five seconds before ten our eyes caught a distant gunflash far beyond the southern horizon. Some battery commander's watch down there was five seconds fast. As though that flash had set light to a monstrous powder train a line of fire topped the black mass of the southern horizon and leaped toward us, flashing swiftly to the northern extremity of our line. That flash took five seconds to traverse the twenty miles of the attacking sector—the last battery to the northward, among the sand dunes of the beach, opened fire exactly on the stroke of ten. The endless flaming band flickered wildly but did not die down. Then came the bellow of the guns with a roar that rocked the stout steel tower on which we perched. Even as the blast of sound rocked us, the whole of the twenty miles of enemy line glowed red . . . a lurid inferno. There were now two lines of flickering but continuous flame before us. The nearer line of gun flashes was yellow. The further line of our shell bursts—the barrage—was red. But the sound of our bursting shells was drowned in the nearer roar of the angry guns which were hurling them; there was a note of rage in the roar of that gunfire—the voice of an army long frustrated but now about to wreak its vengeance. That voice was powerful and the vengeance swift.

Sixteen hundred guns! If they had been placed in line along the twenty-mile sector only twenty-three yards would have separated each from its neighbor. Each of those sixteen hundred guns had six hundred shells buried beside it for its night's ration. By morning those guns would have blasted the enemy with more than twenty-five thousand tons of steel and high explosive. About five million pounds sterling—twenty million dollars—would that night's gun-ration cost the Allied Nations; but it was cheap at the price.

BARELY five minutes had the guns been firing when flare after flare soared skyward from the enemy line: Garrisons of enemy strong points signaling for help. Blasted by our tornado of fire, through gaps in the billowing cloud of dust and reek of high explosive, the defenders of those strong points had glimpsed a line of Sappers coolly sweeping mines in their defensive mine-field and behind the Sappers a myriad points of steel that flashed lurid in the reflection of the bursting shells. Those startled garrisons perforce must hug their foxholes to escape hurtling scraps of metal. As their machine-guns chattered desperately against our men they shot

# of Alamein

BY A MAN WHO FOUGHT THERE—

PETER RAINIER

(Remember his "African Pioneer" and "Green Fire"?)

flares skyward, appealing to their own artillery to put down a counter-barrage. But mostly they appealed in vain. Many of their gun positions were a shambles; that preliminary counter-battery fire of ours had been well ranged.

To us watchers on our water-tower it seemed as though that barrage must die down, as though no human agency could for long propel across the sky line such a river of metal, nor human ears sustain for another second such a volume of sound. But for half an hour there was no wavering of the bellow that tortured our eardrums. Then suddenly a short sector of our front line went black, a gap appeared in the line of flickering flame although there was no perceptible diminution of the volume of sound. During the half hour since the beginning of the barrage our infantry had been moving steadily forward. Now some of the batteries had ceased fire while they too moved forward. Battery after battery would now cease fire as they leap-frogged one another to keep the infantry within range so that the barrage could move always in front of the attackers, a lurid protective inferno. Simultaneously with the cease-fire of the first battery two searchlights shot flaming fingers skyward many miles behind our front—exactly vertical and several miles apart.

To me, those searchlights were the crowning triumph of the organization which had gone to the battle. The exact map positions of the searchlights had been made known to every battery commander. When a battery ceased fire the guns would trundle forward rapidly behind their mechanical tractors to their new positions. While they unlimbered the battery commander could get a cross-bearing with his instrument on those two searchlights just as a surveyor in daylight gets a cross-bearing on two distant beacons of known location. With that cross-bearing, the battery commander could establish precisely his new position on the map and calculate his coördinates so that his guns could continue to range as exactly on the target from his new position as they had from the old one.

Hour after hour continued the barrage, creeping forward before our steadily advancing troops. Hour after hour the guns flashed and thundered. But a few minutes before two A. M. a new sound began to impinge on my ears above the continued clamor of the baying guns . . . the guns seemed baying now, triumphant after the menacing bellow of their first defiance. That sound was the grinding clatter of a large body of armor on the move. Three columns of tanks, bren-carriers and armored cars moved slowly past us. Dimly seen in the deceptive moonlight they conveyed the impression of limitless power. At a leisurely pace they ground their ponderous way forward to crush the enemy. Soon after the armor had passed, colored flares began to soar from our attacking infantry, the sign that they had attained their objectives. On that first night attack we advanced into Rommel's defences an average of two miles on a twenty-mile front.

THERE was little enemy air activity that first night. The D.A.F. had taken care of that. For three days our fliers had been pounding enemy landing-grounds and had temporarily put them almost out of action. But on the following night we had plenty of activity of that sort round the pumping station. About midnight I was awakened in my dugout by the shriek of a dive-bomber. Instinctively I rolled out of my camp bed onto the floor. The bomb burst with a hollow roar a hundred yards or so from me and by bad luck it struck a small dump of ammunition—how I was to curse that ammo dump before the night was ended!

The ammunition caught alight and continued to blaze and splutter like a small corner of hell laid down on earth. Every few minutes one of the shells would burst with a blaze of pyrotechnics and send whizzing splinters flying. It wasn't the splinters that worried me . . . I was well underground, but that blasted firework display attracted every enemy bomber that poked its nose over the horizon and the target was so close that I was bound to get my share of the misses. Only a few minutes passed before I heard another dive-bomber cock his tail up and his nose down and start for the ground.

Z-h-e-e-e-E-E-E-E-E-E!

I hunched my shoulders and tautened every muscle as I sat on my camp bed in the dugout. It seemed as though the ever-growing shriek of that bomber would never end. That fellow must have almost touched the ground before he pulled out of his dive . . . at least that is how it sounded. Then there was a crash as the bomb exploded just outside the window of my dugout. My shaving kit left the window sill and hit me a heavy blow in the chest. I coughed. The dugout was filled with fumes and dust. I reached under the bed, fumbled for the remains of my bottle of rum and took a long pull. That helped.

Then I heard someone stumbling about outside. Jock's voice came to me through the murk. "I dinna think he's hurt the Morris, sorr. She's all right as fur as I can feel." I remembered the Morris parked outside.

"For Christ's sake, get back to your dugout, Jock. Damn the Morris."

"Right, sorr. But I couldn't have slept right withoot having a look at the old bus after the bomb burst by her."

"Get underground. You'll be damned lucky to get any sleep tonight anyway." I heard his retreating footsteps. Something else too I heard. There was another bomber coming over. For several hours we got a pasting. My bottle of rum helped while it lasted but it was the devil of a night.

I still felt somewhat wilted next morning when I chanced to meet a brigadier of my acquaintance who inhabited a neighboring dugout. But the brigadier seemed in fine fettle. He was strolling about blowing with joyful tempo, puffs from his after-breakfast cigarette.

"Good morning, sir."

"Good morning. Grand morning, isn't it?" He waved a hand at the landscape.

"The morning is all right but it was the very devil of a night."

"A bad night? Why? Couldn't you sleep?"

"Not much. Didn't that bombing shake you up too?"

"Bombing? Oh, yes, I did hear one or two, but I didn't let them keep me awake. You've got to expect loud noises in a battle, you know."

My chat with the brigadier left me feeling even more wilted than before. Had it been almost any other man in the Army, I should have mentally called him a liar and thought no more about it. But not this man. I really believed him when he said the bombing had not disturbed his sleep. This brigadier really enjoyed being bombed and shelled. The whole Army knew that. If you wanted to get something over with him the time to do it was just after he had escaped from some particularly rough patch of bombing or shelling and was still in the mood

of exhilaration which loud noises and the whistle of flying death seemed to induce in him.

The following night proved comparatively peaceful. Again on the next morning I chanced on the brigadier outside his dugout. This morning, however, our moods were reversed. He seemed perturbed by some harrowing experience while a good night's sleep had put me in fine fettle.

"Quiet night last night, sir."

"Gr-u-u-m-ph!" He glowered at me. "Didn't sleep a wink."

"Not sleep, sir. Why not?" I hope I managed to suppress the gleeful note in my voice. "There were a few bangs last night but they didn't keep me awake."

"Bangs be— There was a damned mouse in my dugout. Made rustling noises all night and kept me awake."

"Good God, sir! I'll have to do something about that."

LATER I got the New Zealand Sappers on the job and they contrived a mouse trap, one of the spring kind that you set on the floor of your bedroom and catch your toe in when you step out of bed in bare feet during the night. That night I presented myself with the mouse trap at the brigadier's dugout about the hour he indulged in a drink. He was delighted. While I sipped my whisky he hunted up a piece of cheese, set and baited the trap.

"I'll get the little blighter tonight after I put out the light," he announced, his voice grim with promised vengeance.

But he didn't have to wait till he put out the light. The unsophisticated little desert "mickey" had never in its life smelled anything so delicious as that cheese. Hardly had the brigadier laid the trap on the table when the mouse sprang from its hiding-place and dashed at the cheese, right among us. There was a snap and that ended "mickey." . . . .

Night after night our infantry drove hammer blows at the enemy line, now in shorter sectors than on that first great night attack. Night after night the vengeful guns roared and bayed in their support. Each attack created a small salient in some new place. Those small salients merged by design into one large salient which became known as the "bulge." Every afternoon when the westering sun was in our eyes the enemy drove home counter attacks. Both German and Italian troops fought well. They drove their attacks home and their casualties were high. But our men refused to give an inch. Every evening the enemy sullenly drew back to their positions, badly mauled and with the prospect of another night under that hellish barrage of ours.

I had hoped that our advances would have cleared for me the battle-riven section of my pipeline so that I could get that section repaired before the enemy should crack and stream westward in retreat. But the attacks were staged a little too far south for my convenience and in the pipeline sector our front line still remained on the Tel-el-Eisa ridge. I used to go up there every morning to look the battle over. The ridge itself was usually quiet but from its elevation, one could trace the shape of the "bulge" for miles as the opposing positions were picked out by the black eruptions of bursting shells. On the morning after the first attack I encountered a young Australian corporal calmly bathing from the brass spigot at the end of the pipeline.

"What sort of a do was it last night?" I asked him.

"Good. Got our objectives and wrote off a lot of Jerries."

"Many prisoners?"

"We don't take prisoners in our lot," he remarked, the sun glinting on the water with which he was sluicing his bronzed torso. "Jerry awhile back took to tying booby traps to our wounded when they lay out in No Man's Land, and when our stretcher-bearers tried to lift the wounded, they all went to hell together. So we gave up taking prisoners."

A few days later in the same place I encountered the same corporal having the bath in which he seemed to specialize after every attack. "How did she go last night?" I inquired.

"Pretty good. We took our objectives and a bit over for good measure. Took over a thousand prisoners too." He lit a cigarette and stood erect in the sunlight, puffing voluptuously, arms crossed over his chest.

"I thought your lot didn't take prisoners."

"That was right." He flicked the ash off his cigarette end. "We didn't use to on account of Jerry booby-trapping our wounded. Now we send them back on the hoof."

On one occasion I had to go up into the "bulge" with another staff officer to get some information on the previous night's attack. We drove up in my companion's big Ford staff car as being more comfortable than my open Morris. The "bulge" was no health resort. Axle deep in dust we ground in low gear through the gaps which our Sappers had opened in the enemy mine-fields the night before. Here and there shells were bursting with a hollow *cru-u-u-umph* and throwing up black geysers of dust and fumes. Innocent-looking enough, those black pillars, as seen from a distance, but within a wide radius of each was death from flying shrapnel.

We passed an armored brigade in an almost imperceptible fold of the plain. Scores of tanks scattered motionless like ruminating mastodons. Among the tanks moved the figures of their crews, "brewing-up" their morning tea. A mile or so enemyward of the tanks we found the dugout to which we had been directed. Parking our rather resplendent car outside I entered and acquired the information wanted from a young Australian officer inside. We chatted a moment. Then he saw me to the entrance as I left. The staff car caught his eye and galvanized him into a sudden burst of profanity.

"For God's sake, take that 'general's buggy' away from my dugout!" he cried. "You'll draw every damned gun that Jerry's got."

"Are you under direct observation?" It hadn't occurred to me that the shell-fire was directed hereabouts otherwise than from the map.

The Australian waved his arm to the westward. Six miles away on the Sidi-Abdel-Rahman hill the big white mosque gleamed white, its minaret pointing skyward.

"Jerry's got every inch of this area under observation from that damned Wog church," he explained.

"Why the hell don't your gunners knock it over?" I queried as I dived for the car.

"Ask the politicians that one," shouted the Australian after me. "We've got orders to leave it alone although it must cost us a dozen casualties every day. Might hurt the bastardy Wogs' feelings if we toppled it."

I pondered on the wondrous ways of Anglo-Egyptian politics which allowed sentiment to cause a rousing casualty list because the destruction of an enemy observation post would entail damage to a mosque. For about five seconds I pondered as the car lurched forward. Then the first shell arrived and burst fifty yards behind us. The German in the minaret of that mosque must have had a grand telescope and he must have thought a general really was in our "buggy" because shell after shell followed our course over the battle-ravaged expanse of dusty desert.

OUR driver put on speed, zigzagging desperately. Inhabitants of dugouts frantically waved us away. We felt like lepers. Still the shells burst—sometimes ahead, sometimes behind, but always searching for us. At last we got back to the armored brigade, concealed by the fold in the ground from the hated telescope on the picturesque white minaret which we had grown to loathe. We halted and heaved deep breaths of relief. Then the moving figures among the tanks became galvanized by a sudden common urge. With one accord they sprinted to their tanks and disappeared down the turrets like rabbits popping into holes. Overhead there

was a roar like a railway train in a tunnel. Sixteen enemy bombers in tight formation overhead! We flung ourselves flat. The landscape erupted in smoke and flame as the enemy gave an exhibition of pattern bombing.

As soon as the dust and smoke cleared sufficiently we hastened on our way—the climate in the "bulge" was too unhealthy for my liking. But already turrets were opening and the crews scattering to where various petrol fires still smoked blackly under pots of morning tea. To one side a smitten petrol lorry belched black clouds of smoke through the dust fog. Two men were trying to plug the hole in another's chest from which blood was spurting. Near us a man was cursing as he surveyed an overturned brew of tea. That seemed to be the total damage which several score bombs among as many tanks had caused. I have been a bit doubtful ever since about reports of damage caused by bombing armored formations in the desert . . . I have no doubt that the German squadron leader reported that armored brigade as being badly mauled. But the only way you can hurt a tank with a bomb is to drop it slap on the turret and that is hard to do.

The B.A.F. put up a grand show both before and throughout the battle. The bombers conducted a regular ferry service between their aerodromes and the enemy lines. Bostons and Marylands used to take the day shift while Liberators and Stirlings roved further afield by night, blasting enemy ports and bases. Those Bostons and Marylands were a great sight as they flew over us throughout the day to drop their loads. Their approach would be heralded by a distant roar like that of a train in a railway tunnel. Then the bombers would come into view, flying in a tight formation of eighteen planes. Majestically they would drone over us. Unhurried. Imperturbable. In fact, they became known to the Eighth Army as the "Eighteen Imperturbables." We always counted them anxiously as they returned but seldom were they short in number.

Dogfights overhead were frequent but they were usually conducted at such an altitude that the only impression we received was of several specks wildly gyrating in the sky while the hornet note of diving engines floated down to us often after the planes had disappeared. Sometimes enemy fighters used to come sweeping over us like low-flying hawks, guns blazing. One day a Messerschmitt swept over me at less than a hundred feet, guns crackling. My eye followed his swift flight. When he was half a mile or so beyond me there came from the ground a short burst of machine-gun fire. Smoke poured from the Messerschmitt. It wavered in its flight, then crashed and burst into flames. Not a minute later came another Messerschmitt, following the same course. From the same spot came another short burst of fire. The second Messerschmitt crashed within a few hundred yards of its mate.

Now, a strafing fighter plane is over and past you before you can get a weapon ready. In this case some machine-gunner must have happened to have his hand on his loaded gun and to be looking in the right direction when the first plane came hurtling toward him. A lucky shot. Before he could turn from his gun his eye must have caught the second plane. Another lucky shot. Not in a hundred battles would one witness such a coincidence. Then there was the enemy pilot who bailed out and landed by chance beside the policeman at the entrance to the Prisoners of War cage, saving himself a walk. There was the other enemy pilot too who bailed out and landed in one of our mine-fields, slap on top of a mine which promptly shot him in fragments back skyward.

ELEVEN nights we pounded the enemy with frontal attack; on eleven mornings our prison cages filled with prisoners who were evacuated back to the Delta. On ten afternoons the enemy counter-attacked and was hurled back with heavy loss. Then, on the eleventh night, our infantry broke through the last mine-field and reached open country beyond, at Tel-el-Aqaqir, ten miles south of the white mosque of Sidi-Adbel-Rahman. Now came the rôle for our armored forces. Through the gap at Tel-el-Aqaqir rolled the dust cloud of our strong columns of tanks. Rommel's armor had long since been brought up from the southern sector where our dummy tanks had detained them during the critical first phase of the battle. Head-on drove the Panzer divisions in the greatest armored clash the thirty months of desert warfare had witnessed. Those two great masses of armor locked, eight hundred German tanks and over a thousand of ours. For two days they grappled in a battle of annihilation. Then the Panzers broke. For the first time Panzer divisions had been met in grapple by our armor, fought to a standstill and forced to flee in a broken rout. A few days later some thirty enemy tanks limped across the Libyan frontier, hotly pursued, all that was left of Rommel's Panzers.

On the fourteenth day of the battle of Alamein the whole enemy line crumpled. The German divisions in the northern sector and such of the Italians as were with them succeeded in getting tattered remnants across the Libyan frontier. Those of the enemy to the southward, the Italians, were in a pitiful plight. Without sufficient transport even to attempt escape—Rommel had taken it all for his Afrika Korps—they were doomed to death by thirst because the nearest water was at the Alamein pumping station and some of them had fifty miles to tramp on foot to get there. For days our airplanes were circling low over the desert, dropping water to long lines of dispirited Italians who were plodding slowly in to surrender.

The menace to Egypt was ended. The turning point of the war had been passed. The Battle of Alamein was the first of many hard-driven blows that was to set the Axis structure crumbling. The Eighth Army was avenged of its frustration. It had accounted for about a hundred thousand of the enemy for a loss of about twenty thousand casualties. It had destroyed or captured eighty percent of the enemy's artillery and more than ninety percent of his armored vehicles. Alamein too, marked the end of one epoch in the history of war . . . the end of the epoch of the triumphant tank. By inaugurating his attack with infantry Montgomery acknowledged, first of all the commanders of this war, that the proper rôle for the tank was a cavalry rôle in support of infantry attacks and for the pursuit of a broken foe, not for the breaking through of a defended line.

Now a word about Generals Montgomery and Alexander. Throughout this account I have referred always to Montgomery as the great leader, the victorious general. He was all that. But he was also under the command of General Alexander, commander of all Middle East forces. How much of the strategy was due to Alexander I have no idea. He may have been responsible for much of it. I mean nothing derogatory to Alexander when I continually give praise to Montgomery. But Montgomery was the Eighth Army's leader, the man who had fashioned the Eighth Army into such a weapon that it was unbeatable. Montgomery was the man whom the Eighth Army would have followed into hell and fought its way out again. Our Army knew little of Alexander save as a name.

Within a few days after the Battle of Alamein the Anglo-American landings in North Africa were to drive another thrust into the joints of the Axis machine. About then, too, the Russians were to fling the invader back from the Volga in a long and costly retreat from which he would have no return.

Now the triumphant Eighth Army poured westward in that long pursuit which was to end in the mountains of Tunisia, nearly two thousand miles away.

WE WHO HAVE

JUDGE TREAT, drawing at his long pipe, puffed words out around the clay stem.

"John, first thing you know, a mob will have you by the coattails. Unless you keep a closer mouth, you'll meet trouble. Nobody loves lawyers, and that blackguard Nick Carmody has threatened you openly. What does Betsy say about it?"

John Malone grinned faintly. "She says it's high time somebody in this country did step on a few pet pups and speak his mind regardless. She's with me."

"Good for her! That ragged rabble-rouser Carmody, though, is trailing his coat for you, as the Irish say. And things really aren't half so bad as you claim."

"What? When the commander-in-chief of our armed forces is vilified and blackguarded on every side, when every man's hand is out to grab, when inflation—"

"Now, now! There's uneasiness, of course," Judge Treat struck in. "Workers want higher wages, and small blame to them with the price of food what it is! The cost of living is high, yes. But that's the fault of Congress. We're ruled by addlepated nincompoops!"

"Rather, by complacent blindness," Malone said abruptly, incisively. "Uneasiness, you call it? There's rioting, actual strife, everywhere! No regard for law and order; promises belied, workingmen a prey to agitators—"

"Isolated instances!" sniffed the older man.

"Isolated fiddlesticks! Racial jealousy and religious intolerance are blazing. Political hatreds and clashing interests have shattered our unity as a nation, at the very time we most need

FOUGHT

Here a wise madman foretells the future.

by Michael Gallister

unity and its strength! Food shortages—"

"And who's to blame? Congress! These imbeciles we've elected to rule us!"

"No. You're to blame, you yourself and men like you, serving only personal views!"

Malone was a brown, lean-cheeked man of thirty, sparing his choleric father-in-law no words. He was the kind to spare no one, with his hard level gaze and high-boned features and uncompromising mouth, though he could smile with the best.

"I'm as ready as the next man to bear and forbear," grunted the judge.

"It's no question of forbearance," Malone said patiently. He knew the judge to be big bark and small bite. "The country's in upheaval. Sectional strife is rampant. Interstate transportation is hampered by absurd restrictions, while workmen and their families drift about seeking the highest wage. Army men and laborers are bitterly embroiled, and the press eggs on the strife—"

"These blasted newspapers should be controlled!"

"Our fault. We've gone mad over politics and 'isms.' We rail at our leaders in endless political fog. Every man is out for what he can seize, inflation's ruining everyone, and taxes are higher than they've ever been."

"Politicians are God's curse on this country, sir!"

"No. You are, Judge, and others like you. Our country lacks strength because it lacks unity. You fight with savage confidence for your own beliefs; your neighbor fights for his; ruin ensues. It's true of a family, an established business, a nation."

"That's Malone—after him! Kill the traitor!" cried Carmody.

"Smooth Harvard platitudes," sniffed Judge Treat, waving his pipe. Late afternoon was darkening the Boston sky. A drizzle of rain came and went thinly across the Common. "All fine words that butter no parsnips. Theories are vain; we have too many now!"

"Then here's fact," snapped Malone. "You, we, all of us, must look only to the vital need, regardless of our personal views! Have you ever once said, even to yourself, that because the Congress rules us, we should sink all differences and obey our leaders like good soldiers, during the crisis? No. Nor has anyone else. Instead, you damn this man and that; you curse one as a traitor to his party, another because you distrust his ambition. I repeat, then—at this day and hour, regardless of our own convictions, we must look only to the vital need of the country, and serve it!"

"You speak as a soldier—"

"As a civilian, as a citizen! But we who have fought, know the value of unity. Because I was a captain in the Army, I'm a better citizen now."

Judge Treat puffed away, not angrily but thoughtfully.

"Say that again, John—about the vital need."

"Regardless of our private views, at this day and hour we must look only to the vital need of our country, and serve it. That's plain common sense."

A nod of grudging approval escaped the other man.

"You've voiced a good thought there, John: The vital need—yes, that's it! I'd like to see those words writ over every doorway in the United States for every man to read, for future generations to ponder in days of strife!"

"People don't appreciate history unless it has some bearing on their own time and outlook," Malone rejoined. "I'm glad you admit my ideas to be right, sir."

"They are; I never said they were wrong. But, John—you can't publicly attack people's selfish interests without suffering. You're my daughter's husband; I speak only for your own sake. You've made yourself disliked, even hated, among certain classes here in Boston, by fronting against public opinion."

"I speak my convictions, as others do. Mine are not selfish."

"And hence lack appeal. Such men as Nick Carmody paint you and Mr. Washington and others as rank traitors. You can't fight against inflamed mob-passion."

"I'll fight for what I know to be right."

"You haven't a cause. You've no issue that will appeal to the masses."

"The appeal to unity—the cause of unity—that's all. That's everything!"

IT might have been everything; but the United States, to sadly miscall this group of commonwealths, was in sorry shape for lack of it. With the Revolution barely five years ended, the Constitution was as yet an uncertainty, the bickering futile Congress had scant power, the Presidency was a mere shadowy projection of future hope.

The various States were at odds; inflation was rampant; Army veterans were starving and rioting; workmen were rabid and agitators were seeking to gain their own ends by inflaming the mob to action.

And John Malone dared to lift his voice, dared to point to the interest of the whole country as against that of the individual. "To hell with the country! We fought for it, and what's it done for us?" Thus spoke such men as the brawny blacksmith Nick Carmody, hating all aristocrats and all authority with a virulent hatred and dreaming of a rise to power upon the maddened wings of terror. Well might the shrewd old judge caution his son-in-law, for in any unstable and frightened democracy, the voice of the mob is indeed the voice of God.

When Malone left the Treat residence, daylight had been banished by an early drizzly dusk that smelled of damp earth and fog. He struck across the Common as the shortest way to his own house, a half-mile distant....

How and when trouble started, he had no distinct idea. His argument with Judge Treat had carried him into a bypath and thence to a logical conclusion that left him in frowning uncertainty. He was striding along in the gathering darkness, filled with his own thoughts, when he became aware of a hurly-burly of voices. And, suddenly, he wakened to the realization that they were directed at him.

"That's him! Stone him, stone him!" The cries were savage. They rose fiercely and he caught the heavy bellow of Nick Carmody backing them. "That's Malone—after him! Kill the

traitor! Kill the aristocrat who'd see honest workmen starve! Stone him, lads!"

In quick alarm Malone discovered that they were intent upon him, were closing in around and cutting off any escape, and meant business. A horde of flitting figures were converging upon him. The growing obscurity was filled with pointed menace. A stone flew, striking his hat.

He broke into a run, was away from the Common now and heading down a verging street, but there was no evasion. They gathered ahead and behind, voices raucous as they rushed in upon him. A man with a stout stick bore down on him, cursing viciously. Malone swerved, met the fellow halfway, seized and wrested the stick from him and swiped him across the face. The man reeled and staggered off.

"Hold on, men, listen to me!" Malone faced the shadowy ring of figures that circled him. "You'd not deny a man free speech! Let me tell you—"

"To hell with that! You've talked too much already!" lifted a yell. Applause drowned it, stones and sticks hurtled in upon him. Figures came rushing from one side. He met them with the stick, fired by hot anger, but this was folly.

His hat flew off at a blow; a club rapped him sharply and he went staggering. Then a stone struck him over the eye; dazed and blinded, he went down. They closed savagely above him, kicking and striking in screaming fury, until a shrill wild yell arose:

"He's dead! You've killed him!"

This, and a burst of rain, wakened sudden sanity and fear. In a flash the mob disintegrated and took to flight in all directions.

MALONE came to his senses, and rose automatically; he found himself reeling unsteadily along, spattered with mud, hurt and bleeding. He stumbled and fell and was slow to get up, for blood got in his eyes; his head felt enormous with pain, his brain was dizzy and useless. He came to rest, leaning for support upon fence-pickets.

A hand took his arm. "Cap'n John Malone, aren't you? Come along," said a voice beside him. "We'll see to you. Here's our place close by."

Cap'n Malone? No one had called him that since the war; he had been mustered out as captain, after the peace. Gratefully he yielded to the propulsion, his head swimming. He was conscious of dim yellow light and steps. Then came warmth and kindly voices, a soft couch that upheld him, and deft hands cleansing and soothing his hurts.

"Relax and rest," said a voice. He obeyed. His eyes closed and his throbbing head was quieted.

He must have slept for a while; when he wakened and looked about he was quite at ease, and felt himself again.

He lay in a large, shadowy room. A whale-oil lamp burned on a table, lighting the room only dimly. By the table sat a man writing with a scratchy quill. He broke off to trim his point, muttering at it angrily. He was a gray, deep-eyed man with high forehead and firm lips, but of sharp, impulsive movements. Laying aside the quill, he held the paper to the lamp and read aloud what he had written. His voice was sonorous, steady, firm:

"Aye, seek and find on distant roaring shores where these days tend! Within tomorrow's vision they shall loom large as time, for effort ever stands far and high above the dreary wage of war. It is to tell of starry thunder upon the lightless skies among the gods, and huge winged argosies that bait the dawn with no less freight than destiny of worlds gathered within their crabbed dark expanse, where men stand closely within the crowding wings and death is ceaseless guide to valiant hearts. There in the aisles of war lie hope and fear, not for the few who dare but for the world!"

Malone spoke upon the ensuing silence. "Friend, it sounds like poetry."

The man started, dropped his paper, and tugged his stool over to the couch. He touched Malone's bandaged head and peered into his face.

"Cool. You've wakened to health." For a moment he met Malone's eyes, smiling slightly. "Poetry, say you? Well, perhaps; and more truth than poetry, it may be, more fact than dream, this thought of armed men dropping from the heavens. Such words as these come to me in dreams, a vision in words. Sometimes, as now, I can remember the words and write them down; oftener, I can not."

An addlepate, thought Malone, though a kindly one. He sat up; the effort made his head whirl again, and he relaxed on one elbow.

"How did I get here?"

"Corruption," replied the other. "The accustomed corruption of mortality, my friend. You are John Malone, captain under the establishment of Congress in the Revolutionary War; at least, this is your own impression, your last memory of personality. As a matter of fact, you now have a different name, and you are living one hundred and fifty-six years later than you imagine."

Malone stared at him for a moment.

"I fear that you're mistaken," he said politely. "This is the year 1788, as my head reminds me with painful certainty. I'm not inclined to argue with my benefactors, however; I owe you great thanks for your kindness. As my wife is expecting me at home, with your permission I'll be on my way."

"It's all one to me," said the other indifferently, "but I doubt if you can make it. They tell me it takes a bit of practice, after one wakes up."

"Eh? Just where is this? In what street?" Malone asked, resolved not to bandy words with a crackpot. The man shook his head.

"A world o' fog. A chill breath has turned the rain to fog, friend. You'd best not venture abroad in it. A spirit makes hard travel in fog. Rain or wind we can abide, but not the thick atmosphere of fog."

"Indeed! Since you seem to know me, who may you be?" Malone found himself interested by the impressive air of the man. Lunatic or not, here was a curious sense of surety and power.

"Names matter little beyond the grave, friend Malone. But in my life, which was a tiny point of time in time, I was Isaac Barclay, a poor scholar who gave his blood for the country he loved. That was at the Brandywine battle, before the Revolution grew old. Now that our land again labors in threatening days, I am watching over her safety, with help from others."

THE convincing air of sincerity, the words so strangely at variance with it, left Malone puzzled. Furtively he pinched his leg and found it flesh. Smiling a little at his own action, he came unsteadily to his feet and glanced about for a door. The place was all one large room, and he had been lying on a trundle-bed. The name of Isaac Barclay struck a faint chord in his memory, but he could not place it.

"Go as ye like, come back as ye like. I look for help from you yet," said Barclay, "for that was the vision, and you were writ large in it. There's been thousands on thousands of our men taken prisoner in the Manilas, and their generals as well, all prisoned among the heathen; and our ships and people sore stricken in the Sandwich Isles. What to make of it I know not, except the country be wakened to its peril. Yet there was a solution, if I can remember it—a comfort for all our folk, an end to the strife at home! I must try to recall it."

He was at the table again, dipping the quill in ink.

Malone impatiently dismissed these vagaries; he saw a door across the room and went to it. He was well recovered, quite able to walk, and nothing else mattered; he was anxious to be away from here and heading homeward.

He opened the door, passed into the outside air, and halted with a gasp.

Here was a walled garden. Trees loomed; the sweetness of flowers and

new-turned earth struck his nostrils, but the rain had turned to fog that eddied thinly around. A figure approached, looming darkly, and he started in alarm; but a hand of solid flesh found his arm and the voice of a woman sounded—a rich, friendly, capable voice.

"So here you are, Mr. Malone! I was just coming for you. Let me guide you up to the house. I do hope you're feeling at ease?"

"Quite, madam, thank you," he replied confusedly. Who the devil was she?

"I was taking brother Isaac out for his evening stroll," she said, her firm hand urging him along a graveled path, "when we came upon you. A terrible thing, a scandalous thing! This man Carmody is a scourge to all decent folk—him and his godless crew, the very scum of the gutter! Evil enough he's done poor brother Isaac, too. But because he carried a musket from Bunker Hill to Yorktown he's a great patriot and is allowed license to cruel mischief, when he should be safe locked in jail."

THE old addlepate's sister! Malone, listening, was aware of acute relief; things were struggling back to normal, sanity was returning. Vaguely he recalled some town gossip about the Barclay place, somewhere toward the Back Bay fens, but details eluded him. She chattered on, pointing to a lantern-glow ahead, against the loom of a house.

"I left you in my brother's cottage, while I sent our woman Hannah to let your good wife know you were well and in safe hands. I've water on the hob and tea brewing; a hot cup with a dash of rum will pick you up. I hope my brother did not talk to you?"

Malone chuckled. He liked her. He felt happy and at ease with her.

"He did, madam, and vastly entertaining he is; a bit startling, perhaps. Indeed a most impressive person. I had almost said, convincing!"

He caught a fluttering sigh.

"Brother lives a retired life, Mr. Malone, in that cottage at the garden's end. He was a captain in the war but was hurt at the battle of the Brandywine, and later came home the victim of sad delusions. He's the gentlest and most amiable of men; no confinement is ever needed. He spades the garden, occupies himself with his books, and we take a long walk of evenings. But we must shun company in general. Now if you'll lift down the lantern, 'twill light us into the house."

Malone took the lantern from its hook. They passed through the dark house to a parlor where a fire glowed on the hearth and candles flickered in silver holders. Now he saw his guide for the first time—a spry, smallish woman of middle age with apple-red cheeks, piquant, snappy black eyes and a general air of tidy efficiency.

"I'm Ellen Barclay, sir, and bid you welcome," said she, with a curtsey.

Malone bowed over her hand, staggered slightly, and she caught his arm and pressed him into a chair. The table beside him was set with dishes and a china teapot in its gay cozy.

"Sit there and no more nonsense," she said briskly. "Here's Hannah back already."

His head swimming anew, Malone was content to relax obediently. A strapping Negro woman entered, reporting that the attack on Malone had stirred the town and some said that constables and even soldiery were moving; but she had done her errand and Mrs. Malone was set at ease. Ellen Barclay sent her away, rattled the tea-things, and gossiped nimbly on.

"The same Carmody who so nearly killed you tonight, hates brother Isaac most viciously. He was in Isaac's company during the war. A most unruly man, and has a knack at inflaming the mob. I do trust, Mr. Malone, that brother caused you no fright?"

Malone smiled. "Far from it. He was thinking less of me than of the Far Eastern seas and the Spice Islands; some great number of our soldiers—more than were in General Washington's army—lost or captured somewhere. It was a trifle perplexing, I grant."

"Yes, brother's delusions are perplexing. He believes himself dead and living in some future age. Here, now, take this and sip it hot." She thrust a cup of fragrant, steaming tea into his hands, and sat back with a sigh.

"Why, I've heard him cry out of murder—some great good man killed by an assassin in a playhouse box, says he. As though any good man would be found in a playhouse; my land! Though I hear Philadelphia tolerates 'em."

"And New York too: I've seen Mr. Washington himself watching a play, madam," murmured he. The tea was delicious. It heartened him, warmed him, relaxed him gratefully.

"It'll never happen in Boston—that is, unless the British return some day," she stoutly affirmed. "And I mind that brother made a sad face over dying soldiers, for the longest time. His delusions have to do with armies, as is natural. He wrote and talked of great armies marching across the land, and battles of queer names where brothers were killing brothers, all because of blacks like our Hannah. Did ever one hear such absurdity? But enough of that. It is kind of you to treat the matter with such courtesy."

Malone sipped his tea. Ships in the sky, soldiers dropping from heaven, our own people—whalers, no doubt—killed in the Sandwich Isles; brother Isaac was certainly a master of queer conceits!

"I owe you a heavy debt for your charity and kindness, madam," he said, warming to the spry, pleasant woman opposite. He touched the bandage about his head. "It is true Christian love shown a poor hurt wretch! If ever you have need, I pray you consider me your humble servant to command; I mean the words with my whole heart."

So he did, and she flushed slightly.

"You must thank my brother, rather than me. I would have hurried him home; I was in mortal fear lest he be recognized by that rascal Carmody. But we heard your name shouted and he would have it that we give you aid; very luckily, too."

"This Carmody is a dangerous firebrand," said Malone. "I'm told the ragged insurgent elements assemble in Taylor's empty warehouse. It stands close to his smithy, and he harangues 'em by the hour of nights. Such assemblies should be forbidden, and the man himself apprehended for inciting to riot. The doctrine of free speech is a sword that hath two edges and menaces the very foundations of liberty."

Her eyes twinkled at him. "You say that, who fought to win it?"

"We who have fought to win our liberties, must beware of the devil who can quote Scripture against them," he said whimsically, smiling at her.

But the word re-echoed in his brain: We who have fought—we who have fought! Why, poor witless Isaac had fought too, and this man Nick Carmody, and half the men he knew; they had all fought to win these very liberties! Now they battled each other, in Congress, in the press, in the pulpit and in the very streets, all still fighting for liberties, opinions, personal views!

"Mr. Jefferson holds that freedom of speech can't be denied," she said slyly.

"We ourselves hold the answer!" he exclaimed. "Sacrifice all private convictions for the greater good! Stop bickering, follow our appointed leaders, submerge ourselves and our animosities! Look only at our country's need!"

"You ask the impossible, Mr. Malone. Indeed, I do think you are right," she rejoined, "but you seek the impossible. Human nature fights for its own convictions, regardless of any greater need."

HE nodded hopelessly. Here was the very bypath into which Judge Treat had driven him. He went on to voice the logical conclusion.

"Yes, madam. Unless we are bitterly menaced, we may never combine in unity. There ends the argument, I

Illustrated by Maurice Bower

"I see him! Look, there inside the door! — Oh, Isaac! Brother!" cried Miss Barclay.

fear. We must sink far, perhaps too far to recover, before reaching that urge to unity. We've no one strong leader to rally around now, as we had during the war. Our country is sinking in disruption, and there's no one in position to lead us out."

"But there will be—" she began; then her mouth fell in startled amazement and Malone jumped, as another voice broke in upon them from the obscurity beyond the candle-light, a voice strong and calm and sonorous.

"Yes, there will be! Though we feed the world and cannot feed ourselves, though riot and internal strife strike us down, though politics and selfish interests strangle us, a man will arise! The universe permits no delay or interruption in its progress. A man will arise to carry out the dictates of human progress, or if you prefer to call it so, the will of God! And of this man I go to tell now, giving the message of hope to those who need it most. Farewell!"

MALONE heard a quick step, and the slam of a door. Miss Barclay started to her feet, white, stricken and staring, her mouth still open.

"Who was that?" Malone sprang up. "Whose voice?"

She turned a dread face toward him.

"That—that was brother Isaac," she faltered. "The moment I feared has come. Oh, Mr. Malone, help me now, help us both! It is his delusion; he has gone to take his fancied message to those who most need it—those rascals at Taylor's warehouse! Help me to follow and find him and bring him back. I've been so afraid of this!"

Malone was struck to the heart by her fear and dismay; yet she showed no hysteria and kept her poise.

"Run and get your things," he exclaimed. "Of course I'll help you. Be quick!"

He had no choice. He could not let her go alone into that rough section of town where Carmody's smithy stood. He gulped his tea. His eyes flitted about the room for something he had briefly noticed.

It was on the mantel—a long, handsome horse-pistol of brass. Perhaps some memento of the war, perhaps an heirloom. Even an empty pistol might serve well in this pinch. He reached out for it, tucked it inside his waistband, then caught up his muddy hat and cloak.

She was already back with bonnet and wrap; he aided her, gave her his arm, and a moment later they were hurrying into the mist-wet darkness.

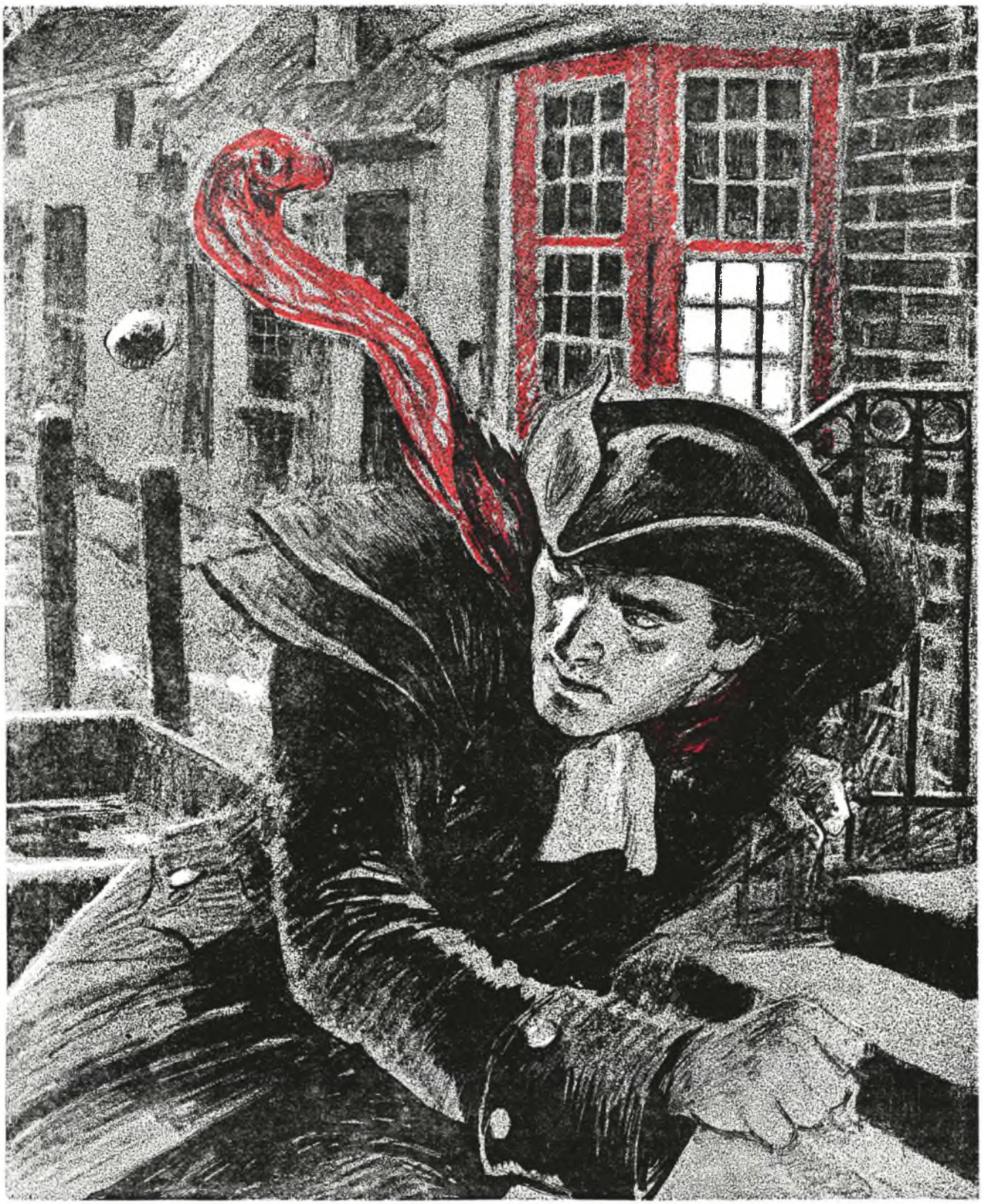
They hastened along, vainly striving for some glimpse of the flitting Isaac. Malone cursed the fog that hid the stars and veiled the obscurity around. He knew that they could not overtake witless Isaac; and he knew Ellen Barclay would not admit it. With conditions as they were, the streets were decidedly unsafe for gentry at night, and little she cared. Her whole thought was for the brother plunging into danger, and it drove her on with desperate urge.

"Brother knows the way, unfortunately," Miss Barclay panted. "Several times he has spoken of going there to reassure Carmody and his rebels."

"Reassure them?" Malone echoed grimly.

"Yes. He wants to show them that prosperity will return, that times are changing, that a leader will arise to bring the country back to normal—just as he said to us when he left. His

A horde of figures were converging



upon him. Malone broke into a run, away from the Common.

whole endeavor is to make them see this; he thinks it will end strife."

"A fallacy. The appearance of a leader won't solve our problems."

"It will if we have sufficient trust in him."

Malone grunted skeptically. He was wondering about it all. Barclay was as mad as a March hare, no doubt of that; yet perhaps the madman had found the right road.

He himself realized that in seeking to make men sink hatred and interest for the common good, he was aiming at the impossible. The madman sought only to bring them word of some Messiah, a leader to reconcile all differences and bring about a return of prosperity. This, to Malone, was a bitterly vain hope. The men in sight did not measure up to the job. The one man who might have accomplished this was General Washington; but Washington had retired to his estate, vilified, berated, accused of seeking kingship and a throne, doomed to oblivion.

"By gad, perhaps the madman has more sense than I!" Malone thought bitterly. "Perhaps he can make them listen and wait."

They stumbled on, by puddles and miry patches and dark lanes, until suddenly Ellen Barclay gripped his arm.

"Look! There it is!" she gasped. "Oh, we must find him, we must stop him!"

Nick Carmody's smithy, or rather its dingy cluster of shadows, lay ahead; and just to the left of it loomed Taylor's warehouse, a huge but abandoned old structure.

IT was aglow with the murky light of spurting torches, strings and bundles of greasy tow burning in holders. Gaping windows and doorways showed crowding shapes inside. Raucous voices were pealing up in riotous acclaim of Carmody. Miss Barclay caught her breath sharply, hesitated, then plunged ahead. Malone detained her.

"Here, wait outside! Let me have a look first—"

"I see him!" she broke in excitedly. "Look, there inside the door. —Oh, Isaac! Brother! *Brother!*"

Malone, too, could see the tall wild figure, shouting and breasting its way through the ragged mob.

"I won't stop!" she panted. "Come on, come on! He'll listen to me!"

She pressed forward, and Malone resigned himself to the inevitable. They reached the doorless entry and began to work their way forward. The crowd scarcely heeded them at all, being intent on the scene in the center of the place. Carmody in his leather apron stood on a table, high above the frenzied faces roundabout.

Barclay was plunging forward.

"Let me speak, Nick Carmody! I've good news for you all!"

"Well, if it aint Cap'n Isaac Barclay!" A laugh broke from Carmody, a jeering laugh. His black-stubbled, brawny features showed mocking delight. "Let the cap'n through, there, let him through! Barclay, d'ye mind that day on Long Island when you wouldn't let us fellers drink from that farm well? And us dying of heat and weariness, us sojers toting muskets? By God, I says then that some day I'd kill ye for it—and I will!"

Infernal enjoyment in his face, Carmody stretched out a long arm, caught the hand of Barclay, and jerked him up to the table-top. Ellen Barclay shrieked at him, but her voice was drowned in a roar of applause and laughter evoked by Carmody's words. Barclay stood, gray hair sweeping about his face, stretched out his arms for silence, and got it.

"Good news, lads!" burst forth his voice. "And high time, too, for the country's in terrible bad shape. Riots and food shortages have hurt; the stoppages of work have done us dreadful harm. Our whole army has been taken prisoner in the Manilas—"

"Army's disbanded, you old fool!" brayed somebody.

"What's the Manilas anyhow?" shrilled another yell. "You're plumb crazy!"

Carmody winked and laughed encouragement at his men. But Barclay went on:

"There's plenty of bad, yes; our troubles here make the war hang fire, what with race riots at home and the Navy not getting proper support," he shouted. Men glanced at one another and back at him, muttering. There was no war. There were no race riots. There was no Navy—it was a string of dismantled hulks in the Charles River.

"But here's the great good news!" he went on ringingly. "A man! I've seen him and walked with him and heard him speak, and rarely have I found so true a heart! A man to lead us out of all our troubles! Here's a man versed in the arts, able in all ways, who is ruled by the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength. He is at this moment working to obtain justice for all oppressed peoples; his is the great name that will arise from this world's crisis!"

Malone, hat pulled over eyes, had worked close to the table but was halted by the jam.

"What are ye prating about, Barclay?" cried out Nick Carmody fiercely. Someone had passed him up a long knotted stick; he held it menacingly. "You're no better'n a lunatic! You and your damned officers, drinking out'n the well; but calling it bad water for us swine! It was us fought the battle, not you, that day on Long Island! And you call yourself a man!"

Malone sensed what was coming. Frantically, he reached for the brass horse-pistol, trying to free it from under his cloak.

"No, no, the man's nothing!" Barclay caught at the word and missed the threat. "The man matters not a particle, lads! A force is at work, the great force of destiny that gave birth to this land of ours. The man merely carries out its commands. Yet this American, as yet unknown to fame, will go down in history as one of the greatest among the great—"

"And you've had your say, ye damned aristocrat!" roared Carmody, abruptly tiring of his game. His stick swung and fell with a sickening crunch.

Struck squarely over the head, Barclay threw out his arms and collapsed. A scream burst from his sister.

Malone, the big brass pistol free, had drawn back in the very act of hurling it. He was too late to avert that cruel blow, but a spasm of fury nerved his arm as he loosed the heavy weapon.

It went true. It smashed the grinning Carmody full across the face. It knocked him backward, knocked him clean off the table, sent him sprawling amid his men. And at this instant a burst of wild yells shrilled from the entry.

"The sojers! Here's the sojers, lads —the sojers! Run for it!"

Pandemonium swept the place. Lights were extinguished, shouts and oaths dinned on the air. The soldiers indeed; Boston had grown weary of rioting. The crowd scattered in mad panic. Malone, gripping Ellen Barclay, held her protected by his own body against the rushing tumult. Lacking a leader, the mob fled every way.

So ended that wild night. . . .

Late the following morning John Malone mounted the steps of the Barclay house and tugged at the bell-pull. Black Hannah opened the door and directed him into the parlor, and Miss Barclay appeared. But instead of the wan face and dreary eyes he had feared to see, he found her smiling and brisk and cheerful.

"What? Is it good news?" he cried hastily.

"Good—oh, good indeed!" she exclaimed breathlessly. "Even better than that, Mr. Malone. Good morning to you!"

Her eyes were alight and dancing.

"Can you credit it?" she went on. "He was hurt, yes, but the hurt cured his brain! He has no memory of it all, he knows nothing about his delusions—nothing! He'll be himself once more, they say. Oh, thank God!"

"Amen," said Malone, astonished and delighted. "I rejoice with you, most sincerely! But have you heard the news from Philadelphia? You've heard the bells ringing?"

"I've heard nothing."

"It's a very strange thing—apparently your brother was right, more right than any of us! They say the Constitution is at last ratified, and the man has been found."

"The man?" she echoed, staring at him. "What man?"

"Our first President—Mr. Washington, no less! There's news indeed, news to make our dreams come true—news to end all our worries and troubles. Pray heaven it's true!"

TRUE enough. In later days, Malone often recalled the queer delusions of Brother Isaac. There it ended, for Brother Isaac had no memory of them. Nor did it matter. For after all, while the human race may go its way in a circling spiral of ascent, people never appreciate history unless it has some bearing on their own momentary outlook.

Pat Pending's Invisibelt

WHEREIN our marvelaceous inventulator breaks out with a surprising contraption calculated to win the war.

by NELSON BOND

"Give me that!" he grated. "This is just what we need."

THAT morning was one of those ayems that curdle the milk of human kindness. Uncle Sam had transferred our Patent Office from Washington to Philadelphia in an attempt to solve the Capital's housing problem, but the Government experts had forgotten to take into consideration the fact that the Quaker City, with its steaming mills and teeming millions, was a bit shy on domiciles itself. As a result, lodging-houses were as rare as Jap naval victories, and the traffic situation was—well, ask your navy pal what *"snafu"* means!

But to enumerate my personal woes: I broke a shoelace getting dressed, and lacking a spare, ended up lacing my left boot with a hunk of dental floss. My trolley busted *its* trolley, and I was twenty minutes late getting into town. By the time I reached my usual hash-joint, the breakfast menu was picked clean as an end-man's jokes at a church minstrel show. When I ordered ham and eggs, Tony just leered at me impishly.

"Are you kiddin'?" he demanded. "Listen: if I had some ham, I'd be glad to give you some ham an' eggs—"

"If you had some eggs," I ended wearily. When your luck runs out, even java-jockeys make with the antique jokes. "Okay, Joe Miller, give me whatever you've got, and let me out of here."

So he did. So I had a little bit of everything for breakfast. In Philadelphia they call it scrapple. . . .

The elevator in our building was out of order; I had to climb five flights to the cubbyhole sometimes laughingly known as my office. When I got there, I found my desk completely submerged under a pile of official Government forms, all demanding immediate answer. In sextuplicate, of course.

And then, finally, when I went to use my typewriter, I found the ribbon as gray as Hitler's horoscope, which meant I had further to begloom an already miserable day by tackling a mechanical operation understood only by Einstein and twelve other geniuses—changing a ribbon.

Thus it was that about ten o'clock I was hopelessly entangled in miles of black ink and blacker fury when I heard footsteps pounding up the hall, and the piping of an all-too-familiar voice:

"Mr. Mallory! Oh, Mr. Mallory, give me an applicaceous form immediantly! This time I've *got* it! The most importulant inventulation ever discoverized by man—"

I groaned, and struggled to shed my inky cocoon, but in vain. The door burst open; and into my office, buck teeth gleaming in his map-of-Eire puss, red hair abristle with wild excitement, rushed that mad genius, the self-styled "greatest inventulator of all time"—Patrick Pending.

"Mr. Mallory!" he bawled. "Give me a pen and paper—quick! I've got

"Back, bud!" grated Big Jowls—and pushed.

to legitilize my inventulation before I—" Then he stopped abruptly, his air-cooled incisors dangling in mid-sentence. "Why, Mr. Mallory, what's the trouble?"

"Can't you *see?*" I retorted. "It's this confounded typewriter ribbon. I've been working on it for the past half-hour. Or it's been working on me. It's supposed to be wound through these thingamajiggers—"

"Yes, I know," he nodded sagely. "I know all about it. I inventulated this typewriter. Remember?" With a smirk of false modesty he upended the machine, pointing to a legend inscribed thereunder: *"Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.—Pat. Pending."* He said: "It's really very simple, Mr. Mallory. You just put the new spool on the first spindle, press it down firmly—"

"I know how it's *supposed* to work!" I fumed. "Only, it doesn't act that way. The keys jam and get in my way; the spindle keeps slipping, the top falls down on my fingers—"

"I see," said Pending sympathetically. "Well, move over. Maybe I can help you—" Then he stopped suddenly. *"Sh!"* he whispered. "Did you hear something?"

"When I'm with you," I told him gloomily, "I *always* hear something. A small, insistent voice saying: *'Run, don't walk, to the nearest exit!'"*

"It's that man!" hoarsed Pat fearfully. "He's been following me all morning. Please, Mr. Mallory, peek out into the hall and see if he's there. I heard footsteps."

"—And the hollow thrum of my arteries hardening," I continued. Then I stopped, staring at him curiously as his freckled paw gripped my arm, urging me toward the door. "Eh? Man? Following you? But why? You're no pin-up gal."

"It's my inventulation!" whispered Pending thickly. "The vandaceous murderizers want to use it for their crimular purposes. But they mustn't. *Please,* Mr. Mallory!"

"Okay," I said. "Stop pushing!" Pat really looked worried, and he had lapsed into that peculiar gibberish which he never used except when excited or trying to explain one of his "inventulations." I moved to the door, listened briefly, then jerked it open—

And stepped back again, but quick! Because that thing jabbing me nor'-nor'-east of the gizzard was big, blunt and black—and ugly! In all of which aspects it matched its wielder, a big, burly, jet-thatched guy with brows like storm-clouds and a jaw like a bride's biscuits.

"Back, bud!" grated Big Jowls—and pushed. It was the winner of the 1943 Award for the Most Unnecessary Command, because I was already back-pedaling like a punch-drunk pug in a pub brawl. He bulled me before him into the office, closed the door, and snapped the dead-latch. Two things grated: the lock and my nerves.

"Where," demanded Big Jowls, "is he?"

"H-he?" I managed weakly. "Who?"

MY unwelcome visitor scowled. "Quit stallin'! You know who I mean. The inventor guy. I seen him come in here just a couple of minutes ago."

"Oh, him!" I said. "You mean *him!* Oh, he's—" I glanced about the office desperately, wondering just where my friend *had* taken refuge. And then—my mouth hung open. For in that room was no trace of Pat Pending!

"Why—why, he's gone!" I said.

That wasn't news to Big Jowls. He had already cast the evil eye around the room and found Pat conspicuous by his absence. He looked behind the filing cabinets, into the only closet, and under my desk. "I can see that. But gone where? That's what I want to know."

That's what I wanted to know too. Pending was obviously not in the room. There was no entrance but that door through which Big Jowls had forced his way; no exit save that and the windows, which opened on a sheer drop of five floors.

A swift fear seized me, and I rushed to the windows excitedly. But I saw no macabre mob milling morbidly about a crumpled figure below. Traffic hummed along, and pedestrians stirred busily by, blissfully unaware that over their heads a weird absence was making my heart go ponder.

My hasty movement roused Big Jowls to action. In a flash he was at my side again—he and that thing. He poked, and I winced.

"Well?" he said.

"Not particularly," I told him. "I'd probably feel much better if you removed that metal wen from my slats. Ah! That's better. Thanks!"

"Where did he go?" demanded Big Jowls.

"Who? Oh, you're still talking about that inventor chap? I told you—he's gone."

"Yeah. And I told you I knew that. But where?"

Necessity isn't the mother only of Invention. That gray-haired old chick had a few other kiddies as well.

"Oh," I answered airily, "down there."

Big Jowls gawked. "You mean out that there window? But how could he? There aint no fire-escape—no ledges for him to hang onto—"

I clucked at him reproachfully.

"You knew he was an inventor, didn't you? Well, he invented a new type of parachute. To get a patent, he had to demonstrate it. He jumped out the window—oh, quite a while ago."

"Come off that stuff!" snarled Big Jowls. "I aint as dumb as you look. Parachutes don't open in that distance; and if they did, he'd still be down there wrapping it up—"

"You don't seem to understand," I sighed patiently. "This man is a great inventul—I mean, great inventor. That wasn't an ordinary para*chute.* It was a—a para*ship!* Like a glider, it can travel for hours—"

It was touch and go for a minute. But I wasn't the leading juvenile of my Alma Mammy's experimental theater just because my hair needs cutting. I gave with the honeyed smile and starry eyes, and Big Jowls squirmed uncertainly. At last he shrugged.

"Well," he conceded reluctantly, "you may be levelin'. I don't know

just what his invention was; all I know is, we heard it was somethin' we could use in our racket—"

"'We'?" I interrupted. "'Racket'?"

He clammed up. "Never mind that, bud. You shuddup an' forget you ever seen me, an' you'll be O.K. Understand?"

I nodded, grateful at seeing that thing shoved back into his pocket. He sidled to the door, unlocked it, and was gone. I dropped weakly into my swivel, mopping the sleet off my forehead.

"Whew! They could co-star that guy with Lugosi and Karloff! Racket, eh? I wonder what racket? And Pending—I wonder where *he* disappeared to—"

"Parashipl" mused a familiar voice, inches abaft my ear. *"Not a bad idea, at that. I wonder if—"*

I leaped two feet, sprouted two new gray hairs, and lost two years off my life.

"Pat!" I yelled.

"Hello, Mr. Mallory," said Patrick Pending.

WHIRL and the world whirls with you. I clutched at Pat wildly; he was real, he was solid, he was *there!* The door had not opened; no red-caped Super-duperman had alighted on the window-sill to dump him like a bag of animate laundry, but here he was!

"Pat!" I gasped. "Where have you been? And what's this all about? And for Pete's sake, where on earth did you get those wacky-looking cheaters?"

Because Pending, whose shamrocky features are never beauty-contest material, had further disfigured the face that launched a thousand sniffs by donning a pair of dark glasses—a grotesque set of Corning corneas with great tortoise-shell rims, and lenses as thick as a hash-house cup!

He slipped these off at my question, and grinned at me a bit sheepishly.

"You don't like 'em?"

"My dear," I assured him positively, "they don't do a *thing* for you! Now, *I* prefer harlequins." Then I glared at him. "Come clean, you thick mick! Where have you been?"

"Been?" repeated Pending innocently. "Where have I been? Why, right here, of course."

"What! Right where?"

"In this room. Beside you, most of the time. When you crossed to the window, I stayed here by the desk—"

I said: "Now, wait a minute, Pat! Let's go back to the beginning and start over. Are you trying to tell me that you never left this office?"

"That's right," nodded Pat agreeably.

"Then *I'm* not! I need the care of an oculist, or a psychiatrist, or both. And Big Jowls is in the same boat. I scanned this office from top to bottom, and if you were here, you must have been the Invisible Man!"

Pat Pending beamed.

"That's right," he said delightedly. "I was!"

As I stood there gaping, Pat Pending drew back his coat, exposing around his waist the strangest-looking contraption I ever saw. It was something like a belt, except that its main purpose was definitely *not* to uphold the wearer's trousers or dignity, for being largely composed of interwoven metallic hoops and loops, it dragged heavily on Pending's braces.

It had two tiny buttons where the buckle should be—one red, one black. Pending fingered the black one daintily.

"See?" he said. "My invisibelt."

"Your invis—" I choked. "You mean that thing can make you invisible?"

"Yes, indeed! See?"

I saw his finger press down on the button. Then—*nothing!* Where Pat had stood was now—so far as I could see—an empty space. The edge of the desk, the wall which had been behind him, sprang sharply into view. There was no mist, no fog, no obscuration of any type. No reflection or refraction of light. Just—a blank!

I groped forward blindly, and felt the warm bulk of Pat's body. I said dazedly: "Pat, it *works!*"

It was eerie to hear his familiar voice answer from a void: "Why, of course it does, Mr. Mallory! My inventulations *always* work."

Well, *that* was true enough. Pat's "inventulations" were never sensible, never even possible—according to known laws of science and mechanics—but they worked. His *bacular clock* that turned Time upside-down; his *periscoop* that looked into the future; his Fourth Dimension probing *fourceps*—

"I'm a believer, Pat," I said humbly. "Turn it off again. It gives me the willies, to be here talking to a bodiless voice."

I HEARD the faint click of a button, and once again he stood before me, grinning.

"Better, Mr. Mallory?"

"Much! Pat," I said solemnly, "this time you've invented a magnificent weapon for our Government. Just think what it means! Safe and unsuspected infiltration through the enemy's positions—the landing of invisible paratroopers behind strong points—thorough and foolproof espionage— Why, man, with this we can win the war this year!"

Pat smiled happily.

"That's what I hoped, Mr. Mallory. It'll be useful after the war, too. I figured the police could use it. Keep an eye on criminals, you know, and watch—"

"Beyond a doubt!" I said enthusiastically. "Why, it's a gadget to end crime for all time, Pat. How does it work?"

"Well," explained Pending, "it's really quite easy, once you get the original idea. You see, the belt contains a small battery. When the

Illustrated by Frederic Anderson

I glared at him. "Come clean, you thick mick! Where have you been?" "Been?" asked Pending innocently. "Why, right here in this room, of course."

electricaceous current flows through the solenizing diffractionators, a hypertenosity vibulates in the negative force field. This creates a vortecular absorbation around solid objects, and at once—"

I sighed, realizing as many times before the impossibility of getting Pat Pending to explain one of his machines in the mother tongue of our race. On all other subjects, Pat could —and did—converse in understandable English, but his verbiage invariably tangled like a female angler's line whenever he attempted to describe the operation of his "inventulations."

"Never mind *how* it works, Pat," I said. "Just tell me *why* it works. Then I'll give you an application form to fill out."

"Well," said Pat, "you know what polarization is?"

"Dimly. Something about cutting off light rays, or distorting them through layers of heavy media? Bending them, as images are distorted when you look at them through a glass of water?"

"That's right. Well, my invisibelt is based on the same principle. It distortulates the visular appearance—"

He got that far. And no farther! For at that moment the office door, which in my astonishment I had forgotten to lock, burst open violently—and into the room elbowed Big Jowls, toting that thing, as usual. He made punching motions with it, and:

"I thought so!" he grunted. "I thought he was here all the time. Now, up with your hands, both of you, before I feed you a lead lunch!"

I started for the door. The desk was in my way. I cleared it in one sliding dive.

NOW, if this were fiction, one of those pale-cheeked guys who writes he-man adventure stories wouldn't let me down at this spot. He'd have me beat my chest, shout defiance, and make a diving tackle for Big Jowls' props. I'd end up with a small bullet-crease in my left shoulder, a medal for bravery, and a Follies gal draped around my dewlaps.

But truth is a stranger to fiction, and I'm telling facts. What really happened is, I let out one startled bleat, and strained three ligaments reaching for the chandelier.

I think Pat *did* make a jab at the control button of his invisibelt, but he missed his target. Moving faster than you'd believe such a big guy could move, our accoster crossed the room, batted down Pending's hand, and jerked the belt off his midriff.

"Oh, no, you don't, bud!" he grated. "Give *me* that! I been listenin' outside; an' from what I heard, I think this is just what we need."

There it was again. That community spirit!

"'We'?" I repeated.

"He's a Nazi agent!" shrilled Pat wildly. "A dirty traitular spy!"

Big Jowls looked sore and a little bit hurt.

"Why, you red-headed ape," he declared aggrievedly, "for two cents I'd knock your block off, sayin' such a thing! I'm as good an American as you are!"

"If you're not a spy, then what are you?" said Pat. "You've followed me all morning, broken in here twice, stolen my belt—"

"I'm in the meat business," answered our antagonist virtuously. "Me an' my pals run a slaughterhouse an' delivery service to a few select customers. Some of the best people—"

"You mean," I interrupted, "a Black Market! That's your racket?"

"Sticks an' stones," said Big Jowls doggedly, "may break my bones, but names'll never hurt me. Some people call it a Black Market. We think we're doin' the public a favor."

"And you call yourself a good American!" said Pending disdainfully. "Anybody who'd do what you're doing—"

"Never mind that!" snapped Big Jowls pettishly. "I didn't come here for a sermon. I came for *this*." He studied the belt dangling in his hand curiously. "An invisibelt, eh? Makes a guy transparent, that it?"

"Nothing of the sort!" said Pat indignantly. "Its extenuosity intravolves the corpusculous reflexionarity—"

"Huh?" said Big Jowls, dazed.

I said stiffly: "I wouldn't explain it to him, Pat. Tell it to him in simple language like that and he'll go home and make a dozen exactly like it."

"You," growled the burly one, "keep out o' this! All I want to know is how it works. I don't care about the mechanics of it. I can get other people to copy it. What do you do with it?"

Pat sighed: "Well—first you put it on—"

"Pat!" I interrupted. "Don't *tell* him!"

Big Jowls scowled. He said: "Look, bud, I'm losin' patience with you. I

told you to keep out o' this." To Pat he said: "Go ahead, you!"

Pat shrugged at me apologetically.

"It really doesn't matter, Mr. Mallory. I might as well tell him. He's got the belt, and he's got a gun. I—I don't want to get hurt."

OUR captor nodded approvingly. "Now you're talkin' sense, pal. Give with the lip, and you won't get messed up."

"Yes sir," said Pat meekly. "Well—first you put it on—"

"Like this?" Big Jowls slipped the belt around his capacious equator.

"That's right. Then you press the black button—"

"Coward!" I sneered. "Pat, I'm ashamed—"

"Shuddup!" rapped out Big Jowls. "Another crack out of you, an' you're a dead duck. Press this black button, eh? So then what happens?"

"Then," said Pat, "you disappear."

"You mean nobody can see me?"

"That's right."

"But I'm still there."

"In the flesh," I sneered, "and twice as nauseous."

Big Jowls glared at me. "When I get a dictionary," he promised, "I'm gonna look that up. An' if it means what I think it does, I'm comin' back an' push your face in. But in the meantime, I've got to try this thing." He groped for the black button. "Well, here goes—"

Then everything happened at once! For as Big Jowls pushed the stud, Pat whirled and pushed *me*. I hit the floor, mouthing the carpet like *Der Phooey* in a frenzy. By the time I clambered to my hands and knees, Pat had left his feet in a diving tackle at the patch of ozone which X-ed the spot where Big Jowls had pulled his fade.

The racketeer grunted and yelled as Pat struck him, and it was eerie to see Pat's body squirming prostrate a foot or so above the floor. Pat's right hand was at his waist; it was not hard to figure that he was striving to prevent Black Beauty from depressing the red button. His left arm was over his head, and by the white-knuckled tenseness of his clenched fist, I gathered that this hand circled Big Jowls' gun-wrist.

And of course in an emergency I always come through with sage advice. I heard myself bleating: "Pat! Be careful of your glasses!"

Pat's left hand started lifting, then twisting back on its wrist. It took me about two palpitations of the heart to realize this meant Big Jowls' superior strength was coming out on top. I scrambled to my feet and started for the door. The desk was in my way. I didn't wait to move it. I cleared it in one sliding dive that scattered desk-pads, pens, clocks and assorted impedimenta like confetti.

That's when the gun went off! Something hard, hot, and heavy hit me in the chest. I slid off the desk, fell to the floor and lay still for a long, horrible moment, gasping. I touched my shirtfront gingerly, and brought my fingers away wet and trembling. A dull despair seized me. A gray shadow grew before my eyes, and I whispered: *"Farewell, cruel world—"*

Then something shook me, and the gray shadow turned into Pat Pending, bending over me. He was grinning, his crimson thatch was *en brosse* with delight, and he beat me on the shoulder.

"Nice work, Mr. Mallory! Oh, certainaceously nice! You laid him out colder than a Siberian salmon!"

I stared up at him dimly. *"I* did, Pat?"

"With that bottle. Gee, you sure are quick-witted, Mr. Mallory. I would never have thought of that."

The wetness was running down my side now. I smiled at my friend feebly.

"I—I'm glad, Pat," I whispered. "I—I'm glad it worked. My only regret is that I have but one life—"

"But," said Pat ruefully, "it's a shame you spilled the ink all over yourself. I'm afraid you've practically ruined your suit."

SWIFTLY I glanced down. . . . No blood, no gaping wound—just a big ink-stain where my shoulder, knocking the ink-bottle off the desk, had spilled the contents and smashed the empty container down on Big Jowls' invisible noggin.

I sat up. I said modestly: "Well—it was the only thing I could think of on the spur of the moment. You didn't do badly yourself, Pat, tackling him like that—"

"Oh, that!" said Pat. "I wasn't taking any chance. I knew he couldn't see me coming at him."

"He couldn't?"

"Why, no. Of course not. He didn't put my *glasses* on too; that was his mistake. The minute he pushed the button, he was in a gray void. I hit him before he could—"

"Pat!" I exclaimed. "You mean the invisibelt is no good without those dark glasses?"

"That's right. You see, polarization works in *both* directions. You can't see a man wearing the invisibelt; but neither can he see *you*—unless he counter-intensificates the opaquosity by wearing polarated spectacles—"

"Never mind," I said gently. "Save the explanation for the Army; maybe the Intelligence can understand it. But meanwhile—" I stooped, fumbled, and removed the invisibelt from Big Jowls' slumbering form. He reappeared, an egg-sized lump on his temple. "Meanwhile," I said, "we've got a little job to do."

"And that is?" queried Pat Pending.

"Call the gendarmes," I said, "and put this hunk of Black Market meat in cold storage—for the duration."

War gives hazardous jobs to beasts as well as men—as witness these stories.

ANIMAL

A GLOOMY battle pall hung low over the Kalinin front. The distant booming of heavy artillery and, close by, the crash of exploding shells told the Russians they were being "softened up" for another blitz. Fanned out across the pitted wastes, Russian infantry hugged the ground, worming in and out among mounds of upheaved earth, seeking suitable cover. Groups of officers and men in muddy dugouts huddled beside anti-tank guns—waiting.

Then it came. First a dull roar, then louder and louder until the raucous clank of metal drowned the din of guns. Over the brow of the hill on which the Russians lay in wait, the first mechanical monster reared into view—the point of the Nazi spearhead. Behind him, winged out on either side, the remaining tanks rumbled. As each topped the crest and the Nazis inside spotted the waiting horde, they sent a spray of machine-gun bullets enfilading over the field. The toll was fearful. Not one man could get near enough to toss a sticky bomb. Anti-tank guns crippled only one or two of the onrushing steel monsters. It was the old story of men against machines.

Suddenly from behind the Russian lines came a new sound—a sound strangely alien to the battlefield. It resembled the barking of half a hundred dogs. And that's exactly what it was. Over the torn earth the mass of furry bodies streaked, zigzagging around shell holes, leaping over escarpments, too fast and too close to the ground to present targets. The animals raced directly toward the oncoming tanks.

Incredibly, the German behemoths slowed down, then wheeled about, and headed back toward their own lines. But the dogs continued to close in. At last the leader of the pack, a shaggy shepherd named Tom, caught up with the foremost tank and leaped against its riveted side. A few seconds later Tom streaked back toward his lines, and none too soon. A terrific explosion rent the air. When the smoke cleared away, what had once been a near-impervious death-dealing machine was a pile of crumpled metal exuding a column of smoky gasoline fire. Before the last tank had clattered over the crest of the ridge, homeward bound, several more ear-splitting roars marked the finish of blitz men and machines.

The Nazis knew what they were doing when they turned around. Many of them had heard about these anti-tank dogs. Some had been in on the tank attack in the Izyum sector a month before, when a few of the specially trained animals under the command of one Lieutenant Konkoff had completely stemmed their advance, destroying nine heavy tanks, two armored cars, and all of the men in each vehicle.

How can a dog possibly carry a bomb to a tank, have it explode, and still escape uninjured? They didn't always. But some of them did. Ilya Ehrenburg, Soviet war correspondent for the New York *Times*, saw one animal that had blown up half a dozen tanks and was still going strong. How the trick was worked only the Russian High Command knows. For obvious reasons they're not telling until the war is over.*

That a dog should be used in such a highly combatant capacity is something new, but there's nothing new about war dogs. From time immemorial the animals have served their masters in battle, saving lives through their keen ability as sentries, carrying messages, and sacrificing their own lives when called upon to do so.

Ancient Egyptian wall writing, thought by some to date back as far as 4,000 B.C., depicts savage dogs straining on leashes held in the hands of Egyptian warriors and leaping on enemy soldiers. In Iraq, old Assyrian temple walls show bas-reliefs of battle dogs. Attila the Hun used a drove of huge dogs to stand as sentries around his camp to guard him against any approaching enemy, and Pliny refers to squadrons of dogs that fought in the ranks beside the Colophonians of Asia Minor against their Ionian enemies. After the battle was over they were harnessed to carts and put to work hauling supplies back home.

Even messenger dogs are ancient history, because Aeneas mentions such a canine squadron, each dog equipped with a special collar for carrying dispatches. In the log of an early Turkish traveler there is mention of dogs "the size of asses," used in battle to tear men from their horses. The Celts modeled a cuirass equipped with steel blades, which they strapped to a battalion of dogs. These beasts, picked for savagery, were then released and sent rushing against the Belgians and Gauls, who were not only cut to pieces by the blades but often were torn limb from limb by the dogs after they were down. The same idea was used against mounted armies. As the dogs raced among horses, blades and spikes on the cuirasses would cut the horses' legs, stampede them, and thus sometimes scatter a whole offensive to the four winds.

In the year 1518 Henry VIII, who was famous for his mastiffs both in battle and at home, where he always had droves of them around to catch tidbits that fell from his sumptuous banquet tables, sent four hundred of the animals to Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (King Charles I of Spain), "garnished with good yron collars." Charles used these dogs to help defend Spain against the armies of Francis I of France, who, upon hearing about the gift of British canines, rounded up a dog battalion of his own. But during the siege of Valencia, Charles's yron-collar-clad warriors not only wrought destruction to the attackers but so viciously attacked the ill-trained French dogs that those poor creatures—as many as were able, at any rate—raced away with their tails between their legs.

Nikolaus Federmann, the German explorer who followed Quesada to Colombia, had a mastiff brigade that he used to scout out Chibchas Indian ambushes. He covered the dogs with quilted armor to protect them from arrows. As the dogs warmed to their task, they soon took to leaping at the natives and tearing their throats. It got so that the Indians were more frightened of the dogs than they had been of Quesada's conquistadores.

What the Spaniards learned about the value of battle dogs during Charles's reign didn't stick, however. For when they went to fight the Riffs in Morocco, Spanish soldiers got a dose of dog medicine themselves.

The wily Riffs concocted the neat trick of winding a turban round a dog's head and covering his body with a white sack. Then they would send the animal sneaking toward the Spanish lines. This made a perfect decoy,

*Because the trick could not be accomplished without dog casualties the Russian High Command abandoned the use of anti-tank dogs soon after the Kalinin attack.

REVEILLE*

by Richard Dempewolff

and invariably the Spaniards would fire at the creeping animal, thinking of course that it was a prowling Riff. The shots would reveal the Spanish positions, thus enabling Riff snipers to go in after them. Pretty tough on the dogs, but it cost the Spaniards a lot of men they might have saved if they'd had dogs of their own to ferret out the snipers. . . .

Probably the most famous war dog in history was Moustache, active with the French in the Napoleonic wars. Moustache was just an ordinary sentry dog whose duty it was to stand guard at headquarters, wherever the Army might be, and warn of intruders. He fulfilled this duty neatly one night in 1800 when Napoleon's troops were camped near the Valley of Balbo, in Italy. An Austrian regiment crept stealthily through the darkness to take the French unawares—and would have if Moustache hadn't smelled them coming and raised such a rumpus that the Frenchmen were all on their feet and ready when the attackers arrived.

Moustache, like many good sentry dogs, had an uncanny faculty for differentiating between friend and foe. Once, when a courier arrived at the camp, the dog set up a terrific to-do, growled at the man, and bared his fangs. The guards had a time restraining him. Later it was learned that the courier was a disguised spy. Moustache was set to track him down, which he did in short order.

But Moustache's crowning achievement, and the deed that earns him a niche in the canine hall of fame, was an action he indulged on the spur of a moment of his own free will. It was at the Battle of Austerlitz. Napoleon's men were taking a trouncing in spite of the fact that they were winning against the two great armies of Francis II and Alexander I. In the heat of battle Moustache was moving amiably among the men of his own regiment. All about him the soldiers were falling. He was trotting past the flag-bearer when a broad-shouldered Austrian rushed up and slew that gentleman. As the Frenchman stumbled to his knees and slumped forward, the Austrian snatched the muddy, torn standard from him and tried to make off with it. In a split second the snarling dog was at his throat. Down went the Austrian, the regimental banner was ripped from his hands, and Moustache went streaking off across the field with that tattered glorious remnant flapping wildly from the end of the pole that he held firmly in his strong jaws. Moustache carried the standard back to his company and there surrendered it.

For that little trick the dog was decorated by Napoleon's field marshal, Lannes, Duke of Montebello.

SINCE Napoleon's time, nearly all the armies of the world have used dogs at one time or another. During our Civil War they served with great success as messengers and sentries.

But it wasn't until the first World War that dogs moved *en masse* to the battle-front, where for the first time warring nations experimented in training them for specialized duties. . . .

Dogs are smart. Given an even chance, there isn't much they can't be taught to do. And the more individual intelligence is required, the more pleased the dog is with himself and the harder he will try to do it correctly.

Germany knew this, back in 1914, and raised an army of about three thousand canine warriors for sentry duty, message-carrying, draft, and for searching out wounded on the battlefields. After a struggle with the King's Army, Lieutenant Colonel Edwin Hautenville Richardson, famous English dog trainer, finally convinced his countrymen that they could do well with a similar dog force. So he trained several thousand of the animals, all of which saw service with the Allied forces.

France, Russia, and Belgium also maintained dog battalions. But America did not. When our dogless AEF landed in France it was soon discovered that an army without pups was almost as bad as an army without guns. Animals had to be borrowed from the French and English, and doughboys had quite a tough time with the polius' pups, who could understand only French. When our Yanks barked orders at them in good old American the dogs barked back. Sometimes they just growled and slunk away in disgust. So the troops who had borrowed French dogs had either to learn French or teach the dogs English commands.

To say that America took no dogs abroad is not true. They took no dogs *officially*. Actually, a good number of home-grown canine buddies found their way across through devious channels, and some of them stacked up favorably against the trained, pedigreed aristocrats from the kennels of Britain and France. One of the most outstanding was Stubby.

Stubby was a bull terrier—broadly speaking. No one ever discovered where he hailed from originally. When students were training at Yale Field he trotted in and out among the ranks as they drilled, stopping to make a friend here and a friend there until pretty soon he was on chummy terms with the whole bunch.

But military regulations are firm, and when the boys were ready to shove off for Newport News for final training it looked as though Stubby would be left behind. He hadn't got around to making friends with the officers.

That's where Corporal Robert Conroy entered the picture. Conroy was going down in a supply car, so the boys appealed to him. What good was a supply car if you couldn't smuggle a dog in it? While the non-com mused over the prospects of dog smuggling and the stripes he might lose if someone caught him at it, Stubby was thrust into his arms. The chunky animal began immediately to lave Corporal Conroy's chin profusely, snorting and panting in his best "how-to-influence-people" manner. That was enough for Conroy. He buried the dog in the equipment and set out.

It wasn't the last of the trouble. After a few weeks at Newport News the outfit got orders to sail. Packing supplies, writing letters, breaking camp—none of these things worried the boys one whit. The problem that fretted them most was how to get Stubby aboard the transport. This time Corporal Conroy came up with an idea voluntarily and offered to carry it out himself. The morning they were to sail he carted Stubby down to the dock and introduced him to the big, tough Irish MP on duty there. Stubby rose on his hind legs and rested his front paws on the soldier's legs, blinking brightly. The MP reached down and rubbed his head.

"Smart little pooch! Is he yours?" he asked Conroy.

The corporal shook his head. "Regimental mascot."

"Whatcha gonna do with him?"

Conroy sighed heavily. "Got to leave him behind, I guess. The Old Man won't let us take him over."

"The hell you say—a smart dog like that?"

The corporal nodded. "Seems an awful shame to leave a good scrappy sentry dog back here when he's just itching for action." Stubby was no more a sentry dog than he was a blooded borzoi. In fact Conroy had a hunch that if the enemy came over the top Stubby's first move would be to welcome them and make friends. But the story fell on sympathetic ears. "Now that's a shame," said the MP. "And, you know, perhaps the Old Man would change his mind if the dog should get aboard the ship by some queer accident."

"Oh, I'm sure he would," Conroy lied enthusiastically. Then his voice fell. "But how could we do it?"

So, before the MP could change his mind, he was involved in the plot. But he fell in with it willingly enough.

"Got a rope?" he asked.

"I can get one," replied Conroy.

"Good. Then I'll tell you what you do. Leave the pooch with me. When you've got your rope, go aboard, and find an empty stateroom on this side of the boat. Open the porthole and throw something out to attract my attention. All you need do then is drop the rope. I'll tie it around the pup, and you haul him up."

"Hey, that's swell," Conroy grinned.

The MP frowned. "You're breakin' me heart," he growled. "Now git out of here before I turn you in. And don't forget to get a good strong rope."

So stowaway Stubby sailed for France, and after that Conroy became his accepted master, although he still chummed around with everyone else in the same spirit of camaraderie that had marked his initial overtures at Yale.

It was at Chemin des Dames that Stubby saw his first action in the front-line trenches. And it was there that the boys discovered he was a war dog par excellence. The boom of artillery fire didn't faze him in the least, and he soon learned to follow the men's example of ducking when big ones started falling close. Naturally he didn't know why he was ducking, but it became a great game to see who could hit the dugout first. After a few days Stubby won every time. He could hear the whine of shells long before the men. It got so they'd watch him. Stubby never ducked unless they fell close—and he could always tell, a good five seconds before it fell, when a big one was going to *boom* near by. The first sight of wounded men upset him not a little. One afternoon a direct hit got about half a dozen, and Stubby ran from one to another of them, sniffing and whining, not knowing what to do. Obviously the men were in pain, because some were moaning. And it wasn't right for them to be bleeding. Apparently it worried him. While shells were still falling, he went looking for Conroy, but couldn't find him. So he returned to the men and stood over them, licking a muddy, pain-pinched face occasionally.

At last, lacking Conroy, the dog went scouting for anyone he could find. This time he came on a group of soldiers behind a parapet. He tugged at their jackets, then ran off in the direction of the wounded men. At last the boys caught on. One of them followed him, returned for help, and the battered soldiers were removed to the hospital behind the lines. After that Stubby made a practice of going for help every time he ran across a wounded man. He would stand guard over the fellow until the barrage let up, then his short legs would carry him bounding in search of help. In this way all the outfits at Chemin des Dames got to know him, and he became a division mascot.

Then one night Stubby made dog history. It was an unusually quiet night in the trenches. Some of the boys were catching cat naps in muddy dugouts, and Stubby was stretched out beside Conroy. Suddenly his big blunt head snapped up and his ears pricked alert. The movement woke Conroy, who looked at the dog sleepily just in time to see him sniff the air tentatively, utter a low growl, spring to his feet, and go bounding from the dugout, around a corner out of sight. A few seconds later there was a sharp cry of pain and the sound of a great scuffle outside. Conroy grabbed his rifle and went tearing in the direction of the noise. A ludicrous sight met his eyes. Single-pawed, in a vigorous offensive from the rear, Stubby had captured a German spy who'd been prowling through the trenches. The man was whirling desperately in an effort to shake off the snarling bundle of canine tooth and muscle that had attached itself to his differential. But Stubby was there to stay. It took only a moment to capture the Hun and disarm him, but it required considerably more time to convince Stubby that his mission had been successfully carried out and that he should release the beautiful hold he had on that nice, soft German bottom.

FOLLOWING the spy episode, Stubby went on to greater heights. He sniffed gas one night and went whipping through the trenches, barking to beat the band, waking everyone.

His peculiar actions were soon analyzed by the men. Gas masks were donned in time to prevent the whole unit from being wiped out. But Stubby was so busy warning them that before he could be caught and dragged to safety he had been gassed himself. Conroy rushed him to the base hospital, and there the mascot veteran underwent treatment. In a few days he was back in the trenches.

Conroy, in an effort to protect the animal from further gas bombardments, ordered a gas mask for Stubby. When it arrived, however, the mask wouldn't fit Stubby's unusually blunt muzzle. In fact, no gas mask would fit a physiognomy like Stubby's. So he had to go through the rest of the war without benefit of gas mask.

At the battle of Seicheprey the dog ran into real trouble. The Germans were closing in on Allied positions. A heavy artillery barrage had let up, which meant that they were coming over the top. Although Stubby could predict the fall of a whining shell, he couldn't do the same with hand grenades. One lobbed over the parapet, landed a few feet from him, and Stubby caught a splinter. That explained, then, why those men writhed and twisted on the ground after shells boomed near by. Stubby was twisting himself, and the boys thought he was done for. They rushed him to an army hospital, where he hovered between life and death for weeks. But, being a tough *hombre,* he beat the infection and by the sixth week was ready to rejoin his pals in time to get in on the Marne offensive. He went through the hell of Château-Thierry and then through the Argonne drive without a scratch.

By this time Stubby was known not only to every regiment, division, and army, but to the whole AEF. Honors by the bale were heaped on his muscled shoulders. At Mandres-en-Bassigny he was introduced to President Woodrow Wilson and "shook hands" with him. Medals and emblemed jackets were bestowed upon him for each deed of valor, plus a wound stripe for his grenade splinter. Not to be left out, the Marines made him an honorary sergeant.

But Stubby's career didn't end with the signing of the peace. While Conroy was on leave in Paris, the dog accompanied his boss. Crossing a street one day, Stubby suddenly bolted, snapping his leash from Conroy's grasp.

He made a beeline for a girl who was standing on the corner, with her back to an onrushing taxi. He plummeted into her and knocked her out of the way. The weaving cab grazed them both as it hurtled past. That feat brought Stubby another decoration and more applause.

After demobilization in 1919 Stubby and Conroy returned to the United States. For years they attended American Legion conventions, and Stubby always led the parades. At one convention in New York Conroy decided to stay at the Hotel Majestic. There was a rule about dogs, and the desk man told Conroy he'd have to find a kennel for Stubby. The Majestic had never allowed a dog in the place.

"This is no dog," the ex-corporal snapped. "This is a war hero. Where's the manager?"

Copeland Townsend, the hotel's owner, was called. Conroy explained the situation, exhibiting Stubby's Marine jacket, covered with medals. While they were talking, Stubby sat at Townsend's feet and offered a paw. The hotel owner could hardly spurn an overture of this sort. Besides, he was thoroughly impressed with the dog's deeds. He not only put Stubby's name in the registry and permitted the animal to verify the signature with a paw print, but he supplied him with a special caterer and the best dog accommodations available on the spur of the moment. What's more, it was all on the house.

At another convention General Pershing asked permission to be photographed with Stubby, and Stubby granted it. He was even painted in oils by Charles Ayer Whipple.

No one knew how old Stubby was when he joined up at Yale, but there's no question that when he died on April 4, 1926, he had reached a ripe old age. He was hale and hearty right up to the end, spending his last years with Conroy quietly, carrying the dignity of a hero whose fighting days were over. With the publicity that followed the announcement of his death, the Smithsonian Institution in Washington requested his body, and Conroy sent it to them. Today, if you go through the Museum, you'll see a mounted Stubby standing in a lasting place of honor among the nation's treasures. He was a true hound of hell.

K-9 SPECIALISTS

From the kennels of the country,
From the homes and firesides, too;
We have joined the canine army,
Our nation's work to do;

We serve with men in battle,
And scout through jungles dense;
We are proud to be enlisted
In the cause for the Dogs for Defense;

Through the watches of the darkest night
We are ever standing alert;
And if danger comes we stick by our men,
All the rights of the flag we assert;

So bare our fangs in man's behalf
And the cause he is fighting for;
We are glad to serve as members
Of Uncle Sam's trappy, scrappy K-9 Corps.

"The K-9 Corps Song," by ARTHUR ROLAND.*

THERE HE GOES—a furry bundle of willingness, intelligence, and strength—streaking over shell-torn battlefields, dodging and ducking around piles of debris, scuttling under barbed-wire entanglements. An open field is skirted, a river crossed, and in he comes, loping on four padded paws, panting and wagging his tail absurdly, to say that it was easy and he'd like to try it again. His waiting trainer at an advance outpost will remove the dispatch collar from his neck and extract from it a message that may influence the lives of thousands of men. Without the dog to pinch-hit for battered communications, those men might be lost.

Once again the war dog is sharing the burdens of men in battle, not only carrying messages, but in many other ways as well. And it hurts to think how close he came to being left home.

When England and later America entered this war it looked for a time as though everything were going to be mechanized. Offensives were to move much faster than they did last time, and, said some Allied experts, the place for dogs was the doghouse—along with other out-of-date creatures and systems that functioned well enough in trench warfare but would be useless in modern blitz tactics.

The result was that, within the first two months of food rationing in England, over 200,000 dog owners sent their pets to RSPCA gas chambers for fear the animals would starve to death. Then came reports that Germany had an army of 70,000 trained dogs. The Berlin dog paper *Die Hunderwelt* told of a grand recruiting rally held in that country, adding another 15,993 Airedales, Boxers, and Doberman pinschers. Of their canine forces Germany was sending 25,000 to Japan.

Even when British military authorities heard about it they weren't convinced. Once more Colonel E. H. Richardson went to bat, as he had done in World War I. Major J. W. Baldwin took up the torch, too, and on their own these men trained several dogs for sentry work. Baldwin was in charge of an important airdrome. He knew what a large amount of manpower was needed to guard the vast ground. He knew, too, how easily a clever saboteur could elude or overpower the sentries.

When his dogs were ready, Baldwin went to his superiors and demanded that the animals be given a fair chance in a demonstration.

"I can show you," he told them, "how one man and one dog can do the work of at least six men—and do it better."

The demonstration sounded intriguing, so permission was granted and preparations were made immediately. On the appointed day scores of army officers and pressmen gathered to watch the proceedings. Baldwin picked a volunteer to play the part of saboteur, dressing him in a heavily padded suit, then asked staff officers to pick a good hiding-place for the man. After touring the airdrome in a staff car a suitable spot was found behind a large, thick clump of bushes covering almost an acre, where the spy would be well hidden from the dog. The car door opened and the victim darted across the field to his hideaway. He scuttled deep into the thick underbrush.

Quickly the car whisked across the field, where officers joined the waiting spectators. When everyone was ready Baldwin signaled the sentry and dog, who were standing at a point about five hundred yards from both the onlookers and the hidden saboteur. The dog, a German shepherd, was hardly more than a black speck at that distance, so the watchers couldn't see his first reactions. They did see him tugging on the leash a few seconds later, and they saw the sentry bend to release the clasp. While the guard walked down the central runway, the dog ranged out on either side of him, darting first one way, then the other. Gradually he worked his way toward the crowd. They could see him clearly now, covering every inch of the area, nose to the ground. No

nook or cranny escaped him. He sniffed behind piles of sandbags, investigated air-raid-shelter huts that lined the field. What was he looking for? Had the animal already sensed that there was someone around who shouldn't have been there? He had. He knew he wouldn't have been released otherwise. That was part of the training he'd received. At last the dog drew near the spot where the saboteur had dashed across the runway and into the bushes. Everyone watched breathlessly. Would he pick up the scent? He appeared to be darting too quickly to get it. A few bets were laid.

"Look!" shouted an officer. Every eye focused on the dog. He'd been racing along, and suddenly he put on his brakes. There was a puff of dust where he stopped. A split second later he leaped back a few yards. Then, head high and tail flying, he was off. His paws barely touched the ground; his back doubled under lengthy strides. He reached the bushes and cleared fifteen feet of them at a bound. For the next ten seconds crashing twigs marked his progress. There was a *crack* as the saboteur's revolver spoke—just once. Then the man bounced up, his right arm locked in the dog's jaw and the gun hanging uselessly from the end of it. Without that padded suit the volunteer spy would have suffered a broken wrist and painful lacerations.

By that time the sentry had caught up, disarmed the spy, and proceeded victoriously back to the waiting crowd. All the while, the dog eyed his prize suspiciously. One false move and he'd have been at the man again.

Needless to say, the demonstration proved Major Baldwin's point, and the English dogs began marching to war instead of to the gas chamber.

Early in 1942 a group of Americans met and decided there would be no gas-chamber exodus in this country. To forestall any such horror, they set up a dog-recruiting organization known as Dogs for Defense, Inc., The outfit was headed by Harry I. Caesar, a New York broker whose favorite pastime consisted of breeding spaniels on his New Jersey estate. His cohorts in the enterprise were two other Jersey dog fanciers, Mrs. Milton Erlanger and Mr. Henry Stoecker. These people, purely on their own initiative, opened an office and began recruiting dogs for war training at their respective homes and the homes of friends. Pretty soon requests for the four-legged trainees began to pour in from Army and Coast Guard and Marine units all over the country. They wanted them for sentries. By July, Quartermaster General Edmund B. Gregory sniffed the way the wind was blowing and decided to make Dogs for Defense official. So all its recruits were sent to the Army's Remount Division for training at Front Royal, Virginia. Later, half a dozen other training centers were established to handle recruits for every branch of the armed services. Major General Gregory called on Dogs for Defense to produce a canine army of one hundred twenty-five thousand. Within a year dogs were pouring into the training centers at the rate of several thousand a week. So, for the first time in its history, America has an official dog army. And it is destined to be one of the largest in the world.

This war-dog mass-production system, first used in 1914 by Germany and later by France and England, leaves no room for pets. Stubby's day is done, and Moustache's, and that of hundreds of other battle hounds who scratched a record on the walls in the hall of posterity. No longer is it a case of a few outstanding dogs performing a vast array of heroics. Now there's a particular field for every dog.

Actually, modern war dogs are being used on battle fronts for duties no one ever dreamed they could fulfill. But modern war, like everything else modern, calls for specialists. It's no different in the K-9 Corps.

Instead of single dogs playing all the angles, there are thousands of sentry dogs in every fighting country that do nothing but prowl beside their soldier masters lending ears, noses, and eyes to the cause. There are messenger dogs that limit their circle of activity to communications—delivering dispatches between post headquarters and the men in the foxholes, stringing telephone wires, and carrying supplies. There are draft dogs, ambulance dogs, and, in some countries, anti-tank dogs and even suicide dogs. Each pup does his part, but doesn't infringe on the duties of others.

SENTRY DOGS

ONE night at a west-coast embarkation port a soldier marched up and down a darkened wharf. Close beside him, on a tough leash, stalked a handsome Dalmatian. It was several hours before dawn, and the pair had been patrolling since midnight.

They prowled in and out through the shadows, between massive piles of crates containing airplane parts, jeeps, and other machines of war. Suddenly the dog stiffened and growled softly. His sensitive nose twitched. The alert sentry gave him his head. He went pattering this way and that across the wooden dock, sniffing furiously.

At last the animal stopped. He had arrived at the spot where the scent was strongest. But still his nose was glued to the planking. Intermittently he growled, then down would go the nose again and he'd sniff through the cracks in the wharf. Warily the sentry unfastened the safety-catch on his rifle. Over the quiet lapping of the water that minute *click* sounded harsh and noisy. An instant later there was a dull clunk of oarlocks beneath the pier. The sentry ran quickly to the edge of the dock in time to see the dark hulk of a rowboat coast out into the black water.

"Halt! Who goes there?" he shouted.

There was no answer from the shadowy form bent over the oars. Instead, the snooper pulled away frenziedly, water gurgling under his rowboat as it shot forward. The soldier raised his gun and fired. The shot echoed sharply from the steel walls of warehouses, and the thud of the bullet as it tore through the wooden side of the rowboat brought quick response. Oars were drawn in with a clatter, a pair of hands shot skyward.

The dog was barking viciously now, rearing and fighting against the leash. The soldier had to tie him, then order the prisoner back. What happened after that was routine. The prowler, a sullen Japanese, was captured and his boat investigated. A bundle of oil-soaked rags was discovered piled up in the prow—evidence enough of what the Jap had been doing. Had it not been for the dog, millions of dollars' worth of war material would have gone up in smoke. Not through any fault of the sentry. He had no way of knowing that the saboteur had slipped under the dock when he was patrolling two hundred feet away. The point is that the dog's keen ears and nose, eight times more perceptive than the man's, had picked up alien sounds and scents.

Although some WAGS have performed outstanding feats in various of the more glamorous fields—like Tom, the Russian anti-tank dog, and others who will be told about later—sentry work is where the majority of dogs shine, primarily because the dog is a sentry by nature. All he needs is a little discipline to make him conform with army regulations. Sometimes he doesn't even need that.

Dogs have even been known to establish themselves at a military post and stand guard of their own free will without any training or encouragement. This happened in India, where a number of Afghan hounds moved in on the British garrison at Chaman. The men fed

them, and the dogs stayed on until they became a permanent fixture at the post. The duty they performed was nothing short of miraculous.

The Chaman post consists of a couple of mud forts guarding the local railway station. Indian infantry and dogs man the positions.

A visitor's eye is not nearly so much taken with the native soldiers as with the big canine sentinels sprawling on the dirt or prowling lazily through the grounds. At first glance they look like greyhounds, but closer observation reveals peculiar tufts of hair on ears, feet, or tail. Actually they are Baluchi hounds, a fleet, sturdy breed of hunting dog, with keen natural intelligence. Most amazing of all, this particular group of Baluchis reportedly was never trained for duty. Once having attached themselves to the post, they automatically assumed responsibility for guarding the place at night. During the day they loaf, but at the first note of "Retreat" they rise on their long, slender legs, stretch, and join the members of the regular guard. One by one, as patrols go out, the dogs join their favorite guards and stay close beside them all night, warning with low growls at the approach of strangers.

One narrow path beside the fort wall is said to be patrolled by the dogs alone. The animals go out in pairs, make the tour, and on their return are relieved by another pair, which makes the circuit. Thus they alternate throughout the night, and the footpath is never unpatrolled.

The dogs are highly esteemed by their chosen masters at the fort. They receive regular rations from the commissariat baboo and enjoy more privileges than the average lap dog. But their self-appointed task, smoothly and precisely carried out, is worthy of all the attention and praise that it never fails to incite.

So there you are. There's something about a dog's get-up that makes him want to be chief guard and danger sniffer for his human masters.

For one thing, he has an uncanny way of determining friend from foe and of sensing danger. Call it sixth sense, if you will. It may be, for dogs have behaved mighty strangely at times. Almost any dog can recognize his master through a closed door, even though no sound is made to offer a hint. Strange footsteps outside a house in which a dog is located will bring varied reactions, from friendly tail-wagging to vicious growls. At the risk of digressing for a moment, there are some interesting tales to illustrate this peculiar dog characteristic.

Not long ago an English country parson wrote to a London newspaper to tell an amazing story about an old setter he had known for years. The dog was completely blind, yet the clergyman could toss sticks and the dog caught them. Perhaps it was the swish as the object soared through the air that told the animal how far and in what direction it would go. Anyway, his judgment was so good that invariably either he would catch the stick in his mouth or it would drop on his back as he ran. What's more, he never bumped into anything, although the garden was full of hedges, bushes, flower patches, and rustic chairs and tables—and the latter items were not infrequently moved about.

In the neighborhood a deep stream meandered across English meadows, and an old dirt road leading into the village crossed it by means of a rickety wooden bridge that the dog always used. One evening in early spring the parson was returning from a walk, and as he approached this bridge he saw the dog coming toward him from the opposite side of the brook. The stream was a roaring torrent, swollen with melting snow and ice. As the old man drew close he was startled to notice that his shaggy friend, instead of using the bridge, swam across the water. Musing over the animal's odd departure from its usual pattern of habit, the parson continued toward the bridge. But the blind setter, as though guided by some impelling force, raced up the bank and placed himself squarely before the old man, barring the way. Nothing the parson did could induce the animal to let him proceed. He tried stepping aside, but the dog leaped up at him.

Finally, puzzled but convinced that the animal was attempting to dissuade him from using the bridge, the parson went home by another route. Later, curious to see what it was all about, he returned to the bridge and was amazed to see the last remnants of the ancient structure swirling away down the brook.

In some dogs this strange sense goes even further. Who hasn't seen the most placid lap-dog bristle and growl at "something" in a perfectly empty room? One young couple owning a Great Dane tell a fantastic story about how they took the dog with them on a European tour. Among the spots of interest they visited was the site of an old prison, and when they were admitted through its iron-grilled gate the Dane refused to follow them. No amount of persuasion helped, so it was necessary for the man to stay outside with the animal while his wife went in to view the ruins. Man and dog watched from the gate as a guide escorted the woman, pointing out spots of historic interest. At last he took her arm and helped her up the side of a slightly raised mound of earth. Suddenly the dog threw back his massive head and howled dolefully. This he repeated over and over until his mistress and the guide left that particular place.

Later the guide explained it. "A lot of dogs act that way around here," he said. "That little mound is where the gallows stood."

Perhaps that's a gloomy story to tell on a dog, but it's the side of his character that helps make him an ideal sentry and an alarm clock when there's danger in the wind. But even leaving the sixth sense out of it, a dog can hear or smell an approaching enemy long before a man can detect him. This is especially true at night, or in wooded or hilly areas, where even a man's eyesight is helpless to warn him of danger.

One night in Egypt, British troops were bivouacked on the desert. The customary guard was posted, patrolling the borders of the camp through a mist so thick that the only way a sentry could tell he had reached the end of his post was when he bumped into the man on the next one. Each guard had a dog on a leash—keen fellows that had been trained by Colonel Richardson's experts. But the night seemed still as death. No enemy, the men thought, could sneak across the wastes without being heard, and all ears were attuned for any suspicious sound. There wasn't a murmur to be detected.

Then the dogs began to emit low growls—not one dog, but all of them. That was enough for the sentries. The corporal of the guard was called, and troops were dumped from their blankets. Relying entirely on the animals, whose snarling muzzles all pointed into the mist in the same direction, the men fired blind. When the "Cease fire" order came down the line there was still no sound out there in the darkness. Many of them went back to bed, grumbling over what they thought was a false alarm. Next morning the mist had cleared away, and two hundred yards from the British camp the barren ground was strewn with enemy dead.

THAT sort of performance doesn't come naturally. It's the result of intensive training at a camp on the home front. Every country has its own system, but the finished product is much the same everywhere. In America, during his first few weeks, the sentry-dog trainee learns four basic obedience commands: Heel, Stay, Out, and Come. And it is something to watch the animals perform. At Front Royal, Virginia, high in the Blue Ridge

Mountains, where a pleasant, strapping colonel named T. B. Apgar holds sway over a super-training center with accommodations for six hundred dogs, inductees work out in a meadow on a lofty hill. Here, with the sky for a backdrop, the animals gather with their trainers in a great circle. Groups of as many as twenty-five or thirty animals go through the routine together. Some are old-timers who know the commands, and you can see the dog recruits, smart and anxious to please, watching the veterans and trying their best to ape them.

At "Heel" the dog stays close to the left side of his handler, whether sitting, standing, or walking; first with a leash, then without. The rookie doesn't quite understand what he is to do when the leash is unsnapped. "The man has released me," his quick mind informs him. "I will go over and say hello to that short black dog across the circle." He starts over, and the trainer says, gently but firmly, "Heel, Barry, heel." The dog is puzzled. That is the word the man used when the leash was attached. It meant that he was to stay by the man's side. "I had better go back and stand by his side," concludes Barry. "Maybe he undid the leash by mistake." So back he goes obediently, not because he is afraid of what might happen if he doesn't, but because he wants the man to like him. And furthermore, all the other dogs are beside their men and he feels uneasy in his mind, gadding about by himself.

There is a week of "heel" practice, taken once a day for only two hours, because dogs are bright enough to become bored quickly with anything monotonous. Trainers can tell when a dog has lost interest in the lesson by watching his tail. When he carries it gayly, or curls it, it's a sure sign his mind is on a mutual dog-sniffing party or something equally frivolous. Similarly, breeds of dogs who naturally carry their tails gayly don't usually make good war hounds.

When he has learned "heel," the recruit is ready to "stay." At this command he must remain in a sitting or standing position while his trainer walks around him, this way and that. It's a tough lesson for a dog to learn. He hates remaining motionless while things are going on around him. At his first session he will rarely catch on to what is expected of him when the trainer begins to circle.

"He wants to play," is the pup's immediate reaction. "Now we are doing something worth while." He romps playfully around the trainer and is promptly reprimanded. This subdues him for the nonce, and he goes down reluctantly in a sort of semi-squat that is a decided compromise. His eyes follow the trainer pleadingly, his tongue lolls, and he wriggles uncomfortably. But the lesson goes on and on, until restraint is drilled into him. It is vitally important for him to learn to "stay," because in actual service, after catching one snooper, a guard may have to go after another. At command, the dog must be able to remain with a prisoner for an indefinite period and prevent his escape—which a good sentry dog does.

So learning to sit, lie, or stand quietly while the trainer moves around him is only the beginning. After that the trainer moves off a few feet. Gradually the distance is increased until the man is out of sight. The dog must not move until commanded to do so. Some of the animals have been known to remain in a single position for several hours, and if you think that's not a real accomplishment for a dog to acquire in two weeks, try it on your well-disciplined son or daughter sometime.

Now the dog is ready to learn the meaning of "Out"—a command indicating that he is to range ahead of the sentry and scout on his own for a trainer, representing a saboteur, who hides behind a bush or building. This he picks up quickly, because it's like a game of hide-and-seek. But the dog must also learn to retrieve any strange object and bring it in with him. The latter stunt starts with fetching at short distances. Almost any dog will fetch, but try making one bring back a bottle. He doesn't like the hard, slippery glass against his teeth. He shows that, to his way of thinking, it is not as much fun as a stick, anyway, and he will have none of it. But sentry dogs must bring anything thrown, and it's a real test of his capacity to learn. Later he starts using his nose to find and bring back something that is tossed when he's not looking, so that when he goes into active service he'll pick up objects a saboteur might leave behind, and bring them in to his sentry master.

By the time the dog has learned these three commands, "Come" is a simple matter, and he will execute it readily in most cases. In some countries the dogs are trained to obey these four commands by hand signal as well as voice, but this isn't wise, for if the wrong person should accidentally affect the signal, the dog's whole function would suddenly become useless. Before Hitler came to power, the Germans used a raised-palm signal for "Stay," and during Nazi parades when the dog troops and their trainers passed in review before Der Fuehrer there was one slightly embarrassing moment when all the pups sat down obediently and the goose-stepping men behind fell all over them with considerable indignity. Every last dog had to be retrained.

BASIC training completed, the dog goes to the field, where he learns to detect the presence of men in hiding and growl a quiet warning. A bark won't do, because such tactics would give the enemy as much warning as the sentry. This is difficult for an enthusiastic dog to understand.

Butch couldn't understand it. Butch was a thoroughbred English bulldog who entered the service through the regular Dogs for Defense route. He was a perfectly normal dog in every respect, though decidedly more intelligent than his average fellow canine. But in spite of all kinds of individual attention he almost failed to make the grade.

One sunny morning he arrived at an inland training center in the usual dog-shipping crate. When the flap door was opened by a young sergeant and a private, Butch stepped with dignity from the roomy but somewhat limited confines, gave the soldiers a critical going-over with his blunt nose, stretched, yawned, and then sat down and began to bark.

"He smells the other dogs," the sergeant surmised, reaching for the name tag on the neck chain. "You'll make a good sentry, Butch, but you'll have to learn how to shut up."

"Woof, woof, woo-oo-oof!" replied Butch. He continued to woof in the line-up when he went to be weighed. He woofed through his medical, which he passed with flying colors, and howled when his serial number was tattooed on his ear. When he was shown to the big kennel with cedar shavings on the floor and a porch under which he could snooze on dull afternoons, he was still woofing. All through his first two weeks of basic training, Butch woofed.

So, although his record of accomplishment was excellent, it was decided that Butch would have to be washed out. Then, on the morning he was to receive his discharge papers an amazing thing happened. The trainer who went to get him at his dogtown kennel was greeted, not with the usual raucous barrage of barks, but by a strangely subdued Butch. Pink eyes peered dolefully from beneath the celotex porch. Pincushion jaws opened and closed ridiculously, but the only sound that issued forth was a squeak.

A hurry call to the post vet soon revealed the cause of the transformation—acute laryngitis.

Butch was returned to his kennel, and when word spread among the trainers that his constant barking had at last worn out his vocal apparatus, the men all came to look at him. Butch regarded them sadly, opened and shut his ugly mouth soundlessly. The trainers doubled up with laughter.

"Shame on you, Butch!" they taunted him. The dog was nonplussed by all the levity at first. "What's the idea?" his hurt eyes said very plainly. "Here I am laid up and deprived of my favorite pastime, and you all stand around making a huge joke of it." He squeaked feebly, turned his back on the gibing crowd, and stumbled into the kennel.

But dogs are sensitive. They figure things out. Butch suddenly became aware of the fact that he was being made fun of. Somehow, he seemed to connect it with his barking, for from that day forward he kept his mouth shut, except when called upon to speak his piece.

The final and hardest lesson for almost every sentry dog is Attack. This goes against his grain. People have been very nice to him, and he can see no reason why he should bite them. Sometimes he just plain refuses to play rough.

Ambrose, an Irish setter being specially schooled for night patrol work at the Coast Guard's dog-training center on the estate of Joseph E. Widener in Cheltenham, near Philadelphia, was one such "non-combatant" canine. Nothing the boys could do would make him mad at them. He was friendly by nature, that was all. At last, after tormenting him beyond endurance with a flicking whip and making vicious passes at him, the trainers finally believed they had him worked up to a point where he would go for the man in the padded suit out of sheer desperation, if nothing else. So the dog was released. Off he bounded, a picture of fury. He tore across the open ground, whipped around a wooded section, and finally discovered his "saboteur" hidden behind a bush. One leap and Ambrose hurtled against the man's chest, knocking him to the ground. A cheer went up from the trainers. Then, to their utter horror, the dog, instead of tearing at the "saboteur's" gun arm, pranced playfully around him and licked his grizzled cheek with a wet tongue. It was still a wonderful game, and Ambrose loved it. The Coast Guard did not. They gave Ambrose an honorable discharge and sent him home.

A few trainees will go with gusto for the man representing the spy, but most of them must be irritated into doing it. The skulking trainer leaps at the dog and lashes out at him with a whip that never actually touches the animal but flicks at his paws. Soon the resentful dog will be tugging at the leash, snarling and snapping. When the recruit has been made sufficiently aware that he must attack, he's given a chance to try it out on a real live man. Naturally the man wears a heavily padded suit. In his right hand he grasps a revolver, and the dog is trained to go for that arm. He must also let go at a given command from his master.

One Doberman at a West Coast training center went through all his training with flying colors. He even entered into the attack phase quickly and efficiently. But when it came to letting go, he couldn't see eye to eye with the trainers. He wanted to hold on forever—and don't think he couldn't have done it. Trainers had to pry open his jaws by main force. The same thing happened again and again, despite constant attempts to break the habit. Nobody could understand why. Then someone thought to look up the dog's record, and there was the answer. That Doberman was a drunkard! The family who'd owned him before Pearl Harbor had included in his daily ration one full bottle of beer. The alcohol had affected his nervous system, and when he was roused to the excitement of attack he was so tense he couldn't have let go if he'd wanted to.

But of all the dogs who join up, 90 per cent make the grade without any trouble. Crackerjacks at sentry work are Airedales, who can detect a skulking man by hearing or smell at four hundred yards on clear nights. And when the weather is sticky or windy, they're still good at two hundred. German shepherds, Doberman pinschers, Great Danes, Boxers, and mastiffs have all figured highly as sentries, too.

There's a good reason why the big fellows are used, aside from the fact that their talents fit them for the job. There's something about a crouched, snarling mass of muscle and teeth that has a remarkable tendency to discourage night-prowling spies. Much more so than something snippy with a yip.

But it doesn't necessarily follow that all good sentry dogs have been heavyweights with pedigrees.

There was Pyram, a French dog, who was anything but impressive to look at. Somewhere near the base of the Pyram family tree there had been a poodle. Beyond that no one would guarantee a thing. He was a shaggy creature with beady eyes, a tail too long and bushy, a nose too short, suggesting rather poignantly that some promiscuous maternal ancestor had gadded about once too often with a stray bulldog. Pyram was a sad example of what can happen to aristocratic dog blood when the going gets rough.

However, he had the goods. Night after night he stood guard with the sentries at the French front and warned them with a low growl whenever he heard anyone coming. In this way French troops were able to prepare for and repel nearly a dozen German attacks in that sector.

One morning the Germans greeted the dawn with a heavy barrage that seemed to be hitting around French positions with grim accuracy. Orders went down the line to shift. No sooner were the men in their new dugouts than the barrage followed them. Three or four such shifts were made, but always with the same result. Somehow the Germans were onto every move. It was an officer who finally noticed Pyram, sitting on a shell case, undaunted by the crashing death all around him, virtually forgotten in the frenzied excitement. But Pyram was growling to beat the band. On a hunch the officer spoke to him. "What is it, Pyram? Where is he?"

The animal was off like a flash, the soldier after him. Back behind the lines they raced. Then the officer saw. On a little rise of ground, hidden from the French positions by a clump of bushes, stood a German soldier flashing to his own men with a mirror. From his vantage point he could watch every move the French made and, at the same time, signal his men where to direct their bombardment.

The officer used his rifle effectively, and that was that. As for Pyram, he was later decorated and given a fat bone for being a discerning and gallant dog.

PROBABLY the most heartfelt gratitude in this war for the presence of sentry dogs was felt by Marines who fought through terrific resistance to establish bridgeheads on Guadalcanal, and then continued fighting valiantly to hold those bridgeheads. The screening jungle around their encampments provided excellent cover for Japs, who sniped on American positions and would have been able to sneak up continuously, almost unhampered, had it not been for the fourteen highly trained "warning dogs" sent out to the islands from a training center in Hawaii.

One of these was a trigger-tempered cross between a chow and a German shepherd, named Hey. The animal had given the boys plenty of trouble with his nasty disposition. During his trip to the South Pacific on an army transport ship, before the men were wise to him, he was approached by any number of soldiers who wanted to be pals with him. Hey bit exactly twenty of them. Con-

sequently, when the troops landed and Hey was officially assigned to the 164th Infantry, the boys gave the dog a social brush-off.

Then, on the night of December 6, 1942, while the 164th was holding a portion of the front lines along the Matanikau River, just west of Henderson Field, the sentry on duty was given Hey for an assistant. It may be supposed he kept the distance between himself and the hound at the maximum afforded by the six-foot leash. It was midnight when the sentry stopped in his tracks, his attention drawn to the dog. Hey was rigid. His quivering nose pointed into the night, and a low growl issued from his throat. Quietly the sentry summoned aid and, by following the line of direction toward which the dog's attention was focused, the men crept carefully into the jungle. Within a few minutes they discovered a Jap sneaking through the brush. The Jap, who turned out to be a sniper and mortar-fire spotter, was disposed of quickly, and Hey's stock with the boys went up a number of points.

On another occasion at the Henderson Field command post, a cry went up one night when a sentry on duty discovered that a Japanese pilot who had been captured and placed in the wire enclosure with other prisoners had escaped. Men were awakened, patrols were formed quickly and efficiently, and the men set out on a systematic search of the surrounding jungle. One soldier had a better idea. He went to the kennels and picked out one of the dogs—a setter named Bronco. After circling the enclosure a few times the dog picked up the scent of Jap. Bronco led his MPs at a dead run to the beach, where, sure enough, the men discovered their missing pilot trying to swim away. In short order the Nip was back behind wires again.

Sentry dogs are seeing much more action on the home front than they ever did in the last war. The Coast Guard has thousands of them on constant vigil along the beaches from Maine clear around to Washington. They wear little leather boots to keep their paws from being cut by broken shells and glass. Dogs from American training centers are also watching faithfully over war factories, arsenals, and other proscribed military areas.

In Hawaii, where one-third of the four hundred sixty-five thousand population (July 1, 1941) is Japanese, dogs guard efficiently against sabotage. Shepherds, trained at various island centers, prowl night and day with sentries guarding the huge Flying Fortresses at Hickam Field. General Delos C. Emmons has his own four-footed guardian, a shepherd given him by Harold Castle, the Islands' Dogs for Defense representative. The furry trooper takes up his post at the door to Emmons' office, and no one gets through unless the general says the word.

So great was the demand for dogs in Honolulu that as soon as the animals completed their training they were flown in to the Islands' capital in the Fortresses they later guarded. They took to the air with utter indifference. "What's so startling about airplane rides to battle-tried fellows like us?" seemed to be their attitude. Some of them even went to sleep in the bellies of the huge ships as the motors throbbed monotonously on the journey to Hickam Field.

MESSENGER DOGS

"I SAW it coming from the direction of the front line," wrote an Australian officer in a letter to a friend, "—a little Welsh terrier. The ground it was going over was in terrible condition and was absolutely waterlogged. The little creature was running along, hopping, jumping, plunging, and with the most obvious concentration of purpose. I could not imagine what it was doing until it came near, and then I saw the message-carrier on its neck. As the dog sped past me I noticed the earnest expression on its face."

That's the way it is with a good messenger dog. He has one thing on his mind, and nothing can shake his determination to see it through. Once a definite route is established between the front and post headquarters, he races back and forth enthusiastically with dispatches, wagging his tail happily in hope of praise when the destination is reached. And if the destination be moved in the course of action, he will use his nose to trace it to its new locale.

When communications are cut and enemy fire makes the use of human runners impossible, these incredible animals seem to know it is up to them to do the job, and their determination is increased noticeably. They seem to sense the tension in the men, and are never happier than when they are called upon to do a real job of work.

Dogs are better than human runners even when there's clear sailing. In the first place, if captured they can't talk; secondly, they can cover up to five miles over broken ground, through barbed wire, shell holes, mud, and brambles in about half the time it would take a man. Paddy, one of Colonel Richardson's messenger dogs in the first World War, carried a dispatch from Passchendaele headquarters nearly to Ypres—a distance of five miles, and most of it over rough planks half submerged in mud—in less than half an hour. The same journey ordinarily took runners about two hours.

What's more, dogs racing close to the ground, dodging this way and that, make much smaller and harder-to-hit targets and will stop for nothing when properly trained. Smoke, fog, and darkness are the three things that often bring carrier pigeons to rest, but they're all part of the game to a dog. In fact, he works faster and more efficiently at night.

Because his line of duty carries him into action constantly the canine messenger is much more spectacular than the sentry dog. He is like a flashy backfield runner on a football team. Everyone has his eye on the brave messenger dog, sometimes forgetting about the less conspicuous fellows up there on the line who work just as hard but get fewer opportunities to assert their unique canine individuality. This doesn't mean that messenger dogs don't earn their laurels. They do.

No dog ever bore this out with more courage than Bobbie, the first messenger-hound headliner of this war. Bobbie was a big Alsatian attached to a Zouave regiment then fighting a losing battle against the Germans in Flanders. Reinforcements and ammunition were badly needed, but the regiment had already been partially encircled, its communications cut, and there wasn't a ghost of a chance for any human runner to break through the curtain of machine-gun fire being sprayed by the enemy.

So Bobbie was tapped for the mission. The urgent message was carefully slipped into his dispatch collar and the collar put round his neck. The instant the buckle was fastened Bobbie knew what was expected of him. The men stood watching as he started off with all the enthusiasm of a four-footed courier who knows he's being called upon to show his mettle. Over the broken ground he skimmed, powerful legs flashing. But the German had spotted him. Before Bobbie was out of sight his human buddies saw him hit the ground, tumble over and over, then lie still. But he wasn't still for long. He staggered up, shook himself, and started off again in the same direction. This time, however, there was no speed in his stride. He stumbled often. Occasionally he lay panting on the ground while snipers' bullets snipped little sprays of dirt all around him. The last the boys saw of him he was still trotting toward his destination.

At headquarters several officers scanning the field spotted what they thought was a man crawling toward

them. Field glasses soon revealed that it was not a man, but a dog. It was Bobbie. The animal was so badly wounded he couldn't keep his feet. But he had never once turned back. For hundreds of yards, bleeding profusely, he had wriggled along as best he could in his earnestness to fulfill the mission assigned him. Bobbie never reached his destination under his own power. He collapsed out there on the battlefield and expired. After dark a sergeant major and three men from the headquarters post crept across the wastes and brought back the dog's body, at no small risk of death themselves. The urgent message was read, and provisions were made for filling the request. The next day Bobbie was buried with full military honors. A sign bearing an inscription to him was erected over the grave.

There has been many an argument over what kind of dogs make the best messengers, but nobody ever won one. It has been pretty generally conceded, however, that Airedales, collies, sheep dogs, and retrievers fill the bill nicely. You might think the fleet greyhound would be ideal. But he isn't. He jibs under fire. But his cousin, the lurcher, has proved excellent. The saluki, who can run forty-five miles per hour, is also jittery on the battlefield. Actually, though, breed doesn't count nearly as much as brains.

There was Jim, for instance, a small retriever spaniel of the last war, who was, by all odds, too small to be a war dog in the first place. In the second place, his long, flapping ears should have acted as air brakes and slowed him down considerably, but they didn't. He made remarkable time carrying messages and once, while living in a front-line dugout, set up a terrific fracas, racing up and down the trenches like mad and sniffing the air suspiciously. Guessing that the animal's sensitive smeller detected gas, the men sent Jim to headquarters with a message to the effect that a gas bombardment was expected. Wire communications from advance positions later verified the gas attack. But it was much later. Jim beat the wire to headquarters by three quarters of an hour.

TO attain singleness of purpose requires rigid discipline during training and calls upon the dog for all his best characteristics. Every pup has courage, fidelity, and honor, but temptation creeps in to overcome these virtues and, like most humans, the animal will take the easiest and most pleasant course. Most dogs hate smoke, yet the messenger must constantly encounter it on a battlefield

Consequently part of the messenger's training takes him through clouds of chemical fumes. He coughs and sputters. At first he trots away, informing the trainer that he will not go through with it. But he does. Eventually he learns to ignore it entirely. In the same way, once he has learned to run between two trainers who gradually increase the distance between them to the limit of the dog's capacity—usually four to five miles—the trainee gets a dose of simulated battlefield hazards. . . .

Messenger dogs do more than just tote dispatches. Some of them string telephone wire for communications between troops and advance details. This is accomplished by means of attaching the instrument and one end of the wire to the dog. Then the animal is released. Off he goes, racing for the advance outpost, the wire trailing after him as it unwinds from a reel held by the man in the trenches. Sometimes, as was done in Poland, the dog carries the reel. The latter system worked well in open country, but Polish soldiers found that when the dog took short cuts through bushes the reels would often tangle with the branches. Besides, when he carries only an end of the wire, the dog makes much better time. The average wire-stringing hound can lay about half a mile of wire in five minutes.

Those who claimed, at the outbreak of this war, that the messenger dog was useful only in trench fighting are pretty busy now trying to chew the tongues out of their mouths. Because this particular branch of dog duty is seeing active service on nearly every front. Across the open sands of the desert, where no man could find cover, and over the shell-packed No Man's Land of the Caucasus their heroic efforts have saved many a day. . . .

Before moving on to the next group of dog specialists, there's a hero who mustn't be passed up. No messenger-dog study would be complete without some recognition of Satan. Satan was a coal-black mongrel. During his time in service he was stationed at Verdun, and it was nothing for him to carry messages to the front lines three or four times a day and come trotting back for another, panting and happily oblivious of the heavy fire through which he constantly ran. One observer claims he saw Satan streaking across a battle zone on several occasions, shells exploding all around him. Whenever the dog heard the whistle of a big one he would gauge where it was going to land and detour around the spot in a great arc.

Sure enough, the observer declared, the shell would always alight where Satan wasn't. And then came the day when the big dog was called upon to show his mettle.

The battle for Verdun had been raging for months. Sixteen times the garrison at Thiaumont had been taken, lost, and retaken. At last the French moved in, determined to stay or die. For a while it looked as though they'd die. Satan's trainer, a man named Duval, had been with him, but Duval was at Thiaumont now, and the dog was back at HQ. Barrage after barrage was laid down on the already battered, crumbling walls of the fortress until there wasn't a gun left intact. Trenches were dug in the debris. Communications had long since been blasted away; men lay torn and bleeding everywhere. Most of the small ammunition was used up. The post commandant knew one thing: the heaviest part of the fire against them was from a well-supplied German outfit off to the left. If only reinforcements could be brought up to annihilate it, the day would be won. But because of heavy machine-gun fire it was impossible to send a man back to headquarters. Several had tried and failed, and the commandant hadn't the stomach to send any more runners to an inevitable doom.

Back at Verdun headquarters, men listened to the booming artillery and knew what was happening. They hadn't heard a peep out of the Thiaumont garrison for days. Runners sent out there hadn't returned. At last one of the officers gave orders that Satan be given a chance to get through. The dog was held while a dispatch collar was put round his neck, and a tiny pannier containing two carrier pigeons was strapped to his back.

Just as he was about to be released the gas alarm sounded. So, besides all his other equipment, Satan had to wear a specially rigged gas mask. Then, resembling some strange mechanical monster, he was given a few friendly slaps and sent on his way.

The dog must have been aware that this was no ordinary run, because, although he knew the route well and usually dashed off like a flash, this time he scuttled low, close to the ground. With what seemed an uncanny realization that running in the open meant death, he picked his cover like a well-trained soldier, pausing now and then behind a pile of earth thrown up by shells, dodging this way and that across open areas until he could find protection behind bushes. Then he would open up, his furry back doubling under powerful leaps, until he was in the open again.

The wily animal proceeded in this fashion until the smoking ruins of Thiaumont were within sight. The last half-mile was a completely barren stretch where pockets of gas hung in the hollows. Over this German machine

guns were trained for enfilading fire. Every time a living thing moved on the flat waste, their *rat-tat-tat* sounded sharply over the din of the everlasting barrage, and the living thing moved no more.

Satan started across at a dead run. But at the first rattle of machine-gun fire he dropped lower and began to dodge. He made it halfway without a scratch, although most of the German gunners had opened up on him. The din had attracted the men in the trenches—among them, Duval. When they saw that dark speck coming toward them in spurts, no home team ever gave a more lusty cheer. Duval, in his excitement, jumped up on the parapet and shouted.

Still cautious, the dog darted forward, a shadow against the shell-torn earth. Then suddenly he stumbled and fell. A moan ran the length of the French line, followed by more lusty cheers when the dog staggered up again and, though limping badly, struggled on. Duval, blind to the snipers' bullets that ricocheted around him, stood waving his arms wildly and yelling encouragement to the wounded animal.

As Satan drew closer it became clear that he was operating on three paws. A machine-gun bullet had winged a hind leg, shattering the bone. Slowly he crept toward the trenches, whining piteously but determined to make it. At last he was within twenty yards of the men—then fifteen—ten. With one final spurt he made a dash for the parapet, clearing it just as Duval fell, mortally wounded.

In the dispatch pocket of the animal's collar was the message from headquarters requesting the garrison to hang on and promising early reinforcements. Hurriedly the commandant wrote, "Stop the German battery on our left," adding technical notations for aiming heavy artillery. This message was duplicated on another sheet of paper. Then the two pigeons were removed from the pannier, and in the aluminum capsule attached to the leg of each the note was tucked.

During the first lull in firing, the birds were released. Even at that, the air was still full of flying shells and shrapnel. The men watched as the two pigeons soared up, circled once, and then homed like the pair of veterans they were. But before they were out of sight one of them fluttered aimlessly in the air and came stumbling to earth. The other, however, streaked on.

Twenty minutes later the boom of heavy artillery from behind the lines told the Thiaumont garrison that the message had gone through. Before another hour passed, the German battery had been silenced and Thiaumont was won.

And Satan? He received full credit for being the dog that saved the day. Because of his shattered leg he was never able to serve again, but the broken appendage was patched up well enough so that he could spend the rest of his life chasing cats to his heart's content. . . .

There are reports about a rather nasty war-dog specialist featured by the Japanese. This is a type of "commando" dog styled after the Japanese suicide squads. The animals, usually shepherds, are trained to go out across a battlefield toward enemy positions. Behind them they pull carts in which fifty-pound time bombs are loaded. The friendly creatures, all unaware that the cart they are towing holds violent death instead of the usual weights with which they were trained, trot off proudly in any direction indicated by the "soldier trainer." When the destination is reached—boom! Dog, cart and, the Japanese hope, dozens of men disintegrate. Probably the Nipponese feel that what's good enough for a Japanese is good enough for a dog. There are two schools of thought. . . .

In another and much more pleasant vein, there was one risqué little war-dog specialist who played a field all her own. She was a seductive French "fifth columnist" dog named Plaisir. It was early in the game when Plaisir went into operation, but she did a noble job. Nazi hordes were pounding at the Maginot Line, and their canine corps was much in evidence. Messenger hounds scuttled back and forth across the front continuously. The Frenchmen sniped at them whenever they could, but it was like trying to hit a white jackrabbit zigzagging over the snow. The score was pitiful. Then a soldier with a fine sense of humor and a keen imagination happened to think of Plaisir, a small liaison dog of dubious ancestry who had reached her "time" and was out of service temporarily.

That afternoon Praisir was unleashed and sent out across the front to practice her wiles. Early in the evening the men saw her coming back, trotting saucily along, her bushy tail curled naughtily over her rump. Behind her, trailing a long queue, were a round dozen well-trained German messenger dogs, devotedly following the little Mata Hari into captivity.

All of which goes to prove that even on the battlefields dogs will be dogs.

SMART ENOUGH TO BE STUBBORN

IF a horse, or a dog, or a cat, or almost any animal you can think of offhand is mean, he's just plain mean, and that's all there is to it. You know what to expect, and you'll act accordingly. Similarly, when he's placid, you know he's not placid on Tuesdays only. He's placid all the time, and you can generally count on it.

But you never can tell about a mule. Even in the U. S. Army, where the long-eared hybrid has for years received the best treatment and rations and performed unbelievable heroics in return, he is an unpredictable enigma. Take Dynamite, for instance, whose explosive disposition accounts for his name.

Dynamite moved in on Fort Des Moines, Iowa, along with a batch of about forty other mules purchased by the Army for draft purposes. He was a beautiful big black, 16 hands high, 1,500 pounds of solid bone and muscle. From the beginning no one could handle him. On the mule line he would hide behind the other mules, waiting for someone to come by; then he'd rear up and strike out with his front hoofs. Or else he'd let go a terrific backlash if anyone was crazy enough to approach him from that end. A number of men were badly battered by various of those four flailing appendages. Of course, everyone at the post was afraid of him, and the mule knew it, which only made matters worse. Whenever he was moved, it was with a man on either side of him holding him by a rope—a long rope. Dynamite would march between them, eying first one and then the other, waggling his long ears, patiently waiting for one of them to lose his grip. Mules are very patient.

Breaking Dynamite for draft or pack was impossible. Besides, no one on that post was anxious enough to commit suicide. If the stable crew had had any choice in the matter, he would have been taken out to a quiet pasture and polished off. But unless an Army mule is sick beyond repair he can't be shot. That's regulation. And Dynamite was the picture of health. The only other alternative the outfit had was to sell him. The men knew, however, that no one in his right mind would buy the animal unless he could be tricked into it. So Dynamite stayed, and the casualties mounted.

Then an amazing thing happened. A fat little private who knew nothing whatever about mules was assigned to the Fort Des Moines cavalry remount depot. On his first day he was given the job of feeding the mules. Right off the bat he hated it, because the animals nuzzled him and pushed him around in their anxiety to get the feed bags. Dynamite was usually tied a good distance from the rest

of the mules in the interest of safety, not only for the men but for the mules. Lacking a human target he'd settle for a shot at one of his cousins. As luck would have it, on this particular day he was tied in with the mulish brethren by mistake.

The recruit came down the line, tying on the nose bags. His disposition was none too good. As he drew near the big mule, he took to clouting the moist noses that shoved at him. A number of hardened soldiers were watching the new bucko, and suddenly one of them noticed Dynamite, crowded up behind the mule next in line to be fed. They knew that if the "boot" tried to shove the black demon around, there would be one big explosion and Fort Des Moines would be minus a recruit. Before anyone could shout a warning, however, the private had slipped in between Dynamite and the adjacent mule. If they hollered now, the men feared, they'd scare the fat boy; he'd get excited, bump the big mule in his hurry to get away, and Dynamite, resentful of being jostled, would let go with everything he had.

So the men stood and watched in horrible fascination, hoping that nothing would happen. But it did. Dynamite moved over officiously and squeezed the greenhorn against the next mule. Mad as hops, the youth hauled off and gave him a terrific dig in the ribs with his elbow. The boys watching from the stable shut their eyes and turned away.

Instead of rising to the situation as expected, Dynamite was so taken aback by the blow that he sidled away, looking down over his long Roman nose at this pudgy pip-squeak who dared question his right to be cantankerous. Then, as the boy, flushed and angry, turned to go, he gave the mule a lusty boot in the rump—an out-and-out declaration of war in any mule code. No experienced mule man would dream of doing such a thing. At the added insult, Dynamite snorted. But, unbelievably, he moved over even further—and kept his distance.

Later, when told what he'd done, the boy leaned against a hitching post and quietly slid to the ground in a dead faint.

Shortly after that, another man went to the infirmary with a pair of hoofmarks imprinted on his rear, and the regiment decided Dynamite would have to be sold, even if they had to tie pink ribbons on his ears to fool the prospective customer.

They advertised and waited. Next day an old farmer who delivered milk to the post turned up to look at the merchandise. The boys led him to the stable, lauding the mule's excellent qualities as they walked. Once at the stall, the farmer cocked an appraising eye at Dynamite. Dynamite, in turn, cocked his ears at the farmer, looked him up and down, then lowered his head suspiciously.

The farmer spat. "Hm-m-m. Purty good-lookin' mule-flesh. How much?"

A ridiculously low price was named by the stable sergeant.

"Durn cheap fer sech a mule," observed the buyer. "Whut's the matter with 'im?"

"Oh, nothing," replied the sergeant hopefully. "Just a little cussed."

"Wal, guess I c'n manage him," drawled the farmer. "I'll take him."

A number of soldiers, loafing around watching the deal, felt a stroke of conscience. This was a dirty trick to pull on the old man. They called him to one side.

"You don't want that mule," they told him. "He's a mean cuss. He'll kill you before you get him out of here."

The farmer scratched a matted beard. "Ornery, hey? Wal, thanks fer the tip, fellers. But I guess me an' the mule will git on purty good once we're 'quainted."

In spite of the warning the farmer returned to the stall and spoke to Dynamite through the bars. The mule eyed him dubiously.

"C'mere, feller." The old man put his hand through the bars, and Dynamite tried to take it off at the wrist. "Wal, guess that won't work," said the farmer, unperturbed. "Git me a length of chain."

At this point the stable sergeant remonstrated with him. "Better give it up, old boy. You go in there with a length of chain and that mule will commit mayhem. He's a killer."

"Git me the chain," snapped the farmer.

He got the chain, climbed over the manger in front of the mule and talked quietly to him. Dynamite laid back his ears, rolled his eyes wildly, and reared. Quick as a flash, the chain whipped out and caught him a belt across the nose. The mule was so surprised he sat down in the stall. Then the farmer jumped from his perch, went over to the animal and caressed the long ears, whispering into them as he did so. More of this, accompanied by a few more convincing belts, and Dynamite was a changed mule. Half an hour later he strolled peaceably out of the camp on the end of a plain halter rope, held by the old man.

Every day thereafter the farmer rode into camp on his milk wagon—drawn by the Army mule that no army man could handle. Dynamite would wait placidly by the curb while his master made deliveries, blinking his eyes and waggling his ears at former associates as though he had never been on any but the friendliest terms with them....

DURING the first World War thirty thousand American mules served with the AEF, and about five thousand gave their lives. When this war entered its fourth year, there were almost ten thousand mules in service—in spite of streamlined, eight-wheeled transport trucks, tanks, and jeeps. The mule's flinty feet, inborn caution, and patience make him ideal for traversing precipices, stony roads, and jungles where wheeled transport cannot penetrate. As early as 1940 the U. S. Army discovered that its supermachines were fine and speedy in open country. But when it came to mud, jungles, mountain trails, and cowpaths, four sturdy legs still made the best time. North African rains stopped everything but the mules; Philippine mountains gave them a chance to show off their goat-like characteristics; they served bravely through the slaughter of Bataan—and then, at the last, they provided meat for troops that had been cut off from supplies.

In Panama one entire artillery regiment entrusts not only its guns and carriages to mule transport, but all its field equipment as well. Six mules can carry a 75-millimeter howitzer. One takes the barrel, another the wheels and breech, a third the gun cradle and top "sleigh," a fourth the recoil apparatus and bottom "sleigh." The last two divide the steel "train" pieces. When assembled, this field gun weighs the better part of a ton.

Strangely enough, one of the Army's most modern divisions can use no other mode of heavy supply transport than the mule: the newly formed ski patrol (the Army prefers to call it "mountain infantry"). No one was more surprised to discover this than the ski troopers themselves. When they first arrived at the fort, the men were put to work building corrals, blacksmith shops, and watering troughs. None could guess why. Then, one morning, over the entrance to the corral, they saw a sign which read: "Through these portals pass the most beautiful mules in the world."

A few days later the mules arrived, and the men discovered why it was imperative that they work with this seemingly primitive transport. It was impossible for skiers to carry heavy supplies over the glacial routes they had to follow, and no mechanical vehicle could possibly plow through the deep snow they traversed. Even horses

would flounder. Only dogs, for light equipment, and the sure-footed mule, for the heavy stuff, could do it. What's more, the mule could climb a slope up to forty-five degrees with the assurance of a mountain goat. His thick skin protected him from the blasts of rarefied air at high altitudes. So the Army's streamlined troops, 1943 version, found themselves following a daily ritual that was a far cry from Sun Valley capers a few of them had expected. They were up before dawn, haying, watering, and learning to pack the mules.

A daily minimum of twelve miles of cross-country skiing broke the monotony. But even then they couldn't get away from the mules. The animals accompanied them, carrying hundred-pound packs, and for every five mules one skier had to act as packer to see that the animals stayed in file and that the packs stayed in place.

Ski troops got to accept them for what they were—the *backbone* of the mountain infantry. Today there are more horses and mules in the country's ski division than with a cavalry division. Without them no supplies or equipment would follow the hickory-clad commandos on their lightning raids across icebound wastes.

Actually, a good mule can carry as much as three hundred and fifty pounds at a three-to-five-mile-per-hour gait, and average twenty-five miles a day. In an emergency he can be pushed as far as seventy miles at a clip with no ill effects. One pack train, during the Arizona "Loco" Rebellion in 1882, is said to have covered two hundred and eighty miles in three days.

BUT for regular, tough, steady going, few mules in this war have performed more faithfully than those on the eastern front in Syria, Iran, and Burma. Most were India-born, though many came from America and South Africa.

The difficulty of obtaining enough dark-colored animals was overcome by painting the white ones black—a trick resorted to in the last war by the Scots Greys, whose horses were similarly camouflaged. Like all warrior mules, these Indian army animals went through a period of intensive training to equip them for front-line service. It takes a few weeks to accustom the animal to his pack saddle and load. Then he is taught to clamber over obstacles, while tin cans are rattled near by, so he'll learn to ignore noise. At "battle school" machine guns open fire practically at his feet, charges of gelignite explode beside him as he plods along, bullets whistle past his long ears. The mule, a placid fellow anyway, quickly learns to take these things in his stride.

After a month, at most, Indian mules are ready to go any place the men go, without batting a crafty eye.

Equipped with pannierlike seat saddles, they see service with the field ambulance sections, saving fuel, rubber, wear and tear on scarce machines. One wounded man is hoisted into a metal frame chair on each side of the mule. Thus, with a balanced load, the animal proceeds slowly back to the medical post. On the India-Burma frontier in 1942 the animals proved vital for carrying heavy packs over extremely difficult country. During the 1942 monsoons, when the whole Middle East was one vast bog, Indian mules saved the day more than once by carrying supplies to isolated troops when even men on foot had difficulty getting through. . . .

These mulish accomplishments are not lost on the Indians, and many are the tributes paid the animal by his dark-skinned masters. Following the incident just related, one Indian noted of the mule: "He will never get a promotion, but in the jungles of Assam they could not get along without him. You can see him on nearly every trail, plodding along—a little out of step, perhaps, but getting there just the same. . . . He and his human companions in arms have a lot in common except that the mule can't grumble when he gets 'browned off' as every soldier does now and again."

To get such results from the average mule, however, a handler must be diplomatic, patient, tough, and long-suffering. If he has the touch of a Houdini and a crystal ball he's all set. A mule will co-operate only as long as he gets a square deal. . . .

It doesn't always require neglect or maltreatment to prod a mule's ingenuity. Actually, some of the humor he indulges just for the sheer enjoyment he gets out of it is better than his most ingenious vengeance. A captain in the British Army tells how he has even seen a pair of mules work together on a tricky double play, carefully timed and carried out with apparent understanding between the practical jokers. On one occasion the captain dropped in to see his camp farrier. The man was busy shoeing a mule team. He had one mule on each side of him and was bent over the forge as the officer entered. While the newcomer watched, the horseshoer began to tap a shoe on one mule. As he was thus engaged, the other mule, who had been observing the goings on from the corner of a scheming eye, slyly craned his neck and took a nip at the farrier's rear. There was an ominous r-r-r-r-rip as the animal came away with a large section of dry goods from the seat of the smithy's dungarees. Furiously the farrier turned to clout his brazen tormentor. No sooner was his back turned than the first mule took a good-natured boot at the same spot. Then the two animals set the rafters ringing with raucous hee-hawing. "There was nothing vicious intended," the captain explained. "The mules thoroughly enjoyed it."

This business of mules understanding one another is more than mere coincidence. They are extremely clannish, and in a group each seems to know what the others are thinking. It's because they talk to each other with their ears. They use a sort of semaphore wigwag system. If you don't believe it, all you need do is to march down a mule line next time you're on an Army post and watch them. The first mule seeing you will glare suspiciously and tilt his ears in your direction. One by one, as the other mules notice those tilted ears, they'll look too. Pretty soon all the eyes and ears on the line will be directed toward you. Move, and all the eyes and ears will follow your progress.

The wigwag system operates best in pack trains, however. The lead mule, usually the smartest one of the bunch, seems to realize his responsibility to his cousins and is therefore the epitome of caution. He's constantly wigwagging signals to them, and good Army muleteers have averted a lot of bog-downs by watching those ears carefully. If the mule comes to a spot in the trail he doesn't like, he will almost invariably throw one ear back, cock the other at a ridiculous angle, and step gingerly. This is a warning to all the mule brotherhood behind him: "Flash. Brook ahead. Looks fishy. Let's quit." And they will, unless the muleteer catches the signal too and helps the leader across the troublesome spot. . . .

ONE thing a mule cherishes above all else is his daily ration of grain at specified hours. An alarm clock in his brain tells him when the hours have arrived—and woe to the man who holds out on him. The easiest way to a mule's heart is through his stomach, and, conversely, the easiest way to make him cantankerous and crafty and to rouse his enmity forever is to hold out on his dinner. . . .

Sometimes, if they're hungry enough, mules will devise ways of getting food by hook or crook. It is a common sight to see a hungry mule browsing about an Army field kitchen where the cook is baking bread. Craftily waiting until the cook's back is turned, the mule will trot over to the Dutch oven, paw off the lid with his front hoofs, gingerly grab the hot bread in his teeth, and canter off with

it while the cook waves his soup ladle in the air and shouts unprintable oaths. All this because someone has done the mule wrong on rations.

In spite of his fussiness about food, one of the characteristics which makes the mule invaluable to the armed forces is that he can subsist on far meaner rations than a horse, grazing on whatever happens to offer. He will munch contentedly on cactus or thistle if there's nothing else at hand, and will even go four or five days on microscopic rations if necessary. . . .

In this matter of food and drink, the long-eared clan shows a good deal more horse sense than horses. The latter will drink gallons of water when they're hot, and nine times out of ten will get good and sick doing it unless there's someone around to stop them. Not so the mule. He waits until he can cool off, and even then won't drink unless he's thirsty. In the same vein, he will not eat more than his fill. If you put out three or four days' rations at once for a mule, he will eat it for three or four days. At the end of that time he will be in excellent condition. A horse will eat the whole allowance immediately—and get so sick he won't be usable for a week. This is one reason why it costs the Army an average of one hundred and fifteen dollars to feed each of its horses every year and only $93.40 for each mule.

THERE are other reasons why mules are held in higher esteem in the Army than horses. Although at first glance their phobias may seem like cantankerous outbursts of temperament, there is usually good reason for them. The mule's dislike for water, for instance, in spite of the fact that he is a good swimmer, is reasonable enough. He knows he *might* drown. A horse would never think of that. The mule's fear of holes and ditches has proven a lifesaver to both mule and rider on occasion. . . .

Horses don't balk as much or as definitely, some people point out. Well, that's not because horses are smarter. When a mule gets tired he sits down. At least there's a possibility, however remote, of getting him up again. Horses will keep going until they drop dead, leaving their masters in some jolly predicaments with no method of transportation for getting out of them. What makes soldiers sore about balky mules is the fact that the animals can't be tricked out of a balk once they've set their minds to it.

At a Southwestern remount station a group of Army men were repairing a road leading from the post to town. They'd been digging a lot of drainage ditches, and along toward the middle of the afternoon a corporal in a wagon driven by four mules came bumping along. The wagon traveled at a good clip until it reached the road workers. Then one of the lead mules spied a deep ditch on his side of the road and promptly sat down, determined not to budge until someone took the hole away. The driver cussed until the dusty air turned purple. He said the Lord's Prayer backwards and added a few lines. He threw clods at the stubborn animal. He beat the mule, he coaxed it, he whispered encouragement into its indifferently wagging ears, he caressed its moist nose, and he cussed some more—all to no avail. It was a complete balk.

The road workers were enjoying it tremendously. "Why don't you build a fire under him?" one of them yelled.

"By God, that's a good idea," shouted the corporal. He went around gathering twigs and sticks. Then he borrowed some paper and a match. He piled the stuff under the mule's belly and set it going. It required a moment or two for things to get warm. At last the mule rose slowly to his feet, moved forward about ten paces, then promptly sat down again. In order to keep the wagon from catching fire, some mighty brisk unhitching was done. No horse could ever make a man that mad—true enough.

But when it comes to a showdown on the battlefield, the mule has it all over his maternal ancestor. Where screaming shells, rattling gunfire, and blood-curdling explosions drive horses wild, the mule plods along with his load as oblivious of danger as he is of the commands of his master. If he's trapped he waits philosophically to be led to safety. If he gets lost in a skirmish he doesn't panic. In fact he may even prowl the battlefield and do a little investigating on his own. That's because he's inquisitive by nature, and this trait has been responsible for some unusual episodes on the front.

Mehitable is a case in point. Mehitable was a gray pack mule who hailed from Missouri. She had seen the better part of twenty summers. Too old for heavy pack work, she was commandeered by the Red Cross and assigned to the Twenty-seventh Division. It was her duty to carry a basket of candy and another of cigarettes from the Red Cross station to advanced positions, where fighting men of the Twenty-seventh were slugging it out with the Germans. Day after day, through shell barrages and rifle fire, Mehitable and her handler trudged placidly through the mud and rubble, carefully detouring around shell holes and taking cover whenever possible.

One day the barrage was a little heavier than usual, but if Mehitable noticed it she didn't let it affect her. Ears flopping at every step, she went calmly along with candy and cigarettes. Suddenly her handler groaned and sank to the earth, victim of a German sniper's bullet. Mehitable stopped, sniffed him tentatively a couple of times, then rolled him over with her nose. Puzzled but game, she left the man where he lay and ambled along her regular route, which she knew by heart. Soldiers helped themselves to her cargo and saw her on her way. At the last stop the old mule turned and trotted back across the torn battlefield toward the Red Cross depot. She hadn't gone halfway, however, when she spied a lieutenant named Hodes and a sergeant crawling from a trench. The men were out to grenade a near-by shell hole, where a German machine-gun crew had entrenched itself and was inflicting severe punishment on Allied positions.

That was where Mehitable's curiosity got the better of her. She detoured over to the crawling men and nuzzled them—obviously entranced by their peculiar mode of locomotion. Hodes, afraid she would reveal their position, shooed her away. But Mehitable was still curious. She strolled around the same general area until she was attracted by a burst of machine-gun fire from the shell hole. She had heard plenty of machine-gun fire before, but never at such close range. This seemed to her an excellent opportunity to investigate and see what made it. So Mehitable trotted to the crater and stuck her nose over the rim. If the Huns were startled by the long-eared visage peering in on their hideaway, it was only briefly—because a moment later Mehitable felt cold steel. A German officer jabbed her in the ribs with a bayonet.

That officer might have been a good tactician when it came to combating men, but he certainly didn't know anything about mules. The thrust brought him close to the edge of the shell hole, and Mehitable let him have it. A quick, vicious side kick caught the man in the head and sent him sprawling. One observer, who watched the whole show from a near-by American foxhole, swears the German's helmet flew all of sixty feet through the air. True or false, the fact remains that Lieutenant Hodes and his buddy later found the German officer so thoroughly subdued that he had to be buried.

Mehitable evidently was satisfied with the job herself, for she promptly left the scene of action and returned to the Red Cross depot. She was later awarded a wound stripe, entitling her to a life of ease on a Government pasture for the remainder of her days.

A COUNTERCLOCKWISE STORY OF CAIRO TODAY—
AND IN THE PERIOD OF CLEOPATRA'S GIRLHOOD.

COSGRAVE leaned over his work-table, forcing his weary brain to concentrate anew, and finished the formulae in hand. Here in this nearly soundproof laboratory built on the upper deck of the *Crœsus,* evening had brought quiet. Although the ship was racing for Alexandria, the engine pulsations were scarcely felt here.

The door opened, and Lundgren came in. He was followed by a steward, who bore a tray.

"Supper, John!" exclaimed Lundgren. "Ready to knock off?"

"In about two minutes," replied Cosgrave without looking up. "Almost finished."

"Sir James Wilkie will be up in half an hour or so," said Lundgren. "We're carrying him to Egypt, you know. Says he wants to meet you."

Cosgrave, utterly absorbed in his calculations, disregarded the words.

Behind them lay the war, the thunderous landings in Italy and elsewhere; for the moment both men had peace, and needed it. They had labored heavily and long, and were getting some results. The *Crœsus* and this marvelously equipped cabin-laboratory had been given them by a grateful Government, appreciative of their achievements with radar and allied war-tools; they wanted to carry on their researches under battle conditions, and got their wish.

But, being a supply ship and speedy, the *Crœsus* was liable to any errand in time of crisis; hence her present mission to the great port of Egypt, center

Princess of Egypt

by H. BEDFORD-JONES

of the Near East war zone. She carried a group of Allied technical experts—among them the British wizard of electronics, Sir James Wilkie—who were interested in certain captured Italian ships now lying at Alexandria.

A long sigh escaped Cosgrave. He laid down his pencil.

"That winds it up," he said. "We're all set to go ahead with it now; those suggestions of yours were simply gorgeous, Lundgren. Did I hear you say something about Wilkie?"

Lundgren, who had uncovered the tray, laughed at his friend and coworker.

"You did. He'll be up after a bit to look us over. I knew you'd want to meet him."

Cosgrave gulped some coffee, and to himself damned all visitors.

"Right now, we're both played out," he said. "Let's eat. Any news?"

"We're forging ahead on the Rome front; no end of rumors flying. Nothing definite."

Food and drink and tobacco made a vast difference to the inner man, but taut nerves were slow to relax. Cosgrave was still thinking about his work as he watched the slow curl of smoke from the cigarette between his fingers.

"You know," he said, "if we pick up those new tubes at Alexandria, we're going to find ourselves getting somewhere. We're beginning to show results."

"Right. And we're going to take the evening off." Lundgren was not the thin, eagle-faced Cosgrave type. He was slower, heavier, broader, but

capable of terrific momentum once he got started. "Tonight we amuse ourselves and break the tension."

"Meaning what?"

"Sir James Wilkie. He'd heard rumors about our Experiment Nine Ninety-nine and asked me. We'll put on the show for him, and see what he can make of it."

Cosgrave winced slightly. "You know I don't like that business—"

"Because it fascinates you and takes your mind off the job. Just what you need."

"You may be right, at that. We don't want to talk shop with this guy. We've had enough shop. I'll break out those experimental tubes and make the set-up. . . . No, suppose you do it."

Lundgren jumped up obediently and went to a mass of panels and dials at one side. The whole place was a clutter of intricate electronic hook-ups; one wall of the long cabin was a huge screen which could remain blank or be turned by the twist of a switch into a large-scale computing grid.

As Cosgrave finished his coffee, the door opened and the visitor appeared. Lundgren introduced them. The famous Sir James was an elderly man, hard-headed, eminently practical, and very affable in a cautious way.

"Mr. Lundgren was telling me about this odd thing you've chanced upon. Sounds a bit absurd, y'know," he observed. "That's why it interests me. Great discoveries usually do seem absurd. You chaps have done some great things with radar."

"This is beyond radar," said Cosgrave. Before the visitor he placed diagrams of the experimental hook-up and enlarged drawings of the queer, bulging electronic tubes used.

"We'll put the whole thing in your lap, Sir James," he continued cheerfully, "and you see what you can make of it. We, frankly, find it beyond us. It happened like a bolt from the blue while we were trying to capture frequencies from the upper ether."

"Thunderbolts from space," put in Lundgren, chuckling. "Or more exactly, glimpses of the moon—anything you like to term it. Anyhow, it has us stymied."

STUDYING the tubes and diagrams, Sir James nodded.

"There's an explanation for everything," he said, pulling at his long lower lip. Lundgren met the eye of Cosgrave, and winked. "One has only to find it."

"All set," Lundgren said, and threw a switch. "We guarantee nothing. John, you'd better take over the controls. The direction-finder is set for Alexandria."

"You mean we're going to look ahead at what's happening there?"

"No; at what happened there in the past—sometime. I don't know what we'll get." Cosgrave went to the controls and settled himself at the dials.

"If you don't mind—" Sir James joined him and studied the layout with shrewd eyes that comprehended everything. "Hm! Most interesting, upon my word! I've played a bit with those ultra-short waves. Hm!"

He returned to his seat—then uttered a short, startled grunt as the wide screen leaped with sudden color and shape. Cosgrave, watching the screen, glimpsed queer stubby ships against a harbor background of glorious buildings and a towering lighthouse that soared upon the blue sky. But it was not just a picture. It had depth and distance and life. Abruptly, everything vanished.

"My word!" A gasp escaped Sir James. "Alexandria! The twin harbors identified it. That tower was the famous Pharos, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world—a lighthouse six hundred feet high of pure marble—or did my eyes deceive me?"

"Then ours deceived us as well," said Lundgren. "No, we've picked up Alexandria in Roman days, to judge from the looks of those ships."

"But—but it's utterly incredible! You've no cinema attachment?"

Lundgren smiled. "No sir. Actual sights and sounds of the past, like picking up old radio programs given years ago. We recapture and bring together scenes dispersed and broken up into their component frequencies; like, for instance, the voice of Cæsar or Napoleon, or like bits of a puzzle picture that come together before our eyes."

Sir James bit at a cigar, looking at his hosts with skeptic glances. Cosgrave adjusted the dials. The tubes sparked and crackled; lights flickered across the screen. A wide stone platform appeared above blue water; men in armor moved there in groups. The faint sound of voices was heard.

"Hold it!" cried Lundgren eagerly. "Look at that armor—Romans! And those other men in Greek costume—Alexandria under the Ptolemies, the greatest Greek city of the ancient world! No doubt— Oh, the devil!"

The platform vanished; nothing was to be seen except blue sky, a cloud or two, and a circling, hovering eagle.

"I elevated the direction-finder," apologized Cosgrave, hurriedly moving the controls. "Now it's coming back."

The eagle swooped lazily. The palace platform returned into sight, with stairs running down into the water and ships moored in the enclosed harbor. Lundgren, who was a classical scholar, leaned forward excitedly and spoke.

"I know what that building is, I've read about it—the royal palace of the Ptolemies, at the very sea-tip of the city!"

The screen became a blur. The Pharos, that pillar of white marble—the ships—the palace and the city behind—all was shaken and blurred except one thing: The circling eagle soared and dipped down, almost touching the head of a young man who stood there.

HE was a stalwart young man, bearded, with high forehead and aquiline nose—a face at once masculine, yet filled with appealing nobility. As the eagle swung about his head, a roar of voices swept up.

"Antonius! An omen, an omen! Hail, Antonius!"

Snap—crackle—*bang!* Everything went dark. The screen was blank; the spark ceased to flow. Lundgren swore softly, darted across the room.

"Tube blew out, dammit! Here's another, John—same type." He swiftly made the replacement, then turned. "Say, do you know what we've picked up? That was Antony, Mark Antony! It's a fact that he was in Alexandria on his first campaign!"

"Do you refer to the Antony and Cleopatra duo?" asked the visitor with unexpected lightness.

Lundgren assented.

"Of course. She was only a girl of fourteen then, but they did meet; and a girl of fourteen in Egypt was a woman, not a child. They usually married at eleven or twelve. Besides, Cleopatra was far older than her years—"

"What was Antony doing there?" demanded Cosgrave.

"The Romans had just restored Cleopatra's father, Ptolemy Auletes, to the Egyptian throne, from which the people had driven him. Antony, or Marcus Antonius, commanded the Roman cavalry. How's it coming?"

"Okay." Cosgrave was intent upon the warming tubes. "Watch it. Warming up fast."

"This is most amazing!" Sir James seemed to suspect some hoax, and pardonably. "Those voices! Why, we simply can't be hearing and seeing things that happened two thousand years ago!"

Lundgren laughed. "Well, sir, you figure it out. Ten years ago, the things our radar installations do today would have seemed fantastic. . . . Ah! There it comes!"

Color flooded the screen again. It focused into shape as Cosgrave touched the dials; a scene grew there—not a picture, a scene, as though the screen were gone and they were looking into space. It was the same palace platform, but no longer in bright sunlight; now it was flooded with the

softer glow of sunset. Two armored men holding spears, evidently guards, stood talking together.

"By Hercules, my money's on this Antonius of ours!" said one. "Don't talk to me about Cæsar and Pompey and the rest back home. There isn't a man in the army who wouldn't swap them all for this youngster!"

"Right you are. He handled the cavalry in this campaign like a demigod! He's one man who has everything. Old Gabinius, who commands the army, is just a stuffed monkey alongside Antony. Why, this chap eats our grub, lives in the field as we do, and could take on any man in the army and lick him barehanded!"

"And leads us to the right sort of loot," said the first. "He's picked himself a likely girl here, too—"

"Look out! They're coming—on your way!" exclaimed the other. They separated, shouldered spears, and were gone.

Strolling down to the water-steps came two figures, arm in arm. One was Antony, a wreath of flowers about his head, alive with youth and energy and happiness. The other was a slender girl who did not come to his shoulder.

"Let's sit here and wait for the stars," she said, pointing to the steps. "I suppose the feast has turned into a drunken riot?"

"Oh, a beautiful riot!" said Antony, laughing. "Cypriote dancers, generals, princes, noble Greeks and godlike Romans, all drunk. And your royal father sprawled out and wheezing away on a shepherd's pipe. He's a funny little man; does nothing but get drunk and play the pipes."

"That's why they call him Auletes, the Piper," replied the girl, sinking down on the top step. Her voice held disgust and weary contempt. "Such a silly little drunkard to be a king! The whole world's a drunken orgy, a riot of shameless lust and luxury and crime; what would Plato think of it?"

Antony gave her a curious look. He had heard that she was a deep student and had an education that would put most men to shame, in mathematics and sciences and languages; she was not particularly beautiful, but her magnetism and personal charm were astounding. Her voice was the loveliest he had ever heard. In short, he found himself utterly fascinated by this Greek girl. Greek, because since Alexander's conquering army had settled here, where Alexander himself was buried, the city's inhabitants had ever called themselves Macedonians, tenuous as their descent might be.

"The world's made for those who can take," said Antony carelessly. "Why not enjoy it?"

"Roman barbarian!" she exclaimed. "Do you enjoy drunken orgies?"

"About this odd thing you've chanced upon. Sounds a bit absurd, y' know," Sir James observed. "Great discoveries usually do."

"Certainly, at times. Do you enjoy philosophy?"

"Well—at times." She broke into low, clear laughter, then checked it. "But what are we coming to, in such a world? You're a Roman, a soldier. I'm a princess; I'll rule Egypt some day. Are we merely to sink in the drunken orgy of life and seek nothing higher?"

"Haven't thought about it," he said, and slipped an arm around her. "There, that's better. What a charming little person you are, Cleopatra! So you're going to rule Egypt, eh? Then you can have Egypt—if I can have you."

"Why not, if you earn me?" she replied. The first stars were pricking the greenish sky; the daylight was gone, lights were appearing in the magnificent buildings that ranged the Inner Harbor. "Earn me, Antony!"

"How, by Hercules? Tell me how and I'll do it!"

"Easily proven." She slipped suddenly from his circling arm. A deft movement, and the gossamer gown she wore fell to the stones; another, and she was gone, a slim white shape, into the water. "Come!" she flung back at him. "I'll tell you how, if you beat me to the buoy!"

He leaped up, discarded sword-belt and tunic and sandals, and took a header into the warm star-sprinkled water. He swam deep and far before coming up, startling her by his proximity, and swam on for the buoy a hundred yards away. She slid into speed, but he left her far behind; and was clinging to the buoy, laughing, when she reached it.

"Pay up, clever girl!" said he. "Pay up! How do I earn you?"

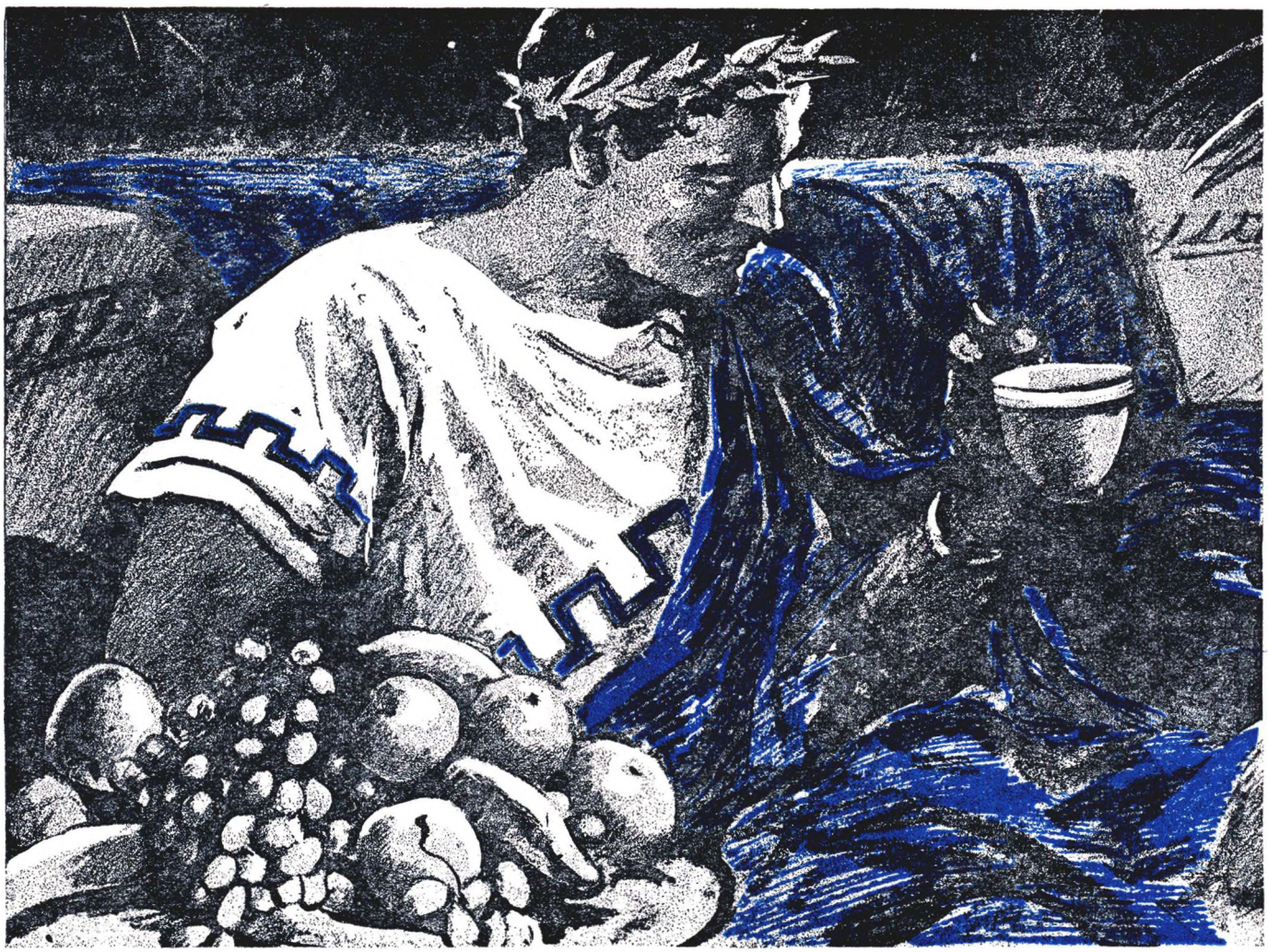
"Me, and Egypt, and whatever else you'd have!" she almost whispered. "Do, for once, an unselfish, noble action. Save Hieron, my old tutor, and restore him to freedom."

A chill fell upon him at the word. "You're stark mad, girl!"

"Think it over," said she, and slid away through the water. "Float, look up at the stars—and think it over. Free him, and Egypt is mine, and all you seek is yours."

She would not say a word more. He struck out, and floated beside her, and began to comprehend what a clever creature she was. Only here in the harbor, where none could overhear, had she dared to utter this request. At this realization he woke up and came alive, for the first time in days—in fact, since coming to this hellhole of dissipation.

THE trade of the world between west and east passed here. Alexandria was steeped in luxury, in wealth, and above all in vice. Its beauty had degenerated into rottenness. Old Auletes, and everyone else in the palace, made life one unending drunken orgy. Gabinius, his captains and his legions wallowed in it; palace eunuchs ruled in the king's name.



Antony found himself catching eagerly at

Old Hieron—ah! True, he had been Cleopatra's tutor in philosophy and mathematics; but he was something far more. A pure Egyptian, this old man was the last descendant of the family of Rameses; he was the last of the blood of the Pharaohs. More, he had all the hidden lore of ancient Egypt at his fingertips; the mysteries of the old gods, now forgotten, were his, the wisdom and magic of the ancient priesthood were his.

He was a figure of veneration, of mystic power, to the whole people of the land. About him clustered a thousand legends; but these had not saved him. Little old drunken Auletes feared him terribly, and at a word from the king, Gabinius had seized and prisoned him in the dungeons beneath the Temple of Pan. Most of the Roman troops here were Gauls who feared and obeyed nothing except the Fasces of Rome; and they were camped about this temple, which was one of the wonders of Alexandria. Thus Hieron was in safe hands, and would probably be murdered when Auletes got around to it.

The stars paled, as the brilliant beacon of the Pharos lit the night. Antony looked at the face of Cleopatra, floating like a lotus-flower beside him under the ruddy glare from the high marble tower.

"Clever wench!" he said. "What do you want of this old man, eh?"

"Wisdom," she replied quietly. "All the lore and hidden treasures and knowledge of the mysteries, the magic and power of the old gods, are his; and he will give them to me—and with them, Egypt. Free him."

"You know what it would mean to me?" he said slowly.

She laughed a little. "Think it over, Antony. Come and sup with me, and we'll speak of it then. It's now or never, for tomorrow my father means to have him killed."

She struck out for the steps. He followed, more slowly.

His head was free of wine; he could think and see clearly. Gabinius was his commander; he was only captain of the proconsul's cavalry, although actually he was the second man in the army and its chief leader. But Gabinius could blast his whole career, and this Antony must risk if he did any such thing as free Hieron.

More; the action would certainly infuriate Auletes and the palace eunuchs and might jeopardize the whole Roman position here. To effect the thing openly, were madness. To do it by stealth was impossible. Let this girl make a fool of him? The hell with it!

BY the time he landed, she was clothed again; the parched desert air was like a towel that dried them almost at once. He followed her in silence to the palace entrance. The Roman guards saluted. Those of the Household Troops, the king's guards, saluted likewise. They passed in the same silence toward the upper terraces that looked out to sea; from the great hall came music and maudlin song, shouts of riotous roaring mirth.

The sea air, the terrace with its pillows and cushions and little tables of fruit and wine, was a breath of cleanliness. A Nubian girl served them deftly; they ate and drank almost in silence, Antony refusing more wine and watering what he had, in Greek fashion. He was conscious of the girl's regard, of her slight smile, of her fresh cool beauty. Her voice stole upon him like music, when they were alone again.

the fancy of sharing Cleopatra's childish hopes and ideals.

"What do I offer you, Antony?"

"The chance to make a fool of myself," he growled.

"So you would see it, true, but look again: it is the chance to do a good deed."

"For your profit."

"No. I lied," she said quietly. "That is all silly nonsense about the old man's hidden lore and so on; all fantastic rumors and wild gossip. He is just an old man, a good man, beloved of the gods. If he had any occult powers, would he be in prison now? I respect and honor him, Antony. He can give me nothing; he has not a piece of silver to his name. Because he is a good man, this drunken father of mine hates and fears him. I cannot see him murdered—I cannot!"

"Now you talk sense," he said.

"Precisely. I offer you great risk to yourself, perhaps, and the chance to do a noble action for another, without reward."

He peered sharply at her. "Without reward? But you promised me your love—"

"Again, I lied. Am I one of these temple women, who give themselves freely to all comers in the service of the gods? Am I a mere palace girl at the service of anyone? Am I so low as to be ruled by vicious pleasure?"

A grimace of disgust contorted her features.

"No, Antony, no!" she went on. "I am a princess, a descendant of the gods, and never shall I stoop to be less! I could love you, yes; my heart goes out to you as it never did before. But I shan't bribe you to nobility. Do this thing to save from tyranny and murder a gentle old man. Do it of yourself, because I ask it and show you what it means. Stand like the Pharos yonder, a beacon in a world of vice and evil—prove yourself!"

The magic beauty of her voice and personality held him gripped. She was, he perceived, opening her very heart to him; the heart of a girl blind to all except her ideals. She was a child, who saw with childish purity and took no heed of practical things.

This shook him. It opened a new vision to him. What if he, too, were to fling aside his hard, cynical Roman teachings and become once more a boy in pursuit of the ideal?

"I'd be a fool!" he told himself, but his eyes were shining, his breath was coming more rapidly, as the vista opened before him. A good deed done for its own sake—this was something new to his Roman experience.

"By Hercules, who was my ancestor, you tempt me!" he murmured.

"Not I, but the gods," she said. Twisting on the cushions, she lay on her stomach and looked up at him, her delicately carven features alight. "To you, the death of one man is nothing at all; but to the gods, Antony, an evil action is evil, a good action is good. You Romans know nothing of good or evil; you only know whether a thing will serve your purpose or not. Your harsh gods will bless a crime if it has sufficient utility."

True; he smiled at her shrewdness.

"Give of yourself for someone else," she went on earnestly. "A new experiment; try it, my Antony. You may find a fresh horizon! I'll go with you and share the risk. All that I know of good, Hieron taught me; all I know of vice and evil, I learned from my father and those around him. You've brought me a breath of goodness and strength. If you're the man

I think you, then to me you're more than Egypt, more than the world!"

The music of her voice drifted along, like the song of the palace singer who chanted all the night long.

"You've heard of the mysteries of Isis, Antony? But you don't know what they are; no Roman will ever know. But I know! This is their theme: that a man must sink to the depths before he can rise, he must die before he can be born again, he must pass through the darkness before he can aspire to the light. You're in the darkness, Antony. Get a start upward toward better things—"

All this and more was over his head; it made no sense to him. But her passionate conviction, her vibrant personality, did. She wakened a chord that was all but buried under his sensual egotism.

It was a novel notion, as she said, and this attracted him; already he was bored with life and seeking new experiences. His first campaign found him jaded with Roman dissipation, yet still able to envision two joys he had never yet tasted—unselfishness, and power.

He found himself catching eagerly at the fancy of sharing, for once, her childish hopes and ideals; of playing, with her, this queer game of doing something for others. It touched the boyish impulsiveness in him and wakened forgotten things in his heart.

THE Libyan slave slid into the lamplight and handed her mistress a pair of ivory and wax tablets. Cleopatra took them, opened them, and read what was scratched on the wax. She caught her breath, and startled anger dilated her eyes. Then it was gone; she dismissed the girl, and turned.

"This," she said, tapping the message, "from a slave. Do you know what that means, Antony? One or two old slaves, on whom I can depend—no others. Not a single human being, otherwise, whom I can trust. I, daughter of the Ptolemies, heiress of Egypt—alone!"

"Not likely!" said Antony, laughing, but her face remained gravely sad.

"You don't understand. My father a drunken sot; power all in the hands of the palace eunuchs; all around me vice and murder. Like my brother and my sisters, I'm a mere pawn in the hands of those who seek power—Gabinius or you. Assassination is the most common of all deaths in this royal family of mine. Kill them, get them out of the way, clear the road—that's the only thing we know!"

Uneasily, he reflected that she was right.

"And I'm alone," she went on. "Alone, with only my own wit to rely upon. In you I've at last found a friend, a person whom I can trust. Why, Antony, what a wonderful thing it is! You're like me; you can see the stars above this filthy murk. You can glimpse higher things, purer things, nobler things."

He warmed to this. But suddenly she struck the tablets in her hand.

"Look! Here's warning; it's now or never, Antony! My father has persuaded Gabinius to kill Hieron at once, tonight; even now, the assassins may be on the way. There's not a moment to waste. Yes or no?"

Decision was one thing Antony ever met like a man.

"Done!" He leaped up, his eyes flashing. "Win or lose, I'll do it!"

"Then wait—wait one moment."

Before he knew it, she was gone. A moment later she came back to him, cloaked from head to heels in a black robe, her fingers dripping with jeweled rings and bracelets. She shoved these gauds at him with a breathless laugh.

"Here, take these—and these gold-pieces! We'll need them for bribery."

"We?"

"Certainly. I said I was going with you." She caught his arm. "Come along! No time to waste—we must go on foot, too. I'll get you out of the palace; you must get me into the Paneum. Your yellow-haired Gauls don't know me."

Antony laughed. "They know me, right enough! Aye, little queen—together!"

He was in for it now with his whole impulsive soul. He swept an arm about her and lifted her, and his lips found hers ready and willing. Next instant they were off.

How they got out of the palace, he never knew; she led him by dark corridors and hidden passages. This palace had been reared by Greeks who had conquered Persia and beyond to the Indus, and was purely Oriental in its secret ways. They emerged by a tiny postern gate by the barracks of the Household Troops, where two of those palace guards were on watch. They saluted Cleopatra, but barred the way.

"Orders, Highness! None may leave except with the signet of the King."

"Here's his likeness instead." Antony poured gold into their palms. "Watch for our return, and say nothing."

The city lay before them—the Gate of the Moon, here at the northern end, with the enormously broad highway leading straight south to the Gate of the Sun, and cut midway by the equally broad Street of Canopus—a city of glorious vistas equaled by no other in the world, and rivaled only by Rome in majesty.

The streets were simply riotous; the army of occupation did what it liked, and with loot-bulging pockets was out for pleasure. The whole city lived only for pleasure and for commerce—all the commerce of Egypt pouring in from the south, of the Mediterranean from the north, of the eastern world from the caravan routes, and of Libya and north Africa from the west. Here was the crossroads of the world, and tonight its roaring highways reeled with tumult that had no limit. The whole world seemed drunk.

Now and again Antony was recognized, and yelling voices acclaimed him—swaggering Gauls or bowlegged Bithynian cavalrymen shouting applause and greeting. The crowded streets were thronged with every race and color under heaven, most of them armed. Quarrels or even small riots were frequent, corpses by no means rare, assault and robbery a commonplace. The police were keeping off the streets these nights.

Twice Antony ran into trouble while shielding his companion from roisterers. Each time he smashed out with arrogant, brutal violence that cleared the way. Cleopatra laughed softly and clung closer to him as they hurried along.

"Well done, my Hercules! Faster, faster! To the right, into the Street of Canopus—there's the Paneum just ahead!"

A strange temple of Pan it was, strange and grotesque and tremendous. It stood on high ground behind the theater, a huge pile of rock in the shape of a fir-cone, girdled by a spiral ascent to the summit. This artificial hill was surrounded by groves and gardens, in which a portion of the army was encamped; consequently the place was under guard. At one side of the temple itself was a system of prisons and dungeons which served the Courts of Justice, adjoining.

THE decurion who stood with his guards at the entrance recognized Antony and greeted him respectfully.

"I want admission to one of the prisoners," said Antony bluntly. "Who has them in charge, do you know?"

"The centurion Decius," replied the decurion. "At least, he's taken over command of the prisons, but these rascally Greeks still have the place in hand. I'll send a torchman and a couple of my men with you as guides."

He did so. Cleopatra drew the dark hood of her robe closer about her face as they circled the temple and came to the prison entrance beyond. Here the guards were Greeks of the palace troops. The centurion, Decius? Not here. Cassander was in

The warder led them along a series of cell-groups. It was not going to be easy to walk out with the captive, thought Antony.

charge, Cassander, lieutenant of the royal household. Who wanted him?

"Marcus Antonius!" bawled one of the legionaries. "Fetch him out here, and quick about it! If he keeps a Roman waiting, he'll get something to remember!"

Cassander came forth, a slim effeminate man in gilded armor. With only a curious glance at Cleopatra, he greeted Antony affably and invited him to enter. Leaving the guards, and with Cleopatra on his arm, Antony strode inside.

"I want speech with the prisoner Hieron," he demanded. Cassander stopped short.

"Lord, only the king's signet can reach him. By what right do you—"

"This!" barked Antony, striking the sword at his hip. "Take me to him and no more talk!"

Cleopatra clutched his arm with a quick grip and a whisper and a laugh. This was not the way to do things; she knew this lieutenant. Antony grunted and fisted some jeweled baubles into the hand of the Greek, who at once became suavely deferential.

"Noble Antonius, to serve you is an honor. Your companion goes with you? Very well; permit me to send a warder to guide you and unlock the gates. Here, my lord—a vial of perfume to keep the prison smell from your nostrils."

Antony took the little vial and handed it to the girl. All this was very satisfying; this rascal knew how to treat a Roman. The name of Antonius was magical. A burly warder appeared, bearing a ring of huge keys and a pottery lamp, and saluted. Antony followed, with Cleopatra.

"One of those jewels would have been enough," murmured Cleopatra. "You are prodigal of wealth, my Antony! How shall you get our man out?"

She spoke in Latin, which was safely unknown to the warder.

"Oh, knock this fellow on the head, fetch out your friend, and shout for the legionaires if anybody objects," Antony replied carelessly, and she laughed at the words. He had his own way of doing things; it might serve.

But Marcus Antonius was by no means so careless as he appeared. He had begun to think; a most unusual process for his reckless, gallant brain. When he really set himself to the labor, he had a remarkably shrewd sense of values. When Cleopatra laughed and whispered, he had seen Cassander's face change imperceptibly; it came to him then that the lieutenant must have recognized this girl's voice, and might know her jewels as well.

Somehow, somewhere, there was something amiss. He began to be on his guard.

The warder led them along a straight series of cell-groups, each group cut off by an iron grating. The cells were small, cramped, filthy; the stench of the place was horrible. They gained a stone stairway and plunged down this to reach damp-dripping oubliettes below ground, where captives of importance were held.

It was not going to be so easy to walk out with the captive, thought Antony.

The warder set his lamp on a wall-shelf and stooped with his keys at an iron grille. As he straightened up and the door swung open, Antony caught him by the hair, twisted his head, and slammed it against the wall. The man dropped in a limp, inert mass.

Cleopatra darted into the cell; a murmur of eager voices sounded. Antony stooped and secured the bunch of keys, shoved the unconscious warder into the cell, took down the lamp and stepped inside. The girl was clinging to an old man with long white beard, who blinked uncertainly at the light.

"Yes, my child, yes," the old man was saying. "All shall be yours—the ancient secrets known to none other, the hiding-place of the royal treasures of Egypt, all!"

"But where?" demanded the girl. "Where are these things to be found, Hieron?"

The old man smiled indulgently.

"In the library, my child. I wrote down everything on the back of a Syrian scroll into which no one ever looks. I can give you its number, which I memorized, but you must write it down. Among those hundreds of thousands of books—"

"Here!" she exclaimed eagerly, and produced the same tablets that had been brought to her. "Tell me the number—I'll write! The point of my knife will serve as stylus."

ANTONY, holding the lamp, stood forgotten. Hieron closed his eyes and slowly gave, number by number, the directions for locating that Syrian scroll among the countless books that filled the Alexandrian Library, most famous storehouse of learning in the world; while Cleopatra, flashing a gold-hilted dagger into sight, scratched the numbers on the wax of the tablets.

Upon Antony dawned a chill, growing comprehension. Her first thought was not to get this old man away, but to obtain his secrets.

"And by Hercules, she played me for a fool!" he realized angrily. "A good action done for its own sake—all bosh! What she said in the first place was the truth. And since I didn't fall for that, she switched around and put on a fine little act—"

Cleopatra glanced up, saw his face, and thrust away her tablets hurriedly.

"Antony! Oh, we must go—we must get him out of here!"

"Aye, you clever wench—got what you were after first, didn't you?" he growled. "So you made a fool of me! I can see it all now. You and your prating of gods, of good and evil, of noble deeds—why, devil take your blasted lies!"

HIS voice of fury reverberated from the walls. The old man bleated at him:

"Peace, my lord, forgive her, forgive her! She is destined to be Egypt's glory—her very name, *Glory of the Race,* is prophetic! The secrets and the treasures of the past belong to her of right!"

"Shut up," roared Antony angrily.

Then Cleopatra was upon him, her arms reaching up about his neck, her eager voice at his ear, her warm sweet loveliness clutching at his senses.

"Oh, Antony, Antony who spoke of love! Would you let injured vanity wound us both? What does it matter how I got you here, so long as you're here? Yes, I cajoled you—what of it? We'll take Hieron out, safe and well! We'll rescue him. His name, his backing, his wisdom and power will put all Egypt in my hand—and in yours, my Antony! All that I have, shall be yours: more wealth than ever Rome saw, more power than ever Rome can give you."

Injured vanity—she had put her finger on it. To his ardent youth, this was the chief consideration; nothing else could bulk so large as the fact that she had tricked him, with a cleverness far beyond his own abilities. Even though he might regret it all his life, he could see but one course open to him now.

He repulsed her rudely, fired by shame and anger.

"None of that—no more of that!" he cried angrily. "A ship is leaving at dawn for Rome; I'm sailing on her, do you understand? Sailing to join the army of Cæsar. Save your wiles for Gabinius, wench!"

"Leave me—you would leave me?" she gasped.

"Oh, fear not; I'll finish what we've begun!" He gestured with the lamp. "Come along. Bring your doddering old fool yonder. I'll get him and you safe out of here as I promised, and you can go your ways. Give Egypt to someone else—some other fool whom you can cozen with your beauty!"

With these vehement words he swung around and strode into the corridor. To the force of his motion was added a draft of damp air; the lamp flickered and went out. He swore heartily, and flung a hasty word over his shoulder.

"Never mind—we can find the stairs. Follow, follow! Waste no more time here!"

He stepped out, feeling his way along one wall. That Rome-bound ship at dawn, the trireme bearing despatches from Gabinius for the Senate—aye, take it! Take it, join Cæsar in Gaul, cast in his lot with that fighting general and take the army for his career!

Suddenly he came to startled halt, as a ruddy glare of light flooded the base of the stairs ahead, and the corridor. Down the stairs came Cassander, holding a smoky torch, and behind him were two gorgeously armed officers of the Household Troops.

"Your life will answer for it if Hieron isn't here!" one of the palace officers was saying. "You had no business to admit anyone. We have orders to put a sword into the old rascal, and stick his head on a pike over the gate—"

Antony, frozen, saw Cleopatra and Hieron, directly behind him, clinging to his shadow. Another instant, and the three officers would discover them.

This instant of time became an agonized eternity, through which flashed a thousand facets of light across his brain.

They were lost, all of them, cut off from the groves and the legionaires. He himself, come what might, was finished and done for. His senatorial rank might save his life, but only one thing now awaited him—swift flight to Cæsar and a new career in Gaul.

His heart leaped. Show her, shame her! Here was his chance; show her, a farewell gesture—make her lying words come true! Do one fine brave thing, not for himself, but for the old man Hieron, and for her! Get the two of them away at all cost, do what he had come here to do! There was only one way, of course.

Do it, and Egypt would be too hot to hold him. Do it not—abandon them, bluff it through, play a coward's part, and he might win greatly; plaudits from Gabinius, rewards and honors from fuzzy little Auletes. What became of a girl and an old man, mattered little. Why run his head into trouble when he might so easily gain wealth and honor? Any other Roman would do it in a jiffy. That was the Roman way; utility at any cost, hard practical self-service, and to hell with anyone else!

Do it—do it not! The balance swung in his mind's eye. Ruin and flight on the one hand, and both of them saved; on the other, a quick about-face, and both of them lost, and himself garnering rewards and honors. It was odd, in this flickering instant of time, how her soft lying words came back into his brain:

"A man must sink to the depths before he can rise; he must die before he can be born again; he must pass through the darkness before he can aspire to the light—stand like a beacon in a world of vice and evil. . . . To the gods, Antony, an evil action is evil, a good action is good. . . . Prove yourself!"

Aye, show her! The boyish impulsiveness of him leaped at the chance. By Hercules, prove that her lying appeal had really awakened this new thing in him! His decision was made. The flashing instant was gone. He threw a word over his shoulder to the pair behind him.

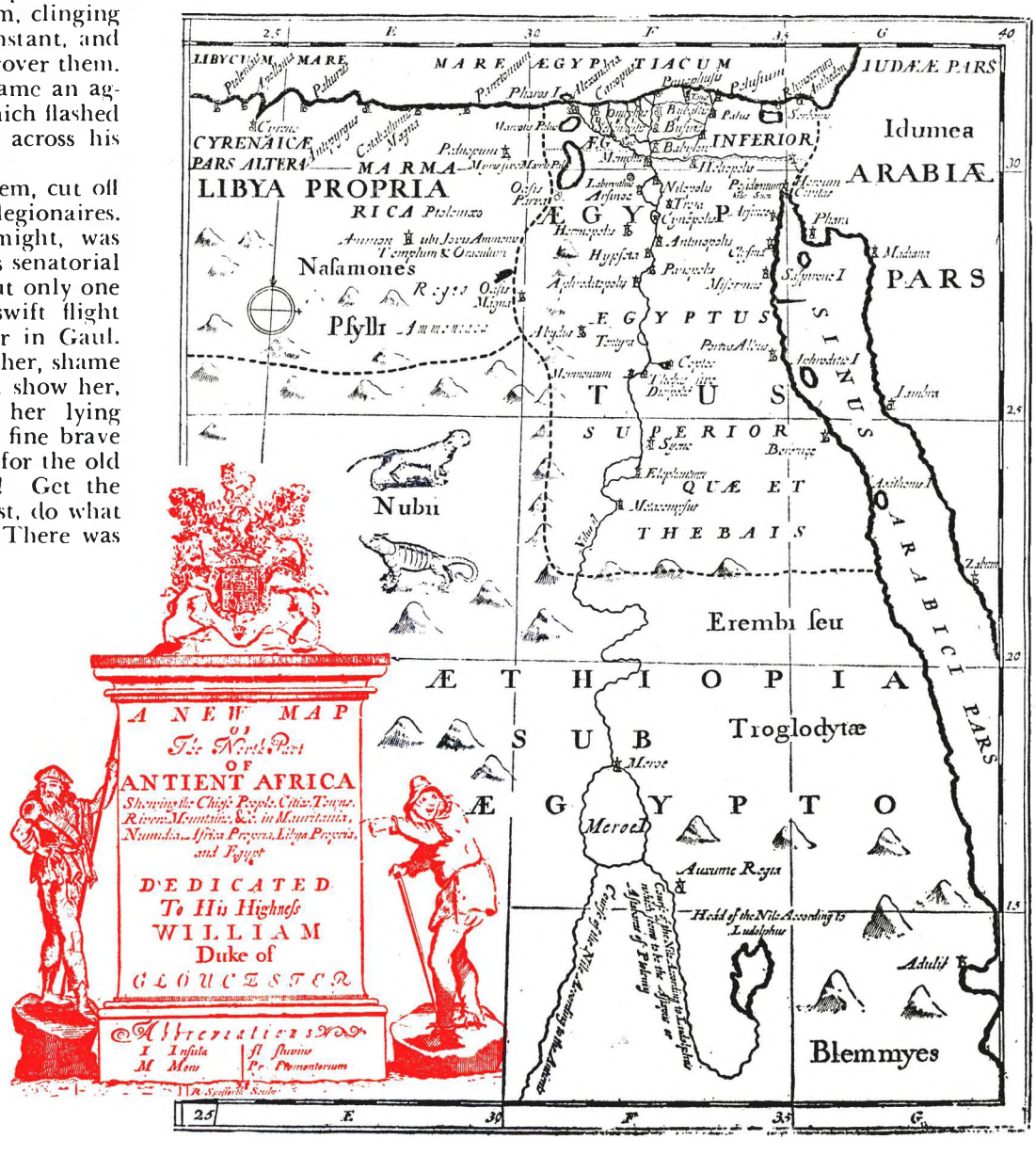
"I'll settle them. Run for it when the torch falls—"

His sword rasped out. The three had seen him; Cassander held up the torch; the two officers stared at him as he approached.

"Antonius!" one exclaimed sharply, taking alarm. Steel glimmered in the torchlight. A shout arose. "Guards! Ho, guards!"

"Murderers!" roared Antony. They lunged forward at him. He met them

Illustrations (except this one) by Maurice Bower



Egypt as it was known in the time of Antony and Cleopatra — according to this centuries-old British map.

halfway; his blade clashed their swords aside and he hurled himself bodily upon them, laying about in wild bellowing bravado. He took for granted they would run at his very name; a nearly fatal error. He swept his sword at the torch, struck the arm of Cassander instead and a scream broke from the Greek.

"Kill him! Kill the barbarian!"

"Kill the Roman dog!" echoed one of the others, and all three of them were at him. The torch fell to the floor in smoking embers—enough light to kill him by.

Antony's contempt for Greeks vanished; they were upon him like tigers. Instantly he became the soldier once more, and this was a business he knew. Their weapons pricked at him, but now he was really using his sword, bending low, striking beneath the steel corselets to kill—and he did kill.

GRIMLY terrible was this darkness below the stairs, where the damp walls reëchoed the clash of steel and the shrill voices of men; yells and curses from frenzied prisoners in the cells made the din more horrible. Amid this blind fury, Antony's blade plunged deep into a body and was wrenched from his hand. He slipped, in blood or water, and fell flat. Above him two maddened figures grappled, and Cassander screamed anew with death in his throat.

Antony found the stairs. Up above, lights were glimmering and men were running, prison guards with torches. Antony came bounding up the stairs into their midst.

"Help for Cassander!" he bellowed at them. "Down there—the prisoners are killing him! Help for Cassander —*help!*"

The guards plunged wildly at the stairway. He hurried along, meeting more guards and roaring at them to save Cassander. All the gates across the passage stood wide open. Here came a Gaul, then another. Antony shouted at them, and they accompanied him back to the prison entrance. His tunic was slashed and ripped and bloodied, and the mad fracas below-ground had left him with half a dozen minor slashes and cuts. A soldier ran up and saluted.

"Antonius! A girl and an old man used your name—we let them pass!"

"Right!" cried Antony. "Out of here! To the tents!"

More legionaries rallied. At the tents amid the sacred grove, he secured a quick bath and change of garments and another sword; amid an outburst of angry tongues, he told of an attempt on his life that had failed. No more was necessary.

The news spread with inflamed exaggeration. Within ten minutes, furious legionaries were bursting through the Brucheion quarter, the city mob was up in arms, fire and sword were at work, and the whole city was being swept by a fury of riot and pillage and murder. Gabinius had his hands full that night, with no leisure to investigate causes or to wonder what had become of Marcus Antonius.

Dawn found a pall of smoke hanging over Alexandria, as a speedy trireme dipped oars and headed from the harbor. On her quarterdeck stood Antony. He gazed back at the royal palace on the tip of the promontory, its cool terraces rising above the water. He thought, but was not sure, that he could descry a white figure there, a slim girlish figure, watching, waiting, alone.

"Bosh!" he muttered, angry at his own emotion. "She'll get on; she's a clever wench. Well, by Hercules, I showed her! No one's going to make a fool out of Marcus Antonius! I'm well off, out of this cursed Orient world of luxury and assassins. Where I belong is in the army with Cæsar. There's not a person in this whole blasted city worth a lift of the finger!"

He stared back at the white speck, frowning, his eyes uneasy and troubled.

"Well, hardly a person," he added. "A girl—a child, dammit—just doesn't count. And yet—and yet—"

A centurion came up at that moment with a brusque salute. Antony whipped around, laughed, and resolutely turned his back on the white Pharos and the smoking, beautiful city. It was all washed out by blue sea and sky.

Windy sea and windy sky, with the trireme bowling away westward for Rome and a lordly eagle rising and circling, soaring across the blue and heading back for Africa. . . . Then all vanished, and the screen was blank.

"UPON my word!" exclaimed Sir James Wilkie, relaxing. "The most remarkable thing I ever saw! How was it done, gentlemen?"

"Are you asking us?" rejoined Lundgren. "No, no. Come and see for yourself. We expect you to solve the secret for us. Did we see and hear the real Antony, the real Cleopatra? Or was it mere illusion, self-deception?"

"I must have a look, certainly," said the visitor. He rose and went to the dials, peering at the setup, questioning Lundgren, looking now at this, now at that; his shrewd hard-headed queries probed the construction of tubes, oscillators, crystal quartz wafers and what-not.

But Cosgrave lit a cigarette and watched them with a thin cynic smile, knowing there was no answer—there could be no answer.

What

A

The Last Girls They'd See

I DECIDED—after being turned down by the Wacs, Waves, Spars and the Marines—to join a U.S.O. unit, and I did; and just recently I returned from six months of dancing overseas in a U.S.O. unit that roamed the barren stretches of Alaska and the Aleutians.

One day there was a troop-ship leaving an Alaskan port for one of the Jap-held islands. Our unit, just four girls, was rushed down to the dock, and on a hastily constructed platform we performed for the boys massed up there on the ship's decks.

For some of them, it was the last show they would ever watch, and we were the last girls they'd ever see; and the thought brought tears to my eyes.

We did our routines, and then the four of us began singing all the oldies we could think of—"Tipperary," "Keep the Home Fires Burning" and many, many, many more. The boys on the ship joined in, and as we were singing, the transport moved out and began to steam away.

But we kept standing there, in the half-light, singing as loudly as we could and hearing the boys' voices echoing back across the water.

That's something I'll always remember—the four of us huddled on the dock, and the sky overcast, and from far away the soldiers singing tunes they had liked at college dances, parties and picnics. We stayed there until the last faint echo had died away. I'll remember that morning for a long, long time.

S. P.,
Minneapolis.

When the War Is Over

A SHORT time ago I was the recipient of one of those dreadful telegrams from the War Department. It tersely informed me that my husband had been killed in action, fighting the Japanese. Later I received a sincere and sympathetic letter from Washington with the details.

My marriage was not just the result of one of those haphazard, flighty, war

Do *You* Think?

Readers' Forum

romances. It was the real McCoy. In fact, we had known each other from childhood, and had made mud-pies together, in the back yard behind the homes where we lived as neighbors. We threw snowballs at each other and went fishing together. When we were old enough to go to school, he was the boy who carried my books and tied my shoelaces. He gave me my first kiss and my first corsage.

But those things belong to the past. Now I am working eight hours every day in a war plant. I have offered to work twelve hours, but as my offer has not been accepted I use my spare time for other phases of war work.

At night, when I go to bed, I lie and think of the good times I shared with my husband before the war came. It still seems impossible to me that this kind, honest, hard-working boy is gone from my life forever, and with him all our wonderful plans.

At heart he was one of the mildest-tempered persons I have ever known; and yet, after the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, he couldn't wait to enlist. Not because he thought he would like it, or because he was seeking adventure or glory, but only because he was a real American, through and through, and because he realized that our country was in grave peril.

The day he left, I tried to be brave, but in spite of myself I cried. He laughed and tried to cheer me up, and told me he would soon be back.

And so he went, as thousands of others have, to face the horrible trials of war—filth, disease and death—death at the hands of creatures human in shape only.

When the day comes when the American armies march into Tokyo,—yes, Tojo, it will come,—then the Japs will be at our mercy. Shall we spare them? Will America allow them to rebuild their ruined cities? Will we resume trade with this "land of the rising scum"? Will our charitable organizations furnish clothing to these beasts who have tortured and killed as no other beast in existence has ever done?

I say no! Let us not be lenient and let us not lay down our arms until the Jap menace has been wiped from the face of the earth!

G. Y.

"Start Truckin', Girls!"

MAYBE, being a woman, I'm not supposed to horn in on the party, but being an avid reader of BLUE BOOK, an outdoorsy, adventurous sort of gal, and the holder of a position which has always been barred to my sex, I kinda feel that I belong to the gang.

I am a lady freight handler. Yes! You read it right the first time—a lady freight handler; and now that I have passed through my boot-training in the profession, I'll gladly take on any of you two-fisted, hairy-chested he-men in a plain or fancy truckin' contest.

How did this all come about? Listen, men: For months I had been brooding over my inability to get into something which would have a direct and definite bearing on the war effort. The Wacs, Waves and Spars had all expressed deep regret that they could find no use for my capabilities, and were polite almost to the point of unintelligibility in explaining that a little matter of twenty or thirty pounds excess tonnage might have something to do with their refusal. Was I mad! Casting about, I came, by fortuitous circumstance, across a Help Wanted ad in the morning paper, which stated: "WANTED. Women Freight Handlers. Steady Work. Pleasant Working Conditions."

Well, here I am, a lady dock-walloper, and proud of it! I know now, when I trundle a ducky little ten-horse motor into a box-car for overseas shipment, that I'm doing something that'll be brought, in time, to Adolf's and Hiro's attention. Why, bless my calluses, I have never been so happy in my life, because I know that every day I spend in rustling freight will bring the war that much closer to a finish.

And now, boys, if you have any little fluffs around the house who are wondering what *they* can do to help the war effort, just tell 'em: "Start truckin', girls!"

M. L. F.,
Chicago.

The Big Stick

THIS is the Regular Army speaking. My serial number has the digits of the professional. But I'm not too clannish to my tribe, for I've seen a great transformation made possible by the "civilian soldier."

Back in the appeasement days of '38 and '39, war was as far from my mind as an invasion from Mars. The Army was tough, but terribly small and ill-equipped. It was like a muscle that has atrophied through disuse: the tissues were there, but they were in a coma, put to sleep by appeasers, politicians and sleepwalkers. Then, the invasion from Mars became an actuality. Now, with millions of citizens swelling this great army, we are bringing retribution to those who would live by the sword.

And while that retribution is in process, many men and women are planning their postwar worlds.

Believe me, there are things that men may disagree on. Everyone is entitled to his opinion, but there is one phase of postwar planning that every soldier concurs in who has enough respite from battle to think of it. They may draw apart when discussing a universal language or religion; but just

MOST of us are interested to know how the other fellow looks upon or solves his personal dilemmas. And with this idea in mind, we would welcome letters from you, our readers, telling us what you are thinking about—about your business now or your career after the war; the war's effect on you or those dear to you; or if you are in one of the armed Services, a letter which would interest your fellow-readers on your recent experiences or expectations for the future—these within the censorship regulations, of course.

We will pay twenty-five dollars for each letter bought by us. The author's full name and address must accompany the letter; but, if he prefers, initials only may be used for publication. No letters will be returned. All letters submitted will become the property of McCall Corporation. Address: "What Do *You* Think?" Blue Book Magazine, 230 Park Avenue, New York 17, N. Y.

mention a large, well-equipped professional peacetime army, and you'll hear a clamor of assent from service men.

Primarily, we are fighting for survival. Secondly, for our ideal of peace. To enforce that ideal, we must be practical. An army of at least a million men would be a concrete persuader to any future aggressors.

Someone has said that an ideal is like the North Star. We steer our course by it, yet never reach it. We *will* reach it if our ideals are backed up by something solid; something that all men, whatever their color or creed, can understand. So long as human nature exists, there will be black sheep among nations. Just how far they will go, will depend, as it always has, on the wrath of the just. We *must* always be prepared.

Right now we have a job to finish. Before we plunge into future battles, let us pray, as Cromwell and Gustavus Adolphus did—then give 'em hell!

Corporal Ed Dieckmann, Jr.

Wisdom from Hardship

AS a Civilian Overseas Worker, I have traveled thousands of miles since the fateful and hateful seventh of December. I've been in convoy, abandoned ship in midocean, flown from Florida to Venezuela and even traveled by dog-sled.

I've worked in steaming jungles and in frigid waste-lands. I've seen the moon over the Caribbean, and I've seen the Northern Lights. There's been heat and cold and hardship, but I wouldn't trade the past two years for any amount of money.

They've taught me to view life and the world with a keener perspective. They've enlarged my sphere, not only literally but also spiritually. Living with men and enduring all the trials of pioneer life at far-away bases, I've learned patience, coöperation and unselfishness.

Luxuries are forgotten and the little things of life loom importantly. Working seventy or eighty hours a week instead of forty or forty-eight makes time a precious commodity to be used with care. And the man in the next bunk whose wife is sick at home becomes of more concern to us than our own problems.

Millions of others, in a similar sense, are also experiencing hardships and finding them enlightening. And I think that never again will time be spent with abandon. Never again will we become so wrapped up with ourselves that we can't see the problems of our neighbors. Never again will material things be all-important. I'm sure that after we win the peace we'll live more humanly, more farsightedly, more wisely.

Lincoln J. Jordan.

An Angry Seabee

FOR seven months now I have been in quite a few camps in the United States getting training that is so valuable to us Navy Seabees.

Perhaps I had better elucidate about the Seabees: We are Uncle Sam's newest branch of the fighting forces. The CB's are all former construction men. The training we take is military, so that we can fight and be as well-disciplined as any other branch. We are able, if the problem presents itself, to fight and take our advance base—then we proceed to build that base, and lastly to defend it. One big job, isn't it—but we Seabees are up to it.

On some occasions in the past few months, I have felt that I wasn't very much of a part of this vast war machine. But now—in the middle of the Pacific—I realize that I am a real cog in this huge war effort.

It is during times like these that I begin to wonder if these strike and dissension leaders are really Americans. I am a part of this war, because I have a wonderful wife and baby at home to protect. I want my child to grow up in the best country in the world.

But yet these strikers keep materiel from reaching us—they won't let us protect our loved ones. Behind every fighting man on the front, there are two or three loved ones at home. This fighting man doesn't care so much about himself, but he sure wants his family to be safe. And yet strikes persist and keep us from fulfilling our promise to our loved ones.

Why doesn't someone put these strikers wise? This is just one example of what makes a service man fightin' mad. Perhaps it would be a good idea to make these strikers 1-A! We fighting men *demand* action!

A buzzin' Seabee,
William I. Stout, F 2/c.

The Tough Job of Waiting

IT wasn't long before I discovered something in England. I was there from July until November in 1942. The Nazis had fallen off in their air attacks, but they were still sending sneak raiders over and whenever the siren went off we made for the slit trenches that had been dug beneath the trees of our hidden camp.

We waited. The planes would fly over and the guns would go off and the bombs would drop and we waited. It was then I knew that there was nothing more brutal than waiting for something we knew might come at any time.

More than that the feeling of not being able to do anything, personally, to knock down the Nazis was almost a disastrous feeling. We would crouch in our trenches and wait. We had the Garand with us but it might just as well have been a slingshot.

I thought then that I knew what it was to wait. But there was another thing. The loneliness began to get us. It was true there was much to do in England and much to be seen, but the loneliness we had was a new kind. We began to miss the friendly faces and the familiar streets and the familiar sights of America.

We laughed our lonely feeling off among unfamiliar faces and friendly strange voices, although sometimes, when we were alone remembrances became too vivid and real; it was then we began to feel depressed and weary and this was a feeling none of us could run away from.

I recalled all these thoughts and emotions when I was returning on the boat to America. I could not write of this to my people, my wife, my friends.

The first glimpse of America was something I shall not be able to put into words. I don't want to sound dramatic about it, but I could not speak. I could only look and feel.

That night for the first time in five months I saw lights in the street, in buildings. It was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen.

I have said that in England I thought I knew what it was to wait In the trenches with the German planes swarming overhead it seemed to me that to wait for death, or injury, was sinful.

But the waiting I did in the trenches was nothing to what I discovered when I returned home. I shall never forget the look on my wife's face when I walked into the house. This also I cannot describe in words. I only know that I found out then that the waiting we may do in battle is nothing compared to the waiting the people back home, who love us, go through.

We are out there doing, making the news. The people back home are hoping, praying, waiting. It takes guts, real honest-to-God guts, to wait.

T/5 Sam Elkin.

After a Year in Combat

HOW many of us, I wonder, are sacrificing something dear to us, for those in combat who are sacrificing their lives each day for us, and those who have died for you and me?

I am sure all of us, each man, woman and child, can give a little more than we are giving for those overseas who are giving their all for us.

After having served almost a year in combat with the Eighth Air Force in England I know what those boys are thinking. They are thinking about you and their loved ones here at home,

and hoping that you aren't being deprived of things you like and worship. They worry more about those things than they do the battles they fight, when life is at stake.

They go out on their dangerous missions, and the last thought may be about Mother and Dad at home, and are hoping they are well and all right. They may not come back from that mission, and may have died thinking about you, when we are people in the safest corner of the world that has not as much as felt the shock of one bomb.

We, the people of the United States, are the luckiest people in this world. This is one of very few countries that hasn't been bombed and really torn up by battle. We are not affected much here by rationing, and haven't really given up nearly as much as people in the other countries. We can still get sufficient clothing, a nice steak, and gasoline for our automobile without too much trouble. There are plenty of well-paying jobs everywhere; and we don't have to worry about being bombed from our home tomorrow.

The people in England can't get all the clothing they need; it is almost impossible to get a nice meal, and they cannot get gasoline for an automobile. Everything is rationed so severely there that you can't buy a bar of candy without a coupon, and coupons are a prize. They have been bombed and blitzed for four years and are still being bombed. They are forced to work in war factories if they aren't in the Armed Forces, and the pay they draw is very small in comparison with ours. They live in a dark world and never see a light outside of a closed blacked-out building. Yet these people carry on with what they have, and do not complain as you or I would under those circumstances. Wouldn't it be terrible if we had to live as the other people do on the other parts of the globe? Yes, we are the luckiest and most fortunate people in the world, by far.

I am sure each of us can sacrifice just a little bit more for those who are sacrificing their lives for us; and soon our world will be at peace and there will be no more fighting; and the ones we love can be with us to share that peace that you can help bring about. Are you doing your part?

S/Sgt. Durward L. Hinds.

Understanding Is No Small Thing

THOUGH it may fall strangely on older ears, it is quite true that a man of twenty-six has experienced a lot; he can do a great deal of thinking too, but only that thought is significant which is expressed primarily in terms of this experience. As I look back now, though I was no extreme introvert, it seems to me that I spent too much time with books and too little with people. It was thus, burdened with book-learning in many fields, that I obtained a degree in science.

It is accounted a tacit admission of failure when a man does not seek a living in that field of activity in which he specialized in school. If this is true, of course, it reflects on both student and school; but I refuse to admit that it is true. I did not continue in the arena of the laboratory, simply because I wanted to know more about what used to be known as the world of men and affairs. In this I received a first lesson and a strong stimulus to some honest thinking: I obtained a job in a national war agency, and discovered for the first time that the men who run the business of the world are, strangely enough and to their credit, only human beings!

That the names in books and men we used to discuss in bull sessions are not gods or ideas or academic problems merely, but are men even as you and I, may appear to some as only a reiteration of the obvious. In my experience, however, this was among the first of a kind of event marking a unit of growth: When the academic abstractions become realities the school boy is frequently *shocked* into manhood!

For the first time my scholastic complacency was pierced, and I knew a sort of fear. Now fear springs from ignorance, which in turn may be dispelled by thought. Men may be more or less powerful; they may be symbols or causes or effects in the movement of history, but they are men. The responsibility and dignity of being a man is implicit in the tradition of Western civilization, but it remained implicit, an academic abstraction, until it dawned on me that I too was a man. While this realization must have been gradual, it was crystallized suddenly when I recognized my kinship with "the movers and shakers of the world." Some such swift focusing of thought must have occurred to Shakespeare when he wrote his piece on "How noble a creature is a man."

This acute awareness of what to me was a new reality was a salutary thing. I had long come to know a good cigar when I had one; I had an eye for a pretty girl, and a palate for a brew, and I was acquainted with the profundities of friendship. All of these things now took on a poignant new value when they were considered in relation to a world whose fate was being worked out in terms not of gods nor of categories but of men. At the very least it behooves me to strive to understand men's decisions and actions. Since I am one of them myself, and in a democracy, I am potentially able to do this.

The coming of war made imperative a new assessment of things, and at the same time it called for activities, leaving not too much time for thinking. I felt a sense of unity in the war effort, especially since my job contributed to it; but I made no pretense (and only a little effort) to understand the war. It was to a great extent simply another sort of extra-curricular academic abstraction; but it broke over my head in a cold wave of reality when I was drafted. (And I was an engaged man!) Again the academic problem had exploded into a first-class *human* problem!

BEING drafted was salutary, too, however, for my sense of unity with the boys of Bataan and Guadalcanal (always the most acute aspect of the war to me) would now be much less tenuous and much more real.

When the Medical Officer at Fort Myer, Virginia, announced that my group was not quite up to the present standards of the Army, he said: "—And a few of the men in this room even have active tuberculosis." Poor devils, I thought. But another academic abstraction became a stinging reality, for I was one of them!

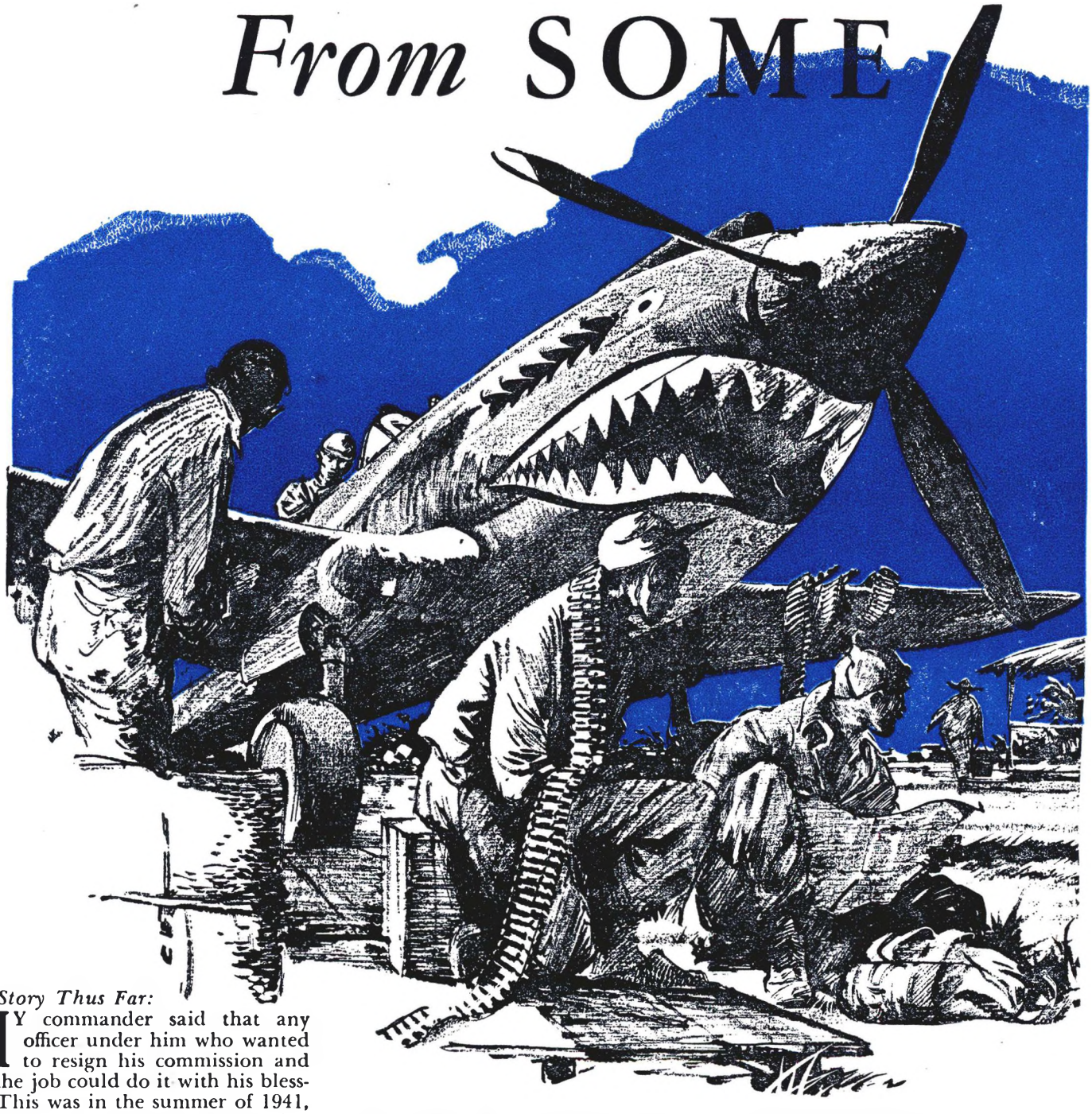
Now I'm at a sanatorium. My lung trouble is not so serious that I may not sometime be in the fray. And in the meantime, amid a litter of broken academic abstractions, I have time to think. Men do run the world, and despite the debunkers (whom I could never stomach, anyway) there are such things as great men and men who do great things. And possibly the thinking man, in understanding the world, will understand man, or in understanding man, will understand the world.

There is a beauty deep down inside of things which we can appreciate when we do think; and if through the smoke curling from the bowl of our well-worn briar we admit that there are some things which belong to the world, we must also admit that they belong *best* right here in the United States, where, under Providence, all the streams of civilization have flowed together. And right here is involved one of the main points of the war: We have a duty to be intellectual, a duty to think and understand. The tangible things of our heritage are not the only things worth fighting for.

Amid the clamor there are some men who have effected a synthesis of the various factors explaining the war. Perhaps, in seeing the world through the works of these men, I can make a contribution to the war effort. For understanding is no small thing.

W. P. H.,
Glenn Dale, Maryland.

From SOME



The Story Thus Far:

MY commander said that any officer under him who wanted to resign his commission and take the job could do it with his blessing. This was in the summer of 1941, and I was a lieutenant in the Marine Air Corps, stationed in the Caribbean.

So I resigned and presently found myself in the office of a man named Shayne in New York. He limped when he got up to shake hands. "Shrapnel," he told me. "Last war. Bad on rainy days. Sometimes on sunny days. Give me a contract, Miss Johnson."

I signed the contract, and soon afterward took ship from San Francisco. A strange voyage! Three times an attempt on my life was made; but watchful guardians—an F. B. I. man, a Chinese officer named Ching, and, I think, the purser—intervened in time. And on that voyage I met Vi Shandy, a dancer going out as entertainer in a night-club at Rangoon; Vi and I fell for each other pretty hard.

Vi Shandy was detained at Singapore, but Ching escorted me to Rangoon, and thence upcountry to a landing-field called Timara. There he led me into a lantern-lighted office. "Major Rees, may I present Mr. Arch Feeney?" he announced.

"Feeney," Rees said a little later, "you are the bearer of one of the most important messages I can imagine. We could not send it by cable or in cipher. We had to trust it to a messenger who himself didn't know it. You were selected because you are supposed to have an amazingly retentive memory. Please tell me everything Shayne said to you in New York."

I repeated, "'*Shrapnel. Last war. Bad on rainy days. Sometimes on sunny days,*'" and went on with the rest of the dialogue.

"You've done our country a great service, Mr. Feeney. You'll be able to do more," said Rees when we'd finished this strange interview. . . .

So I joined the American volunteer group. And only next day, I took up my P-40 to fight off a Jap bombing raid. I got two of the Jap bombers too, but the tail of my ship was shot off, and I had to bail out. . . . Pretty soon I found myself the guest of a Chinese listening post way upriver. *(The story continues in detail:)*

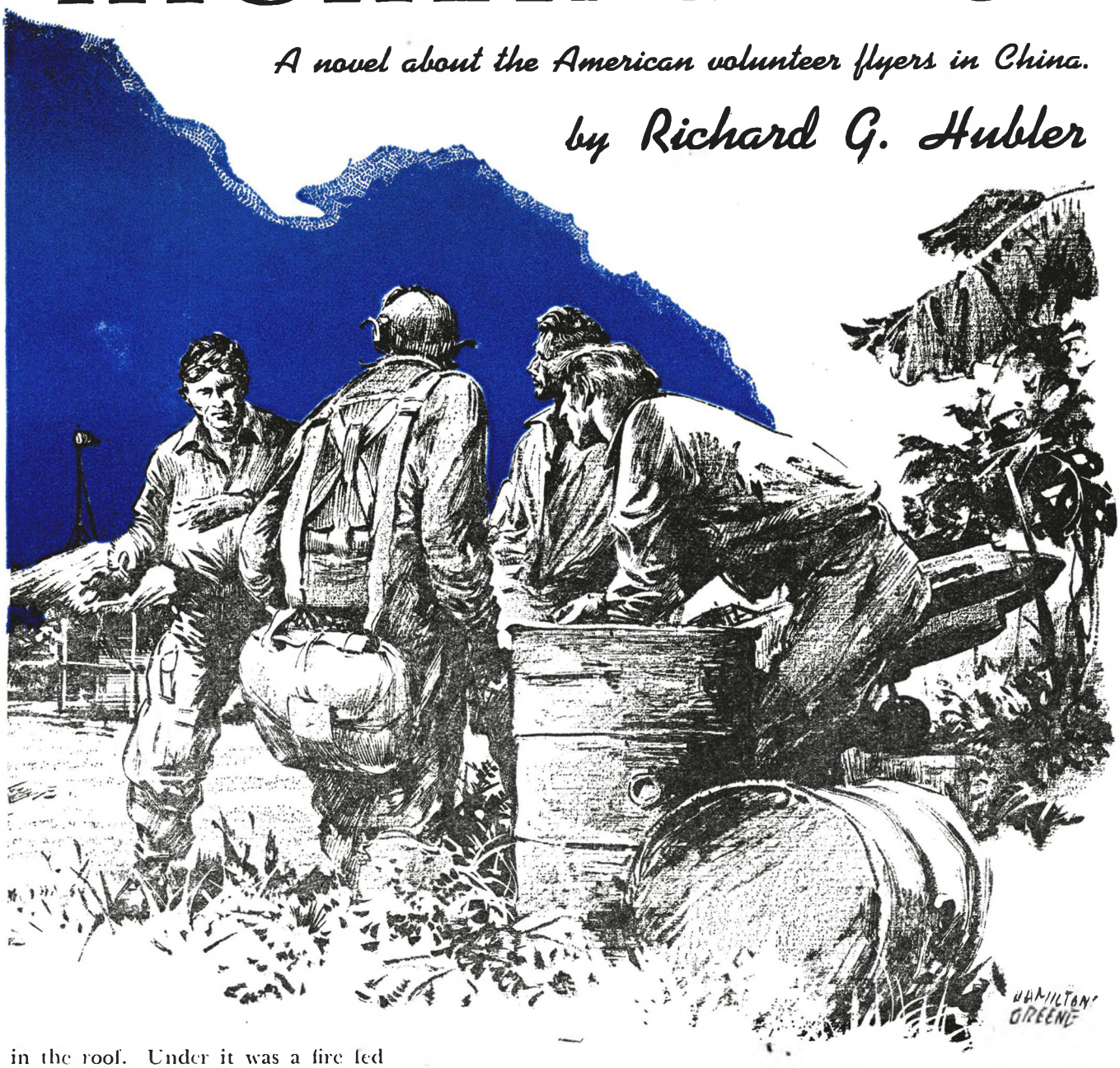
THEY took off my boots for me. The man who had captured me —his name was Sze-Fong—wrung out my socks and I washed the blood off my face myself.

I looked around the cave—a huge place. Fifty feet back was a vent cut

HIGHER PLACE

A novel about the American volunteer flyers in China.

by Richard G. Hubler



in the roof. Under it was a fire fed with sticks and what looked like water-buffalo chips. Clothing was hung along the walls. There were cans of food stacked in one corner, and ammunition and rifles in another. In a third niche there were three small shining boxes. I pointed to them. "What are they?" I asked.

The Chinese officer, who had introduced himself as Chang, loped over and picked up one. "These are the radios," he told me. "We send our messages to Timora by way of this radio."

"That's my base," I told him.

He looked at me surprisedly. "You have a very long way to go," he said.

"I don't doubt it," I said sourly.

"There are no paths in these mountains that are known, except to very few," continued the officer. "I cannot spare a guide for the days it would take."

"Well, never mind," I said. "Not for now, anyway. How do these things work?"

He showed me. It was a portable radio set that worked up current by the turning of a frictional crank. Once it had enough juice—twenty fast cranks could generally do it—they sent out a prearranged code. This was set up to correspond to a clock face. The figures on the clock face indicated direction: three o'clock (three taps) meant from the east, twelve o'clock (twelve taps) from the north, and so on. The number of the bombers was also indicated, after a specified pause, by taps, as was the height, speed and type of attacking planes. Since this data could only be transmitted by taps, it was a complicated business.

"We sent in news of some bombers early this morning," said Chang.

"I know," I said. "I was one of the boys sent out to knock them over. You must have got something wrong. Most of the flight missed them."

"We must do better," Chang said. "Did they all get away?"

"No." I said. "I saw three, at least, go down." Chang clapped his hands. He picked up a cup before him and presented it to me, full of a steaming liquid. "Celebration," he said. "This is the last of the hot wine."

He drank his off with a flourish. I followed suit and burned myself clear

through twenty-six feet of intestinal plumbing: the *gallien,* as Chang called it, seemed to be pure alcohol. Tears ran out of my eyes. Chang clapped me on the back. Sze-Fong giggled.

"You will get used to it," Chang said. "Now we shall eat."

"Don't you think I had better get going back to Timora?" I asked him. "I have nearly eighty miles to go."

Chang stared at me.

"By air-miles, perhaps, yes," he said. "But we have no planes. You will have nearly two hundred fifty miles to go by road and river."

THIRTY men lived in the cave; after ceremonial bows to me, they passed out in single file. Chang told me they were taking up spotting positions and would not return until night. "The Japanese do not fly at night," he said thoughtfully. "They are very confident. At Nanking, before it was captured, they used to send over bombers with women operators. Only someone who was very confident would do that. Or very cruel. Do you think they are cruel? We think they are both cruel and confident."

"I wouldn't know," I told him. "I just got here. The only Jap I ever knew personally was a gardener. He used to come to our house once a week in California. He seemed all right. He did what we told him."

"They take orders very well," said Chang. "They die well too."

"Do you know Captain Ching?" I asked.

Chang's face lit up again. "But of course!" he said. "He is famous. He is intelligent."

"Yes," I muttered, thinking of the *World Almanac.* We stopped talking for a minute, letting the sounds of the outside come in. They were faint but clear, as if they had been filtered up through the air. A voice or two, laughter, a bell tinkling. I felt drowsy.

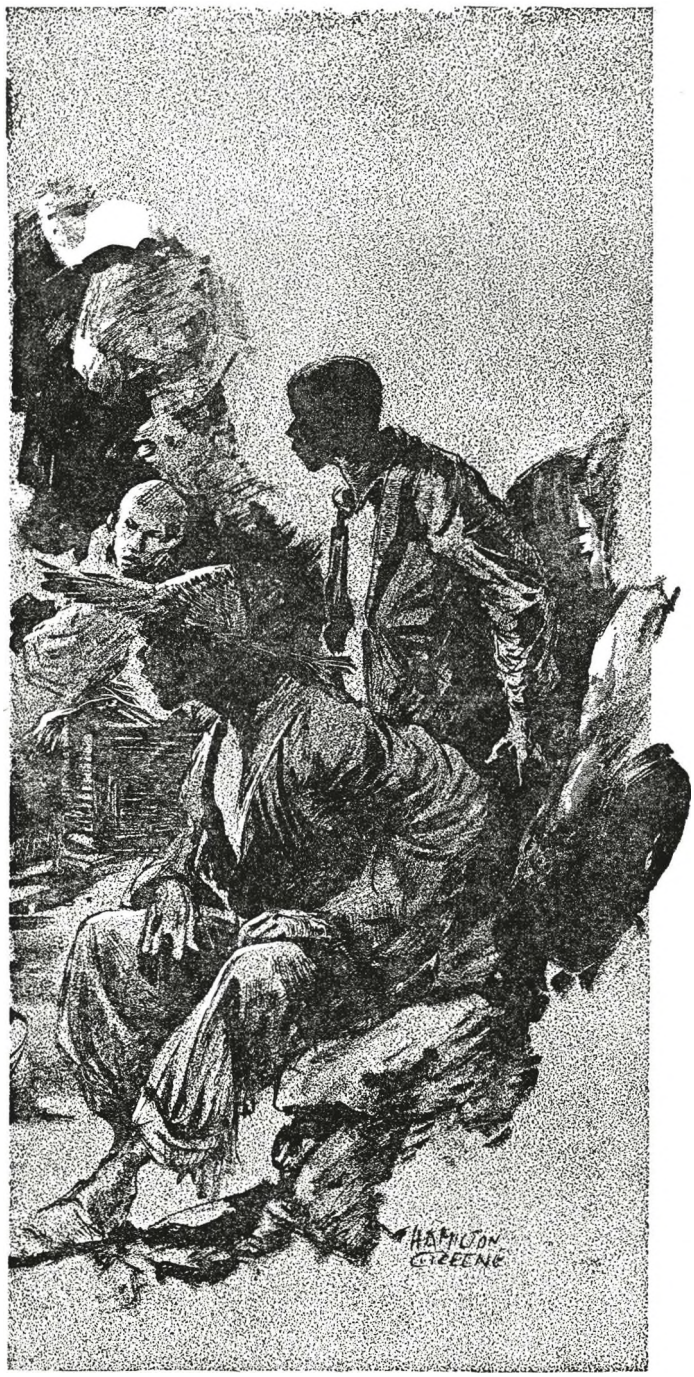
"Why do you fight?" persisted Chang.

"For six hundred dollars a month," I said sleepily.

Chang nodded. "That is a great deal," he said. "It is more than I would get in three years."

He bent toward me. "Tell me," he said. "Do you hate the Japanese?"

"I don't hate anybody," I told him.



Illustrated by Hamilton Greene

"These are the radios," Chang told me. "We send our messages to Timora by way of this radio."

"But you fight as if you did. You talk as if your United States were at war."

"I know."

"Is that right?"

"Right for me." I couldn't keep my eyes open any longer.

IT was late afternoon when I woke. The sun was coming in the mouth of the cave as golden as sauterne. I felt stiff. I got up and put on my boots and walked around. No one else was in the cave. I went to its mouth and stuck my head out, blinking. Chang got up from where he was sitting. "You are better?" he asked.

I yawned. "I feel great," I told him. "I'd be better, though, if I got back to Timora."

Chang gave a whistle, and the head of Sze-Fong popped up from a ledge below the cave. He grinned and bobbed his head at me.

"You shall start as soon as you please," Chang said. "Sze-Fong will be your guide as far as necessary. I regret that he cannot go all the way with you, but he is needed here."

"Okay," I said.

"I have packed some food for you," said Chang. "I nave also made out some papers and used our *chop* on them. You do not mind?"

"Mind?" I said. "I am very grateful."

"I meant," said Chang gently, "I hoped you did not mind that I picked your pocket while you slept—to find out if you spoke the truth."

I slapped my hip. My wallet and papers were still there, but they had been pushed around. My face got hot. "A fine host," I said ironically.

"A careful one," Chang corrected me. "If you had not been what you told me, we would have—"

"What?" I demanded belligerently.

"Killed you." Chang's voice was very soft, but there was no mistaking his flat statement.

I felt cold. "You take this war seriously, don't you?" I said slowly.

"Don't you, Mr. Feeney?"

"I suppose I do," I told him. "But it's different shooting down someone in the air, and putting a pistol to the head of a man who has eaten and drunk with you."

"We all make war in our fashion, sir."

I looked at his long, serious face. "What do you expect it to get you, Chang?"

He shook his head. "For me, most likely, death. For the rest, who may live, freedom perhaps. We can only hope. . . . What does it get you, Mr. Feeney?"

"I don't know," I said honestly. "I don't expect to know."

Chang's face was expressionless. His tone was still cordial, but he had less friendliness in his manner. "Too much philosophy is bad for the digestion," he said. He took out a map.

"Here," he said. "This is the way you will go. You must cut down in this direction until you come to this stream. There will be a boat waiting. It will take you into the Rangoon River. You can drift down with the current into the city, and get the train back to Timora. Or perhaps you can engage a cart at the junction of the river."

Rangoon! "Is this the shortest way, Chang?" The eagerness in my voice must have betrayed me.

Chang shot me a curious look.

"It is the best way," he said.

"I'll start now," I told him.

He took my hand and wrung it. His voice was suddenly choked with emotion. "Mr. Feeney," he said. "I hope—I hope you will learn."

Sze-Fong clucked, and led the way down the path. I followed, my eyes on his bobbing knapsack, thinking only a little on Chang's strange words.

Rangoon was ahead. So was Shandy. I wasn't going to start hitch-hiking at any river junction.

Chapter Ten

SZE-FONG went down the hillside at a pace resembling that of a scared mountain sheep. I did my best to keep up, but it was no use. Every fifty paces I had to call to him —usually when he was bouncing from

Sze-Fong took the knife, raised it above his head and brandished it once.

one rock to the other as if he had pads on his feet. Sze-Fong always came back and waited until I got my breath again, but he was as relieved as I when we hit the bottom of the mountain.

He led the way around the base. I followed him closely, determined not to fall behind. I bumped into him around a boulder. He was looking with pride at a cart—a bullock cart with primitive wheels of sawed sections of tree-trunk bound with iron rims and braced with cross-pieces. On the seat was a Chinese driver with a long withe-whip. He had a scraggly gray beard and appeared to be middle-aged.

Sze-Fong pointed at me and then at the cart, making signs that I was to get in the back. I got up. He gave me the knapsack. The driver made his whip whistle, and Sze-Fong emitted a cry. The driver stopped. I looked at Sze-Fong. He bounded to the side of the cart.

With swift, accurate gestures—he must have been accustomed, himself, to the use of it—he imitated a machine-gun. Then, eagerly, he pointed at my hands, raising his brows in question. I understood what he meant after more sign-language. He wanted to know which hand had shot the Jap plane down. I pointed to my right.

Instantly Sze-Fong seized it and pressed it to his lips. I pulled it away. I felt as if I were cheating him. "Wait a minute!" I cried. The driver, who had been ready to go again, resignedly lowered his whip once more. I reached in my hip pocket. That morning, I had transferred the knife that Ching had seized from the ancient assassin in the Kuala Lumpur train, from my suit to a pocket in my shorts.

With ceremony, I opened and gave it to Sze-Fong. I made a great gesture with both hands, driving an imaginary knife into an imaginary back. Sze-Fong understood. He took the knife tenderly in both hands and kissed the blade. Then he raised it above his head and brandished it once in the long flat rays of the afternoon sun. The steel glittered. Suddenly he turned and was running. He vanished behind the boulder, and the bullocks started moving.

"Could have sworn he was crying," I said. The driver grunted and stood up to beat the off bullock.

IT was after sunset when we came to the river—a flat, placid plain of water perhaps fifty yards across. The screen of green bushes and plants with great flat unknown leaves leaned over the slow current. At the bank, tugging against the pull of the water toward the sea, was a raft. It was two yards square and had a short, forked stick lashed at the back for the steering oar. I saw it was far more buoyant than I would have thought. The reason was apparent on close inspection. The framework of branches that constituted the floor of the raft was really the lashing that tied together a half-dozen inflated pigskin bladders.

I climbed down from the cart. My muscles were sore and my face burned from the sun. We had come a distance of perhaps twenty miles or more. It was getting dark. I ran through my pockets for something as a reward for my driver. There was nothing. I spread out my hands as a sign that I had nothing.

The driver nodded. He smiled benignly and began to drive off with a creaking sound into the shadows. "Good-by," I called after him. He turned in his seat, and brandished his whip in a gesture reminiscent of Sze-Fong's with the knife. Then he was gone. I had got curiously fond of him in the hours on the cart. We had not spoken a word. Neither of us knew the other's language. But there flowed between us a stream of conscious *rapprochement*.

I wondered if the proprietor of the raft would be as congenial. He seemed darker than the Chinese. His facial contours were different. He was probably a half-caste—Burmese and Chinese. He was already seated impassively on the raft, cross-legged, with

the steering oar in place under his right arm. He was waiting for me.

"All right, all right," I said under my breath. I got on the raft, and it rocked perilously.

"Be careful, wise guy," said the steersman in an expressionless voice.

BUT that was all the English he knew. After my initial start of surprise, which nearly tipped over the raft, I shot every question and bit of slang I could think of at him. I racked my memory of pidgin English, that queer dialect which was originally "business" English to the Chinese. I got nowhere. My mentor would stolidly repeat, at intervals, "Be careful, wise guy," running the words all together. That was all there was to it. He didn't know anything else. He must have had parrot blood. Maybe he picked it up in one of the Burmese cities—or from an American movie.

He knew I was trying to talk to him, if only by the vehemence of my tone and my gesticulations. Once or twice he showed his betel-stained teeth in a grin. But he stuck to his one phrase.

I gave up. It was getting darker. I wanted to see how the fellow thought he could navigate through pitch darkness. But he knew more than I did. We didn't have any darkness. The moon was full again, and the reflected light on the river was bright enough to read a newspaper by.

I knew that moon was hanging over Shandy in Rangoon. "Hurry it up, boy," I said. The raftsman smiled. I began to sing:

"Oh, the moon is shining bright
along the Wabash.
From the fields there comes the scent
of new-mown hay;
Through the sycamores the candle-
light is gleaming,
On the banks of the Wabash, far
away."

I bore down on the parts where there would have been harmony if anyone had been along with me. From time to time I heard faint pipsqueaks from the steersman. I encouraged him to sing, but he immediately became sullen if I asked him to join in. "Be careful, wise guy," he said. He wanted me to keep on singing.

There was a whole file of moon songs in the back of my head. I tried to remember all of them. I trailed a hand dreamily in the water until the raftsman gave a yelp. He pointed to the shore, and I saw a form like a rough-barked log swimming along silently. An eye bulged above the surface and looked at me coldly. It sank. It was a crocodile. I returned my thanks and started singing again, keeping my hand out of the river.

It was a silver world and a warm night. What was around me didn't matter. I was headed downstream to see somebody I wanted to see more than any other person in the world. The air smelled like magic, with a heavy sweet odor in it. I took it in, all my lungs would hold. I hoped I would be lifted up and floated down to Rangoon on the night wind. . . .

I didn't care for the next day. It was a white-hot nightmare. There was no wind, and the river flung back the rays of the sun until I could feel the skin of my face lifting off in blisters. The steersman, dark and imperturbable, sat cross-legged and silent. Not once in hours did he change his position. Any human being would have got cramped intolerably within ten minutes in such a position. He wasn't human.

The stream was broader and the current swifter. We were fairly near the Rangoon River. Now and again a bevy of rafts like our own, tied together in a jam and loaded down with household goods and people, would go by. We exchanged no greetings.

Just after noon we came to the meeting of the streams. My man started to make for the shore, but I persuaded him otherwise. I got us into the middle of the stream again, and he acquiesced as soon as I began singing *"My Gal Sal."* I alternated this with *"Kathleen Mavourneen"* until I was sure he could not land.

By the time we hove into the dirty waters of the basin outside Rangoon, it was late afternoon. The current, swirling oily and lazy, took us over to the side of a pier that jutted out into the water. I signed to the raftsman to wait, and hurried up to the nearest street. The first person I ran into was an Englishman with a swagger-stick and a weary look. He spoke first.

"Oughtn't, old chap, really," he said.

"Oughtn't what?"

"Sun helmet."

"Oh."

"Sun like a club. Beats down. Lay you out. Mad dogs and Englishmen, you know, but not without sun helmets."

"All right," I said hurriedly. "Can you let me have a couple shillings?"

He fumbled in his pocket, an expression of pained astonishment on his face. He produced the shillings. "Thanks," I said. "I'll be at the Silver Slipper tonight. I'll pay you back then. My name's Feeney."

"American?"

"Yes," I said. I ran back to the pier and dropped the money into the raftsman's hand. I waved to him, and was paralyzed in the middle of my wave. He slowly spat on each one of the shillings, precisely on the image of George V, and dropped them into the water. He did not look up. I saw him go leisurely down the river.

I went back to the street and asked the first policeman I saw—a brawny Sikh with a red turban—the way to the Silver Slipper. He pointed down a street. It was three blocks away. I had begun to walk in that general direction, when I became dizzy. I staggered toward a wall and collapsed against it.

"Told you, old chap." It was the voice of the Englishman who had lent me the shillings. "Fix you up in a jiffy."

My eyes were hard to focus. "I'll be all right," I said with difficulty.

"Of course," he said. "Here." Somehow he had a cool cloth on my forehead.

"That boatman I gave the shillings to," I said faintly. "He didn't like King George."

"Spat on the old boy, I suspect?"

"That's right."

"We aren't winning any popularity prizes—with some of the lads hereabouts," said the Englishman. He stood up. He went into a shop across the street, and in a moment came back with a sun helmet which he put on my head. I protested feebly.

"White man's burden," he said. He helped me to my feet. I was feeling considerably better, but not too much so.

"Tough guy, Feency," I said.

"Quite so," said the Englishman. "My name's Gilbert. Winston Gilbert."

He said it very seriously. That made it sound all the more like an old vaudeville act. At least it was an old vaudeville joke. I laughed. Gilbert looked concerned. "Still feeling the sun?" he inquired.

"No," I said. "I have these spells. Thanks. Thanks a lot. I'll buy you a drink tonight at the Silver Slipper. But right now will you excuse me? I've got to find someone."

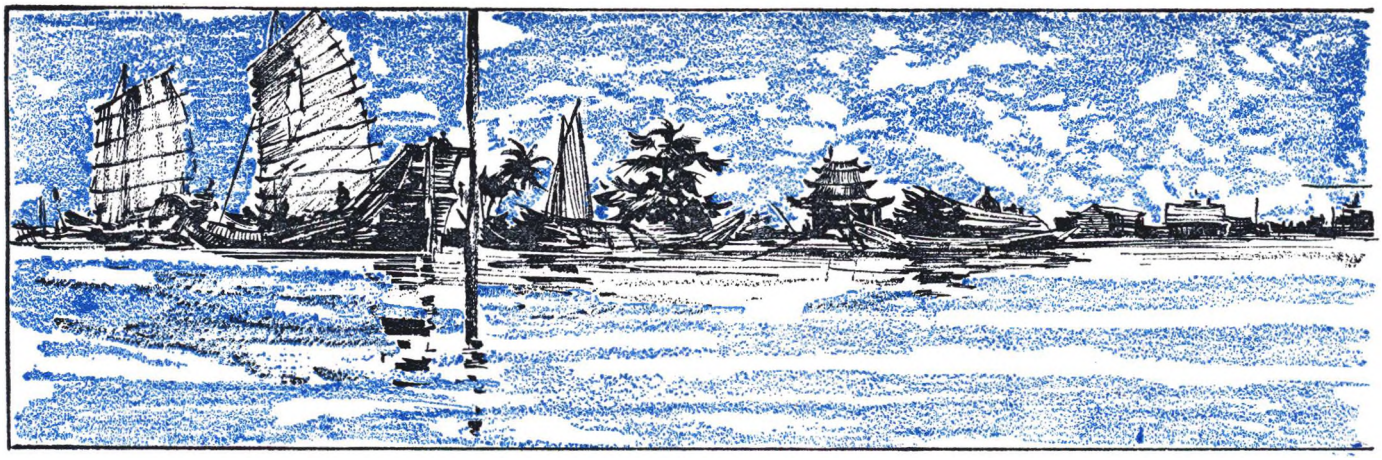
"Certainly," Gilbert told me politely. I started up-street, shaky at first, but getting better with every step.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE Silver Slipper was the Rangoon equivalent of a super-speakeasy. From the outside, it looked like a respectable English house done up in faded grays and browns. But where the name-plate usually appeared, on the right of the door, there was a brass plate. *The Silver Slipper,* it said; and below it were what looked like Arabic characters.

I pressed the bell. Immediately, as if it had been waiting for me, an iron grillework that was twice as high as I was swung open. A pert little dark man appeared—so suddenly that I had a vision of him as a djinn.

"Yes?" he said. "Yes?" he said again. He cocked his head on one side like



a sparrow. I could smell the perfumed oil on his hair.

"It is too early for a drink," he said in a positive tone. He beamed. "On the other hand, perhaps it is not," he told me.

"I don't want a drink," I said. The little man had a rough accent that I couldn't identify as anything more than a touch of what I imagined Swahili must be like, but I could understand him perfectly.

"I'd like to see Miss Shandy, Miss Vi Shandy," I told him.

HE cocked his head farther to one side until I was afraid it would fall off. "Miss Shandy?" he asked. "You are a friend of hers?"

"Yes," I said. He looked at me doubtfully. A light dawned. He clasped his hands over his slightly protruding stomach, which was clad like the rest of him in gray sack suiting.

"Ah!" he said. "Is it possible that you are Mr. Feeney?"

"It is possible," I admitted.

He looked at me with disapproval. "But you are so—so red and so dirty," he said despairingly.

"All right," I said. I stepped inside the grillework. "I still want to see Shandy."

The man tossed his hands in a gesture of dismay. "She left commands," he said. Abruptly, he introduced himself. "I am the Mahatma," he said. "I own the Silver Slipper. They call me the Mahatma because I am very good."

"I see," I told him. "Do you serve goat's milk at the Silver Slipper?"

"No," he said. He snickered. "A joke," he said. He looked at me brightly. "We will be fine friends, Mr. Feeney," he said.

"Miss Shandy," I reminded him. He assented and led me down a flight of heavily carpeted stairs. The air smelled of dried sweat, perfume and liquor. We turned right in the semi-darkness and came into what seemed to be the Silver Slipper proper. It was a square room, with a bar on one side backed with mirrors, and a series of semi-circular seats on the other. On lower levels were tables and chairs around a circular dance-floor. There was a single light burning in the glass ceiling. Most of the chairs were on top the tables. A weary Hindu was mopping up the floor. The Mahatma pointed to him. "Untouchable," he said.

He led me to the back of the night club and through a door. We climbed a flight of stairs and turned right. Before me, as the Mahatma stepped aside, was a door with a bright silver star on it. "Miss Shandy," said the Mahatma politely. He turned and went off down the stairs.

I knocked. "Come in," said Shandy's voice. I pushed open the door. A burst of light hit me in the face. Shandy was seated before a mirror surrounded with bare electric bulbs. She was putting on her face. She turned and squinted a moment before she saw who it was. She jumped up. The costume she was wearing, a silver affair with tinfoil slippers all over it, tinkled as she ran.

"Arch!" She landed in my arms, and I kissed her. First the top of her head, then the tip of her nose and last on the mouth.

"Shandy," I said. I kicked the door to, behind me. I kissed her again.

It had only been a few days since we had left each other in Singapore on a good-by-forever note. But a lot had happened. At least, to me. I seemed to do most of the talking to explain my muddy boots and my sunburn and my so-called head wound. Shandy made soothing noises and beamed on me with an expression of beatific pride. It got on my nerves.

"Stop it!" I told her.

"What, darling?" she asked me.

"That business of the big brown eyes," I said. "I'm no hero. I'm just a lucky guy. I'm even sneaking this time to see you." I snapped my fingers. "I'd better send a wire," I said. "Tell them I'll be home."

She had a telephone, and I called in the message. That left only herself to account for. She told me she had arrived in good time from Singapore and had been in the show for two nights. "I'm on at nine, eleven and one," she said. "After that, I'm all yours."

It made my stomach tingle to hear her say it. "What are you rigged out like that for?" I asked her, to stop it.

"This? It was too big. The last girl that wore it must have been Sophie Tucker. I had it changed. I was just trying it on."

She looked at my sun helmet. "Where did you get that, Arch?" She picked it up and tore out a price-tag.

"A little sunstroke on the way," I told her. "Somebody named Gilbert fixed me up."

Shandy looked at me thoughtfully. "I know him," she told me. "I had supper with him last night. He flies for the R.A.F."

My heart twitched and then slowed. "Nice guy," I said.

She nodded. "Very polite," she said. We laughed together, and my heart started thumping in the usual way.

"Lend me some money, Shandy," I said. "I'm broke. I'll go out and dude myself up in whites and things."

THAT night at eight-thirty I was at the bar of the Silver Slipper. The first drink had been on the house. I was way beyond that. I was having rum-and-coke at two bits a toss. My new whites crinkled nicely and it felt good, somehow, to have a tie on. I had a handkerchief in my breast pocket and a shine on my new shoes. My hair was in a cool semi-slick. I felt very comfortable.

I surveyed myself in the mirror. Not bad, I thought; not bad with over a hundred thousand miles on the speedometer. A little gray at the temples, but that was distinguished. A few lines around the eyes and mouth, but that indicated sophistication. No looseness or double-double on the chin: that was to the good. The plaster on the scalp scratch didn't show. The only thing that offset the picture was the red face. It clashed with my tie.

The bartender jerked his thumb over his shoulder. I looked and saw Shandy's face behind him, peeking through a half-door. She beckoned. I went over, and she was in her costume. She kissed me lightly and told me to wipe off the lipstick. "Stick around, darling," she said. "You'll find out what I meant when I said I missed you more than my right leg."

I went back to the bar and ordered two more rum-and-cokes. I felt fine. Shandy and I had had supper together. She was as good as the Shandy in my dreams, which was not a short order.

"Greetings," said a voice. I swiveled on my bar-stool. It was Winston Gilbert, his pale face and fair hair in order, and his blue eyes only a trifle less weary.

"Hello," I said.

Gilbert waved to two men beside him. They were dressed in white, and I felt glad I had gone out and got some myself. They wore them better than I did but mine looked to be as good material.

"Meet Faulkner and Messert," said Gilbert. "I suppose you won't be able to tell them apart. Nobody else can until after the first four drinking-parties."

And as a matter of fact, the men were both of medium height and with short brown hair and blue eyes. Their build was similar, and so were their expressions. They even started to talk at once. "Hello," they said together. They blushed together, looked at each other simultaneously and laughed together.

"See?" said Gilbert. He appropriated the stool next to me, and Messert and Faulkner took the ones on the other side. The place was filling up, and those were practically the only seats left in the Slipper.

"Beautiful girl dances here," observed Gilbert.

"Yes," I said.

"You'll be more enthusiastic, old chap, when you see her," he told me. He was running his sentences together better than he had on the street in the afternoon. Maybe it was the Scotch he had taken on. It could be smelled. It was very good.

"I couldn't be more enthusiastic," I said.

"Really?" said Messert.

I disliked him immediately. "No," I said.

Gilbert nudged me. "Don't take on," he said. "Messert has a date with her after the show."

"No, he hasn't," I said. I took a gulp of my drink.

"Really!" said Messert.

"Really," I said. "Is that your whole vocabulary?"

"Now, Feeney!" Gilbert expostulated.

"She has a date with me," I said.

"I'm afraid she'll have to decide that," Messert said stiffly.

I nodded. "All right," I told him.

"You Americans," said Faulkner. It was the first thing he had said.

"Yes." I turned. "Anything else?"

FAULKNER hedged. "You do get ideas," he told me. I didn't say anything. I could afford to keep quiet.

The Mahatma came bustling up. "Everything, it is all right, gentlemen?" he asked. All of us nodded. "Fine," he said. He bustled away.

The subject didn't come up again for a while. We sat and drank without conversation until Gilbert started it rolling.

"What do you do, Feeney, old fellow?" he wanted to know.

"I fly," I told him.

Their heads jerked toward me. "Oh!" said Gilbert. "For C.N.A.C.?" That was the Chinese National Airline Corporation that ran most of the airlines in China and Burma by virtue of subsidies from Pan American Airways and the Nationalist government.

"No," I told him. "Military."

Faulkner leaned over. "You aren't with that outfit up the way?" he inquired. "I mean, at Timora."

"That's right."

"Used to be one of our bases," said Gilbert.

"Too tough for you?"

It was a crack. It didn't have to be made, but I felt in the mood.

Gilbert half-closed his eyes. "No," he said. "That wasn't it, Feeney."

"How did you know we were in the R.A.F.?" demanded Messert.

"The sixty-four-dollar question," I told him. "You've been talking about bases all night. Anyway, Shandy told me Gilbert here was in it. Satisfied?"

The fact that I had seen Shandy to talk to made them gloomy. They might have been gloomier. I was in a mood for a titillating confession just to raise their nap, when the lights dimmed and the band blared. It was a bad band, playing pieces like "Always" and "I Wear a Dress with Forty-Eight Slits When Francis Dances with Me," but it sounded impressive in fanfare. The Mahatma stepped out on the floor in the spotlight.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," he declaimed, "we have one of the prem—prem—first ladies of the dance in the United States of America. This is her first appearance in Rangoon. She is an artist. I give you my word. Miss Vi Shandy!" And Shandy came on with a ruffle of drums and broke into a tap-dance.

She could dance. Not even her best girl-friend could have said anything different. Those long legs in their black net stockings, flashing in and out of the fringed silver dress with the tinkling tin slippers on it, made the whole night-club whirl. Her taps were staccato, clear and perfect. I didn't hear her blur one, and they rattled off like a machine-gun.

She had more than ability, too. She had that aura of confidence and youth and personality—and I suppose character, too—that made her radiant. No one could resist her, and no one in the Silver Slipper tried to. The applause, after she had finished, nearly brought the plaster down. She came on again, her breasts heaving, and blew a kiss at the bar. Messert blew one back. When I looked at the floor again, Shandy was gone. The lights came up, and everybody started to dance.

"Beautiful!" said Messert.

"I'd like to marry a girl like that," said Faulkner. He was a little younger than the rest, and his eyes were still ecstatic and dreamy.

Messert turned on him. "Pull up, Faulkner!" he said.

I didn't like his tone. "Why?" I asked.

Messert whirled. At last, it seemed, I had touched raw. He thrust his face into mine. "Look, you bloody Yank!" he snarled. He stopped himself.

I reached out slowly and got the lapels of his white linen suit firmly in my fists. I turned my head to Gilbert. "He asked for it," I said. "'Bloody' is a swear-word."

I turned to Messert again. He had put his own hands over mine in a tight grip. His eyes were glaring into mine.

"This isn't for Shandy," I said. "She has nothing to do with it. This is for me." I said it very gently. Suddenly I ducked my head, jerked him to me and rammed my head into his face. Hard! Not as hard as I might have done in a rough-up, but hard enough. I felt his nose crumple.

His hands flew up to his face. I let him go and pushed him off the stool. I knew his nose was broken. Blood was streaming down his face.

"Take him away," I said. Not many of the customers had noticed the scuffle, and the Mahatma was already leading him out, with Faulkner, a little white at the blood and muffled sobs of Messert, at his side.

Only Gilbert remained. He got up. I stayed seated, and ran a comb through my mussed hair.

"Shouldn't, old chap," he said, clipping his words again. "Have to fight fair. Have to fight me."

"Any time," I said. "Always at the disposal of the R.A.F."

"Not now," said Gilbert. He finished his drink and went out.

A few minutes later Shandy, in a street dress, joined me at the bar.

"Didn't I see Gilbert here?" she inquired.

"He left," I said. "There was somebody called Messert here too."

"He had a date with me," Shandy said promptly. "But of course that's all off now."

"He's gone, anyway," I told her. Shandy smiled into my eyes.

"Can't trust the British," she said gayly.

"No," I said. "Perfidious Albion." We clinked glasses.

Chapter Twelve

A BEAM of the moon through the barred window caught Shandy's face and made it pale and intense. "Arch," she said tentatively.

"Yes," I said comfortably.

"A little while ago," she said seriously, "you asked me why I came out here. You said I was good enough to make real money in any spot in New York. Didn't you?"

"That's right."

"I said I didn't know."

"That's right, too."

Shandy rocked herself a little. "I want to know the same thing," she said, her voice muffled. "Why did you come?"

"Easy, Shandy," I told her. "For pay and fun. I wasn't getting anything like the money or the fun—or you—back in the Marines and the Caribbean."

"Do you think it's funny that I want to know?"

"Yes," I answered slowly. "Since you don't know why *you* came. And everybody has been shooting the same quiz at me. Why? Why does it make so much difference why?"

"I wouldn't know." Shandy flung her hair back and looked at me. "But I want to know. I'll tell you, darling: I did have a good job. I had a boy who was in love with me, too. But you knew that, didn't you?"

"I thought so," I replied. All the same, her admitting it made me uneasy. She anticipated my thought.

"Now I'm in love with you," she said. "It's the other way around. I like it better that way." Her voice was soft and I kissed her.

"If you had to dig down, darling," she said abstractedly. "I mean way down, in me, for example, could you find the reason?"

"I suppose."

"What would it be?" She sounded eager.

"I think you want to live," I told her. "I think you want to find out all you can about the world. Spinning around in space like maggots on a meatball isn't a pleasant destiny. Even a maggot would like to know the extent of the meatball. This one would."

Shandy laughed in a gurgle. "This one too," she said. "But I don't think you've gone deep enough. I think maybe it's because I want to know about something else than living. I want to know about dying."

That didn't make sense, I told her. But her words started a little hammer beating at the back of my brain.

"This is a crazy place," she said. "It's dirty and full of smells. I like things clean and I like my own smells. I like money and handsome men, too. I haven't any money. Nothing but a handsome man. . . .

"This place has an air," she went on after a moment. "It seems like a place over a volcano with people having garden parties and dances in the orchard while the earth rumbles under their feet. Have you read *Æs Triplex*, darling?"

"No," I said. "Have you read Bowditch?"

Shandy laughed again. "I suppose life is best when you feel that you're going to lose it," she told me. She was serious once more. "I always knew when I was most tired or most tensed-up, I found myself living better. Everything seemed super-acute—hearing, sight, feeling. Food tasted like ambrosia and music sounded sweeter. That's what I meant about finding out about dying."

"Who wants to die?" I asked her.

"Am I morbid, darling?" she asked.

NOW the moon was above the window and the angle of its rays was steeper to the floor. I kept thinking of Chang back in the cave, and of Sze-Fong watching with my knife in his belt. I thought of the tired face of Clair, too, and the grim expression that was a habit of Rees. I even thought of Shayne and his game foot.

"Maybe there's something more than just the money and the fun," I said. "But they'll have to prove it to me."

I let myself out of Shandy's door, locked it behind me, and started down the alley that was the street on which Shandy lived.

A dark figure scuttled suddenly out before me from a niche almost beside Shandy's door. For a second, it turned a malevolent face toward me. I recognized the raftsman who had brought me to Rangoon. In another second he was off down the alley.

"Hi!" I shouted. My voice echoed. I started running. At the end of the alley, I could see what appeared to be a scuffle. I came panting up to it. A man had collared the little raftsman. "Thanks," I said.

The man raised his head. It was Captain Ching.

"Ching!" I exclaimed. Ching nodded pleasantly, still holding the writhing raftsman by the neck. "You wanted to see—this?" he asked, indicating his captive.

"Yes," I said. I told him the story, especially the part concerning the spitting on the shillings. Ching shook the man and showered him with questions. The raftsman answered sullenly in a guttural dialect. Ching, satisfied, turned to me.

"It is true," he said, "that he does not like the British. He says he only took you down the river because you were American, according to Sze-Fong. But when you paid him in British money, he thought you were British."

"Why was he sitting around spying tonight?" I demanded.

But Ching shrugged. "He will never tell me that," he said. "Perhaps you are lucky. These fellows are very ill-tempered. There were 340,000 people in Rangoon in 1920, and not all of

I started running. At the end of the alley, a man had collared the raftsman. The man raised his head. It was Captain Ching.

them could be trusted. It is the same today except for the numbers. But now this one knows you are American."

"Police?" I inquired.

Ching shrugged again. "If you wish," he said. "But it will not do any good."

"Let him go," I said. Ching contemptuously let the man slink off. He turned to me but before he could speak, I shot my question: "How did you get here?"

"Flew," said Ching. He smiled slightly. "I was waiting for you," he said. "Love comes so rarely, it is not polite to disturb. I have orders for you to return at once to Timora."

I got my things together quietly. Ching and I got into a taxi and headed for the Mingaladron Airdrome outside the city.

On the way, Ching said nothing. Neither did I. I didn't know the reason Clair wanted me back but it was probably excellent. At any rate, I had seen Shandy again and, even if I got a dressing-down, it was worth it.

A P-40 was waiting at the field, fragile in the night-lights. Its prop was turning over. Ching and I climbed out of the taxi and he paid the driver off. He turned to me. "Please," he said, "will you pilot?"

I knew there was only room for one in the cockpit of the P-40. Ching would have to crouch back in the fuselage compartment. I had estimated the trip back to Timora as a forty-minute flight or more. It would be damned uncomfortable in the compartment for that long.

"You pilot," I said. "I'll climb in the rumble."

"No, please," said Ching. "I will be comfortable. I had the pleasure of flying the ship down."

Without more discussion, he started to crawl in. I wasn't disposed to argue. I grabbed him by the seat of the pants and helped heave. His face popped out in a moment, already running with sweat. "Thank you," he said. "Course 273."

I closed the door and fastened it. Ching was in for the duration. I got into the cockpit and signaled the boys. They let go the wings and I taxied down the field and took off.

THE hop took forty-three minutes. I sighted Timora by its rows of flickering little oil "bombs"—the round black containers of kerosene that were set out as guiding torches along the borders of the field. There were no other lights. I knew that as soon as I came in a truck would dash out and collect them all. They gave as good

a beacon to Jap marauders as they did to me.

I slid in and put on my brakes as soon as I dared. I hopped out and ran around to the compartment. I swung it open and Ching crawled out. He was drenched in his own juices but the cool wind gave him some life. He made an effort to unjack-knife himself.

"I thought the Chinese were famous for not sweating," I said to make conversation.

Ching drew himself up. "That is not true," he told me. "That is anti-Chinese propaganda.

He offered to take the plane on in and I said okay. I wanted to see Clair as soon as possible.

I found him waiting in the operations shack. As I entered, I checked my wrist-watch. It was two o'clock.

CLAIR was as gaunt as a ghost. He rose, and wrung my hand until my fingers ached. "God, I'm glad!" he said simply. Rees, who was pacing up and down, did the same. "Sit down," said Clair. He motioned to Rees, who silently pulled down all the blinds and bolted the door.

"We can talk," said Clair. He was evidently conserving every word. The man was a genius for keeping going but it was apparent that he was near the end of his stamina.

"We have decided to confide in you," he told me. "Rees and I are the only ones who know but the burden is too much. We must have help." He made no reference—beyond his first remark—of my narrow escape or of the planes shot down. He was evidently laboring under some greater strain than seeing a pilot return from the dead. The wire had probably taken all the dramatics out of my *Enoch Arden* return and I was glad it was that way.

"To fine it off," said Clair. He paused. "We are going to war."

"We?" I said stupidly.

"The United States," said Clair grimly. Rees nodded, his eyes fixed on me.

"I don't understand, sir," I told him. Clair passed a hand over his face.

"You brought a message," he told me. "That message let us know what we had suspected. According to advices, the State Department believes the Japanese will raid some part—perhaps several parts—of the mainland and outlying possessions of the United States, without warning, some time in December. Probably on December tenth, as nearly as we can make it."

I sat with my jaw sagging. Clair went on. Rees continued to stare at me.

"The President believes he can jolly the Japanese along," Clair said. "He realizes our vital need out here is time. Time to get supplies and put them in readiness. Time to get men. We have assurances of both. But you can't shoot with assurances. So the present policy of the President is to continue his bribery—that's what it is—of the Japanese to buy us time. A few cargoes of crude oil. A few tons of scrap iron. That will give us some leeway."

The gasoline lamp above sputtered as a moth was cremated against a white-hot mantle. Clair went on.

"So much for flies in the international ointment," he said. "Now for ourselves. We are practically a lone hand out here. We fight for and are paid by and hired by China. But we came here—if I can say it—Rees and myself—seeing the ultimate necessity and trying to build a dam against the day of flood. We have made a beginning. We must do more. We must protect the Burma Road. That is the windpipe of China. Cut it off or squeeze it, even, and you throttle this land to death. The only alternative is to fly supplies in and God knows how long it will take to get a fleet of adequate transports over here."

Clair passed his hand wearily over his face again. Rees poured out a glass of water from a pitcher on the desk and drank it off. My mind whirled. I tried to understand what I was hearing. Somewhere, in the back of my consciousness, the little hammer that Shandy had started beating was beating again. It was cold and precise in its strokes.

"We must protect more than the Burma Road," Clair said. "The Japanese, the British Intelligence know, will strike directly at Burma. To cut off supplies to China. It will be a first move. Our job is also to help protect Rangoon."

"Does that mean—" I began.

CHANG

I stopped as Clair raised his hand. "Let me finish, Feeney," he said. He went on.

"We can't do that with the men we have here," he told me. "The American Recruit Group must die. But another man will come here as soon as he can. He is now the actual head of China's fighting air force. I will be proud to serve under him. His name is Chennault. He is gathering a nucleus of men and planes. I hear he has already been promised a shipment of more than a hundred P-40's of late model. He will form the First American Volunteer Group. I don't know how many men he will be able to get. I don't know how soon all this will happen. But Rees and I want you to be ready."

Clair, a look of intolerable tiredness on his face, rose and turned appealingly to Rees. "Tell him the rest, John," he said. He went stiffly to the corner where a blanket was spread, and stretched out. Immediately, as if he had been stunned by a blow, he fell asleep.

Rees turned out the gasoline lantern and beckoned me outside. On the steps, he told me the rest in whispers.

"We trust you greatly," he said. "We would like you to be an executive officer. Would you accept? We could not, of course, guarantee anything when Chennault arrives but we imagine he would be glad to have a man like you in a position of responsibility."

"Whatever it is, sir," I said. "Okay." Rees took my hand and squeezed it gratefully.

"By the way," he whispered, just before he moved away, "congratulations on getting three Jap bombers!" He chuckled and moved off in the darkness. I felt my way back to the bunkhouse and found a flash. I undressed and turned in. I was very tired. The world might tumble overnight but I would not get up to see it.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

I LOOKED at things differently the next morning. I had hardly got my eyes open before Evarts and Black were lifting up the mosquito net to congratulate me.

Black didn't seem excited but Evarts was. "Great!" he said. "That was wonderful shooting." I stuck my legs out under the netting. "Thanks," I said. "How did you do?"

Black and Evarts looked at each other. It was Black who spoke. "We each got a half of one bomber," he said.

I was pulling on my socks. "That's something," I told them. I started to put on my boots, dumping them

out carefully first to see that no odd snakes or scorpions had climbed in to nap during the night.

Evarts walked away and went back to his bunk. Black was about to follow when I stopped him. "By the way," I asked. "Who did get that bomber? You or Evarts? I only saw one P-40 doing the shooting."

Black looked at me. His dark eyes were steady and burning. He frowned. "Evarts did," he told me. "I—I funked it." He turned his back and crossed to Evarts. I finished dressing and went to the toilet. When I came through the bunkhouse again, I glanced toward the two of them. Evarts' shoulders were heaving, and there was a red mark on his face, on the half I could see. It looked as though he had been slapped, but it was none of my business. I went over to the mess hall.

Everybody took the blow of my being jumped to an executive officer calmly enough. Rees announced it. Clair didn't put in an appearance. I thought he would still be pounding that blanket, but I was wrong. He was working at his desk when I got to Operations, poring over a map. He looked as tired as he had the night before, but his words were sprightly.

"I think we'll give the Japs a dose of the medicine they've been handing out to the Chinese," said Clair. He grinned. "You know what I've got under lock and key back of the hangar?" I shook my head. I remembered seeing the little shack, but I had thought it was a toolshed. There was an enormous Yale lock on the door.

"Bombs," said Clair. "The British left 'em here when they got out. God knows what they had them for, but they're there, all right. Most of them are small jobs. We might be able to fit them into the flare-flaps on the wings of the P-40's. A lot of them are 100-kilo and 250-kilo jobs. If we only had a bigger plane!" He rolled up the map. "But that's an assignment in the future."

He went outside with me, talking all the time. "The first thing, Feeney," he told me, "is to teach these boys how to save themselves from getting killed and how to fight. I can't do much; neither can Rees. You have a natural instinct for it. Ching gave me a report on the fight while I was off goose-chasing somewhere. That was the main reason we wanted you back so fast. We want some kind of a record and personnel to hand over to Chennault when he gets here."

He eyed me. "I don't give you cards over Rees and myself in fighting," he said dryly. "Rees was in the Lafayette Escadrille, and I had a spot of dogging it in the Spanish war. But you do seem to have a nose for pulling Japs out of the air like rabbits from

WINSTON GILBERT

a hat. We need a nose like that, with our warning net the way it is. So it's up to you to polish us up. Rees and I'll try to do the administrative desk stuff, though God knows we hate it. We'll try to get the material and men coming in. What d'you propose to do with the American Recruit Group?"

Chapter Fourteen

WELL, I showed him. But it was the end of September before I could get the A.R.G. organized enough to start work. And it was the middle of October before I could show any results.

My own ideas, the ideas any pilot gets about fighting, were an unorthodox bunch worked out by sweating on them myself in the air. Most of the two weeks it took me to get my ideas rounded up, I spent in the air or on the ground with paper and pencil. The A.R.G. spent more time than ever in Rangoon, and a lot of messages from Shandy came in. I couldn't get down, but I wrote her as much as I could tell on paper. She threatened a couple times to come up, and mentioned Gilbert, but I figured that was window-dressing.

Oddly, the man who stuck closest to camp and helped me, was Jonny Black. My initial distaste for the short, dark, slightly bowlegged youngster turned into genuine liking. He was invaluable. He had the natural instincts of a fighter, and wasn't too careful about saving his own skin. All of which made him a distinct asset—one that wouldn't be liquidated too soon. That didn't make me understand any better his lie about funking.

The course of instructions covered the following subjects: fighting, strafing and bombing. Observation came in for a secondary place. So did navigation. The emphasis was on individual and formation battling.

It was really a bag of little tricks. The first thing I knew—from Clair and Rees, who were encyclopedias on Japanese planes and pilot performance—was that I wanted more fire-power. The Zeros' guns were about equal to ours. Their planes were more maneuverable but less protected. We had armor plate, self-sealing gas-tanks, and heavier construction. We also had more speed, but a Zero could almost literally fly rings around a P-40. So the problem divided itself automatically into two parts: get more fire-power; devise a way of fighting where maneuvering wouldn't be important.

The answer was obvious in both cases. More fire-power meant either mounting more guns or doubling up. If more guns were put on the P-40's, that meant loss of streamlining and consequent loss of speed, the one real advantage we had. So the only check left was doubling up. This meant hours of split-second formation flying in pairs, as Clair had already outlined.

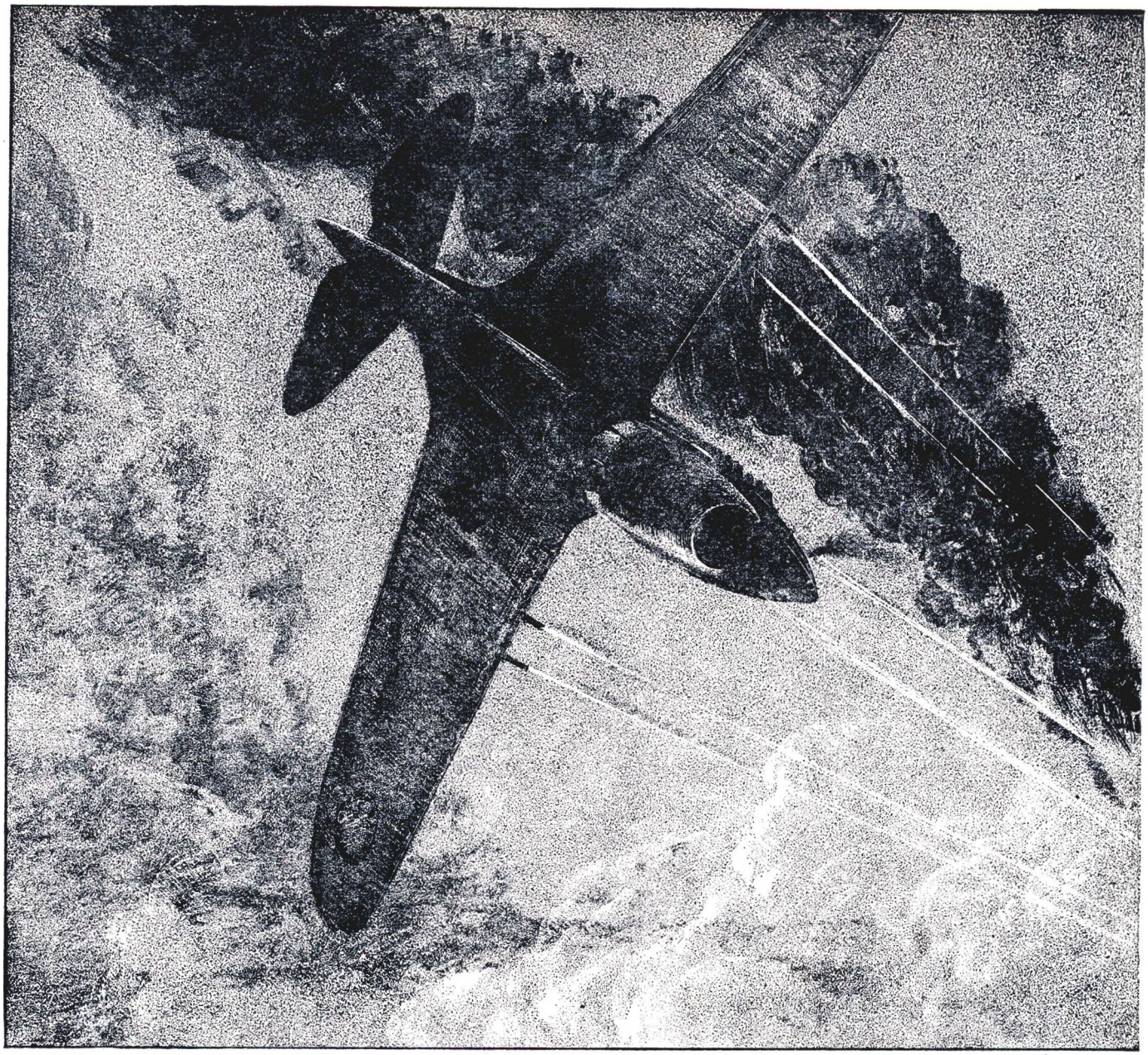
I worked it out this way. The idea was to get height, at least three or four thousand feet above the ships that we would attack. I knew the Zeros had a slightly higher ceiling, but Rees assured me the Japs didn't like to fight too far up—fear of some god or other.

Once the height was achieved, the idea was to go tandem, swing down and start potting at a single plane. Gilbert would have called it dirty fighting, I suppose. But it was effective, and that was all Clair or I cared about.

So much for the fire-power. Next, to nix the maneuvering. I told the boys to break away as soon as they had fired a burst, never to stick around. And if they saw that a Jap ship was hurt, to get the killer instinct and follow it right into the ground but not under the ground.

There were obvious gaps in this method. In the first place, generally speaking, no matter how fine a formation flyer a man may be, after the first two or three passes, the fight always breaks up into the traditional dog-fight—where the Japs would have precisely the advantage they wanted. In a dog-fight (which takes its name from no less than that type of canine warfare where a dog that's being beaten tries to bite the tail of his opponent in order to keep out of harm's way) the maneuvering ultimately resolved itself into loops. I knew that, just as Clair did, and had said in his first lecture, and would have repeated in the lectures that he now had no time to deliver.

In that sort of fighting, the Zeros could always turn inside a P-40.



Which meant that they would, eventually, win the majority of fights. We needed tricks for our fighting.

"First," I told the A.R.G., "you want to practice lazy eights. Practice them until you go blind—until you dream of eights in your sleep. *But practice them with one variation.* On your off swing, go up a little. This will make you lose speed, and you'll come out on the other man's tail."

I told them, in an emergency, to use their landing flaps in the air to stall it being pursued, and make the Zero overrun them. I pointed out that the P-40 was much superior in a dive, and to use the power-push for home as much as they wanted. Also, to try to keep out of ring-a-rosy with the Japs.

"It's as simple," I told them, "as that. And as hard! Learn to fly formation as if you were tied together with string. And get letter-perfect in your combat aerobatics. Never mind practicing what the Japs want you to. Practice what I tell you to."

For a wonder, they took it. The A.R.G. was not organized with military discipline. They had all sorts of men in it. Black and Evarts were Navy, for example; and Rees and Clair were Army. I was a Marine. There was no guardhouse, no method of enforcing discipline except slapping on fines, or as a last resort, invoking the contract with the Master Aircraft Manufacturing Company that all of us possessed. But everything worked out. Even the Chinese air crews became imbued with the spirit of coöperation, and turned out some of the fastest and best repair jobs I had ever seen.

I got permission from Clair to unlock the bomb dump. I also managed to rig up a cleared space in the jungle three miles from the base and put up a target—a bamboo hut—for the A.R.G. to practice on. We managed to cram some thirty-five-pound bombs into the flare-flaps on the wings, and I kept them dropping them to see what accuracy we could get by eye. There was no other way to do it. And bombs were a thousand per cent more effective than bullets in a real job of strafing. One lucky hit would be more ruinous than one thousand rounds. It was worth trying. The morale of the Chinese troops, pretty low after years of lacking an air umbrella, would be considerably improved as well, Ching told me, just by the sight of explosions, even if nothing was hit.

In the way of gunnery, I enforced forty-five minutes of shooting every day at ground targets. I had the sights of the guns checked every week. Cloth targets, eight feet square, were tacked out on the ground. The ships

would come in at two thousand feet, take a shallow dive at two hundred miles an hour, pull out at fifty feet and go back to two thousand. In the meantime, they were supposed to have riddled the target. We never got a chance to do any live shooting at targets in the air—beyond the Japs themselves. The danger of the dropping bullets in the countryside was too great.

The substitution for that was plenty of aerobatic training. I sent the A.R.G. up in the air time and again, telling them to rat-race with each other—keep following the leader, usually me, through maneuvers—and encouraging fake dog-fights. The idea was to go up to ten thousand feet, pour on the soup and pass the other plane head-on at 250 miles an hour. As soon as this preliminary, which like the salute in fencing, was given, the battle was on. The first man to get on the other's tail long enough for a burst was the winner. Against the civilized C.A.A. regulations I remembered, I also encouraged buzzing operations—diving on Operations and pulling out at a minimum altitude.

As for fighting formation, I used the three-plane, two-plane and string formations. Mostly, I liked the two-plane formation, because it allowed for closer, more economical teamwork. Deploying in the air, as on the ground, had its advantages. A flight would ordinarily be composed of two three-plane elements, or else three two-plane elements. The A.R.G. would fly staggered, up and down alternately. They looked like one of those

The ship fluttered. I dived after it. I saw the blue-clad pilot; he tumbled like a doll out of the Zero.

heaving flights of stairs that used to be in steeplechases.

Clair and Rees had already rigged up the radio. Y.B. was the operations base at Timora. It was 23 on the radio on the ships. I set up a series of signals for weather and situation. Most of them were signals already in use in the various United States armed services. For example, AFFIRM meant taking off, BAKER meant circling to land. We had some additional ones of our own: GEORGE meant the pilot wanted dope on the field conditions, KING was a call for position.

What there was in humor, Black squeezed out. He devised a set of code-words that soon came into general use. CHICAGO indicated a bombing raid over Timora or the Burma Road. RED RAG was a warning to stay away from the base. FREE BEER was the code phrase that meant to return home, all clear.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE first chance to prove my ideas on combat flying came a week after the A.R.G. had first begun to practice them. Most of our flying was done in the early morning. From noon until five in the evening the sun was generally so hot that it nearly melted the P-40's into scrap. They were almost too hot to touch. So the youngsters generally wheeled them in at eleven o'clock and let the mechanics work on them until noon. To while the time away, they played records on an old phonograph that was in the Operations bar, or else had a hand of cribbage. That and poker were the favorite games.

They had just taxied in this morning when the alarm started to clatter. I was in Headquarters poring over a map with Rees. I came outside. The spotters had reported a single Jap pursuit, probably observation, headed for Timora.

"Okay," I said. I ordered the rest of the A.R.G. grounded. "Maybe I can demonstrate what I've been talking about," I told them. "Keep your eyes open and breathe a prayer. This is a good chance to see if what we've been doing works. Also, a good chance to see if I'm lucky."

"Wouldn't want me to go up with you?" asked Black. "You told us two was better, remember?"

"Just this once," I said, "I'm a liar. You don't mind, do you, Black?" He closed his mouth and stepped back. I hadn't meant to hurt his feelings, but it looked that way. I went out to my ship. . . .

The world whined and thundered. Suddenly I got three times as heavy. My shoulders depressed involuntarily. It was hard to breathe. My buttocks pushed painfully against the seat and the parachute pack under me.

The blood drained out of my head, making my legs swollen and soggy. The green-and-brown wings of the camouflaged P-40 quivered against the late morning air that was hard as stone under the pressure of the leading edge. The crazy quilt of the Burmese earth disappeared. I caught a glimpse of the checker of brown hills and green valleys whisking out of sight.

In the imminent instant, it was light. Radiant gold and luminescent blue of a saint's halo! The Allison engine of the P-40 sobbed, roared in cabalistic tempo. The earth returned under.

I had ended my tight loop.

I kicked my left rudder, wrenched the stick sidewise with a careful jerk. The turn-and-bank indicator jiggled violently as I spun about in the flat air, held vertical, like a toy on invisible threads. The P-40 trembled. It moved under me in an unaccustomed motion like the resentful stir of a hurt child. Bullets, I thought, going in.

I looked into the rear-view mirror. The Zero was still there. The Jap was good—maybe better than I was. The silver-white tracers poured from the wings and the nose of the truncated little ship, tendrils of death that tied us together. There was a dull sound on the armor back of my seat. The instrument board showed two small splintered holes: Cannon shells coming up.

I flung the ship instantly into a headlong dive. The whimper of the wind was harsh through the half-open canopy. The P-40 hurled itself toward the cumulus overcast a thousand feet below, five hundred feet to the right. It smashed into the white fluff. The sound of the motor muffled.

Gently, I thought. I pulled up a little. I eased back the throttle. Suddenly I jammed it forward with all my strength. I raked my knuckles bloody on the coaming as I always did, but this time I didn't feel the pain of the torn skin. I pulled back on the stick and broke through again, into the haze and sanctified light of the land above the cloud.

Directly before me, like a lost hound, the Zero droned. Its pilot had not suspected a slowing in speed. He was waiting for me to come up ahead. He could not have seen me behind.

Sucker shot, two hundred yards, I thought. I puckered my lips. I pressed the knurl of the trigger on the stick, gently and firmly. The red, ravenous lines of the tracers leaped out. They converged on the gray-bellied Zero. It was a six-limned triangle of .50- and .30-caliber destruction.

The Zero staggered. It seemed as if it were suddenly and celestially drunk. I dived. I swarmed up under. Fifty yards, I thought. Again I pressed the trigger—with a lover's touch. I saw the inhuman goggles of the Japanese pilot peer over the cockpit edge for an instant. I saw the blue hood of his coveralls. At the same moment I remembered I was still pressing the trigger. I could still see the red lines, hear the far-off chug of the two .50's, the rattle of the four .30's.

The Zero's rudder flipped into tatters. The ship over me reeled madly. Smoke, light and blue (then black and thick), began to pour from under the broad ring of the Zero's radial engine. The ship fluttered. It began a retching dive toward the earth.

I dived after it. The smoke of the burning made a light soot on the cockpit canopy over me. Five thousand feet, nearly a mile, the Zero fell. It was the drop of a plumb bob.

All at once it was no longer part of the sky. The earth swallowed it.

But I saw the last of the blue-clad pilot. Against the earth where the shape of the Zero had already vanished, I saw a blue puppet struggle free. He tumbled like a doll out of the Zero, and went on as escort to the plane to the earth. The end-over-end fall went on interminably.

There was a flash of bright flame and a puff of smoke. They shot up like the discharge of the gun. But no sound. I turned upward. My face face felt wet and white; the lines of it were deep and ugly in my rearview mirror. I climbed slowly in great spirals to ten thousand feet. I started to weave leisurely like a tail-ass Charley across the sky, looking for planes.

After five minutes, I was satisfied. The sky was clear. The Zero had been alone.

I decided to come in.

NOSE-DOWN, the P-40 rolled in, as though it caught a mysterious spoor at ninety miles an hour. It struck, bounced and rolled. I wasn't in the mood for a pretty landing. I pulled the stick back between my legs and let it fly. The motor dropped from a roar to a mumble. The prop was no longer a silver platter before my face but a tri-bladed piece of aluminum alloy. I checked my watch. I had been in the air a half-hour.

Two Chinese mechanics came running out. I slipped the earphone from my head. It was slimy with sweat. I sat still. It had been quite a fight. I was tired. After a minute, I cranked back the grimed canopy over me and got up. I felt the breeze drying my cheeks. I was awkward in getting down. My parachute,

with its tight banding, clung to my bottom. It bumped me as I went across the field; I was too tired to take it off.

The dust lay fine and thick on the sun-dried Timora field. My boots left crumbling prints behind. As I went toward Operations, I saw Black standing fifty yards before the building. He had a curious expression. I couldn't tell if it were amusement or pain. He held out his hand. On it were a pair of lacquer cans. They were tiny: one was red and the other was black. A brush was balanced across them.

"Want me to do the honors?" he asked. He referred to the little six-by-two-inch banners I had ordered painted on the sides of the P-40's to mark the number of Jap ships shot down. I had three of them. This would make four.

"No," I said. "Later."

BLACK followed me to the door of Operations. He stood watching me take off the 'chute. "Want me to sign the confirmation?" he inquired. "I saw the crash. Saw the pilot hit, too."

I unbuckled my 'chute and tossed it on a cot. My eyes, blind with sun, could not see Black as I turned. I spoke to a blotch of shadow outlined against the bright rhomboid of the doorway.

"For the sweet God's sake!" I said. "Let me alone!"

There was no excuse. No reason. I liked Black. I had nothing to show for my breaking loose on him. I sat on the cot in Operations until my eyes got accustomed to the light. Then I put my 'chute back in my locker and stepped outside. I crossed to the bunkhouse and went in. It was hot and steaming. Black was lying on his cot with his hands under his head and his legs cocked up. I wanted to say something, but there was nothing to say. I decided to take a shower.

The showers in the four bunkhouses were good. There was a big tank up in the hills that the British had installed, and a little gasoline pump that kept it filled. We had plenty of water—all of it cold. It would feel good on a day like this, and might wash away the black-Irish mood I was in. I stripped and picked up a towel.

I pushed open the door of the shower. I had one foot in the air, ready to step into the six-inch-deep square of galvanized iron that was the bottom of the shower, when I froze. I must have looked like a clown, but it was no laughing matter.

A cobra was staring me in the face.

It seemed that I stood there a long time. I kept my foot up, because I didn't know what would happen if I lowered it. I had heard that cobras liked cool, wet places. That was pre-

I froze. A cobra was staring me in the face.

cisely what the shower was, with the drain clogged up from too much use. It wasn't big enough for an arena. Three feet square didn't give me much of a chance. I didn't dare withdraw. I had seen a cobra strike a fakir in Soerabaia, on my rounds with Hein. They were lightning.

My leg began to tremble. I couldn't keep it still. The cobra, rising, fastened its bead-black eyes on my toes. I saw it was getting angry. Its glittering black body began to sway. It cocked itself up nearly fifteen inches off the floor and began to hiss. There was a queer odor in the shower. The neck of the cobra started to swell. I could see the pale white underside fanning out, and the muscles, like the ribs of a parasol, behind the head.

"Where's a gun?" It was a whisper behind me. It was Black. I didn't move my lips. "Bed," I whispered. My toes were twitching more violently. The cobra was swaying back and forth. . . .

Suddenly, like a clap of thunder, there was a *blang-g-g* in the cube of iron that was the shower-room. The concussion nearly drove my ears in. I saw the head and hood of the cobra fly apart. There was a metallic twang as the bullet went through the back of the shower. I sat down on the floor. I knew Black had found my .45 and let go. That bullet could drive a man flat on his back at twenty yards. What it did to the cobra was a sight to turn the stomach. The floor of the shower was a mess of writhing black scales and bits of flesh in a sticky stew of blood.

"I don't think I'll take a shower," I said. I said it very carefully and sliding back out of the shower-door, still sitting, I turned and looked up at Black. He snapped the safety-catch on and offered me the gun.

"This yours?" he asked. "Found it on your bed."

"I think it is," I told him. I took the gun and went back to my bed and sat down once more.

Black followed me.

"Get one of those Burmese boys to clean it out," I said. Black went to the door and yelled. He came back to me.

"I wish you'd tell me something about that fight today," he began.

Black and I thought it called for a drink. We went over to the bar in the Operations building. It was a small room upstairs filled with some chairs, a phonograph and a pile of records, old magazines and books, and a bar and some cases of liquor. It was a self-serve and mark-it-down policy strictly. The drinks, all warm, had a good but hardly infinite variety.

I WENT behind the bar. "Name it," I said. Black chose a slug of sherry; and I, keeping up my spirits, took rum-and-coke, mostly rum. We sat down. I wanted to talk.

"I'll trade you the fight for some stuff about you and Evarts," I told Black. "I'm curious."

He had no time to answer, however, for at that moment Evarts came in, his thin face set, and his bright hair tousled. He brightened when he saw us.

"Hello, sir," he said to me. He went behind the bar and selected an orange squash. Going over beside Black, he sat down. "You don't mind, do you, Jonny?" he asked. "You've been queer lately."

The word cued my look at Black. His face was tight. He looked at Evarts and suddenly he relaxed. "Get out," he said gently.

Evarts, sipping his squash, looked up in astonishment.

"What?" he said.

"Get out," said Black. Evarts, looking as though he might cry, got up and walked out without a word.

I took a pull of my drink. I had too much Indian rum in it, and it

tasted like bile. "Why do you hang around with him?" I asked Black. "You don't act like a pansy blossom."

"That might be accounted for by the fact that I'm not," Black said. He gulped some sherry. I agreed that it might be the case.

"Look," said Black. "I don't want to know your history before you came here."

"I'll tell you," I said. "I was born in Pennsylvania on a farm of three hundred acres. Northeast part. My family moved to California, and I became a roughneck in the oil-fields. Then I decided I wanted to fly, because the ships were going over my head every day and I got a yen to go up rather than down. Then, in 1939—"

"I said I didn't want to know about it," interrupted Black.

"You said you didn't," I admitted. "But I figure if I open up, you will too."

Black took a deep breath and a drink. "Not much to tell," he said. "I come from Illinois. Went to the University of Chicago, came from what might be called a good family, up on the North Shore. Dances, teas, all that. Met Evarts at school, and we stuck together. He's not really a queer one. He tries to fight it, but he doesn't get very far. Still, he's an innocent, and he's nearly twenty-three now. That's something. I try to help him. I really like him. We thought getting in the Navy would cure him. It didn't. So we took this chance."

I shook my head. "Nothing works for those poor devils," I said. I was really sorry for Evarts now.

Black's face was haggard. He looked down at his drink. "I suppose you're right," he said. I could hardly hear him. "Anyway, I'm sick of trying to steer him," he told me. "I've got my own job to do—the job you're cutting out for me."

Ching stuck his head in the door. I turned off the phonograph.

"The Colonel would like to see you," said Ching.

"Come along, Black," I told him, and finished my drink. He did the same, and we both stood up.

"We'll figure it out," I said. We went downstairs and started for Operations.

Chapter Sixteen

CLAIR had a half-smile on his face. "Quite a day for you, Feeney," he said. "First a Jap and then a cobra. The boys tell Ching, and he tells me. Efficient intelligence I have around here."

"About the same thing," Rees said. He was standing near the opposite wall with his hands in his pockets. "Killing a cobra or a Jap."

"They both turned my stomach," I told him. "If that's what you mean." Black shot me a quick, comprehending glance. He knew how I felt when I came down from that flight. Rees' lips tightened, but he said nothing. Clair's gaze flicked my face, but his look was understanding. "The first time," he told me. He shuffled his papers and seemed reluctant to go on. "I wish I could feel that way again," he said at last. Rees had turned away and was looking out the window.

Clair cleared his throat. "Feeney," he said, "you've been working hard. Why don't you take one of the ships and fly down to Rangoon tonight? Have yourself a time. We've got notice that some new P-40's have come in, and we want them flown back. You can head up the flight. I'll send some other men down by train."

My heart wabbled, and I felt the world come into a bright focus. "Sure," I said. "Yes sir." I turned around and walked out, with Black behind me.

"I hope nothing breaks while you're gone," Black said. "I'd hate to see you miss a mix-up."

"It won't," I told him. "Take care of yourself up here. I'm going to snooze for the rest of the afternoon, and take off just before sunset. I won't see you again, probably, for a day or two."

Black grinned. He commenced to walk away, and I remembered something. "Take care of Evarts too," I called.

Black grinned again and waved.

"He'll be with me," he called back. "We're going to try to get permission to go down on the train tonight at ten to ferry those ships back. I'll see you at the Silver Slipper."

There wasn't any white man in Burma, I thought, that didn't know about Feeney and his romance of Rangoon.

On an impulse, I called after Black.

"Hey!" I said. "One more drink."

He came back, grinning more widely than ever. . . .

"We should have a caste-mark on our foreheads," Black said. His face, with lean chin and a stubble of blue beard, was rapt and serious. He looked like a prophet. We were on our third and final drink.

"I fall off on that turn," I told him.

"I mean we're marked. We have a lot of things for us, but mostly they're against us."

"They?"

"The things."

I didn't say anything. I watched him. After a while, he began to talk again.

"I used to dream at first. On the ship coming over, in the little tight bunk I had. I used to dream here, too. Now I don't. I'm free of that.

"They were dreams that woke me up stark and stiff, the way nightmares used to make me when I was a kid. I kept dreaming one particular one over and over again: The plane would be crashed in a rice-field that went out to the horizon in a kind of solid atmosphere that was clear and bright. I would be pinned under the ship. Sitting in the cockpit, calm, perfectly conscious, just sitting there without any desire to move. I would be frightened, but I would sit there in a sort of peace. Do you know what I mean?"

I didn't. "Yes," I said. Black took a breath and went on:

"The ship would be on fire. I could see the flames coming back toward me in little tongues from the engine. I could see fire touch me at last. My boots and legs would begin to burn. The hair would shrivel on my legs. I could smell it burning. I hate the smells in dreams, Arch."

BLACK'S face was set. His eyes looked deeper in his face.

"I wouldn't know what it meant, Dr. Freud," I said. "If you're asking me."

"I'm not," he said. He was still serious. "I'm just telling you how it was."

"I know what you mean, anyway," I told him, "when you say we're special."

"It's not egotism," he said quickly.

"No."

"We're a new race. We're the Indestructibles. We can't be killed. There used to be a selected bodyguard of Darius, the Persian king, that was called the Immortals. We're not that. We're more solid, more worldly stuff. We're the Indestructibles. No matter what happens to anything, nothing can happen to us. We go on."

He was putting something into words now that he had been thinking about. He was getting excited.

"It's a new kind of person coming up, into a new kind of world. It took the Industrial Revolution all this time, I guess, with its cranks and cogs and rhythm, to make us. We're half-men, really—glorious half-men. Sort of a schizophrenia. Half of us understands machinery like nothing has ever been understood before. I used to see the kids with jalopies in California. I knew how they nursed a piston and talked about a universal joint as though it were a mistress. They're us or we're them—to the *N*th degree.

"Our lives depend on our knowing machinery better than a brother. Our whole existence hinges on the split-second timing of a spark-plug; our going-on depends on the strength of a weld. So we pay obeisance to our

gods and become a part of the thing that gives us life, as men always have done."

"What about the other half?" I wanted to know.

"That's the naïve half. One side of us is incredibly sophisticated about a valve; the other is incredibly naïve about the world that our fathers and mothers knew. We're kept men, Feeney, just as much as any Park Avenue mistress is kept. We're fed, clothed, repaired, told what to do and when and how to do it, suckled for a purpose not our own. So we really never know anything—or, what might be worse or better, *want* to know anything outside the other, sacred half of our lives.

"It used to be something for a man twenty-five years old to drive twenty-five horsepower. Now you can give four thousand horses and more into the hands of a single kid of eighteen; you can star him in power and in the glory of flying, of the drunkenness of leaving man's traditional element of the earth and becoming a god looking down on the world, a colossus with pygmies squeaking between his legs."

I felt disturbed. Black's talking reminded me, now, of something that Ching had said. I couldn't quite remember. "Go on," I said.

He made a faint gesture of derision, at himself or at me, I couldn't tell which.

"That's all," he said. "The spring's run down. It was all I was set for. A weak moment and some good Scotch."

"Don't let it happen again," I warned him. We got up to go. It was the first—and last—time I ever had a talk like that with him. I thought of it afterward, after he was killed.

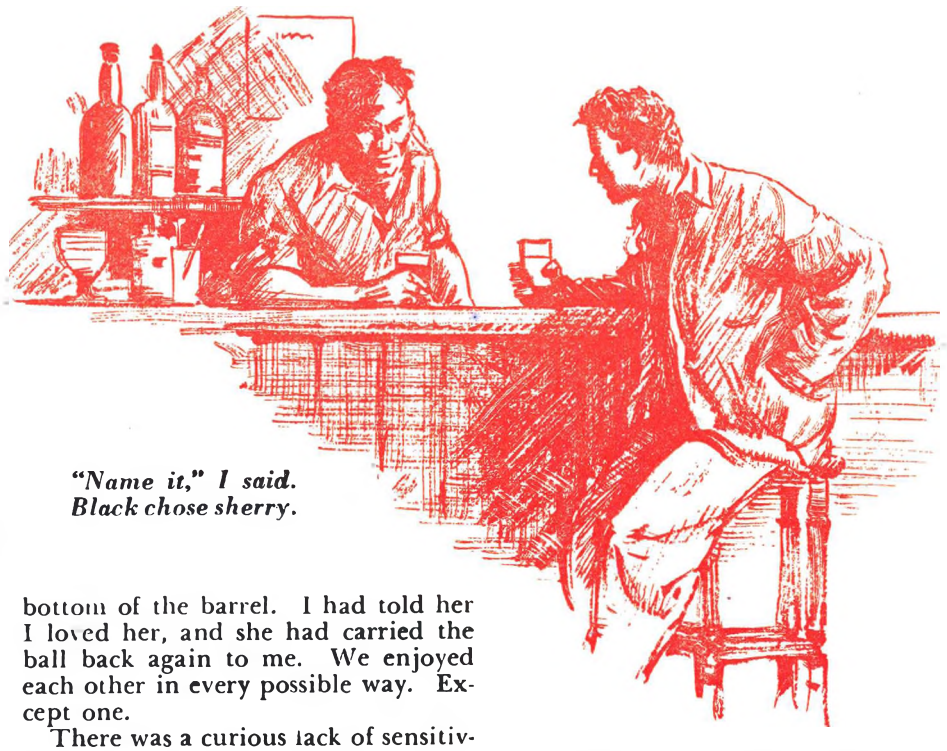
Chapter Seventeen

I SUPPOSE Clair knew, when he sent me to Rangoon, that the P-40's weren't ready to fly. Some were on the Rangoon docks in crates. Others were at the Mingaladon Airdrome. They were being fitted together by Burmese mechanics. It would take at least two days to fit them for flying.

I wired Timora. Clair sent back instructions. I was to stay on the spot and wait for the P-40's to be assembled. He would not send down pilots to fly them away until I notified him that everything was ready.

The routine was gone through in good time, considering the place. I checked my watch. It was eight o'clock. I had done a job, pumping the shipping clerk and the Mingaladon micks in that time. I could think about Shandy.

I was reluctant to see her. I didn't know what to say. It didn't seem there were many more words in the



"Name it," I said. Black chose sherry.

bottom of the barrel. I had told her I loved her, and she had carried the ball back again to me. We enjoyed each other in every possible way. Except one.

There was a curious lack of sensitivity between us: the knowing of the inexpressible beyond the ordinary means of language and touch. Physically, Shandy and I were suited. And we knew, at least, what the other half talked about. I knew more than aërodynamics, and Shandy seemed to have an instinctive kind of mentality that sopped up knowledge like a sponge.

All this meant we could talk and make love and be happy. But both of us knew there was a set limit to lovemaking and talk. As Ching might have said, there are only so many hundred thousand words, maybe six hundred thousand, in the English vocabulary. Shandy and I knew perhaps fifteen thousand between us, and some of those were technical terms that she never would be able to pronounce.

That drew a boundary; it seemed as though we were practising a kind of black magic, and that just beyond us, always, was the secret, invisible limit. We must reach it some day; but we must not—could not—step outside it. The only key to the farther universe was, perhaps, the spirit that we believed to be between us like a drawn sword, separating yet connecting.

For the first time, thinking of Shandy and myself made me uneasy. On shipboard, it had been a question of conquest. In Rangoon, it was a problem of consolidating my position. Now, I wondered, was it to be a strategic withdrawal or a triumphal advance into a territory where I had never been and which I had never wanted until now?

Hell with it! I decided to see the city.

Rangoon was a strange mixture of the squalid and splendid, of the contemporary and the fabulously ancient. I passed through its narrow streets. Craning upward, I could see the houses built so close together that they seemed to be toppling inward. I strolled under the porticos of the great gilt pagoda, a landmark both for ships at sea and planes in the air. I bought a postcard and sent it to my sister in New Jersey.

The odors ended my tour. The thousand unspeakable smells, trembling in the air like live things, drove me back to the Silver Slipper. The hot reek of sweat, the tantalizing fragrance of foods I did not know, the nameless putrescence of sewage and offal, the musty odors of age and dampness, the perfumes I could not identify, that passed like a strain of music. I smelled them one by one at first. They were peculiar and perverse in their coming. But at last they merged into the smell of the city itself, a whole that was more offensive than any of its parts. It had a queer, truculent effect upon me, an almost physical repulsion. I went to the Silver Slipper.

SHANDY was not in her room. The Mahatma let me in with a bow and said nothing. He regarded me as a bull in a china shop after what I had done to Messert on my previous visit. But evidently he had orders that I was allowed to go to Shandy's room and wait.

I sat down and took my package from under my arm. It was the only thing I had picked up—beyond the postcard—in the bazaars of Rangoon. It was a chess set.

The board was inlaid with teak and ivory. The men were also of teak and

ivory, ornately decorated in twisting, cone-like devices. I had bought the whole for twenty-five dollars. It was a sudden, inexplicable impulse. I knew only the basic moves of the game. Black had taught me some on the set at Timora. I had picked up a few game patterns from the study of the chess column in an old magazine in the Operations bar.

I set up the men. I posed my problem. It was, of course, aimed to put the king in check. To do it effectively, after a knight-pawn opening beginning with a king's pawn gambit, I had to also put the queen in jeopardy. It was difficult for me.

IT presented a curious analogy. I stared at the pieces a long time. I imagined myself as the king: powerful, able to move in any direction, capable of taking any piece—but only able to move one square at a time, and forced, usually, to hide behind other pieces. There was the queen: able to move any number of squares in any direction, the most powerful piece on the board, unhampered and ruthless. Still, the king was the real piece. Without it, there was no game. Without it, the game had no object.

I moved the card-table with the pieces on it carefully under the light. It was a hanging lamp with a green shade in the middle of the room. The bulb, electric but ancient, gave off a slightly dingy yellow light. I started to work out my problem and forgot about comparisons. "Hell with you!" I said aloud to whatever psyche of Shandy's might be hanging around.

I was in the middle of it when there was a knock at the door. I looked up, my hand on the queen. I said: "Come in."

The door opened and the cadaverous face of Captain Ching appeared. "Hello," I said.

"Good evening," he returned. "May I come in?"

I nodded toward a chair on the other side of the table.

Ching sat down across the card-table and looked at the chess set-up.

"Do you play?" he asked politely.

"Only a little," I told him. "I can't get interested enough in figuring out what pieces of wood and ivory might do."

"That is the incorrect attitude," Ching reproved me. "The bits of wood are only symbols. They reflect the life of the mind. Chess is a fine thing, a relaxation."

"I suppose," I said.

Ching sighed. "I do not know who was chess champion in 1930," he said. "It does not say." It was the first time he had intimated that his knowledge came from anywhere but a direct enlightenment from heaven. I went on puzzling over a queen-bishop move.

"Chang," said the Chinese intelligence officer opposite me, "—you remember Chang?"

I looked up and wrinkled my forehead. "Can't think of him right now," I said.

"Chang of the cave."

"Oh," I said. I moved a piece. "Yes. I remember him."

"He is dead," Ching said. "And Sze-Fong is dead. I knew they were friends of yours. I thought you would care to know."

I picked up the queen I had knocked over. "Yes," I said slowly, "I would like to know." Ching was silent. I stopped moving the pieces. I could not think about chess for a minute.

"How did they die?" I inquired.

Ching straightened a little. "Very well," he said. "Very well indeed."

I shook my head. "No," I said. "Who killed them?"

Ching's voice betrayed astonishment. "The Japanese, of course," he told me. "Who else?"

I nodded.

"Sze-Fong," said Ching meditatively. "It is very peculiar. He died exceedingly well. Five Japanese. They caught him at the mouth of the cave. It was a surprise attack of Japanese guerrillas."

He looked at me. "They are very good at that," he said. "They put green net over themselves, and paint their faces green. With a little rice and much ammunition, they are very good. They wiped out the whole post."

"You said Sze-Fong—"

"There were five dead Japanese about him. He was covered with innumerable cuts and shot-wounds. It was very curious."

"What was?"

"In his hand was a clasp-knife. Very much like the one you picked up on the train to Kuala Lumpur. You remember?"

"The same one," I muttered. "I gave it to him."

"Ah," said Ching. "I thought so. I thought you might like to have it again." He reached inside his coat, but I seized his arm.

"No, Ching," I told him. "I don't want it. Keep it." He dropped his hand.

For five minutes, perhaps longer, neither of us spoke. Then Ching leaned over and patted the back of my hand. I pulled it away. I dislike men doing that. Ching did not notice.

"You seem unspirited," he told me.

"Dispirited," I said.

"Yes. Dispirited. Sometimes the words are not right. Is that true?"

"It's an old disease," I said. "I've been thinking."

"Not too much, please," Ching said. "It is bad."

"Thinking?"

"Yes. I will give you something better. Among my other duties, Mr. Feeney, I memorize gems of the literary world."

"Fine," I said.

"I have something for you," Ching told me.

"Don't bother," I told him.

Ching paid no attention. "It is from Marcus Aurelius, the emperor," he said. "An emperor as wise, perhaps, as some of those who sat upon the Dragon Throne of China in the old days. But it is not really Aurelius who speaks. It is a saying of Plato that has been lost."

"All right. What is it?"

Ching began to recite in the droning voice of memorization, his eyes fixed unseeing above my head:

"'He who is discoursing about men should look at earthly things as if he viewed them from some higher place; should look at them in their assemblies, armies, agricultural labors, marriages, treaties, births, deaths, noise of the courts of justice, desert places, various nations of barbarians, lamentations, markets, a mixture of all things and an orderly combination of contraries.'"

"Some truth in that," I told him. "So far, my whole career has been an orderly combination of contraries."

Ching nodded and got up. "I will leave you alone," he said. "But I will remind you that we who fly in the heavens have the higher place. We should also have the higher philosophy, or we lose more than the world and our fight. We lose ourselves."

I put away the chess. I wished Shandy would come back.

I interrupted my soliloquy. The door was opening. The fat, dark face of the Mahatma peeked in. He smiled dubiously at me.

"Miss Shandy," he said, "—she is having supper with Mr. Gilbert. Do not blame me, please."

He vanished, leaving the door open. I went down the steps after him and into the Silver Slipper.

ACROSS the way, in a booth, I saw Shandy and Gilbert. Shandy stood up and waved. I crossed over. "Do you mind?" I asked Gilbert.

Gilbert said he didn't mind. I sat down and smiled at Shandy. She smiled back and raised her glass of champagne. I did the same, and Gilbert came in a bad third.

"To us!" I said. Shandy knew what I meant.

"To us," she told me softly.

"Oh, to us, by all means," said Gilbert. We drank off the champagne and felt the bubbles in our nose.

"Dance?" I asked Shandy. She nodded and got up. Gilbert took an-

other disconsolate drink and looked down at his curry. It was good dark-yellow curry dried green at the edges, and the rice was very fluffy. The pieces of chicken were large, and there was plenty of chutney, but Gilbert didn't look as if he enjoyed the sight. I felt very good and headed Shandy across the floor.

She clung to me. I felt her in every nerve of my body, the galvanic response that was almost automatic in my fibers when I touched her. "Now I know how Pavlov's dog felt," I said. Shandy understood and laughed, warm and sweet, into my ear.

"You dance badly," she told me.

"Say 'dear' when you say that," I muttered, careening off a dark-hued couple. The Silver Slipper had a cosmopolitan clientele.

"Dear," she said obediently. I pulled her tighter and tried desperately to manipulate my feet. It was no use. I decided to give up and told Shandy so. I steered her back to the table.

Gilbert got to his feet. "May I?" he said.

Shandy shook her head. "I'm tired, a little," she told him. Gilbert sat down again. We filled our glasses all around. Shandy asked to be excused and we said she could be because her first number was coming up. When she had gone, Gilbert looked at me with disfavor.

"You're a nervy Yank," he said mildly. "You know about the young man so benighted?"

"No," I told him.

"*'Who never knew when he was slighted,'*" Gilbert went on:

> *"'He went to a party,*
> *And ate just as hearty—'"*

"I remember it now," I interrupted him. "But you're the lucky one. Shandy didn't know I was coming down when she made the date with you. She asked me if she should break it and I said to keep it. So you're really the one not invited." I didn't think he knew I was lying.

Gilbert twirled his empty goblet thoughtfully. "So that's the way it is," he said.

I nodded. "That's the way," I said.

He looked up. His blue eyes were hard. "Didn't I promise you a beating?" he asked.

I pursed my lips. "The last time we met," I said, "you did."

Gilbert stared at me. "Messert's nose will never be as pretty again," he told me.

"Maybe he went to the wrong doctor," I suggested. "My nose was broken three times in the California oil fields."

"It doesn't look very pretty, either," said Gilbert. He ran a hand through his blond hair and stood up. "Miss Shandy won't be back for a while," he said. "Suppose we go outside and have a go at it."

I finished my champagne and got up. "Okay," I said. Gilbert grimaced and went out ahead of me.

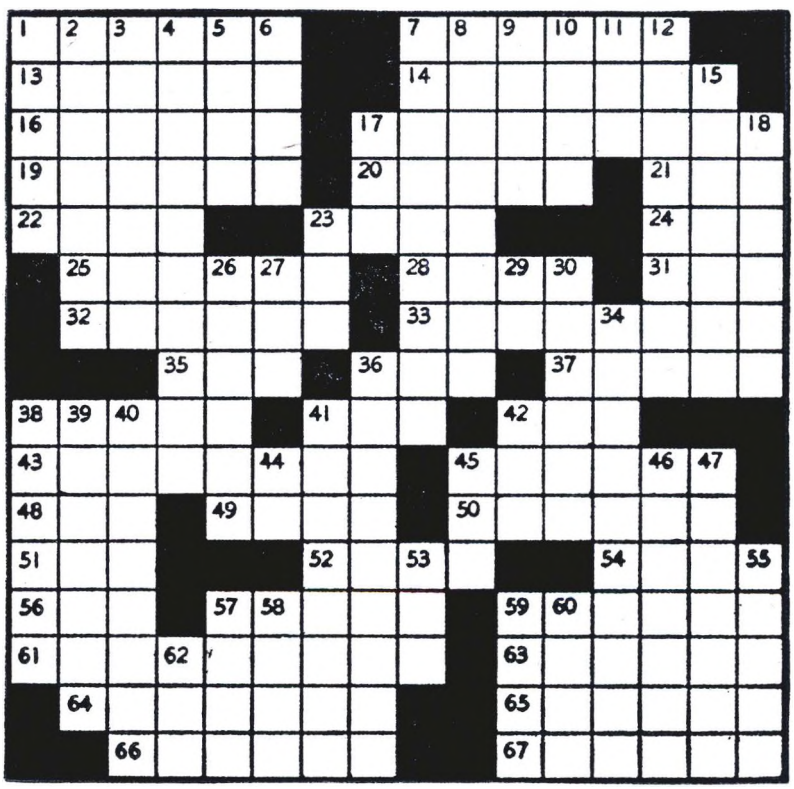
This story continues in our forthcoming February issue.

AN OLD-TYPE CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Edited by Albert H. Morehead

A number of readers have felt that our crossword puzzles have been too difficult, and it has been suggested that we alternate them with the old-fashioned straight definition type. In order to discover your preference, we herewith begin this alternation with a puzzle of the simpler and more familiar sort—and hope you will let us know which kind you like the better.

(Solution on page 105)



ACROSS

1 Nape
7 What our eagle holds
13 For No. 7 or No. 5
14 Pulls out shoestrings
16 Sound of pleasant laughter
17 Stratagems
19 Take in
20 Pick up butts
21 Empty
22 Pome
23 "My wife has a —— of iron."
24 Mountain in Colorado
25 Staid
28 In legend, carries a gem and produces a wart
31 Rubbish!
32 Slipped away
33 Waving
35 Not
36 Wipe
37 "Where —— shakes a few sad, last, gray hairs." *Keats*
38 Sharpener
41 Letter
42 Weight, long or short
43 Seconds
45 Jumps up and down
48 High, musically
49 Mixture
50 Living
51 Greek fury
52 Spill the beans
54 The Big House
56 First cardinal
57 One beloved (Numbers 10:29)
59 Pallas
61 Impasse
63 Cower
64 A putting-away
65 Business combine
66 Groped for vision
67 Potentates

DOWN

1 Substitute for money
2 —— Gordon
3 Painter
4 Not forgiven
5 A doctor whom I do not love, without knowing why
6 Run away
7 Fittings
8 Element
9 Dock
10 Place to get coffee in France?
11 And this here is French, too
12 Of a spherical section
15 Makes tastier
17 Tree
18 Not satisfactory in parts
23 Got spliced
26 Twin of Artemis
27 Number of pins
29 Score over deuce
30 American admiral
34 County in England
36 Overwhelmed with grief
38 Soldiers' caps
39 Biblical currency
40 Pleads
41 Card game
42 As sure as death?
44 Overhead railway
45 "Bud"
46 Informal alliance
47 A cocktail
53 A President
55 Parts of the picture
57 Metis' successor
58 Poet
59 Benefactress of ancient Rome
60 Car
62 Fate

The Mystery of the

One of the queerest crimes in the category is brought to an even stranger solution in one of our professorial detective friend Jonathan's better failures.

by WILLIAM BRANDON

THE woman he recognized as Mrs. Hartley was on the edge of the crowd now, searching her purse for tickets. The bus was pulling up.

Harold went into his song and dance:

Lahst night, dahn our alley cyme a toff
Nahsty old geezer with a nahsty cough—

He used a cockney accent, and the song was an old-time music-hall favorite, familiar to any Londoner past forty. His ugly face was cut by a cheerful grin as he sang. His dancing was clumsy and not very good, but it had enthusiasm, and it was working him nearer to Mrs. Hartley.

Sees my missus, tykes 'is topper off,
In a very gentlemanly wye—

A circle of passers-by was drawn around him now. Harold winked extravagantly at a pretty girl in a red jacket and shook his cap for coins.

Larf, larf, I thought I should ha' died,
When I knocked 'im in the old Kent Road!

He wound up with a flourish and a bow. A few people laughed. He heard the girl in the red jacket ask her escort, a sailor, whatever language that was supposed to be. A dime fell into his cap, and a nickel and some pennies rang on the sidewalk.

A woman's voice said: "You're a breath of the Old Britt. I did enjoy it." Mrs. Hartley was at his shoulder, smiling and offering him a half-dollar. Harold bobbed his head in thanks. Her purse was open in her hands, and the moving crowd shouldered them together. Harold's fingers, very skillful, dipped into the purse and lifted the white leather billfold.

Baggage and passengers filed into the bus. Motor roaring, air-brakes spurting, it nosed into the early evening Times Square traffic. Harold got a last glimpse of Mrs. Hartley settling herself in a rear seat.

He crossed the sidewalk to the bus station and walked quickly through the waiting-room to the phone-booths at the rear. His cap was on the back of his head: he was whistling. . . .

"I know," Mrs. Hartley wrote, "that you'll want to hear first all about my new position, my employers, my charges, my first impressions of the situation here, etc. etc. Really, I am more than satisfied, I think, although of course nothing is ever perfect. The estate here is lovely; my own room is luxury itself—these people, the Groepers, must be quite as wealthy as a latter-day Crœsus: indeed, I have never been in a home exhibiting such an overwhelming air of elaborate wealth, my experience having been gained, as you know, in the best of English families, where riches are seldom present, and when they are, are accepted without ostentation. Only in America could you find Mr. and Mrs. Groeper—and I might add, only in America could a governess command the salary Mr. and Mrs. Groeper have offered me.

"Mrs. Groeper is a very typical person. When one quite obviously is cultured, one quite obviously is not. I should say that Mrs. Groeper had great beauty and small beginnings, and both are now coated with glossy layers of artificial make-up, to conceal the approaching defects of the one and the disturbing memory of the other. The children, two girls of eight and six, appear terribly spoiled but otherwise rather nice, and a little pathetic amid all the adult splendor of this place—the acres of formal gardens, the automatic fountains, the noiseless elevators here in the house, the host of footmen, maids and gardeners, the French tennis instructor, the Hawaiian swimming instructor, the Dutch equitation instructor; where on earth do they find such a complete and elegant staff in these times?

"I have not yet seen Mr. Groeper. I understand from the housekeeper that he is ill—an invalid. In fact, it was hinted that his illness is of a mental nature, and I gather it has made for household difficulties in the past. I do hope nothing interferes with my

Missing Face

continuation here, as I need the money so badly.

"And that reminds me: my purse was robbed during the trip out here from New York. Most of the money I had with me was taken; and worst of all, I lost all my cards and address-book, etc. I don't know how it could have happened. I'm sure I didn't lose it, but I can't imagine when anyone could have stolen it, either. It's been a terrible nuisance already, for I had an awful time even getting into the estate here today without the identification card that had been sent me (apparently Mr. Groeper suffers from a persecution complex; I have never seen a place so thoroughly guarded, like a jail; and I understand that in Mr. Groeper's own wing of the house, which holds his famous collection of paintings, an armed guard is posted day and night—but at Mr. Groeper's apartment, not in the gallery). And—well, if it hadn't been for the fact that I had an interview with Mrs. Groeper in New York last week, so she could recognize me and vouch for me when the guard called her to the gatehouse, I certainly shouldn't have got in here even yet."

Mrs. Hartley finished her letter at midnight. She wrote to her sister as other people write in diaries: more for her own satisfaction in writing than for her sister's in reading. She sat awhile at rest at the strange desk, resting against the newness of her strange room. The great house was oppressively silent around her; the muffled hush of drapes and tapestries, deep rugs and thick walls, the sleep-

ing house soundly wrapped in its costly adornment—she felt its weight and grew restless.

After a time she went to her window and opened it wide; and standing there, she heard the man scream. It was shrill shrieking, a scream not of fright but of agony. It came from a distant part of the house; it was gone in a breath. Mrs. Hartley's shocked face stared, listening, into a night that had become grotesque and frightening. The scream was not repeated. . . .

Some heavy-bodied insect buzzed and bumbled about his brain, flying clumsily from corner to corner, to

Illustrated by John Fulton

"You're the Professor, I guess, young feller," Harold said.

bump and fall and crawl and fly again, stubbornly seeking escape. He tossed restlessly on the bed and gradually awakened. Some place in the room there was a light that hurt his eyes.

He said: "Nurse."

A woman's voice said, "Yes, Mr. Groeper," and the light was cut off and on again, and gleamed and glistened on her white uniform. She turned and tugged the pillow under his head.

"Your dress hurts my eyes," he said. "A brown dress. A brown dress would do all right." He yawned and stretched. His muscles were sore, and his bones were tired. "Have I been sleeping, nurse?"

"Just dandy, Mr. Groeper."

"I said to hell with that. Don't talk to me like that."

"Now—" Her voice was smiling, and her fingertips were cool, touching his eyelids. "You're getting wide awake, and that isn't very good."

"I was yelling again. I woke myself up."

"Only once, Mr. Groeper. Just for a second."

"You didn't have to get Henry?"

"No, honestly, it was only a second."

He let his eyes close. There was the uneasy sensation of drifting that always preceded sleep. There was some security in the nurse and her coolness and her smile. She was a pretty girl. She had the sensual young figure of the Sleeping Venus, but there was that memory about those dimples at the corners of her mouth, her laughing teeth and laughing eyes. . . . That thing of Hogarth's—the nurse always reminded him of it.

The Greco watched him frostily from above the nurse's left shoulder. He could see it without opening his eyes. He would dream if he went back to sleep, but he couldn't stay awake. He drifted away.

At two o'clock the nurse went to the door to ask Henry to order coffee. His solid, white-coated figure was as much a fixture in the corridor as the molding on the wall. She was startled to find him gone.

She stepped back into the room for a look at Mr. Groeper; he was hard asleep, snoring unevenly. She took the chance of leaving him for a minute to run down the corridor and see what had become of Henry. . . .

Jonathan put down the telephone and said: "Tell me."

"But yes, kind sir," Annabel replied. "They've put the blast on your holiday."

He shook his head, lighting his pipe "Who would steal an El Greco portrait, cut out the face and return it?"

"The face?"

"No, the portrait."

"The faceless portrait."

He looked at her thoughtfully.

She said in haste: "Maybe someone who didn't like El Greco."

"There were El Grecos easier to get at than this one."

"Well, who owned it?"

"A psycho-neurotic."

"You mean a loony?"

Jonathan shrugged. "A sick man, that's all."

"Then he did it himself, of course," Annabel said firmly.

"No; the thief was a woman. She got in past the night gatekeeper on an identification card stolen from the governess. She knew the set-up of the place, because she drew the guard away from his station by touching off an electric alarm in another part of the house. Then the nurse went looking for the guard. She was gone two minutes. When she came back, the picture was stolen. That was last night. The room was unoccupied during lunch today, when the picture was returned and hung in its place again—minus the face!"

"Governess, gatekeeper, guard! I take it this is among the ultra rich?"

"You don't come by El Grecos for peanuts."

"So they call upon the eminent Dr. Jaffrey, world-famous analyst of the curious in crime, celebrated author of 'Murder and the Mind,' who obediently drops his work, shines up his rosette of the Institute, and trots along to fawn over their silly mystery."

"No," he said, unruffled; "the nurse called me. She used to be in my English Lit classes in school. She thought the case would interest me. It does. She got an okay for me to come out and look around."

ANNABEL slanted her green eyes. "She is beautiful, of course," she murmured.

Jonathan reached for his coat and shucked into it. "You aint lying!"

"Of course. You only notice the pretty girls in your classes. And I can see a meeting of minds, if she is now nursing mental cases. Am I forbidden to come along?"

"It might not be a bad idea."

Annabel jerked a comb viciously through her red hair, pinned it in an extravagant mass on the top of her head, dabbed on too much make-up and offered him an artificial smile of leering sweetness, batting her eyes. She said between her teeth: "Try to stop me." . . .

Mrs. Hartley said: "That man singing out there. There's something about him— But I can't think today. I'm so upset."

The two little girls were with her on the terrace. The elder, Rosa, said: "That's Harold. He's the night gatekeeper. I like him. May I go talk to him?"

Mrs. Hartley hesitated, and Jonathan said: "If he's the gatekeeper I want to talk to him too." He took Rosa's hand. "I'll go along."

"Well, all right," Rosa said.

Harold was sauntering through a rose-garden in the middle distance, his cap on the back of his head and his hands in his pockets. He was singing about *Could she bill, could she coo, could she, could she Charleston too; has anybody seen my gal.*

"Harold sings all the time," Rosa said. "He knows a million songs. He doesn't care where he is; he just sings. I think that's nice, don't you? But Mamma doesn't like it."

Harold saw them coming and stopped singing. "Well, well," he said, "if it aint little Rosie O'Grady, that foine little lady! Shure, and how are ye this mornin', colleen dhas?"

Rosa giggled.

He leaned back on his heels, grinning, and sized up Jonathan. "You're the Professor, I guess, young feller."

"News gets around," Jonathan said. "I haven't been here an hour."

"Didn't ask about you, bub." Harold winked like an owl and clucked his tongue. "Seen your red-headed seckatary, and I says: 'Who's that?' 'The Professor's seckatary,' they says; 'the professor that's a detective,' they says, 'come about that swiped pitcher.' 'Then he'll talk to me,' I says. 'I'm the only guy that saw her. I'll tell him what I told the Missus,' I said: 'Wasn't my fault I let her in. She had her card, stamped and countersigned by Henry himself. They told me there's a new governess, didn't they? Let him ask me,' I says. 'Does he want a description of her? Well, I've got a sharp eye. Five foot five, weight one-twenty-nine or thirty, hair brown with a dust of gray, eyes gray with a dust of blue, wearing shiny glasses and a brown hat and a coat with a fur collar. "I'm the new governess," she says, "I just come today and I just walked into the village this evening." "What for," I says, "why, that's a two-mile walk." "That's my business," she says; "are you going to let me in or aint you?" High and mighty enough she was to pass for an English governess any day.' Well, there you are, bub, what I saw, said and heard. Go ahead and ask me."

"You saw her card?"

"To be sure I did. She took it out of a white leather billfold that she had in her pocketbook."

JONATHAN nodded. "It was a white billfold Mrs. Hartley lost. You'd never seen this woman before? She couldn't have been some employee who'd been fired and held a grudge?"

"Could of been. I only been here five years. Could of been someone holding a grudge since before then. But that's a long time to hold a grudge. Now, I'm a kind of a grudge-holder myself, but don't know as I'd have the patience to hold one that long. Why, a week's a mighty long time in the life of a grudge; a grudge gnaws at you, and you'd be et up wholesale in one year, let alone two or three; and Providence spare me five! No, you better come again, bub; that wasn't much of a guess. I could do better'n that myself."

"I don't doubt it," Jonathan said. "What is your guess?"

Harold grinned and winked. "That's the secret, bub; I never guess. *Ergo sum cogito.* I'll give you a proverb,

though. A proverb's a good thing. You mull it awhile, and it'll up and do your thinking for you, if you're too lazy to do it yourself. 'Out of the mouths of babes and fools comes wisdom.'" Harold laughed. "Come on, Rosie," he said, "you want to talk to me, and I want to talk to you. Don't take any wooden nickels, Professor!"

Harold went away laughing, leading Rosa by the hand.

JONATHAN walked back to the terrace. Annabel and the nurse were talking together animatedly. Mrs. Hartley and Rosa's little sister were gone. Laurie, the nurse, explained the little girl was nervous and upset because she was afraid; the excitement about a burglar breaking in the house had frightened her.

"They've both got phobias about strangers and burglars and kidnapers. They've always been kept wrapped in cotton and overcautioned and overprotected, so I suppose it's only natural that they're timid."

"Rosa doesn't seem to be," Annabel said. "She went away by herself."

"Usually Rosa's the worst one about it. But she's older, and I expect she could be outgrowing it."

"No," Annabel said, "I don't think it's a thing children outgrow. I think it grows with them."

"I imagine you're right, at that," Laurie agreed. "It's really too bad. Rosa is the best child, otherwise. She's so friendly, and she's practically adult in her sentiment. She fusses over everyone like a little mother. Actually, it's pitiful the way she's worried over her father being sick. Adults accept things, you know, and grow resigned to them; but because Rosa can't understand it, she won't admit it. It's heartbreaking."

"It's a female characteristic," Jonathan said, "to make noise. Her fluttering soul is uneasy in quiet and contemplation. She is disquieted by thought, so she chatters to drive thought away." He sat down and tugged at his ear.

"Quiet, for goodness' sake!" Annabel said. "The master wishes to ponder."

Laurie giggled. "He used to be like that in school. But everybody thought it was just put on."

"Oh, not at all," Annabel said. "I've heard him say that genius wings its own way into infinity. At any old time, too, except when females are chattering."

"What about female cooks?" Laurie inquired. "Would he wing far on an empty stomach?"

Jonathan stood up, puzzled and shaken to find them in league against him. He said: "I'd like to talk to Mr. Groeper, Laurie. Sorry to break this up."

"He speaks!" Annabel whispered in awe.

"Mr. Groeper's physician is with him," Laurie said, "and Dr. Brunell is celebrated for kicking people inside out when they interrupt him. Would another time be convenient?"

Jonathan sat down again and tamped tobacco in his pipe. He had expected Annabel and Laurie to dislike each other, and he had been anticipating some interesting observations of feminine psychology. He was deeply irritated. Any simple glimmer-witted girl was still more than a match for the most subtle of scientists. He smoked in silence. He was aware of eloquent glances and repressed giggles at his back. Women were always children!

Annabel tired of the game presently and left for a walk through the gardens. Jonathan watched her moving away, graceful white swinging against the soft greens. Sunlight splintered on her hair.

He knocked out his pipe and said: "If you're coherent yet, Laurie, I'd like to ask you a question."

She smiled brightly and said: "Shoot."

"Wipe that silly grin off your face. . . . That's better. You said Mr. Groeper's doctor is with him; is he worse today?"

"Very much so," she said soberly.

"In what way?"

"Extreme prostration."

"Because someone broke into the house last night?"

"He doesn't know anyone broke in. All he knows is that the painting was defaced."

"He thought that much of it?"

She said curiously: "I don't know. I do know the painting has some relation, somehow, with his collapse. In his delirium he raves at it and talks to it and calls it by name. It's the only picture in his room. It's hung—"

"What name does he call it?"

"Coalho. It's the name of the man who gave him the painting."

"*Gave* it to him?"

"Yes, as I understand it. A man named Coalho, a wealthy South American, an old friend of Mr. Groeper's family—in fact, he seems to be a sort of household god of the family, one of those men who are just and wise and noble and perfect in every way, so I gather from Mrs. Groeper's housekeeper, who's been with them for years and years. Or I should say he *was* wise and just and noble. He's dead now. He willed Mr. Groeper the painting. It was a portrait of the founder of the Coalho family, and had been kept in the family for three hundred years. It was also a superb El Greco, from his later period, with a thin drawn face and a thin hand, and godly eyes and a little gray pointed beard. The housekeeper says it really looked quite a bit like Coalho; you could see the family resemblance even after a dozen generations."

"When did Groeper's sickness come? After he got the picture?"

"Well, I suppose that's part of it—the way he came to get it. He was in South America—he has business interests there; and he was traveling with Coalho, by airplane, and the plane crashed. The pilot and Mr. Groeper survived, but Coalho was killed. I never got the story clear, but there was something about there being only one parachute, and Coalho giving it to Mr. Groeper, when they knew the plane was going to crash. Mr. Groeper jumped, and the pilot and Coalho went down with the plane. By some miracle the pilot wasn't killed, but Coalho was. Mr. Groeper and the pilot had a bad time, getting out to civilization—it happened some place in mountains or jungles; and Mr. Groeper was still sick from the effects of it, shock and exposure, when he got back to the States. He came here to recover—and I suppose the painting had been sent up here from Coalho's estate by that time. But instead of getting better, his nerves began to act up, and he got steadily worse. As for the painting, it's been hanging in Mr. Groeper's room ever since I've been here. I think it was almost two years ago when the accident happened. I've been here about a year, and Mr. Groeper's been a pretty hopeless case all that time."

"And now he's worse. Could this shock be serious?"

"The senior nurse thinks it could be very bad or very good, either one."

THEY were silent; then Jonathan said: "What kind of guy is he?"

"He seems nice enough when he's lucid. But I've heard—what I've heard hasn't been so good. He was a rich man's son and ambitious to be richer; and I gather he was inclined to be vicious and petty with whatever power he had. He seems to have more enemies than friends."

"Apparently he didn't make any objection when it came to taking that parachute."

"No, I imagine not. He's really unstable because he's weak. I can fairly see him, wild with fright, almost snatching the parachute out of the old man's hands. He can't help it. He's simply not strong enough to fight down any such basic animal emotion. But he isn't all bad, at all. I've seen that. He's like a lot of people, only more so. He means well, but he never gets any further than that."

"What about his wife? I want to talk to her while I'm here."

"She's very hard to see," Laurie said. "She's usually too busy with her hair. She has two other passions in life,

though: her chin strap and remembering to use a broad *A*. You'll like her."

Annabel came back, walking with Rosa and carrying on a lively conversation. Jonathan lit his pipe and sank himself in thought.

ANNABEL said: "You mean you're quitting."

"I'm out of time," Jonathan said shortly. "We've been here three days." They were in the living-room of the suite Mrs. Groeper had put at their disposal. Jonathan was snapping shut the final suitcase.

"You mean you're giving up," Annabel repeated serenely.

"All right," Jonathan barked, "I'm giving up. Have your fun." He glared at her. "The case doesn't make sense. I've worked out every angle in it. There aren't any leads left." He got out his pipe and put it back and shook out a cigarette. "There's something valuable in it, but I can't get it. Nothing jells."

"I'm sorry," Annabel cooed. "I never really hoped to see the great Dr. Jaffrey meet his—"

"I had an awful time getting into the estate without identification. I have never seen a place so thoroughly guarded, like a jail."

"It might have helped for you to stay with me. I could have used a few notes on these people. But you've spent your time playing dolls with Rosa. Doubtless that was more interesting."

Annabel said: "Well—"

There was a knock on the door, and Laurie looked in.

"I had to say good-by," she said.

"Good-by," Jonathan said.

Laurie regarded him with sympathy. "I'm afraid I won't be able to face Mrs. Groeper. I guess I puffed you up to her more than I should have. I told her you would walk in and snap the handcuffs on the thief in a matter of minutes. But now—"

"Jonathan!" Annabel said. "You don't need to throw the baggage around so."

"Come on," Jonathan said.

Laurie walked with them to the elevator. A footman appeared and ran down the corridor to take the bags.

"Mr. Groeper's still getting better," Laurie said. "That's something, anyway. He's still weak, but his mind is clear. He was perfectly rational last night, except about that portrait."

Jonathan turned on her. "What about it?"

"He won't let it be taken down. It looks—horrible—and butchered, somehow, hanging there on the wall without any face, but he won't let anyone touch it. And last night, just as he was going to sleep, he said something about—oh, about thanking Coalho for doing it."

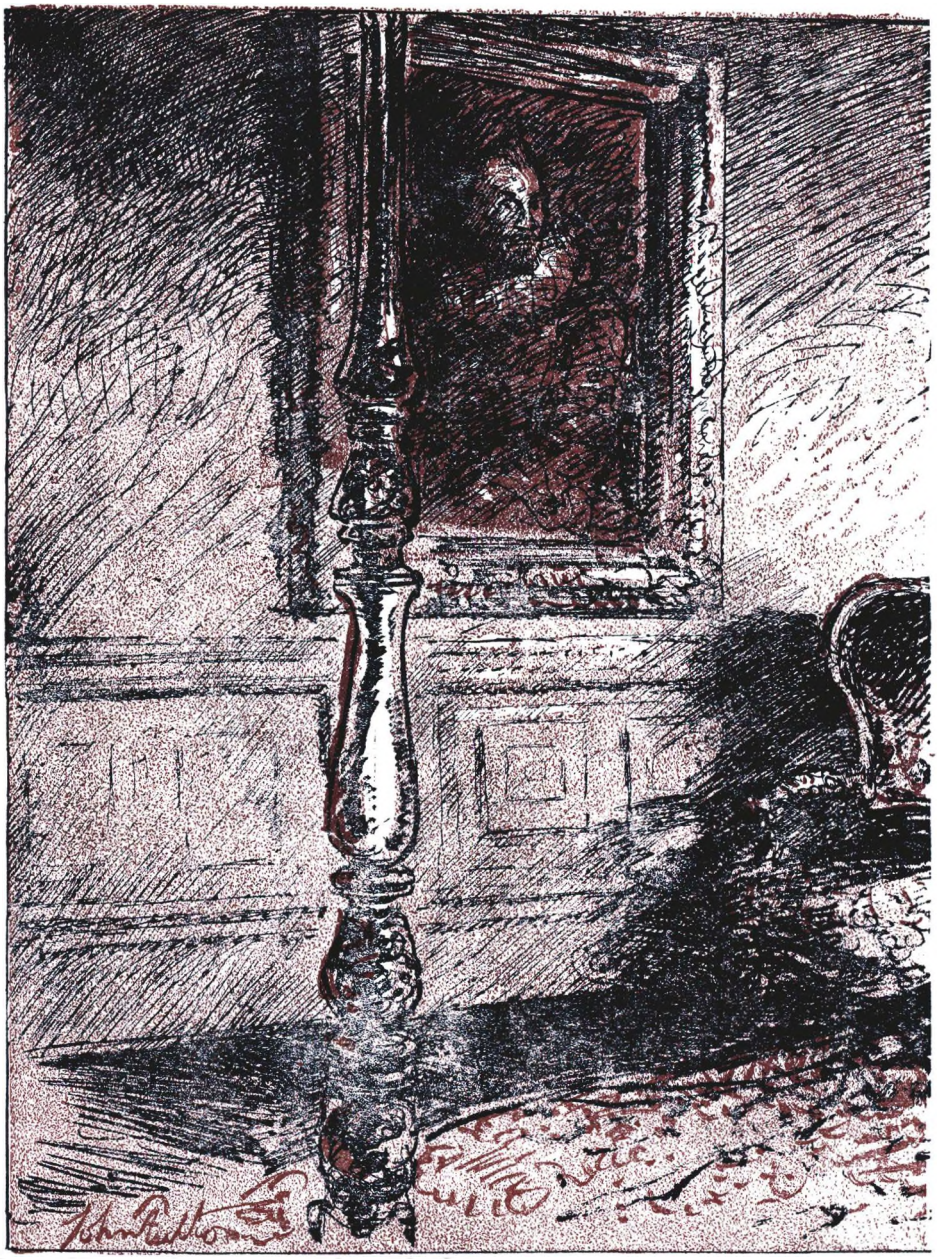
"What do you mean?"

"I'm not sure. I really think he believes that Coalho's spirit cut the face out of that portrait. I hope it doesn't mean another change in condition. Dr. Brunell is certain now that he's going to be all right."

A victoria and a shining black team were waiting at the *porte-cochère* to take them to the station. Mrs. Groeper and Rosa and Mrs. Hartley were on hand to bid them farewell. Harold waved his cap at them and shouted as they turned out of the grounds.

"Why were you so interested in Mr. Groeper's improvement?" Annabel asked. "Does it mean something?"

"Means I'm right on one side of this mess. You'd better take this down: No one has ever gauged the power of remorse, the power of humanity and the aspirations of man present in the most miserable of human souls. The old man Coalho, a



"I was yelling again. I woke myself up." said Mr. Groeper.

great man, a good man, gave his life for Groeper, a heel. But in Groeper there was enough honesty and humanity and intelligence to realize that the finest aspiration of man is sacrifice. Coalho had succeeded in this; and in so doing had laid a tremendous duty on Groeper to fulfill the spirit of that sacrifice. In plain words, Groeper realized that he was unworthy of Coalho's life or of anybody's life. But the sacrifice had already been given him. The burden already weighed on his shoulders. He had accepted it in panic when he took the parachute from Coalho. It wasn't until later that his conscience made him aware of what was involved in this acceptance.

"To emphasize this, Coalho himself came to watch him, in that portrait that resembled him. The face was there, day and night, remembering and accusing and reminding. . . . Think of the power that makes an army of men give up their lives for an idea, a flag, a family. Think of the family as it walks forth, freed, over the bodies of the dead. And its thoughts, if it realizes it is unworthy. Groeper must have prayed a thousand times for a second chance in that plane to refuse the parachute—while Coalho watched him from the wall! Groeper's mind finally took refuge in blankness. In defense of his weakness, his mind ran back through tortuous black corridors of agony to hide in insanity.

"And then Coalho returned to cut his face out of the picture on the wall. The final act of his greatness. Forgiveness for Groeper, belief, encouragement, another chance. . . . Groeper may be another man when he is well."

The carriage drew up to the station. The coachman leaped down to help them out. Their train was waiting.

ANNABEL said breathlessly, as they hurried across the station platform: "You don't really think a ghost did steal that picture?"

"Hell, no! But Groeper does."

"Then who—"

"That's what I don't know."

"Someone must have," she said innocently.

Jonathan looked at her with suspicion. She settled herself in a seat, and he saw to stowing away the grips and sat down beside her.

"That's what I've been going on for three days," he said. "Someone stole it—a twisted mind: we've got that much. To steal a painting worth a small fortune, and only deface it and return it! And a woman—we've got that much. A woman who had planned the job in advance. She swiped Mrs. Hartley's billfold, with her identification card. A woman with some inside dope on the house. She knew Mrs. Hartley was coming that day, and she knew by what route—some place along the way, she had to rob her. She knew the system of alarms in the house. And apparently, from the time about two in the morning that she stole the portrait, until about noon the same day when she returned it, she stayed in the house. Asking too much to think she got out and in again without being seen.

"Naturally, I assumed it was an inside job. All right, who? Laurie? Grant the impossibility of squaring it with her logically, why would she go to the trouble of stealing the billfold, disguising herself to get past the gatekeeper—and at the same time she was probably in the room with Groeper, anyhow, on duty?

"Same thing applies to Henry, the guard. He's punchy; he might have done it out of spite if he had cause; but where does the woman fit in? Mrs. Groeper? Same thing. She could have gone down there any time and defaced that painting. No one else was allowed in Groeper's wing of the house, but— What are you after?"

"Looking for something," Annabel said. She had a small overnight case open on her knees, and was pawing through it industriously. A piece of cardboard fell out, and Jonathan picked it up.

HE was handing it back when he realized it wasn't cardboard, but canvas. It was a life-sized face, painted in oil on canvas, the paint cracked and darkened and gummed with age. The face was thin and drawn, distinguished by a pointed gray beard and upraised eyes. There was a white ruff around the lower jaw.

"Oh, thank you," Annabel said. She took it out of his hand and put it back. "Someone else might see it," she explained placidly.

Jonathan said: "*Where—*" He swallowed. He lowered his voice: "Where the *hell* did you get that?"

"Rosa gave it to me."

"*Rosa?*"

"She's a bright child. She decided the picture was making her father sick, since he wasn't sick until it came, and he insisted on keeping it in his room. So she took out the face."

Jonathan's jaw was sagging. "She—the woman—"

"There wasn't any woman. There was only Harold. He's Rosa's best friend. She told me all about Harold. Of course you understand that all this is cross-your-heart and hope-to-die if you ever tell."

"Yes," Jonathan said blankly; "cross my—" he swore. "What do you mean, Harold? Harold, the gatekeeper?"

"Harold, the night gatekeeper. At night, when the mysterious woman came. Harold stole the picture himself. He cut out the face and gave it to Rosa. Among other things, Harold is a trifle simple-minded."

"The billfold—Mrs. Hartley—"

Annabel smiled.

"Harold went to New York with Mrs. Groeper to interview Mrs. Hartley before she was hired. He knew when she was coming, and that she was coming by bus. He went into New York the day she was to leave, and lifted the leather—as Rosa puts it—probably at the bus station. As I said, Harold is a man of many parts. He's been in vaudeville, and he's been in prison—as a pickpocket. And he idolizes Rosa. When she told him she wanted the face out of her daddy's picture, he got it for her. And he got it for keeps."

Jonathan closed his mouth again. He wiped his hands over his face.

He said: "Rosa told you this? She goes around talking about it?"

Annabel smiled again. "I'm Rosa's second-best friend now. Rosa hasn't got many friends in that house. Even an expert in criminal psychology should see that.

"You looked at her and said to yourself: 'I'll get friendly with this child, and she'll tell me how she got the face out of the picture, and—'"

"Any woman is a child psychologist," Annabel said gently. "That first day her little sister was so afraid of the burglar the night before that she was sick. But Rosa didn't seem to give it a thought. But Laurie said Rosa was even more timid than her sister. It made me curious."

"So you spent your time with Rosa, while I—"

"Out of the mouths of babes," Annabel said, "comes wisdom."

"Take that down," Jonathan said bleakly. "I've heard it before."

THIRTY GERMAN

THE first time I saw him, I think I hated him. It was in Tunisia, where for three weeks we had waited and done nothing but grow lazy under the hot sun. I had been out of internship only six months when I was called into active service and even now, a year later, I still held a feeling of resentment. I felt I was wasting my time and my talent.

In the morning I held Sick Call, diagnosing stomachaches and diarrhea, treating colds, and bandaging minor cuts and bruises. A Boy Scout could have done as much. In the afternoon I sat in the shade of the aid tent and read magazines which were months old.

Then one afternoon a shadow fell across the magazine I was reading and, looking up, I saw an officer standing in the opening of the tent. He took one step inside and stood there blinking his eyes from the glare outside and I saw he was elderly, with gray-streaked hair, red, healthy complexion, and a flattering gray mustache. He held himself stiffly erect in military posture, and for the first time I noticed the silver oak leaves of a lieutenant colonel on his shoulders.

Suddenly he took another step forward and, reaching over, grabbed me by the collar and pulled me quickly to my feet, surprising me by his strength. "When a superior officer comes in," he said, "stand on your feet." He looked at me evenly, and I could see restrained anger in his eyes.

He turned away from me and surveyed the interior of the tent. "This place is filthy," he said sharply, and went over to the dressing-table.

"The alcohol is dirty, Lieutenant. Keep a cover on it. These scalpels are dull. And the gauze is gray, it's so dirty." He ran the palm of his hand over the surface of the table, then held it up so I could see the dirt smudged on it. His voice was cutting. "What do you think you're treating here, Lieutenant? Cattle?"

From then on my life was something like a nightmare. Much to my regret, I learned that the Colonel was to be attached to our battalion for a short time and would be my immediate superior officer. A battalion aid station like ours didn't call for a lieutenant colonel, but they had no other place to put him at the time.

He was ruthless. When Sick Call was finished, he had the enlisted men working themselves almost to a point of exhaustion cleaning the instruments and the dressing-table. In the heat of the afternoon he had me conducting litter drill and first-aid instruction. He was almost fanatical about sterilization. He would begin at seven in the morning, inspecting every field chest and examining each enlisted assistant for personal cleanliness.

ONE morning, among the men reporting on Sick Call, was a young cook who came into the tent hesitantly and afraid, his young face pinched with pain. He had been severely burned by grease from a stove. The Colonel applied tannic acid, and I was surprised at the gentleness in his hands. Then he talked with the boy for quite a while. The cook was twenty years old and away from home for the first time. After he had left, I watched the Colonel go to the opening in the tent and stand quietly staring straight ahead at nothing, a strange softness coming into his face.

Then that night, after supper, I went for a walk past the motor pool, enjoying the coolness of the early evening and thinking of a girl back home. I stopped to light a cigarette. I had just struck the match and was holding it up to my cigarette when someone said: "Hold that light, please." I looked up and saw the Colonel standing next to me, a cigarette poised between his fingers.

He drew a deep inhale, and his whole body seemed to relax. We walked on a few steps without saying a word. When he spoke, his voice was low. "That boy today," he said: "Seeing him brought a lot back." He paused and looked away for a moment. "My boy was the same age when he left. He's buried in the Philippines." He was quiet a long while, and we walked slowly. It was becoming dark. Down by the tents, we could hear voices singing softly.

"He was a fine boy. Had one year of college to go, but couldn't wait to get in."

"I'm awfully sorry," I heard myself say.

He looked past me as though he hadn't heard me. "I wanted to do something for him. I offered my serv-

PLANES

The author of this fine brief story is a sergeant in the Medical Corps.

by Jordan Barlow

ices as a field artillery officer." He smiled a little bitterly to himself. "You see, I had spent practically all my spare time in the National Guard, as much as my practice would allow. I read every book on field artillery I could find. I went to every summer camp. I loved it."

I didn't say anything.

"They turned me down. Said I was too old for field duty. And a month later they called me in as a medical officer." His voice had become hard, and had the sound of a voice talking to itself. As he talked, the flashes from the artillery began, like summer lightning, in the east. "They called me in to do medicine—me, a country doctor. What good am I doing here? I don't know medicine as some of the others do. My heart's out there with the guns. I had to pound on their desks to get them to send me over here." The wind was starting up now, sending sheets of dust across the desert, and in the new moonlight the Colonel looked old and tired.

When we got back to the aid tent, we learned that an attack was being launched up forward, and our ambulances were needed. Since our battalion was being held in reserve and wouldn't need them, we sent them up ahead.

And that made the difference. If we hadn't sent them, there wouldn't be any ending to this story.

The next day the Colonel was as exacting as ever. He seemed to be embarrassed by what he had told me the night before. But now I felt no resentment. I understood him.

IT happened that night. The charge of quarters hurried into our tent very excitedly. A pilot had been brought in from a crash near by and was in critical condition.

When we came into the aid tent, I saw him lying white-faced and young on the litter. Around him stood two other fliers, concern tight on their faces. The Colonel examined the patient quickly. The symptoms were evident: thready pulse, rigidity of the abdomen, and crushed rib. The Colonel turned to me. "Ruptured viscus," he said quietly.

We had no ambulances to move the patient back to a station hospital, so there was no other alternative. We prepared to operate.

An enlisted man and I worked on bringing the patient out of shock, wrapping him in blankets and giving a transfusion and morphine. Two hours later the Colonel began to operate.

I watched his face and could imagine what he was thinking. An operation of this type was difficult even under ideal conditions; to perform it successfully in an aid station would be something close to a miracle. The clamps would have to be placed with certainty; a fraction of an inch either way might be fatal: death in a few minutes.

Inside the tent, the sound of the patient's breathing punctuated the silence. The hot glare from the light overhead highlighted beads of perspiration on the Colonel's forehead. From the distance the sound of the guns rolled like thunder. I placed a hemostat hard in the Colonel's hand.

HE worked slowly, his hands nervous and a little clumsy from lack of practice. But I found myself watching his eyes more than his hands. In them was the same expression you might see in the eyes of a conductor leading a symphony; it was a kind of greatness. His face took on vigor and even beauty.

It took an hour and a half. When he was finished and was sewing up the incision, I watched the tiredness and discontent come back into his face. He bent over the pan of soap and water. "There's your pilot," he said, without tone in his voice. "In a couple of months he'll be flying again."

One of the flyers, a major, gripped his hand. "Thank you, Colonel," he said with feeling. "We need him badly."

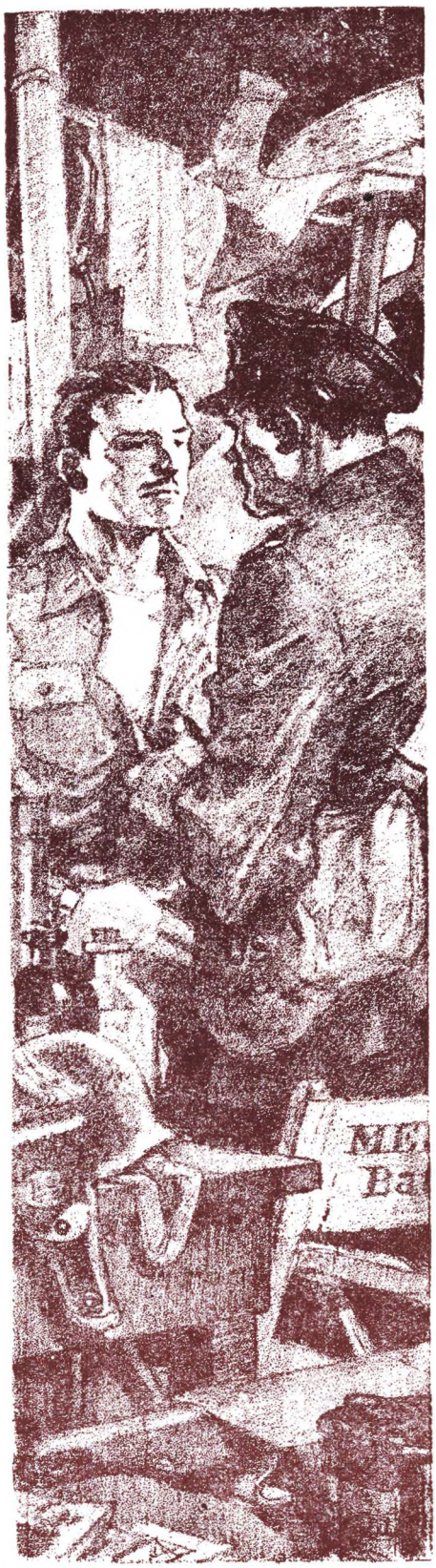
The Colonel was taking off his gown.

"Is he a good flyer?" he asked.

The Major nodded. "One of our best. He has twelve German planes to his credit already, and he's good for thirty more."

After the flyers had left, the Colonel stood at the tent opening and was silent a long while. When he spoke, it was as though he were talking to himself. "Thirty German planes," he said slowly. "I shot down thirty German planes."

When he turned around, there were tears shining in his eyes.



Many of our older readers continue to ask for reprints of Clarence Herbert New's stories. Here is one of his "Mysteries of the Sea," first published under the pen-name of "Culpeper Zandtt."

The Hatching

WE were sitting, one evening, in the Italian dining-room of New York's newest hotel—just to look it over, and Medford's order was bacon and eggs, with a chaser of *café-au-lait*. That constituted his entire meal; and he was unusually silent. As we lighted cigars, he indicated the drift of his thoughts.

"There were times, over there, when the chow didn't get to a front-line trench for two days straight—or coffee either. But there were four million men along that line—hard as nails. These fellows here look soft. They think they know life—but they haven't touched the edges. Their breed is going to be unpopular, but they'll never know why. . . . H-m-m! I'd shade that opinion concerning the chap at that second table—and the two in the corner who seem to be watching him when he isn't looking. Those three belong in the open air—not in a place like this. They've all given orders, and they've obeyed orders—*pronto*. Know any of them, Tony?"

Anthony Farnel puts in certain hours each day as star operative of the United States Secret Service, and is to be reached more frequently on the Customhouse telephones than at either of the other places mentioned. We three had been classmates in high school.

"The two over yonder," replied Farnel, "claim to be Swedes, in the shipping business, but there's a hunch down at Bowling Green that they were born a darned sight nearer Hamburg. By morning I'll know pretty much where they go tonight, and what they do. But I'm rather interested in this other chap myself. That pair are back of him—if he's on to them, he hasn't shown it. But he's not entirely comfortable, just the same, if I'm any judge. He's dawdling through a dinner as if he enjoyed it, but he's looking for something to happen, any minute. Has the appearance of a Navy man."

Jim Medford was studying the man speculatively, through half-closed eyes.

"I've seen him—somewhere. Can't locate it. W-e-l-l," —smothering a yawn of evident boredom,—"I guess I've had about enough of this for one while. Let's go!"

"What do you figure on doing now, Jimmy? Going back?"

"No. I'm fed up with the continent of Europe—for life, I guess. I mixed in over thirty actions. Saw things that none of us talk about. Don't want any more newspaper jobs—don't need 'em! I've got enough to live on—and I'm foot-loose. But—somehow I don't see myself sticking around where nothing happens. I'm spoiled for that sort of thing!"

When we were out on the sidewalk, Medford offered no suggestion for the rest of the evening—and presently he disappeared—toward the East Side.

People don't usually foot it from the "Library" neighborhood to the foot of East Seventy-seventh Street; but the big New Englander swung easily along at a gait which covered the distance in twenty-two minutes flat. At the end of the street he crossed the inner court of a big apartment-building and climbed one of the exposed corner stairways to a fifth-floor studio overlooking the little park, the River and Blackwell's Island. Inside, the place had atmosphere—and "Jess" Appleton, the girl who lived in it had personality. She had driven an ambulance in France, then had come home to mix with the colors of her illustrations something they had lacked before.

Another man was lounging by the window in a big easy-chair as Medford came in—forty-five, straight as a lance, iron-gray mustache and hair, piercing gray eyes, rather spare, but with the flexible muscles of a cat. Satterlee was a distant cousin of Miss Appleton's, who had lent her the money to study in New York and Paris. Nothing definite was known as to his business—something in the line of speculation and shipping, it was said; but it was supposed to have netted him a million or so.

Though they had never met before, Medford had heard of the man—and liked him at sight. And their congeniality was shown by nothing quite so much as the way each of the three settled down in perfect relaxation with tea or tobacco, offering merely an occasional remark as things occurred to them: Bits of personal experience—Europe, Africa, the Sea Islands, the Orient.

Presently, through the open window of her little kitchen, they caught the sound of running footsteps across the flagging of the court below—a scraping and low vibration as they raced up the iron stairway of their particular corner. Then—other footsteps padding after them, as though shod with rubber. For an instant there was a fumbling at the door of the studio which opened upon the skeleton landing; then something was pushed through the letter-slit and fell with a light thump on the floor, the sound being deadened by a confused jumble of scuffling noises which indicated that the pursuers had been close enough behind the man they were chasing to force their way into his quarters—and close the door behind them.

The walls of the building had been deadened to some extent, but a murmur of quarreling voices reached Miss Appleton and her friends. Then came the sort of shuddering groan with which they had all been quite familiar—a heavy fall, the sound of furniture being overturned, a general ransacking of the other studio.

With the prompt efficiency which had won the strip of ribbon pinned to her waist, Miss Appleton reached across the low table for her telephone—calling the office of the Settlement Manager.

"Send a couple of officers up here quickly, please." And she gave the street number. "Something wrong in there! Sounds like a man being robbed and killed! Miss Appleton talking—Fifty-seven, A."

The neighborhood was orderly, as a rule. But in it there were hundreds of professed Bolshevists, anarchists of various breeds and nationalities. So a few extra "ward men" were usually detailed within a six-block radius; and it was under four minutes when two of them came running up the stairs. When they had reached the floor below, two men bolted from the next apartment and ran up to the roof—with the detectives close after them. Shots were fired—one of the police badly wounded. But the murderers got away, though a man was arrested on suspicion as he came out of an apartment farther up the street. In Fifty-nine B the still warm body of the occupant was found—and presently recognized by Medford as that of the man he had seen in the hotel dining-room earlier in the evening.

When the morocco-bound memorandum-book dropped from the letter-slit into Miss Appleton's vestibule, Medford had stepped noiselessly across the room to pick it up. As the sounds of the quarrel and the groan came faintly through the wall, he instinctively started for the door—but Satterlee motioned him back.

"Too late, Medford—the man's dead, or dying, now! If we mix in this, it involves Jess, who lives here. Messy

of a Pirate *by Culpeper Zandtt*

legal proceedings—possibly under suspicion ourselves. She's called the police—let them handle it."

"Humph! You're dead right, old man! Guess I won't examine this book just now, either—it looks to me as if it might be what those brutes expected to find when they killed him!"

"Very likely. And we'll be out of here with it before any of that gang come back for another search. I want to look at our unfortunate neighbor before we go—but the ward men know me, and won't detain us. Jess, those fellows meant business. If they didn't get what they were after, they'll come again—police or no police. You'd better stay with some friend in another part of town for a few days—everybody will understand that you couldn't sleep here for a night or so after a murder in the next room. . . . Medford, I've an extra bed in my suite at the Club. Suppose I put you up, eh?"

When Medford told the police of the two strangers who had been watching the dead man at the hotel that evening, and suggested calling up the Secret Service office with the information, they left the building. Miss Appleton went to stay with a friend in an apartment on the river-bank and Medford accompanied Satterlee to his luxurious quarters in one of the leading clubs.

AN hour later, secure from observation, Medford took the morocco book from an inner pocket and began to examine it. If the thing contained any definite clue to the murderers, he preferred handing it over to Farnel and the Secret Service—having an impression that the affair might prove more political than a mere police case. But the more he studied various entries upon the pages, the more it seemed to him that there might be considerations against parting with it at all.

Medford presently leaned back in his chair and lighted a fresh cigar. Everything he had read was written in German—with a choice construction which indicated the upper-class officer, presumably of the navy, making out a more or less detailed report of certain articles and occurrences. And the amazing features of these entries were the familiarity of the handwriting—the appearance of a name which he had unusually good cause to remember. Aside from this, the book quite evidently had been soaked in sea-water, for some hours at least. After a little more thought, he tossed the thing over to Satterlee, asking him to look it over carefully. The millionaire said:

"Humph! You'll remember our impression that this was what those murderers were after in our late friend's quarters? Reckon there's no question about it! I don't know German as I do French, Spanish and the East Indian dialects—but this appears to be a record of noon positions during a thirty-eight-day cruise of some craft under command of a navy lieutenant, Wilhelm von Breitnach, together with a list of stores and munitions on board at the date of the last entry. The other memoranda, I'd say, might be gauge-records of certain storage-tanks or batteries—and chemical or other formulas. Some of these figures might be compass-bearings of certain objects on coasts or islands. The entry 'Unterseeb—119,' I should infer to be the German submarine, *U-119*. If that is actually the craft this memorandum refers to, then Miss Appleton's murdered neighbor—who had occupied that other apartment for nearly a month, she said—was presumably the German navy lieutenant von Breitnach—commander of a submarine."

"Y-e-s—that inference is so obvious that the 'crime experts' in Center Street would enter it in their memoranda on the affair as established fact, and base all their investigations upon it—if I were fool enough to hand over this book as Exhibit A. Only—you see, that dead stranger wasn't von Breitnach, nor anyone resembling him!"

"Eh? You knew him, did you?"

Medford nodded. "I happened to be on the *Skillton Castle* when she was torpedoed by the *U-119*. Von Breitnach shot our boats from under us when we piled into them, but took a dozen on board from the bits of wreckage. His craft wasn't the largest cruising type, but she was the last word in what they had for speed, radius and efficiency with a crew of sixteen. I saw her handled for hours with just five men on duty, all told. Before von Breitnach could get back to his base at Zeebrugge, the British fleet nearly had him out of current and smothered, on bottom—off the Orkneys. He was getting short on chow and drinking-water. We figured he'd put us out on deck and then submerge, as the easiest way to conserve his stores. But the fellow weakened, somehow—hadn't the cold-blooded nerve to do it after playing cards and eating with us for a couple of weeks. So he ran in fairly close to one of the harbors at night, and gave us a collapsible life-raft.

"I guess I'd know von Breitnach on a fairly dark night in Equatorial Africa. This writing is his—no doubt of it. But the man who slipped the book through Jess Appleton's door wasn't even a German, as far as I could tell. I'd seen him in some other place within six months—France or England, probably, though it might have been on one of the Pacific steamers. Came home through Siberia, you know. What interests me is how the man got this pocket logbook of von Breitnach's—and what happened to the Lieutenant. I'll swear he wasn't either of the brutes who killed this fellow, because I had the door a few inches open when they jumped for the roof with the cops after them. Now, who else would have any object in committing murder to get this thing—and why? The German subs were all surrendered to the British navy shortly after the armistice was signed—"

"H-m-m—what's the date of the last entry in that book?"

"Eh? The devil! February twelfth, by Jove!"

"And the boat's position at that time?"

"Why, if these figures actually refer to that U-boat, she was then in one degree and four minutes, north, by one-fifty-four and forty-five minutes, east—somewhere in the southwest Pacific!"

"Exactly! And that, Medford, you may take as the main fact upon which this whole affair is based. What did you figure on doing with that logbook—if I'm not too inquisitive?"

"W-e-l-l—I put it about like this: those brutes were after something in dead earnest. Looks as if this book was it. Now, if I were in their place and had tools enough for the job, I wouldn't quit until I got what I went after. I'd be back on the job as you suggested, cops or no cops, until I'd gone through every apartment near that one—supposing, of course, I was reasonably sure the man had this on him when he ran across that court and up the stairs. Jess told me anybody could get up to those roofs from an apartment on Seventy-sixth Street. If they've been spotting that chap for a day or two, they know who occupy the neighboring suites. If they were laying for him when he came along this evening, they

know that you and I were in the next apartment—and if there were enough of them on hand, one very likely trailed us to this club. Under the circumstances, I guess I'll jot down bits of these memoranda on the back of an envelope, in a shorthand of my own—then get out of here in the morning by a back door, if there is such a thing, and hike downtown on the subway—put the book in my safe-deposit vault, and leave it there indefinitely."

Satterlee grinned appreciatively.

"Medford, along some lines, your mental processes are very much like mine. That's exactly what I was going to suggest your doing! But you'll be safe enough going down to Wall Street with me in my landaulet. My chauffeur is rather a wizard in dodging traffic when I want him to make time—and it's doubtful if that crowd get after us until they've searched the apartment-building a little more thoroughly. You see, they've no valid reason for imagining that either of us may have that book—not yet. It'll be a process of eliminating other possibilities first."

Next morning, Tony Farnel called me on the phone to ask if I knew where he could locate Medford. While I was trying to remember some of his haunts, Jim got out of the elevator on the third floor of the Customhouse and walked into the office—so I hung up and started downtown to lunch with them.

All through that meal, which we ate in a private room where we might talk without risk, I had a feeling that Jim Medford was in possession of information which he had no intention of sharing with us—for what he considered sufficiently compelling reasons. But later, I couldn't get Farnel to agree with me. He was too full of his own discoveries, too certain that anything Medford knew would be merely supplementary to his own facts. And there was no denying that what the Secret Service had dug up made the affair of the previous evening a rather absorbing mystery. Farnel began at once to give us the night's developments.

"Say, Jim, it was after nine o'clock, wasn't it, when you had the Central Office bulls phone us your identification of that chap as the one we saw in the hotel dining-room? Just by luck I happened to be in the office at the time. I got busy trying to locate the operatives who were shadowing those Swede shipping men—and struck one of them within half an hour. He said the Swedes had met three other men at the corner of Fifth Avenue, then separated. He followed two who went down Forty-second Street, but lost them in a house on East Forty-ninth. Then I went up to the precinct in a fast car and saw the fellow who was arrested coming out of that other apartment in Seventy-seventh Street. Identified him as one of those we'd seen at the corner table watching the dead chap, but the lieutenant wouldn't hold him. The fellow told a perfectly clear story about having been with a family on the fourth floor, for dinner—playing cards with them afterward until he left. They corroborated his statements—apparently no evidence but mine to hold him on, and the lieut' said there was nothing against anyone's eating a dinner in the same hotel dining-room with a man who happened to be killed a few hours later. I couldn't prove they were really watching him, or even unusually interested in the chap—so they let the fellow go, but not until after I left the precinct—"

"And you just naturally shadowed him yourself?"

"Rather! Trailed him to a respectable brownstone residence in West Eighty-first—and ran up against our other man coming out of the house next door. He'd managed to get in from the roof and overhear a pretty interesting yarn. Boiled down, it's about like this: Two steamers of four thousand tons were loaded with a lot of mysterious cargo—at Stockholm, as near as he could locate the port, though it might have been some other one—and sent with picked crews to some designated rendezvous, different for each ship, to be anchored there and abandoned until the proper time came for them to start out in the business for which they were intended by this gang of Swedes who chartered and loaded 'em. The inference was that they were anchored in hidden bays on an uninhabited coast where they'd be safe until wanted—and their cargoes may be some exceedingly valuable commodity which they mean to spring upon its market after peace has been signed—holding it for a corner. Or it may be a new wrinkle in what might come under the head of piracy—any old thing."

"How long," inquired Medford, "were those ships to be left in the unknown bays?"

"Until some proper moment to be determined by the syndicate. Anyhow—their plans appear to have gone all right with one ship—all wrong with the other. The picked crew of one got back to Stockholm, or wherever it was, and are being kept up-country on full pay until they're needed again. The master and crew of the other had a long pull in open boats and landed on some island where there was an agent of a pearl-shell company, with an English friend visiting him. The steamship-master got all lit up and had a row with them over cards or something—was shot, but not killed. The agent, with his island natives, forced master and crew into their boats and made 'em clear out. The master died at sea two days later. Crew died of thirst or were drowned, crazy—all but one illiterate bosun, who was picked up by a steamer and eventually brought the news back to the syndicate.

"Now, they're plumb up against it, as far as their second steamer is concerned. She's lying in some unknown inlet that was undoubtedly entered by the master upon papers he fetched away when he left her. But he's presumably in the belly of a shark, and his papers with him. The bosun couldn't navigate—couldn't tell within a thousand miles the location of that boat. She's lying there, perfectly equipped and loaded for whatever they meant to do with her,—cargo probably worth millions,—and she might as well be at the bottom of the ocean! Know what I think? I'll bet a hundred dollars that gang of Swedes located some man whom they had reason to believe either the pearl-shell agent on that island or the Englishman with him—and have been following the chap with the idea that he might have their ship-master's papers! Of course, it's only a hunch—not a shred of real evidence to support it. But that's the only theory which seems to connect those men in the hotel with the chap who was murdered."

WHEN Medford left us that day, we assumed that we would see him within a day or two. But it was many months before we even heard of him, so completely did he drop out of our everyday world. In that time, Farnel's investigations of the supposed Swedes had produced no evidence upon which they could be detained. The house in West Eighty-first Street was presently vacated, and all trace of those who had occupied it was lost. The studio-murder passed into the police records as a mystery with no clues.

From the restaurant where we had lunched together Medford got in communication with Satterlee and arranged to meet him at the Club an hour later. When they had locked themselves into his luxurious suite, Jim gave him the additional data obtained from Tony Farnel and his Secret Service operatives. Then they looked at each other in silence for a moment or two. Presently Satterlee said, reflectively:

"From what you tell me, the Secret Service has no suspicion at all that the steamships referred to by those presumable Swedes may be actually U-boats—of the latest, most effective class built at Kiel?"

"None whatever! I infer that the Swedes, even among themselves, were mighty particular to use the word steamships. They had obvious reasons for such a precaution."

"But if ordinary steamships, the loading with such a mysterious cargo and dispatching them to a hidden rendezvous—abandoning them for an indefinite period—is too beastly absurd on the face of it! They must have cleared for some regular port, with a manifest and other papers that would bear inspection! Did your friend, Farnel, actually swallow a yarn like that?"

"Not until he'd had a talk with Lloyd's people and the London Salvage representatives. They admitted that scrap-iron and even dirt had been frequently shipped in packing-cases labeled 'pianos' or 'expensive machinery,' upon certain overinsured ships. He also was shown a list of ships reported as missing during the last quarter. Two of them were of a size and build which might easily correspond to those mentioned by the Swedes. Of course, the whole yarn is improbable, if you're going by everyday activities in the shipping trade—but it's possible."

SATTERLEE grinned reminiscently.

"Oh, I grant anything's possible! H-m-m—this proposition is getting hold of my imagination; let's see what it actually amounts to: Presumably there were two mighty effective submarines which were never surrendered—which simply disappeared, and probably were reported to the Allied governments as having been sunk by the British fleet at one time or another. That's perfectly simple and plausible. If they didn't return to their home base after their last departure, even German naval officers would accept that statement without question. Now, we have no evidence to show that the men in whose possession they now are have relations with any government—or to indicate what they intend doing with them in the future. We can surmise the obvious use, of course—but at that, we may be quite wide of the mark. One guess is really as good as another. What we do know is that one of those subs is where they can put their hands on it when they're ready to move. And with that one we have nothing to do—for the present, anyhow. I'd say it is probably on bottom in about ten fathoms somewhere—practically no possibility of anyone's discovering it by chance. With the other, however,—the one whose insides and general operation you know so well,—we seem to have a little edge on everybody else, if we keep from being wiped out because of that knowledge. After you turned in last night, I looked up that last position given in von Breitnach's log—"

"One of the isolated atolls down near the Solomon group, isn't it? The position would be in that neighborhood, as I recollect the chart."

"Greenwich Island—isolated, as you say, three hundred and sixty miles north of the Solomons. . . . Wait a second! I'll get the Admiralty 'Pilot' for the Western Pacific groups—then I can explain better. . . . Here it is! Now, then! 'Greenwich Islands—reported in eighteen-eighty-three. Twenty-eight small islands covered with coconut trees on east side. Reef triangular—fourteen miles by nine. Boat-entrance to lagoon through southeast corner. About a hundred and fifty natives.' That covers practically all the official data. My business interests, however, require as detailed reports as is possible for me to obtain—from a good many out-of-the-way corners of the world—particularly the South Seas and East Indian Archipelago. Ten months ago one of the Island traders who is really in my employ—although he doesn't know it—sent in this little typewritten note: 'Natives on Greenwich Island group thinned out by epidemic—two hundred and twenty-nine survivors accepted proposition of copra-dealers and were moved down to a cove on north coast of New Britain—leaving Islands abandoned. A pearling company said to have lease—after a 'taboo' which has still two years to run. Passed this group in schooner last month—appear to be deserted.'"

"Humph! That would give a good deal of color to this submarine theory. One of the best-developed naval bases Germany had before the Australians took it was Friedrich Wilhelmshafen on the east end of Papua—about six hundred and fifty miles from this Greenwich group. There are thousands of Germans all through Papua and the Solomons; it's pretty generally admitted that a German radio is doing business from some of the Papuan mountains in spite of the British occupation. . . . Satterlee, there's practically no question as to the *U-119* being in the lagoon of that deserted group or in one of the reef-channels between the islands. And we're the only living men who know it!"

"Well," said Satterlee, "I'm not disputing the fact. What's on your mind? A few years ago I'd have said: 'Let's you and I go get her!' I used to risk my life—jump headlong into adventures, as if I had as many lives as a cat. Four times, before I was thirty-five, I was 'on the beach'—flat broke. In between those times worth a hundred thousand—half a million—fifty thousand. Reckon, today, I'm considerably over the million mark—and I'm no longer young. Crave adventure as much as I ever did—but not at quite so much risk of being snuffed out before I'm ready to go. But I'm interested in this proposition sufficiently to get that sub entirely beyond the reach of those Swedes, or whatever else they may be, if I can. If you care to risk your neck on a gamble of this sort, I'll back you with money—and perhaps half a dozen men who can be trusted to the limit, under any conditions. Frankly, Medford, though I know nothing of your resources, I don't believe you could pull it off without my assistance."

"Possibly. But—why?"

"You've got to have some kind of a steamer capable of staying on top in Pacific hurricane weather, and rigged with pretty heavy derrick-booms—that's your first requisite. With the demand for tonnage what it is today, in every country, I doubt if you get one for half a million! Too vast an amount of tonnage has been destroyed. You've got to have quite a lot of diving and wrecking equipment before you get that sub to the surface and under her own power. How far do you suppose you'd get, in these times, attempting to purchase anything of the sort—before the secret service in two or three different countries would be asking rather pointed questions which you couldn't answer without giving your whole game away? You'll need at least six other men—navigator and engineer among them—who'll obey your orders without question and keep their mouths shut under all conditions—who'll stand by you to the end of the deal as long as you keep your agreement with them. How many of such men could you put your hands on within, say, a week?"

"I pass! With anything like a time-limit, I'm out of it."

"Fortunately, I'm not. I own a fifteen-hundred-ton menhaden trawler on the Pacific Coast—rigged with derrick-booms that would answer your purpose very well. Fourteen knots—sixteen at a pinch. Had her engined for another sort of work if the chance offered. The Shipping Board released her to me last week, and though we've had three offers for charter, she's neither the size nor equipment most in demand at present. I'm known in most of the Pacific and Oriental ports as a man who has made a pile of money in salvage and keeps considerable of the latest equipment stored in Seattle. So I could fit out that trawler for a supposed wrecking-cruise in the Pacific without much question from the authorities, and with perfectly legitimate papers.

"In regard to the men—well, a good many have been under obligations to me at one time or another. One I have in mind is a Naval Reserve lieutenant who has no immediate family and who received his discharge, minus six months' back pay, two weeks ago. He's literally on the beach—can't land any sort of a job under the present conditions, and he's really a genius in navigating and

diving. Another, a warrant machinist, held a chief's ticket before he enlisted. He can not only run any sort of motor, turbine or reciprocating engine, but repair them as well. He's in the same fix—there are more good men stranded than there are ships with berths for them. I can get in touch with half a dozen others right here in New York who are hardened scrappers from the trenches and the navy—and who'll carry out any agreement with me until they drop. Each of those men has been tested until I'd gamble on him as far as I would on any human being; of course, there's a limit in human nature, but that's a chance you've got to take—sort of makes the gamble worth while. Now, what do you say? Does a partnership with me in a game like this appeal to you?"

"Very much. But somehow—hanged if I can figure where you come in—what you get out of it!"

Satterlee trimmed a fresh cigar with some deliberation—took a few reflective puffs.

"First place, I'm a pretty good American. Three hundred years ago my folks were English. I'd gladly pay every cent this little gamble may cost me to snuff out even one U-boat that is likely to menace either country! I'd spend a darn' sight more to find and sink that other one which we know is up to mischief of some kind!"

TWO weeks later a group of men sat at a beer-stained table in an upper room of a second-rate hotel in San Francisco, overlooking the lower end of Market Street, not far from the Ferry. The air was stratified with eddies of stale tobacco-smoke, and three of the men had the appearance of such weariness as may be produced by a good deal of night work and too little sleep to make up for it. The fourth was evidently a personage of authority—accustomed to prompt obedience; he had been an army or navy man—no question as to that. The one who seemed to be leader of the other three had lived in America long enough to lose the inborn fear of the governing class in certain countries of Europe, or else was of sufficient importance to maintain his ideas in defiance of anybody. He had been summing up their activities for a month.

"There's no question whatever as to the identity of Marshall or that he was staying for some time with the British agent on Carpenter Island in the Admiralty group. We'd been cruising through the Bismarck Archipelago in an island schooner, looking for some trace of von Breitnach—and reached Nares Harbor a few days after his row with them. The agent gave us a detailed account of the whole affair, which coincided with the written one he sent down to Sydney. Von Breitnach was pretty drunk—and out of business for an hour or so after the shooting mix-up. They could have gone through his clothes; but from the bosun's account of the way he talked in that open boat before he died, there wasn't a word to indicate that they did—and there was certainly no reason why such an idea should occur to them. If anyone got the log from him, it was Marshall, the Englishman—not the agent. We saw and talked with Marshall, so that we'd know him anywhere. We knew just when he left the Island—followed him to Frisco, to New York—saw and identified him there. His taking that apartment at the foot of Seventy-seventh Street was the first suspicious thing—his attempts to get in touch with some of the biggest men in the shipping business the next. Then—he was seen in the Metropolitan Museum, studying penciled entries in just such a morocco-bound book as we know von Breitnach had. No trace of that book was found in his room before or after he was killed. It's practically certain he did get the book from von Breitnach—and that he hadn't it then. The whole question is, who has it—and where?"

"You say the neighboring apartments were searched?"

"Down to pins and wastebaskets. We had the building fairly terrorized, in spite of the police—you see, a new janitor was in our pay and could do a lot of searching while the tenants were out—even admit one of us in several instances. The circumstantial evidence—eliminating everything else—sifts it down pretty close to three people who were in the studio-apartment next door, when Marshall was croaked, and who telephoned for the bulls: that woman artist Appleton, her millionaire cousin Satterlee, who lives at one of the leading clubs, and Medford the war-correspondent—just back from Europe—an old friend of hers. Either one of them was in a position where he or she might have obtained possession of that book under certain conditions. It's pretty clear that the Appleton woman didn't—or she'd have turned it over to the police, whether she guessed what it was or not. Satterlee is a different proposition; he's known as one of the luckiest adventurers in the Orient, and he's no fool. But he hasn't made a move of any sort which might indicate a knowledge of that book or what it amounted to. Medford—"

"Yes, what about Medford? He's the man who saw Marshall eating dinner in the hotel an hour or so before he was killed—looked pretty closely at us too—as we were studying him!"

"Well, Medford has dropped out of sight as completely as if he had walked down the Coney Island Pier and stepped off! Not a trace of him anywhere—"

"H-m-m! We assume, let us subbose, that Medford hass the book—*ja!* What goodt will it for him do! How can he with us inderfere—eh?"

"Dev'lish little, if he thinks he's smart enough to play a lone hand! There may be actually nothing in von Breitnach's book to give him the exact location of our boat, and he can't get a wrecking-steamer to go after it if there is,—or any sort of diving outfit,—without being compelled to explain why he wants it. Of course he can blow the whole thing to the Government, but I'll bet a thousand dollars they wouldn't believe a word of it. The greatest harm he can do us is to prevent our getting hold of our own boat and using it as we had planned. We can do a lot with the one we have, but we'll be hampered and hounded to cover more frequently than if we had two, operating thousands of miles apart. We couldn't build other boats to replace them now, or any time within the next few years, unless the materials were taken by different steamers to some unknown base where we could put them together without being seen—there will be much too close a watch kept upon every shipyard in the world! That boat was left in perfect condition, with batteries charged, fully stocked with stores of all kinds, waiting in some perfectly safe anchorage for us to use her. Von Breitnach was to be governed by circumstances in selecting the place when he found where the British cruisers were. If there's no other way of finding the location, we can search every atoll in the southern groups with a gasoline schooner, but that may put us off for a year or more."

One of the men had stepped over to a window, glancing down at the street traffic. In a moment he gave a low but sharp exclamation.

"Come here quick, will you! If that isn't the very man we're talking about, I'm a liar! It's Medford—walking down to the Ferry! And he wouldn't be out here on the Coast just now if he wasn't on to our boat in some way. Come on! He doesn't know either of us three by sight—we'll go over to Alameda on that ferryboat with him. And there'll be something doing—*ja!*"

Now, Medford, all his life, had been a fool for luck—which is a fool's way of saying that he was unusually observant, knew opportunity when he saw it, and had a cat's instinct for sudden, unseen danger in his immediate vicinity. Subconsciously, he had noticed the face of a

stranger in a third-story window as he strolled along the sidewalk on Market Street—noticed something like sudden recognition streaking across it, and the motion as if the man were calling some one else to look. Consequently, when they reached the street, he was nowhere in sight. A man who resembled him was just entering the door of the ferry-house, but they didn't find him there—or on the Alameda boat which was just leaving.

Medford had casually stepped into a saloon which had another door on a sidestreet—had gone through, hurried around the next corner, returned to Market Street five blocks farther back, jumped a jitney, driven to the St. Francis, paid his bill, come down again with his luggage to a taxi and driven to a garage at the south end of the city. Hiring a chauffeur and touring-car, he then had been driven to a station on the Southern Pacific, sixty miles away, where he caught a San Diego express and took a stateroom in the sleeper. In San Diego he got a small launch to put him aboard one of the yachts in the bay. When the launch returned and the yacht's sailing-master was sending his luggage below, supposing him a recently arrived guest of the owner's, Medford stopped him. He gave the appearance of carrying a trifle too much liquid ballast, and held out a twenty-dollar bill.

"Look here, ol' man—some mishtake! Thish aint my boat! I'm just a li'l' pickled. Mashter that trawler over there—see! Only trawler in whole bay! . . . Mush be that one! Jush takin' c'mand of her. Shay! Put me aboard of her like goo' feller—hey?"

As the sailing-master didn't care to have any of his deckhands cut in on the twenty, he lowered a dinghy and pulled the soused Captain over himself—putting him aboard on the lee side, where it was impossible for his own crew to see just which craft he approached. At midnight the trawler quietly steamed out past Coronado. As the port authorities supposed they understood her business perfectly, nobody gave her a thought, after a little preliminary speculation as to which of many wrecks she might be going to salve. As for her crossing the Pacific—well, the two steamers which did sight her naturally assumed that she'd been purchased by some Australian fisheries company and was being taken across for delivery—a not uncommon occurrence.

FROM the time he left New York, Medford had put in every spare minute upon a study of navigation with an absorption which enabled him to use a sextant and work out a reckoning with the tables in a nautical almanac before they were halfway across the Pacific. Not one of the half-dozen men sent on ahead by Satterlee to load and clear the trawler had the slightest idea where they were going or upon what sort of adventure. They had been introduced to Medford at the Club—had studied the war-correspondent from every side until they were sure of recognizing him under almost any conditions, and understood that they were absolutely under his orders for an initial period of eighteen months, at wages for which they were entirely willing to risk their necks and keep their mouths shut concerning what they saw, heard or did.

Torrey, the ex-navy-lieutenant, acting as mate and navigator, had merely been told to make for a position in the Pacific five hundred miles from their real destination, by the safest and quickest course at that time of the year. When he realized the amount their commander had absorbed of his own pet science, in a few weeks, Torrey spared no pains to make him an expert capable of working out stellar observations without the assistance of prepared tables. And when they reached the position Medford had indicated, he was entirely able to take his boat anywhere on the Seven Seas.

As the assistance of each man would be necessary in getting away with the submarine, he now told them enough of the story to fire their imaginations and make them as keen as himself actually to pull the thing off. In cases shipped as cargo and wrecking machinery there was a complete supply of Admiralty charts, diving-suits, arms, and all necessary equipment for raising a hulk from any moderate depth—also two radio sets, one for the trawler, and a much more powerful one which Satterlee had foreseen they might be able to erect at some isolated spot ashore.

The finding of the submarine and getting it to the surface would make an absorbing narrative if given in detail. The only entrance to the lagoon in the Greenwich group is a boat-passage through the southwest corner of the reef—a channel with several coral ledges a scant eight feet under water at average high tide. Yet the U-boat somehow had been worked through it and was resting on bottom in nine fathoms. Even though he knew the secrets of her most improved appliances,—from close observation while a prisoner aboard,—Medford had little hope of being able to raise her without the assistance of the trawler, and he made a quick decision concerning what the other men figured as a job of months. Going down in a diving-suit, he estimated that by the removal of four projecting ledges in the boat-channel he would be able to get a minimum depth of sixteen feet clear through at high tide. With her water-ballast pumped out, the trawler drew just under fourteen.

Blasting the ledges and removing the débris took ten days of excessively hard work, but they got the trawler into the lagoon without a scratch and anchored her directly over the submarine. If her batteries were still fully charged, Medford knew there was power enough to start her pumps and clear the water from a chamber in her bottom through which men in diving-suits might get in or out of the hull. But if the power failed, once they were inside, there was no way in which they could recharge the batteries until the boat came to the surface, where her Diesel motors could be used. He remembered, however, a provision which had been made for just this emergency. In a recess of the upper shell, closed with a water-tight hatch that could be slid back with a lever, there were twenty fathoms of heavily insulated copper wire connected with the batteries inside. It was by no means a difficult matter for them to open this hatch, haul the cable up to the trawler, attach it to her dynamo and send down current until the cable began to heat, showing that the batteries had absorbed all they could take. After that Medford and Stevens, his engineer, got into the U-boat through the air-chamber in her bottom, pumped out the displacement-tanks and brought her to the surface under her own power and buoyancy. As there were but seven of them altogether, the trawler had to be left there in the lagoon—after they had transferred oil, munitions and stores enough to last them during a three-months cruise; but they didn't leave the immediate vicinity of the atoll until they had experimented in handling the submarine under every condition they could think of.

When they were finally at sea, making seventeen knots on the surface just to prove what the boat could do, Medford called his men together in the chart-room for a conference, the helmsman and engineer being given the gist of it afterward, when relieved.

"We've got this sub, gentlemen,—blocking those scoundrels to just that extent,—and it is thoroughly understood that we sink her in deep water if ever there seems to be a chance of their getting her again. But she's a pretty handy sort of craft for a good many purposes, and we'll not part with her except as a last resort. Now, there's little question that the other sub is where they can get her in a hurry as soon as they're ready to go ahead with whatever scheme they have in mind—and it's a safe gamble that it'll be something which is a menace to every

honest ship on the ocean. The possibilities of what a few unscrupulous men can do with a craft like this are too obvious for argument. You catch the idea, of course? It's open season for us on that other sub. To attempt a search for the place where she's now hidden—under water—would be more of a job than finding a black pin at a colored funeral. But I figure that they mean to use her in a very few months—so I'm going to play a hunch that may hit plumb center and can't leave us any more up in the air than we are now."

Torrey had been thoughtfully considering future possibilities as he began to realize the sort of craft they were on.

"You don't want to forget, Captain, that we're going to need a safe place to hole-up ourselves—a place where oil and supplies can be left for us by one of Satterlee's boats. That point has got to be definitely worked out before we run short of what we now have aboard. We're calculating a three-months supply—better figure on two instead! We can't run into any port and buy what we need, you know!"

"That's part of my hunch, Sam. On the coast I'm bound for there are coves where we can lie up with very little risk of discovery. Here's the way I figure it: Do any of you know the Dutch Indies—really know what their coasts are like and the sort of natives who live on 'em?"

Torrey and Stevens both spoke up. Danby nodded.

"Sam was down there surveying for the Hydrographic Department on the Des Moines, out of Manila—and I was second for a few trips on a 'B. P.' boat, running up from Brisbane."

"Then you know what Lombok is like on the charts, even if you haven't been there. Forty-five miles one way, thirty-eight the other—about fifty thousand people altogether, mostly bunched in the cultivated valley which runs across from east to west; but it's absolutely one of the least-known spots on the globe—under the rule of its own native rajah, with merely a resident commissioner to represent the Dutch Government—not over thirty whites on the island. On the south coast there are two entirely landlocked bays, with hills from five to nine hundred feet high all around them—steep-to. The larger one, Telok Awang, is five miles wide by six long, and with water enough to accommodate the navies of the world—has communication with the middle of the island only by two footpaths through the jungle, but it has three small fishing villages around its shores. The other, Telok Blongas—in the southwest corner—is miles away from any settled part of the island, has but one footpath leading down into it from the hills, through pretty thick undergrowth—and it has a hidden inlet with nine fathoms of water, two miles long by a thousand feet wide. Of course, there may be a few native huts where that path comes out on the shore, but there's no village of any size within miles, and there are probably months when not a soul visits the place. As late as 1913 the Admiralty charts note that the whole south coast of these islands, and Java, have only been 'partly surveyed'—which shows how completely isolated they are."

"Wasn't there a story going about the China Sea and the Moluccas that Cap'n Sam Nickerson found a German masked battery of naval guns on the Head at the entrance to one of those bays, and succeeded in blowing it up one night, in 1915?"

"I've heard that story, and I believe it had some foundation. Germany certainly intended to fortify Telok Awang as a naval base as soon as she had taken over the Dutch possessions—because it is one of the very finest harbors in the whole East Indies. The chaps in the British navy all believe that it was the *Emden's* base, and that the Germans paid the Rajah of Lombok something very satisfactory to have those three little fishing villages abandoned for a few years. It is said also that one of the navy supply-boats, disguised as a tramp, put in there for water one night, found the bay apparently deserted, and a long corrugated-iron shack hidden in the brush on the east side, full of oil and ship's stores. Might belong to the Dutch government, of course—not the slightest evidence against that supposition, or even that it may be the property of the Koninklijke people, held there as emergency stores in case they are needed by one of their Lombok and Sumbawa steamers. But not a single steamer of any description touches at a port on the south coasts of those islands or goes within miles of them!"

"Humph! Reckon I'm beginning to understand your hunch, Captain! You're figuring that the massive German mind always moves in the same way regardless of circumstances or human variability—eh? You think that having once used Telok Awang as a perfectly safe hidden base for the *Emden* and other raiders, having oil and stores already waiting there, so concealed that no cruiser poking her nose between the Heads would be likely to see them, your U-boat syndicate intends to use the place again, because it would be very difficult to find another place as good, without running much more risk of discovery? Isn't that the idea?"

"You've struck it, Sam. We don't know that those fellows have anything to do with the inside crowd which is actually running Germany today, but we do know that possession of these two subs implies pretty close relations somewhere—close enough for them to get all the valuable hints in regard to hiding-places that anyone in Germany could give them. There's practically no question that they know all the inside dope there may be concerning Telok Awang and the *Emden's* secret activities—and if they know that, there's little chance of their wasting much time searching the charts and pilots for some other place as good. I'm heading straight for the south coast of Lombok, and I'll bet the other sub turns up there within sixty days!"

AS the submarine raced around the north end of Papua and down through the Moluccas, there were discussions concerning their quarry and their possible future proceedings—but the actualities of their own position never really dawned upon them until one morning when they were forced to slow down because of fog so thick they could see but thirty feet of their own turtle-deck from the conning-tower. Medford and Torrey were standing in the open hatch—it hadn't occurred to either that they were crossing the main steamer track from Thursday Island up to Manila and Hongkong. Suddenly, the air-currents shifted a trifle. They heard voices so close that a collision appeared almost certain; then a little breeze thinned the fog sufficiently for them to see the superstructure of a N.Y.K. boat within four hundred feet, crossing their bow at a sharp angle, but safely clear of them.

In a moment the Japanese officer on the bridge and several passengers along the starboard rail saw the submarine. There was a chorus of alarmed shouts and a fusillade of revolver-shots. Some of the shots struck the conning-tower and glanced from the steel plates. Then the fog shut down again. The voice of the English captain was perfectly distinct as he asked his Japanese mate and one of the passengers what all the row was about. They could hear him shouting: "Nons'nse, man—nons'nse! There are no subs which are not in possession of the Allied fleets—certainly none in these waters! What you saw was prob'ly some ship's boat, floating bottom-up! Why, if I thought there was really a U-boat within ten knots of me, I'd go out of my way to ram and sink her! The submarine is an outlawed craft till the end of time—don't you know that? Suppose it belonged to our own navy? Nons'nse! They'd not have it in these

waters without due notice being given! And any ship-master would sink one if he saw it!"

As the voices died away in the distance, the two closed the hatch and went below without a word. Lighting cigars, they went aft to where Stevens and two of the other men were sitting in the motor-compartment. When Medford gave the others the details of what had happened, there was considerable food for thought.

"It hadn't occurred to me," observed Medford, "that we were actually pariahs without having done a single thing to merit any such reputation! Say! Know what I think? I'm wise to the sort of feeling the Flying Dutchman and the Wandering Jew must have toted around with them day after day!"

THE more they considered their situation, the more difficult it seemed, from any point of view. But leaving all that as a future problem, Medford kept steadily to his purpose of catching the other submarine first. They made the coast of Lombok in better time than they expected, and drifted imperceptibly into the big landlocked bay of Telok Awang with nothing but their periscope showing, and not way enough on the craft to create a noticeable wake from it. The little steel pipe might have been a limb of a tree floating in a partly submerged position, as far as anyone could tell from the shore without a powerful glass. Slowly, as if a two-mile current were setting it in between the Heads, the little pipe drifted clear up to the extreme inner shore of the bay—then back along each side.

There was no sign of life anywhere. The huts of the three little fishing villages stood just as they had been abandoned by the natives, with evidences in the way of accumulated dust and debris that they had not been occupied for several months at least. And although Medford searched the sky-line through the periscope, then let the conning-tower emerge until he could get halfway out of the hatch with his prism binocular, he could discover nothing to indicate the presence of any men left to watch the place. So the sub was presently brought to the surface near the east shore of the bay, and a landing-party went off for a more careful search—which resulted in their finding a long corrugated iron shack concealed in the jungle-bush, in which there was a large quantity of oil and ship's stores.

After a little consideration Medford decided to remove these to a spot where no other submarine or raider would be likely to discover them. Taking aboard as much of a load as he dared carry, submerged, he ran down to the smaller landlocked Bay of Telok Blongas twenty-three miles to the westward, and made as careful a reconnaissance there, before coming to the surface. There were no indications whatever of human life or occupancy. Running up the hidden inlet to a spot where the bank was ten feet above the water, and "steep-to," he landed the extra stores, then went back for more. In a week he had not only transferred all the stores, but the iron shack itself—and so thoroughly concealed it in the jungle at Telok Blongas that anyone not in the secret would have searched a long time before discovering it. Then they took the sub back to Telok Awang, concealed its turtle-deck and conning-tower with a lot of dead brush and driftwood—and sat down to await developments. They had an abundant supply of food and good water, and did considerable fishing and exploring along the shore; but it was a long wait—in a bay as unruffled as a lagoon except when the wind blew from due south, and a stillness broken only by shrieks of birds or chattering of monkeys.

Finally, on the thirty-fourth day, another submarine came slipping in between the Heads with her decks awash. The *U-119* was prepared for her—with torpedoes in her tubes, and her six-inch gun loaded, under its pile of dead brush; but unfortunately, two of them happened to be coming off in the dinghy, and there was some unavoidable movement behind the brush as they climbed aboard—enough to attract the attention of the other submarine commander and cause him to order a torpedo shoved into its tube while he was investigating through his glass. When the target was moving fairly up to his sights, Medford released his "Whitehead." Seeing its wake darting toward him and knowing that he couldn't dodge it at such close quarters, the other commander let loose his own torpedo—which struck the deeply shelving beach a hundred feet astern of *U-119* and raised her almost out of the water with the tidal wave it created. The two explosions were almost simultaneous. When the smoke cleared away, there was no sign of the other submarine—save a widening film of oil on the water.

After their craft was again on an even keel, Torrey and Stevens had hurried below to see how much damage had been done them. In a few moments, the mate came up on deck to report.

"Some of the light stuff has been smashed, but the only serious damage appears to be a starting of her seams in one or two places. Water's coming in—nothing but what the pumps'll take care of; and in a few months we could rig up a marine railway to haul her partly out while I calk those seams. Nothing but what we can handle, I reckon, long as we stay on the surface—but we can't submerge until those plates are fixed."

"And we can't travel anywhere on the surface without being sunk by the first steamer that sees us and carries a gun! Lovely—perfectly lovely!"

Just then Stevens poked his head up to say that he had put on a "head-frame" to see if there might be any radio talking near them which would indicate that the explosions had been heard by other craft north of Lombok. Apparently they hadn't—but to his amazement some high-powered outfit was calling "Medford! Medford!"

"Humph! Probably some message from Satterlee, trying to locate us! If it's high-power installation, they won't be able to hear anything from our short aerials and small dynamo, at all!"

"But other ships between us are getting that message too! If we answer, they'll relay it!"

"Bully for you, Stevens! I didn't think of that! Tell 'em we're getting 'em clearly!" In a few minutes, Stevens had taken down the message—relayed from Honolulu.

Submarine reported by Kokura Maru,
Molucca Sea. If successful, deliver your
boat naval authorities, Port Darwin.
J. S.

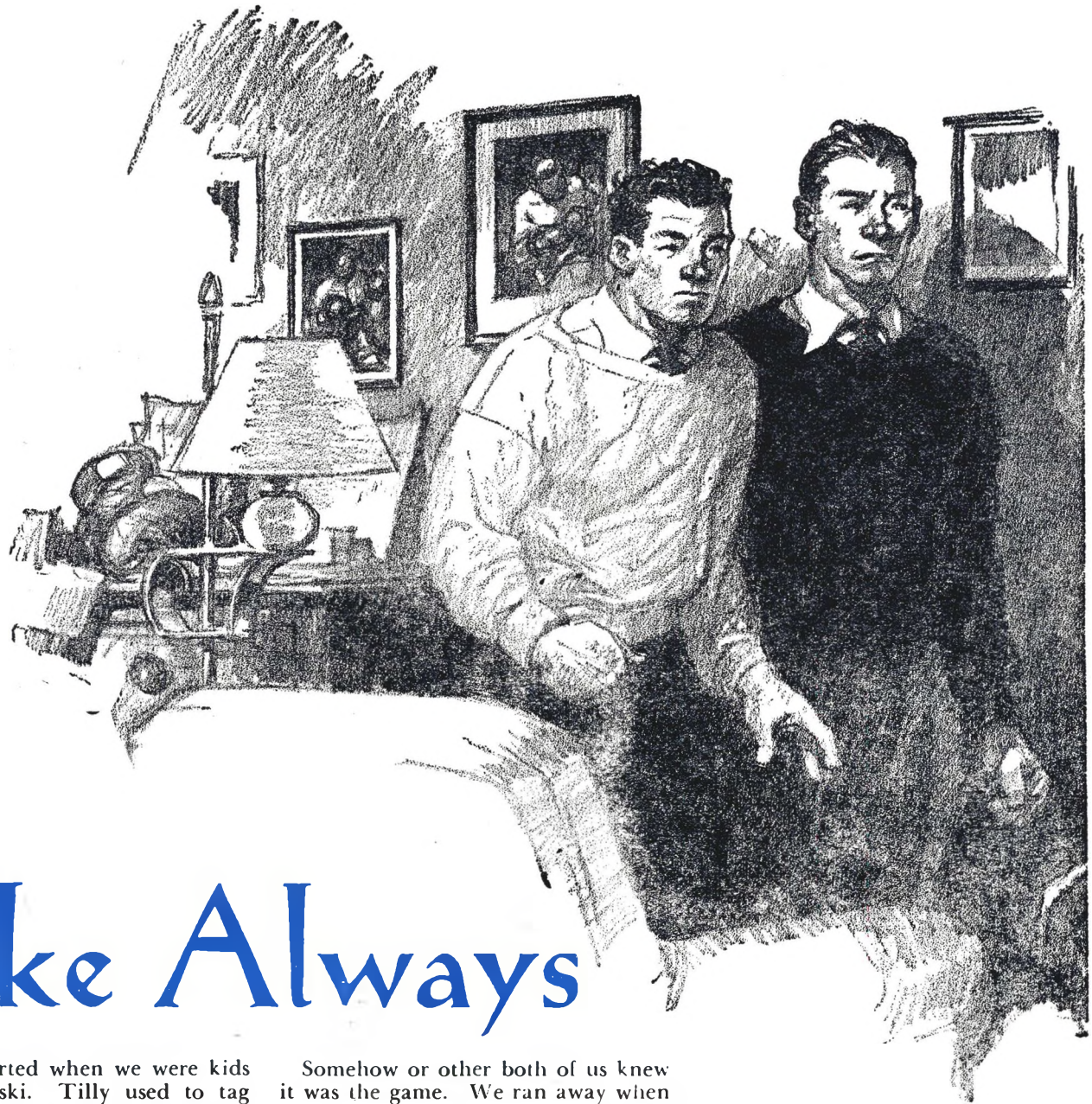
Medford considered it thoughtfully.

"H-m-m—he can't possibly know where we are or the shape we're in just now—but he's a damn' good guesser. Darwin is just about the nearest port we can make, on the surface, without being seen and fired at—practically no travel south of these islands!"

"But why not chance sending us to our own naval authorities at Zamboanga or Manila?"

"Terms of the Armistice. They stipulated delivery of all submarines to the British fleet. Satterlee's foxy! No international complications for him!"

In less than a week—without having been sighted by another ship—they ran at a leisurely gait into the landlocked harbor of Port Darwin, on the north coast of Australia—with the American flag at their jack-staff, over the German naval ensign upside down. One of the Koninklijke steamers was just pulling out for Batavia, her decks crowded with passengers who waved handkerchiefs and cheered as long as they could be heard. Medford and Torrey stood on their turtle-deck, saluting in a bored way as if catching pirate submarines was all in a day's work. In fact, the whole crew were a bit glum. The return to a law-abiding life seemed rather flat.



Like Always

IT all started when we were kids in Owaski. Tilly used to tag around after George and me, and we did all kinds of things together. Tilly was George's kid sister, and a pretty good tomboy at that. We used to swim and steal apples and do kid things like everyone did.

George and I had plenty of fights, and I always won. I was taller and had longer arms. But when other kids butted in, it was a picnic, with George and me ganging up and hammering tar out of them, even if there were six or eight. It got so we were being licked by our parents every day or so for fighting.

Then we got into high school, and the football coach was a boxing fan. He had gloves, and we started to box after school, and he taught us the rudiments of holding up our dukes. I took to it naturally, and when they had the amateur tournament I won the middleweight title easy. George won the welter championship after a hard fight.

Somehow or other both of us knew it was the game. We ran away when we were seventeen and got into Chi and started in the little clubs. We starved a lot, but we grew too, and pretty soon we were both light heavies. Sammy Gross put us on in the Climax Club, and we both won three or four bouts and got a hundred bucks ahead. We lived together and thought we were big stuff.

We were twenty when Tilly appeared. She had run away, too. She was still a shrimp of a girl, but I never recognized her. She had filled out in such places as to draw attention even in Chi. She had one of those noses, and large round eyes with natural long lashes that tipped upward.

I said: "Tilly, you got to go home. Chi is no place for a nice girl."

But George said: "She can stay with me. You can get a room for a while, Wally. Owaski is no place for a beautiful kid like Tilly."

I said: "You must be nuts! These wolves in this town—"

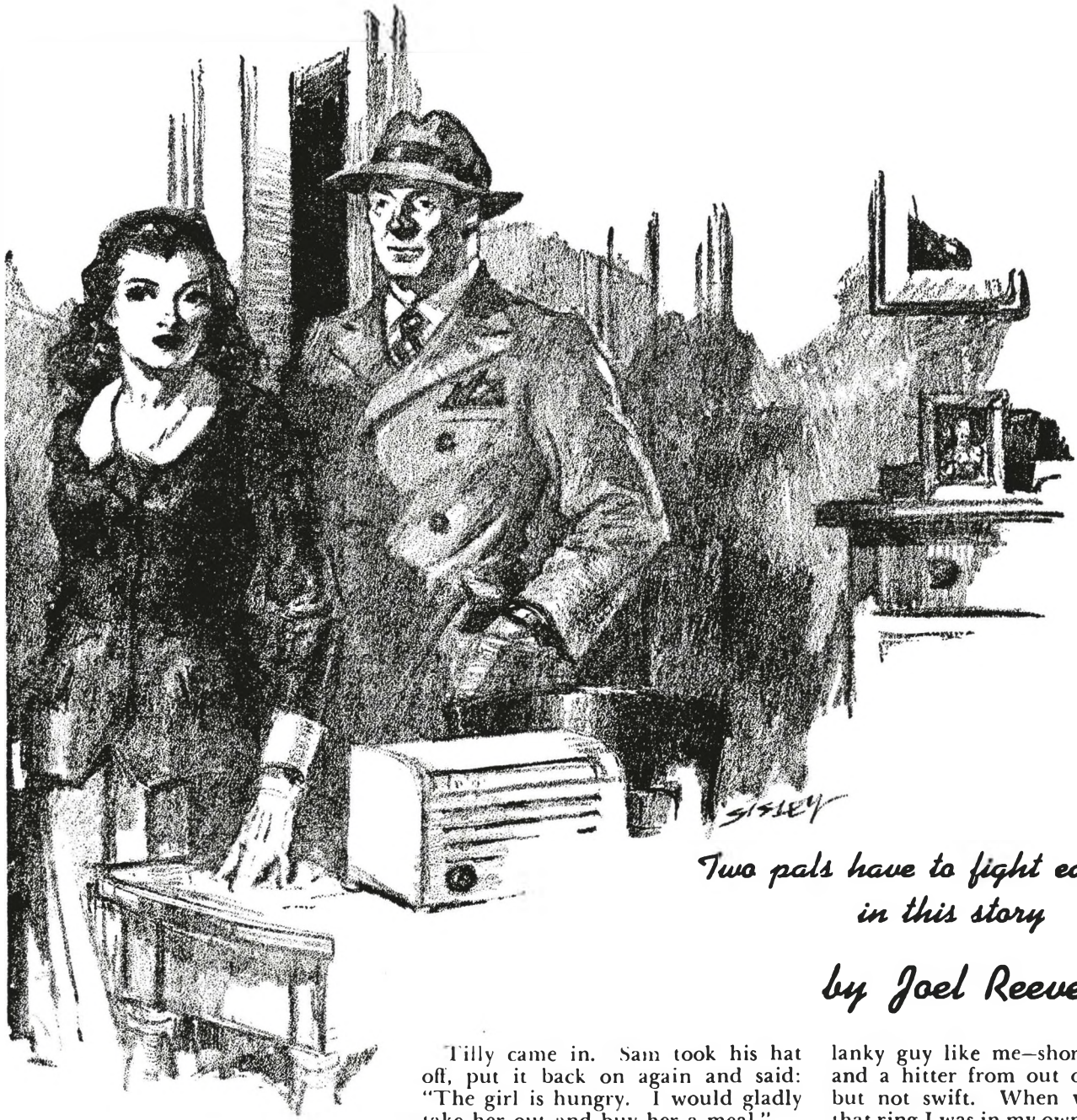
George said: "She's got you and me, hasn't she? Have we ever been licked?"

He had me there. I got a room, and Tilly moved in with George and kept a fine house for him, only she had this bee in her bonnet. She kept saying: "I know I can act. Not in the chorus. I can act in plays. I feel it."

I said: "Tilly, you are nuts. When George and I get our feet into the trough with the big shots and nail some of those big purses, you will not have to worry about anything. Just take it easy."

"Inside, I feel it," she would say. "I can act."

We ran out of bouts at that time, and the recession hit us, and we began to skip meals. Tilly got a job around one of those theatrical schools which was also starving. George and I went nuts. One day Sam Gross



Two pals have to fight each other in this story

by Joel Reeve

came to us and said: "Look—an idea I got. You boys are too good. Nobody will meet you, ha?"

I said: "I am going to New York. There must be a buck or two left in New York, that big city."

"New York, yet!" said Sam. "What about Chicago? You should fight Georgie here, you will make a thousand apiece!"

"Fight George? Are you nuts?" I said.

"I'll pop him right now," growled George.

"We're like brothers, you dope!" I said.

Sam Gross smiled wearily. "Brothers can starve too. Go on, be stubborn yet. But a thousand apiece, that is not straw!"

"He means hay," I said to George. I swallowed hard. I said: "And it aint hay, either."

Tilly came in. Sam took his hat off, put it back on again and said: "The girl is hungry. I would gladly take her out and buy her a meal."

Tilly sat down and began to weep. She said: "Thank you, Sam. You are a decent fellow."

I yelled: "Stop! Gimme an advance. Give George an advance. We will make your fight. We will feed her ourselves."

Sam said: "I would rather take her myself." He grinned and gave us some dough, and we ate hearty. But there was a ghost at the feast.

ONE thing about George and me: You got to give us credit. We never thought of acting charades with people. Sam knew it when he signed us. Even the sports reporters knew it. We trained separately for the first time. I found Sad Sam Willow then, and George picked up with Holy Joe Parsons.

Of course I had always licked George. He was built to order for a lanky guy like me—short and husky, and a hitter from out of this world, but not swift. When we went into that ring I was in my own mind a four-to-one shot. It sort of worried me. Tilly was down there biting her nails.

Tilly said to me before the fight: "Wally—I wish you luck. But I got to hope George wins."

I said: "Sure, Tilly. That's right. But I will win."

She said: "I know it. I am very unhappy, Wally."

So we begin to fight, and George came swinging like always. He was sincere. He fought me into a corner and nearly kayo'd me with a hard inside right. But I stabbed him off.

I had to keep stabbing him. I murdered him, but I couldn't knock him off his feet. He kept bulling in, game, stubborn, trying to give me the right to the potato, and I kept murdering him. It was one of the greatest fights ever put on in Chi. He knocked me down once, but I could get up at nine. Then I beat him half to death. I for-

got he was George and just kept hammering him.

They had to give me the duke. I went to the dressing-room and rested for an hour. George hadn't done my ribs any good, and my left kidney ached from the hooks. Sad Sam said: "He's a good boy. He is serious."

I said: "He is next best to me, and the world will learn it."

The light was on in George's apartment. I rang the bell, feeling the crisp money in my pocket, thinking it was not so bad. Tilly opened the door and stood there, barring the way. She said in a low, terrible voice: "You rat! You hurt him! He is in the hospital right now. You rat!"

I said: "Now, Tilly—"

"You needn't have hurt him so! This boxing! This dirty business, you belong in it! It was your idea to fight him because you knew you could win. Sam Gross told me!"

I said: "Whoa, Tilly. I'm your pal! Let's talk—"

She said: "I hate you! Get out! I never want to see your ugly face again."

All right, so I am not beautiful. Maybe I am sensitive about my pan. I burned. I said: "You shrimpy little broad, go play actress with your lousy friends, and maybe Sam Gross will buy you an audition somewheres. Blah!" And I left.

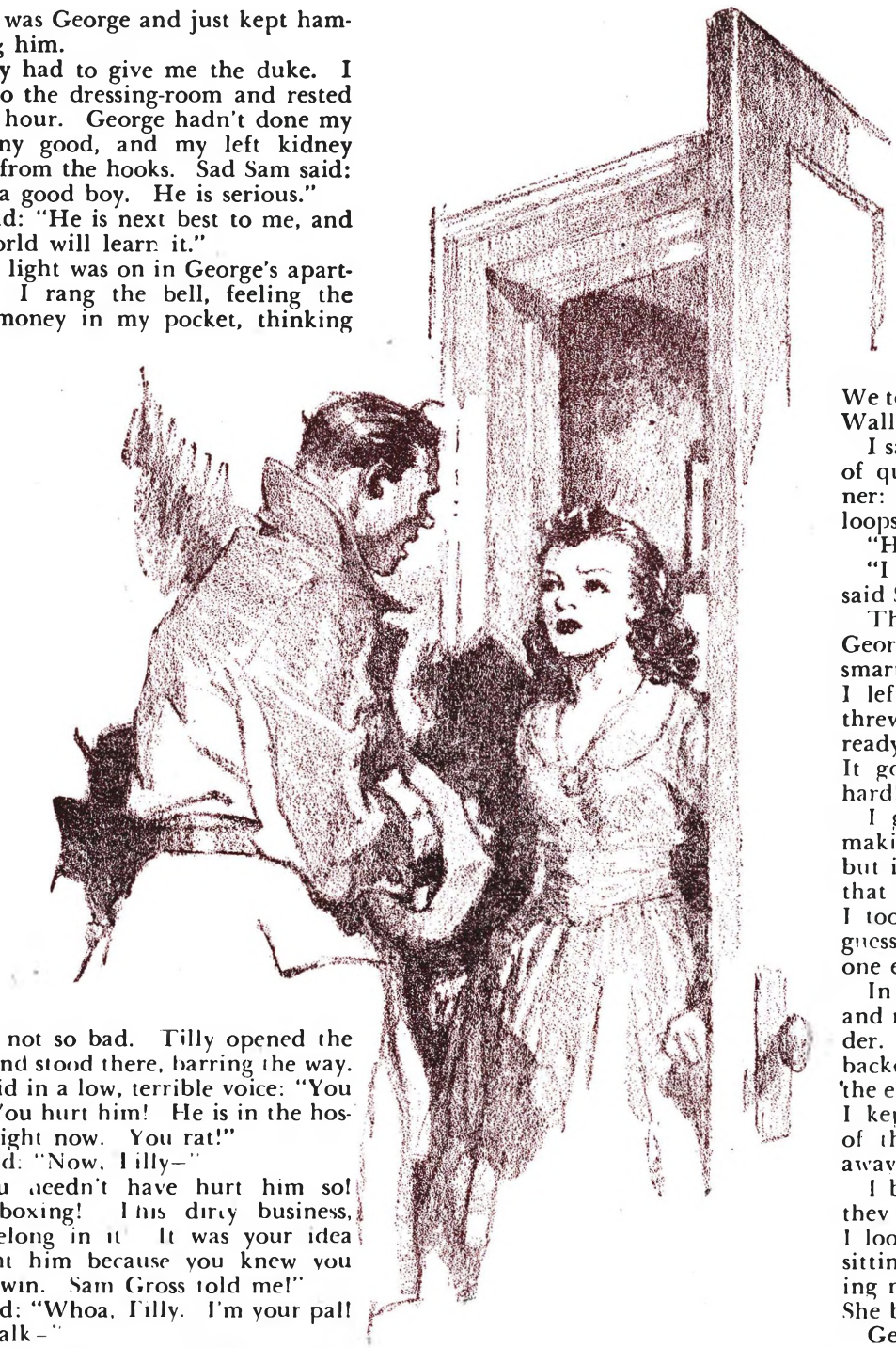
I went to New York, but they never wrote to me. Tilly got her break, and damned if Sam Gross didn't back a show in Chi for her, and she made it, as all the world now knows. George came back to win fights like Joe Louis, one after another.

Of course I do well enough, although we never quite hit the big time, as Sad Sam is not in with the mains, and I will not toss Sad Sam out. But we do all right. We go West on a tour, and at the Olympic in Los Angeles, Babe McCoy beams on me and says:

"I got you a sucker. George Morgan's here. Ten rounds."

It was a shock, but on second thought, what could I do? George and I are natural rivals by now, each coming along as promising light heavies. I signed for the bout.

How was I to know that Tilly's show was playing at the Biltmore and that she would be at ringside? I never saw George until we got into the ring—I guess neither of us cared to meet.



I said: "Go play actress with your lousy friends, and maybe Sam will buy you an audition somewheres. Blah!" And I left.

We touched hands, and he said, "Hiya, Wally? What's new?" very quiet.

I said: "Same old stuff." I felt kind of queer. Sad Sam said in our corner: "Look out for his right. He loops it."

"He never looped it before," I said.

"I been watching him in the gym," said Sad Sam.

The bell rang, and I went out. George was a little faster, but I was smarter, too. We went around, and I lefted him like always. Then he threw the overhand right, and I wasn't ready in spite of Sad Sam's warning. It got me, and I hit the deck—but hard!

I got up, somehow. I waded in, making the play to get back the round, but it was no dice. He had me with that right, and he laid it into me, and I took a lacing for three rounds. I guess I got up four or five times—no one ever agreed how many.

In the fourth I solved it. I crouched and moved in, taking it on the shoulder. I laid it into his belly and backed him up. I got his nose on the end of my left and led him around. I kept ducking and throwing it out of the crouch, and he couldn't get away.

I broke his nose in the eighth and they stopped it, giving me the T.K.O. I looked down at Tilly, and she was sitting there, all tied up in a knot, hating me. I thumbed my glove at her. She burned me—but good, the brat!

George said to me before we left the ring: "Almost had you, Wally. Some day I'll get you good."

I said: "You'll never live to see that day." I was sore. I went out and took a plane and got a nice bout in New York with Sime Gillis, and I beat him, too. I didn't see Tilly to speak to, nor did I see George again during that time I was coming up fast.

It came from that crouch I developed. Sad Sam said it was like Dave Shade, in the old days, when Dave was giving Walker fits and getting little credit for it. It got so I could duck and weave and throw that left out of the crouch and really hurt with it. I beat a lot of boys. Pretty soon they said it was me and Maxie—or George and Maxie.

George was doing fine. He had a straight left now, like the one I used to dish out, and he was weaving and hitting very hard. He cleaned them up as fast as I did. We got about equal raves.

They had to take Sad Sam in, because I was really killing the crowds. I had adopted a sort of contemptuous style in the ring. People hated me and came to see me beaten, which is almost twice as good as being popular, because people never love like they can hate where the prize-ring is concerned. We made a lot of dough.

TILLY, I heard from time to time, was a riot. She was, they said, a comédienne. She was terrific. Once she played Akron while I was there. I sneaked into a balcony seat, just to catch her act and make sure.

She was pretty good, I suppose. Somehow, though, the thing didn't seem very funny. It was one of those drawing-room comedies which would be banned if it was performed in a bedroom. I left before it was over. George was fighting in Pittsburgh, and I wanted to catch his act too. He was very good, but I didn't see anything new in his routine.

Sam Gross had got big, too, and he wanted us for Chi. The New York people howled, but we were a natural for the Loop City on account of having begun there. Sad Sam signed me, and we went back to the Midwest and trained a little.

I felt very good about it. Maxie was slipping, and this was it. Whichever one of us got the fight would win the title. And I had never lost to George. It was very fine.

Even then I had no real feeling against George. It was a sort of sore thing if I stopped to think about it, because we had been pals so long. But time was getting away, and I didn't often think about it. Fighting him was a habit, I guess. Anyway, I was taken back seven miles when Tilly popped in to see me the night before the fight.

I said: "Hello, great actress!"

She said: "I'm not great. I'm bad. But I'm learning, like George. We Morgans learn, after so long a time."

I said: "Fine. . . . I hope George learned to duck."

She said: "I had to see you, Wally. We were friends for the nice years of our life. I wanted to see if you'd changed any."

"I'm smarter," I said. "And tougher."

She nodded. Her eyes looked very big. She said: "You hate us a lot, don't you? Because you've always won, you despise us. It's a strange thing, success. When you get it, you become different, hateful. I'm almost afraid to go to New York."

Illustrated by Raymond Sisley

She said: "I'm not working tonight. Take a walk with me."
I said: "Why should I walk with you? We're not friends."

I said: "That's silly talk, Tilly. I don't hate anybody."

She said, "I'm sorry for you, Wally. You're missing something that could be so nice."

"Nuts!" I said. "You and I couldn't be so nice together. Not with Sam Gross around!"

She said: "So long, Wally. Maybe after the fight it will be different. I hope so. You'll catch on, some day." She went away. I couldn't make any sense out of it. She depressed me.

The next morning my draft board had the message in. There wasn't any war then, and I didn't like it one bit. I squawked like mad. I telephoned some big shots, but they couldn't do a thing for me. I was Army-bound when everyone thought we would never get into the Big Fight. It sickened me.

I went into that ring furious at the world. George was like always, solemn, solid. I snapped something at him. I was as edgy as a tomcat on a fence. George just said: "Okay, Wally. Save it for the bout."

Sad Sam said worriedly: "He's hooking them now, Wally. Don' mix with him."

I said: "Let me get at him. I'm going to finish this quick."

We finally got down to it. I swung out of the corner with my hands up, coming from the crouch that I was using. I banged into George, throwing the right cross inside. I landed, too.

But the hook came from nowheres, a beautiful left. It must have hit me on a nerve. I went down and lay on my side, and I couldn't breathe. I could see and hear and everything, but I couldn't move a hand or leg. My middle was all dead.

George was down too. Only, he climbed up without a count. He had beat me to the punch by a fraction of a second. He was in a neutral corner, and the referee was counting over me. Tilly was there, like always. She was biting her handkerchief.

After a while Sad Sam came and got me. A lot of the galleryites were booing, thinking I had quit without taking one. But the ringsiders knew. I was unable to walk for an hour. That George really laid that one on me. When they asked me about it, I just said: "You can't duck a left hook. I forgot to peg it."

That was how George got the bout with Maxie and won the championship. Things happened then, like the war coming on. They put me in camp, and I didn't get to fight very often. Then December 7th came, and they sent all our boys over, but they made me a sergeant and kept me teaching boxing.

I hated it. I went to everyone I ever even heard of. But they said they needed me. They didn't need Barney Ross, did they? But they needed me. I taught boxing until my arms almost fell off. I got sunburned tonsils staring at fighting planes they would not let me even get into. I fought Sal May and Jamey Doeg and Dooley Smith for nothing.

Then they got up this big bout, for War Relief. It was a natural, of course; and in peace-time George and I would have collected a fortune. This was for Sweeney, and somehow or other I was glad. The boys all took turns training me for it. I had some good ones, and I was doing regular duty too, trying to get the hang of things in case I *should* get to go overseas. I reckon nobody was ever in better shape than I when I went in to fight George that fourth time.

He got the news about his punctured eardrum long before that. He was working in the shipyards, I knew, and they said he was a hell of a man, too, driving the riggers. They gave his yard an E, and the boss said it was all George's, really.

The night before the fight I went in to New York; Sad Sam had a bed for me in his apartment, and we drank a glass of milk together. Then he had something to do, so I wandered down to give the Canteen a play. I'd never been in the joint, and wanted to see Lunt and Fontanne and make sure they really didn't look any older than their pictures. They didn't, either, and I was ogling Joan Crawford when Tilly came in.

Four Marines and a gob made for Tilly. She was wearing a green dress to match her eyes, and she laughed and made faces, and they all howled. She had opened a new show as the star. She was the toast of the Armed Forces.

I stood there, watching. She pushed through them and said: "Sad Sam said you'd be here."

I said: "Hello, funny girl."

She said: "I'm not working tonight. Take a walk with me."

I said: "Why should I walk with you? We're not friends."

Broadway was dimmed out, but it seemed better that way, and there wasn't all that terrible traffic. It was kind of small-towny and we walked around the corner, and there was her name *"Tilly Morgan"* in lights that would never be lit. She said, "You see? I'm here, but there is no glow to it."

"That silly talk again!" I said. "You've got war bonds. You've got security."

She said: "I want to talk about the fight."

"You mean the slaughter," I said. "I'll kill old George."

She nodded. "I know it."

I said: "Huh? You know it?"

"I can tell by looking at you," she said. "You're fit. George has been working two shifts and couldn't train. You'll win, all right. I'm just wondering how you'll take it this time."

I said: "Now wait, Tilly. I don't want to fight any man who is out of shape. I don't want any title that way—"

Tilly said: "It's not always what you want. George knocked you out when he was right. You were worrying that night. Sad Sam told me you weren't sharp."

I said: "It was my own fault—" I shut up. I thought for a while, walking along. I said: "Why do you always bother me with things, Tilly? Why do you make me stop and think?"

She didn't answer. We walked some more. It got late, and we were still walking. Then we somehow began talking about Owaski and the times in Chi when we were broke. It seems there were a lot of funny things happened in those days which I had not remembered as being very funny. And there were a lot of things which sort of brought a lump to your throat.

We wound up in front of her apartment house, and she said, "George is up there, trying to sleep. You'll beat him, Wally."

I said: "I guess that old title means a lot to him."

"Well, he is 4F, and that isn't pleasant," she said. "You know how he got that punctured eardrum, don't you, Wally?"

"No."

"Remember the first fight, when I got so angry and screamed at you?" she said. "I'm sorry I was so pitiful about it. But that's where he got it—in that fight."

I said: "Oh!" There wasn't anything else to say. She held out her hand, and we shook, hard.

Then I was hugging her and kissing her like mad. She was saying: "All the years and all the bitterness! I'm so sorry, Wally. It was my fault."

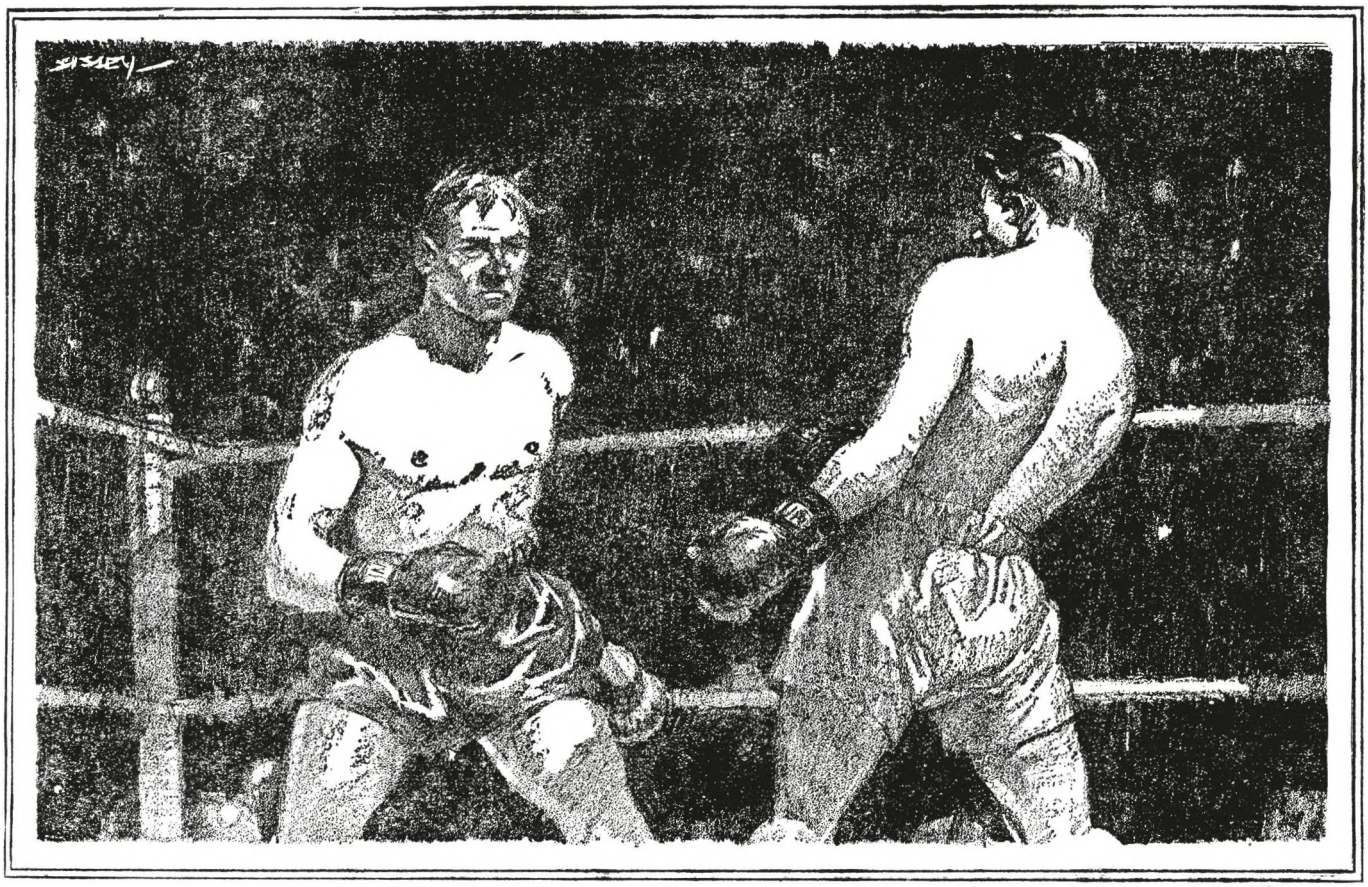
And I was telling her that I am a fathead and a jerk and such things as I could not even repeat to her. We are shaking and weeping and laughing, all at once.

She said: "Go home, Wally. Make it a good fight, won't you? They were always good fights, with you and George." She was ring-wise, and she knew it had to be a good bout.

I said: "It'll be just like always, baby."

I went home and Sad Sam was worried to death because it was by then five o'clock. But I slept until late afternoon, like a baby. I was fine when I went in there against George, and I gave him the razzberry to burn him, but good, and get him started.

George came down the aisle in the old robe, and the crowd gave him the



I have to push him away and mumble past the mouthpiece: "Come on and fight, you 4F bum!"

business. He was a popular champ. He grinned at them, and every hair on his chest stood up and waved. I ran all the way over and parted the ropes for him to climb through, stealing his cheers.

He said: "Hello, Wally. How's it?"

"Fine," I said. "How's it feel to be a shipyard hero?"

He did not like that. He said: "You always were a smart guy, Wally."

"Okay, 4F," I said. "Come out and show me up. You're the champ. Show them you can beat me."

Holy Joe saw that George was burning and ordered me away from the corner. I laughed and went back; and Sad Sam said: "That wasn't smart. Now he'll come out fighting. And remember that right hook."

I said: "I have fought this character four times, haven't I? Back in Owaski I fought him a hundred times. Are you telling me about George Morgan?"

Sad Sam said: "And every time he had something new to try on you. Now he is champ and that makes them better, too."

"Fighting George makes me better too," I said. "This will not be like Chicago."

Sam said: "You stay away from him, and you will win. He is packing a bit of fat."

They are clearing the people from the ring while we are talking back and forth. I can see past George to where Tilly sits tearing at her handkerchief, like always. When the referee called us out, I waved at her but she did not wave back.

We touched gloves, and I said: "That punctured eardrum won't affect your hitting, will it, George? You'll fight me this time, won't you?"

He burned. He growled: "You'll find out, wise guy."

I shuffled gay as a bug in my resin, and waited. Sad Sam made motions of boxing at long range. I winked at him, and the bell rang.

IT was like always with George; the measuring left, then hooks coming in like bombs. He had a new one too, like Sam said. It looked good, and the crowd loved him for it. I had to ride the storm out, holding and countering when I could. I clipped him with the left seven times, got him going and made him miss. George is a great one to fight. He is serious.

I come inside and meet him, hammering hard with a right cross. It is not dead center, and my left finds his ear.

As it is his bad ear, he gets somewhat hot and belts me in the middle like with clubs. I go on my bicycle to keep from being murdered. Not George nor anyone can catch me when I run.

I hold him and say: "This is not like in Chi when you were so lucky, pal. Tonight I am right."

He just snarls at me. We break, and I come right back to him, which surprises him a bit. But he never stops trying to put one where it will stop my clock. Just one of those would do it, too, if it landed right. I am very busy making them miss by a fraction.

That is the way with George. Always bulling, looking for that big opening. He got Maxie that way, after taking a licking from the old champ for eight rounds. Maxie's tired old legs gave out and George caught him and it was curtains. He got me that time in Chi, too. But tonight I am sharp. Tonight I am all legs.

I can run from him, but I do not. I lean into it and give him nine more lefts, and he goes around and around, very angry. I even nail him to the ropes with a long right. He bounces off and slams them right in there to my middle. I suck air, and he tries with the right.

I put on speed. There are about twenty seconds left in the round, and it is good to put on the flurry there. The judges like to see it and the crowd loves it. I begin to swing them fast, not hard like George, but lots of them. I shower him with leather. I put one on his eye that will raise a mouse. He leans away, crouching,

and I think for the moment that I have him. I can see Tilly down in her seat behind his corner, white-faced, biting her fingers. I let down on my heels and start the old haymaker.

There is a hell of an explosion as George comes out of the crouch with that right. My chin seems to leave me. Then I am lying there, under the ropes, and the referee's arm is a shadow going up and down like the old pump-handle back home in Owaski. Tilly's face swims around, tears in her eyes. I know that I cannot get up and fight George any more, and it is bad.

Sad Sam had me under the arms and was easing me onto the stool the colored boy swung in there. He said: "The bell saved you." Then he went to work on me. Sad Sam is very good in the corner.

I said: "That hook again."

Sad Sam nodded and kept working on me. I can see the lights and the sky above the lights and the crowd is roaring, wondering if I can come back. I can see George over there, and he looks fine, except his chest is rising and falling like it was the tenth round.

Sad Sam says: "You have got him if you run. Stay on that motorcycle and you will breeze in. He is pooped."

THE whistle blew, and Sad Sam climbed down. Tilly is crushing her handkerchief and staring at me. I give her a wave.

The bell again. I am leaning into the ropes and I let them shove me out. I have got my hands low. I say: "George, this is it. I am coming at you."

He plants his feet and starts that hook. It is all out for victory with George. He knows I can run away and he will never catch me. I am Army-trained and I am sharp. But George never finishes and both of those hands can hurt a man but sadly.

I put down my head and start punching. It is like back in Owaski, two kids, swinging away. George has that hook, and it is better than mine, because I am a straight puncher. The middle of me gets a curving that nobody can take. I go down like a sinking ship, by the stern.

The referee is puzzled, but he counts over me. At nine I get up and George is there waiting. He sets me back on my heels and hands me three on the chin. I take them blinking and drop a right on his jaw. I throw a straight left inside his hook.

I drive him backward. He is strong as a bull for these early rounds—as I know he will be. It would be the third or fourth when he had to slow for second wind. I walk into him, plowing the long ones across his shoulder, into his jaw. He weaves and throws the hooks. They hurt. They double me up and he uppercuts me in close, like Sam says.

I go around and around and Sam is weeping and gnashing his teeth, but George is just busy beating me to death. I fall against the ropes and catch on with my left hand and my knee hits the canvas. George is on top of me and let one go and I almost died right there.

Then he is lifting me to my feet and saying: "I didn't mean to, Wally! I didn't know you were down." He is almost bawling and I have to push him away and mumble past the mouthpiece: "Come on and fight, you 4F bum!"

He growls then and comes in. I waved him away and do a quickstep and get him alongside me and spin him. I give him the short left, stab him and drop the right from the chest. He takes it and shakes his head and comes back with the hook. I catch the hook on the peg and bang him with the left.

He is too strong and too rampant for me and I have to back up a step. I am losing my sight and the deck is slippery. I spraddle my legs and hang on and he bends me again with the hooks. I try to crouch and he straightens me with the new inside right. It is a very bad time and I am going around and around and getting my head beat off me.

I am on the ropes and Tilly is beneath me. I stare down and she says: "Oh, Wally! Please, Wally! Don't hurt him, please!"

I almost fall down with surprise. She hollers: "Make it quick, Wally! Don't hurt him again!"

I guess I am dizzy as a bedbug, because I suddenly think I am winning. I spin around and here comes George with those terrible hooks. I bend a little, catch one on the right glove.

George is very earnest and still tough as nails. He scowls and beats in with another hook. I hook him right back, but he is accepting all offers and coming for more.

So I fight my way to ring center and the clock is showing twenty seconds. It is the old routine. I bend him over the ears with the left. He comes in low, always with the hooks.

I reach away up into the lights. It is not a thing I ever do in my life before. But it is a thing born of desperation, because he is always chopping in there with those hooks and that inside right. I reach away up and I grab ozone and I drop it in.

It came against his jaw and it amazed him, because he opened his mouth and the rubber piece fell out. I am very amused. I say: "You don't like that, Georgie? Why, you used it on me, don't you remember?"

I clubbed him again, like a stone mason with a hammer in his mitt. It landed on his chin. George's chin is like rock, and well I know it. But this one was good. It was unpremeditated and not very smart, but it was very good.

George spun around. I propped him up with my left and he tried to hook me once more. I slammed home the pay-off punch. It hammered on his chin.

George went down like he was shot. I walked away, watching him. He did not move after he lit. I stopped watching him and looked down at Tilly, afraid almost to see her. She would go back to hating me now. I had taken away her brother's precious possession, the title which he prized above all things.

Tilly was not even there. I died, waiting for them to count out George. I helped pick him up, but he was out cold. I had to get through the crowd of soldiers who wanted to tear me apart on account of they had bet their shirts on me to win and were so happy over the hangovers they would suffer tomorrow.

I got into the dressing-room and Sad Sam shut out everyone and began to patch me up. He said, "You sure made a dumb fight. I can't understand it. You could have decisioned him like shooting fish in a barrel. You walk in there and let him hook you like Grant took Richmond."

I looked past him. Then I said: "Hello, George."

GEORGE wore the old robe I had given him long ago. It was all tattered, but it looked good on him. He came over and grabbed me and hugged me. He said: "You didn't outsmart me, Wally. For once you really fought me. You could always beat me, pal."

I said: "I'm sorry, George."

"No!" he said. He was very serious. "No! You're the champ. I got a new racket. They made me super at the yards! Super! Imagine that!"

I said: "I can't imagine it."

George said: "Tilly's crying. You better see Tilly. She is in my dressing-room and I got to go out to the yards and see if all is well."

I shook his hand again. I left him telling Sad Sam that I was the greatest fighter in the world and that I would certainly lick Louis, which is a big lie.

Tilly stopped crying. She said: "Winning or losing doesn't matter, does it? It's how we take it, isn't it?"

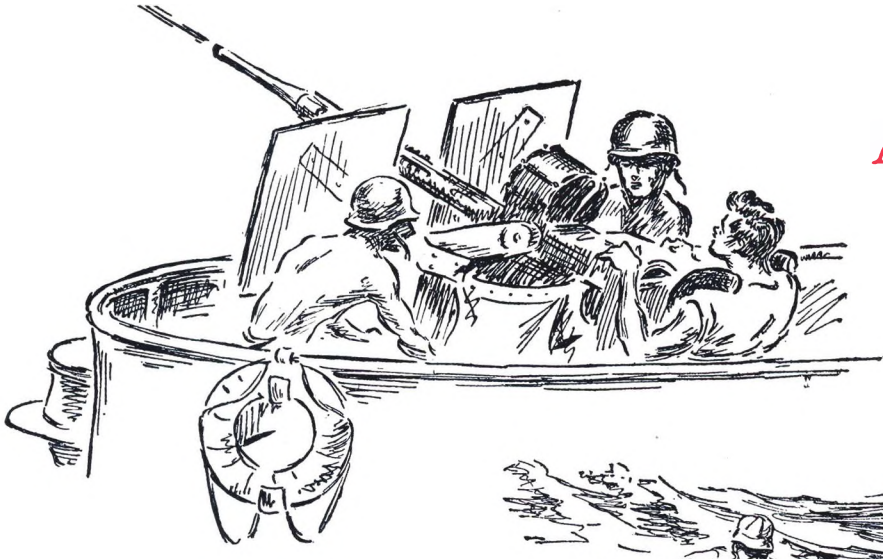
I kissed her again. I said: "To me it is like always. You and George and me. I got four days off, Tilly. You can go on with the show, huh? We can get married in Jersey."

Well, bring on Hitler and Hirohito. George is making the boats and I'm ready to sail on one.

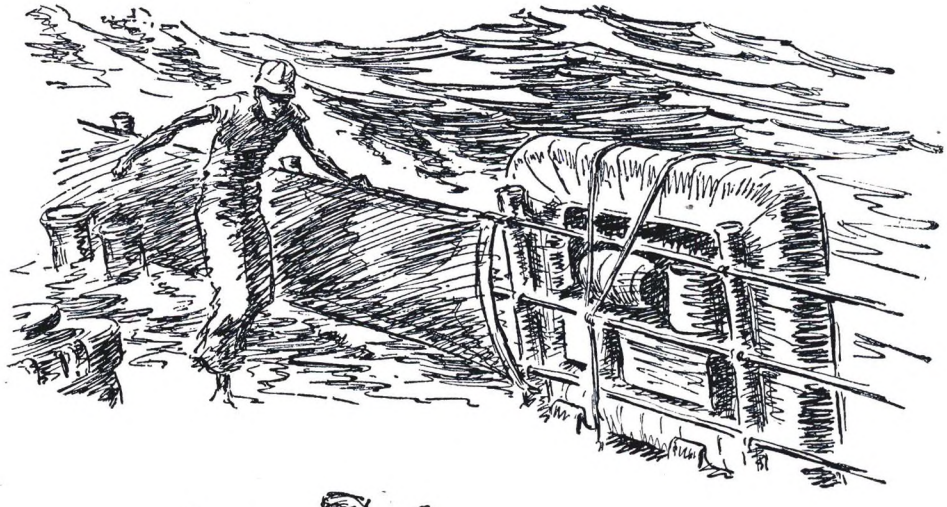
A Sailor's Sketchbook

A new batch of drawings from the Atlantic front

by Carl Kidwell

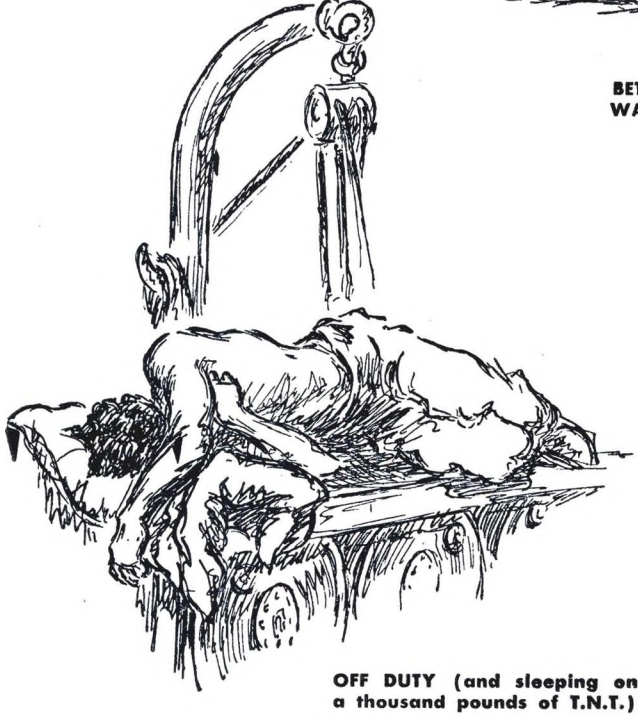


20 MILLIMETER



HEAVY WEATHER

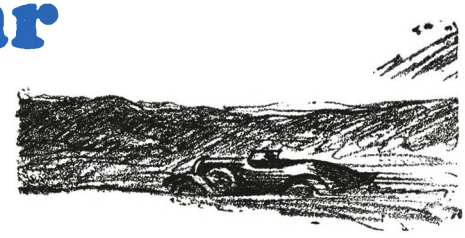
BETWEEN WATCHES



OFF DUTY (and sleeping on a thousand pounds of T.N.T.)

TARGET!

Pedigo Shines His Star



He wasn't really the Sheriff—but he knew how to track down bad men.

by KENNETH PERKINS

"IT'S only the storekeeper at Ten-Lode," they said when Sheriff Pedigo entered the camp commissary to see the prisoner.

With some truculence Pedigo wiped the blade of his knife on his laced wrist-guard after cutting a hole in an orange. He had the orange in one long hand and had taken a suck or two after that dusty ride in his delivery wagon. Some of the juice had spilled on his brass-knobbed star, and he wiped it off—a gesture which told the company watchman, the master mechanic and the welder that he might be a storekeeper, but he was also Sheriff.

His granddaughter, Jen, had come in ahead of him. She was an excited, bewildered girl almost as thin as the old-timer, almost as burned. And the gentle look of her face had, because of the present exigency, turned almost as hard. She went to the prisoner and took both his hands.

He grinned, delighted, eager to take her in his arms. The watchman and the other two company men, decent and sympathetic enough, got up and turned their backs so that Jen could have this first meeting to herself. They sensed, perhaps heard, the two kiss each other, the girl saying something in a soft moan, the man laughing reassuringly.

Dick Burling, the prisoner, saw the old Sheriff fumbling with his knife and orange to free a hand. He offered the hand to Dick, and they shook.

The girl said: "I brought Grandpops. He'll make everything come out all right."

"Now, Jen!" Dick tried to laugh. "Who said it's not coming out all right? We'll rent that shack in Ten-Lode and live there till this road's finished. Then wherever they're tying in another unit, we'll move to the nearest town. Maybe we'll get married right away. What's the sense waiting?"

Sheriff Pedigo wondered if this meant they would hurry up and get married before Dick was sent up to San Quentin. As a matter of course, he would lose his job as plant engineer; and being perpetually broke because of his gambling, there did not seem to be much chance of a wedding for a long time—a year, maybe many years. The old man left them sitting there on a bench, their clasped hands hidden between her knee and Dick's. There was nothing he could say to them.

And for that matter, there was nothing much that he could do. He had not been notified of the robbery, or called in for advice or action. The first he had heard of it was when Jen came back to the store at Ten-Lode half an hour ago. He was ripping off the top slats of a crate of avocados and tipping the crate up in display under the wooden awning of his store when she drove up in their delivery car. It was Jen who drove the old car out to the road-building camp, where there was a good sale for tobacco and magazines, sunburn lotions and fruit. On paydays the men would buy fancy belts and bandanas and wampum hatbands—anything that they could not get at the commissary. And this was payday when Jen started out with the car loaded. But she did not get far.

She came back and said that a motorcycle cop had told her there was no use trying to sell the camp crew anything on this particular Saturday, because the pay-roll had been stolen. She said this in a flat queer voice, and Pedigo saw that her eyes were swollen.

He asked: "When did they find it out?"

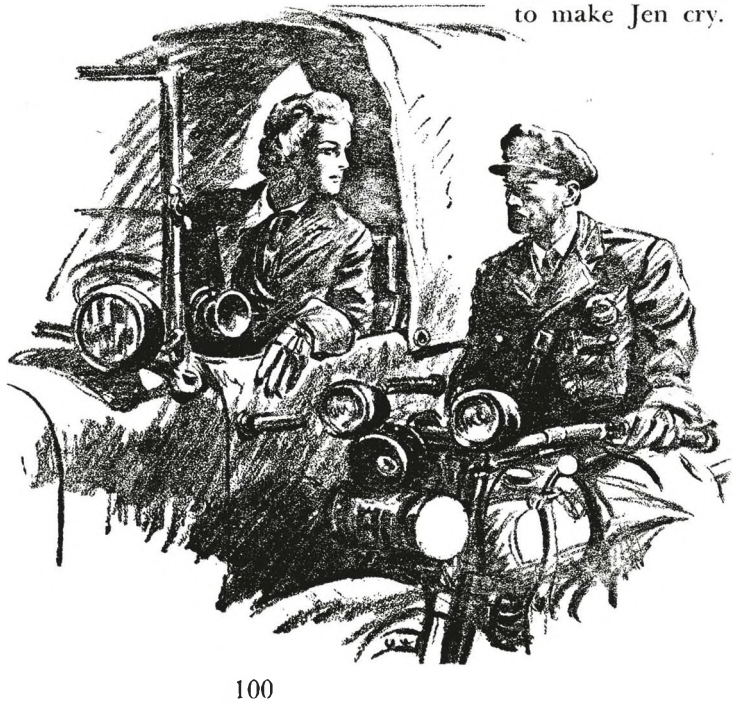
"About two o'clock."

He bristled, standing there as straight and long as the single gasoline pump in front of his store. "They didn't tell me about it. Nary a thing."

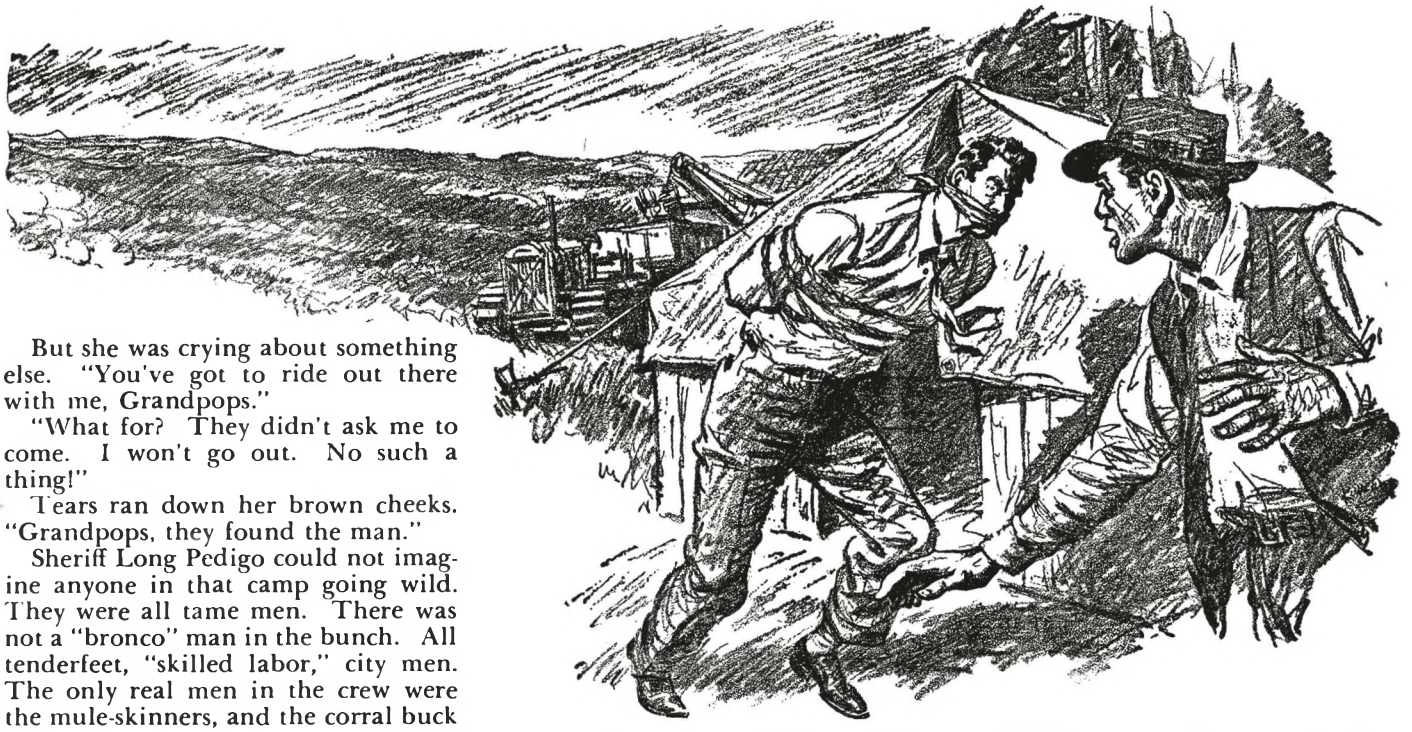
"They had a State trooper there, and the deputy from Filer."

"Sure, I know. That'd be Tim Henderson, young shot from the county sheriff's office." Old Pedigo was not the county sheriff; hence actually he was not a sheriff at all. But he never realized it until this construction company came, building a motor highway through the Ten-Lode country. When the tie-in between the transcontinental routes was finished, he would be looked upon merely as a picturesque character, for thirty years a constable, still elected to that office by the assay men, alfalfa growers and barkeepers of Ten-Lode. Motorists would photograph him and his old star the way they photograph Navajos on the Santa Fe.

It was coming. He was in the discard: here was proof of it. A robbery right here, fifteen miles from Ten-Lode, and they had not called on him! A few weeks before, he had been told to watch out for three gunmen in a stolen car—which tickled his pride until he found out that every filling-station had been warned. It was enough to make Jen cry.



A motorcycle cop told her there was no use trying to sell the camp crew anything because the pay-roll had been stolen.



But she was crying about something else. "You've got to ride out there with me, Grandpops."

"What for? They didn't ask me to come. I won't go out. No such a thing!"

Tears ran down her brown cheeks. "Grandpops, they found the man."

Sheriff Long Pedigo could not imagine anyone in that camp going wild. They were all tame men. There was not a "bronco" man in the bunch. All tenderfeet, "skilled labor," city men. The only real men in the crew were the mule-skinners, and the corral buck who took care of the mules. And these were greatly outnumbered by the truck-drivers. There was perhaps one other who had the makings of an old-timer—the plant engineer, who was the wildest gambler and steadiest drinker Pedigo had ever seen.

He asked Jen: "Which one of those two-spots did it?"

She scarcely whispered: "Dick."

He nodded slowly. "I told Dick last night you two couldn't get married till he had a little put away in the bank." This did not help Jen's tears. "He left, and spent the night at stud poker. Thought he could get some money quick that way, maybe. Reckon you started reforming him too late. He kept calling to my mind the bad bunch of the old days. But the bad bunch often made good men when the right girl came along. Well, let's take a *pasear* out to the camp."

That was all Jen wanted.

"And he had a good job," Pedigo said sorrowfully. "How he could keep it and play poker every night I don't know. Making tests, watching the mixer, taking samples—guess he had a *segundo* to do his work for him. I know how you feel. You just about had him reformed, and it would've been worth it. He had the makings."

The car bumped and rattled over the sage plain toward the one high spot on the horizon—the plant. This was a pile of trestles and belts, boiler and hopper—like a great dinosaur that had crawled down out of the Utah mountains, leaving a slimy black trail of oil-smeared, crushed gravel. When they passed it, the plant foreman, mixer and a crusher man were pulling tarpaulins over the engine, locking up the tiny shack high up on the platform. Pedigo saw his granddaughter staring straight ahead, gripping the wheel hard. Dick was not up there on the platform where he belonged. That, of course, was what she was thinking.

She had to get off the road, for on this part of the highway only the subgrade work had been completed. Spreaders had left the spreader-boxes; dike men had left the slopes of the banks. The last of the trucks were rumbling into camp, and Jen followed in their dust.

Sheriff Pedigo went into the supply tent, shook hands with Dick, left Jen with him, then came out wondering what he could do next. Most of the company men were gathered in groups in front of the office tent. All talk was about the thief. It was not pleasant.

Long Pedigo slouched up to one of the older men, an oiler who was swamper on the shovel. "How'd they pin it on him?"

THE case was clear enough: Dick Burling had left his job at the plant. There were no more tests to make; the mixer was being repaired and would not be working until Monday. He went to report to the timekeeper that he was knocking off. Sheriff Pedigo understood well enough that he wanted to spend Saturday afternoon with Jen. The timekeeper, however, was not in the office tent. Dick left, preferring to wait till Monday for his pay. That was his story.

Three of the cook's flunkies, the welder and the supply man, saw Dick come out of the office, get his old roadster and ride hell-bent. Then the timekeeper, gagged and bound, staggered out of the office. Burling had half brained him, he said, thrown him behind a locker and scooped up the long pile of pay-envelopes.

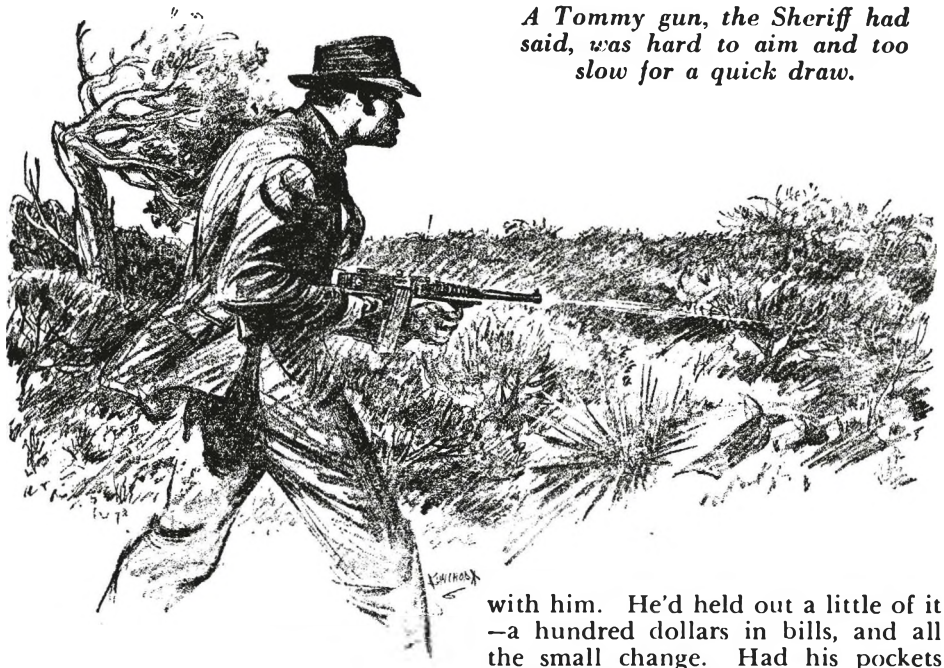
The Sheriff made a grimace. He knew that the timekeeper, old Sam Farady, had worked for the company for years. There was no reason he should lie about Dick. There was no jealousy between them, no quarrel. The timekeeper told the truth.

"But it sounds gauzy," the Sheriff said. "Dick Burling wouldn't walk in and show his face—"

"That's just it. He wore a bandana: they checked on that. It was one of those fancy ones Jen sells to the boys. And Dick had it in his pocket when they arrested him. Besides, Faraday saw his legs under the table and they were his boots—stars stitched around the top. Old Farady was afraid to try and yell through his gag till Burling left. Then he saw his back and knew for certain it was Burling—his red neck, his hat, his windbreaker. He said there wasn't a chance in a thousand to mistake him. There's only one man in camp has Dick's shoulders and his curly hair."

The Sheriff's face lengthened again. It was very long. Jen's future husband looked pretty guilty, there was no doubt about that. And if he was guilty, he was a seventeen-button rattler and belonged in San Quentin. But that did not help Jen's heartbreak any. The Sheriff went to see the Big Boss. . . .

The owner of the Carter Construction Company sat behind his plank desk checking over the work-sheet. He was a huge man with hair like shingle nails and eyes that were wrinkled and cold. In an attempt to give some credence to Dick Burling's ridiculous denial, he was making sure just where



A Tommy gun, the Sheriff had said, was hard to aim and too slow for a quick draw.

every man in the company was during the robbery. They were all checked on the sheet under the different headings—subgrade, stone surfacing, drainage, embankment, excavation. The drivers of the hauling equipment, including the service and gas-truck, and the cat-skinners on the mule-teams, were checked up. All were on duty.

PEDIGO stepped into the tent, which was hot with grim men. The company clerk said to him: "Want something?"

"Want to see Mr. Carter." He brushed by the clerk and the deputy and State patrolman and stepped to the desk.

"It's the storekeeper from Ten-Lode, Mr. Carter," the clerk said apologetically. Pedigo swallowed this insult. He was not known here as the Sheriff who had caught many a renegade in the old days. He was just the storekeeper from Ten-Lode.

The Big Boss was in no mood for interruptions. His cigar rolled in his clamped lips. His eyes went up and down the incredibly long figure across the desk, then lit on the star—the only bright spot on that long battered figure, for it was kept scoured by flour. The Big Boss's cigar stopped rolling and seemed to point at it.

Pedigo explained: "I'm Sheriff at Ten-Lode, Mr. C:

There were grim[illegible] at the Big Boss only scowled. "The county sheriff's office has this case. And the State highway patrol have closed the road at both ends. It doesn't seem like we need any more police help. Besides, we've got our man."

"But how about the cash?"

This was more to the point. The Boss said: "He got rid of the cash before this highway trooper caught up with him. He'd held out a little of it—a hundred dollars in bills, and all the small change. Had his pockets bulging with two-bit pieces and dimes from the pay-envelopes."

"Meaning the two-bit pieces were earmarked, proving it was Burling?"

"Are you trying to tell us it was someone else?" The Big Boss turned to his timekeeper's sheet, exasperated.

"Someone might've been coyoting around behind the office tent and sneaked off through the crick wash."

The Boss did not listen. But the deputy from Filer laughed, "This isn't a case of tracking the crick washes, Mr. Pedigo. We got highways now. Which," he added, tapering a cigarette, "takes a different kind of sheriffing." He licked the cigarette shut.

Pedigo did not like this deputy. He represented the real Sheriff of the county, and accepted Pedigo for what he actually was, a constable.

The State trooper added: "We hunted for prints behind the tent, if that's what you mean. No sign of anybody."

"What do you young buttons know about reading sign!"

As he stormed out, the deputy shot after him: "Find those Denver bandits yet, Mr. Pedigo?"

Pedigo clamped his mouth so that his lips met his nose. That incident of the three bandits stopping for gas right in front of the Sheriff's office and store, was a good joke. He had been inside his store when they came, his Mexican *mozo* tending the pump. It was a lunch-wagon keeper who spotted them and gave the alarm—too late. Cars and highways made things too fast for old Pedigo.

He turned on the deputy, just before leaving the tent, but could do nothing but work his lips. He stepped down from the platform, hearing grunts and chuckles.

He knew the deputy was right. It was not a case of tracking in creek washes. He thought this when he went out in back of the tents. It was new ground to him. In wild country he could trail a horse by the hair on brush, by the turn of grass-blades, by the stirred mud in water-pockets. But now there was only a bewildering set-up of packed ground, blackened with oil-smeared tires. Corrugated metal pipes, draining the road-bed, followed the slopes down to the creek bottoms. He did find the print of a hobnail boot where the sand was crusted enough to leave a mark, but this had doubtless been checked already. He memorized the pattern, however, and measured the size with a mesquite twig, then went back to the supply tent to Jen and Dick.

He told them he was working on a hunch, but as he talked, he studied the shape of Dick's boots. The result was disheartening. It was the same type of boot. It suggested, rather than disproved, that Dick had gone into the office tent by the back door.

"Where'd you get the cash they're talking about, son?"

"At stud last night over at Torvester's place."

"Reckon Torvester might testify regarding that?"

"He doesn't know I won. I don't go around telling my winnings to everyone in a *baile*-house."

The Sheriff nodded. Dick was that sort of tight-lipped gambler, he knew. "How about the birds you played with?"

"Couple tourists on their way to the Coast. Suppose you think I should've taken their number?"

The Sheriff shook his long head slowly, but sadly.

Jen was wringing her [illegible]ds. "Gr[illegible]dpops, you aren't doubting what Dick says!"

"I'm the only one who's working on the hunch that he isn't a sheep-biting thief, Jen." He added reassuringly: "That's why maybe I can find something these other fellers aren't even looking for."

HE left them sitting there holding hands, and went over to the cook tent. The cook was a short-barreled man with fat jowls that were perpetually sweat-shined. He was pestered with the heat, with horseflies which stuck around the cook tent, and with the complaints of many men.

The Sheriff opened with his old-time question: "See any suspicious characters herdin' around this tent?"

"Plenty of 'em."

A crowd gathered. Slopers, greasers and shovel men, killing time before supper, came to listen.

"I was just figuring," Pedigo said. "The bird that pulled this job knew when the pay-roll would be ready and how few men there'd be in camp, how

many out on the spreader-boxes and the plant. And he could check the throw of the land, noting that those crick benches would hide him for a while when he made his get-away. Think of any stranger could tally up on all that?"

"Sure. Dick Burling."

"No hitch-hikers asking for work?"

"A dozen a day. Most of 'em hungry. And when they tell 'em at the office there's no work, they give 'em a meal-ticket, and they eat here. What's that got to do with Burling?"

"Who was the last one—can you remember that?"

The cook shrugged his blubbery shoulders. "Couple prospectors come in from the desert, wanted to get some air-tights cheap." He dismissed this possibility genially. "Course, they came after the robbery. But you asked me."

Pedigo pursed his mouth gloomily. The cook said: "Figure a couple prospectors would rob us, then make their get-away with only burros?"

"No. But they might've seen somebody out yonder."

"The deputy from Filer talked to 'em. So did the motorcycle cop."

"That was two-three hours ago," Pedigo objected. "They might of seen tracks. Prospectors are pretty good at reading sign."

"Ever read sign on a macadamized road?" the cook asked, winking at the crowd.

The Sheriff flared. "It's not only hoofprints I used to look for. I could tell if a man had been up a barranca by the dust in the air. And if I couldn't see it, I could smell it. Same as I smell you."

"How about those three Denver crooks? Did you smell them?"

The crowd grinned. Old Pedigo brought his teeth together with a clack. "Pshaw, I'm just wasting time palavering with you dehorned squirts."

He stalked off, their laughter burning him on the back of his hickory-brown neck. He felt pretty bad. Especially when he saw Jen outside the office tent, crying. The prisoner had been brought from the supply tent next door and was inside the office for another questioning. Pedigo heard the angry voices, and realized that their only concern now was the recovery of the cash.

He put his scrawny arm around the girl. "Listen, Jen. I got something figured out. The timekeeper really saw Dick in there—"

"He didn't! He lied about it! It's a frame-up!"

"Now wait. It's not a frame-up. Farady told the truth. The timekeeper says he was knocked out. He'd spotted the bandana all right enough, but nothing else. Well, you've sold lots of bandanas like Dick's. When the timekeeper came to, he was behind a locker, but he could look under the table, and he saw the thief's boots. Well, they've sold a few boots like that right here in the commissary. The thief rustled the pay-roll and sloped. Then Dick Burling comes in. He doesn't see Farady, who's gagged and afraid to make a sound. But this time Farady sees Dick's back and hair and clothes and spots everything. And he's right, because it really was Dick!"

Jen saw the idea, and her eyes danced. "Why didn't you tell them all that, Grandpops?"

"They'd only laugh at me. Besides, I got a chore to 'tend to." He cinched on his hat. He still wore a complicated hat-strap, a sort of miniature latigo which was good in the old days when he rode the brush country. "You go on in and tell 'em. Those cops will listen to a little sagehen like you any time."

He saw Jen leap eagerly up to the tent platform. She could hold them awhile! Without waiting longer, he got into his delivery-car and headed off down the highway.

GASOLINE flares marked the detour. The highway itself left no more sign than a squaw's track, but those flares gave him an idea. It was a rather fantastic one, but his mind clung to it like a bur on a colt's tail. "'Ever read sign on a macadamized road?' that cook asked me. The pot-bellied wart! No, I can't, but I can read it on a wagon road. The highway being patrolled, the camp crew checked up, that leaves one way out. The thief headed for the desert."

He was glad to get off the macadam and onto the wagon-track trail that led through the sage. He was on his own ground now, on the old trails which, as the saying goes, were all started by horsethieves.

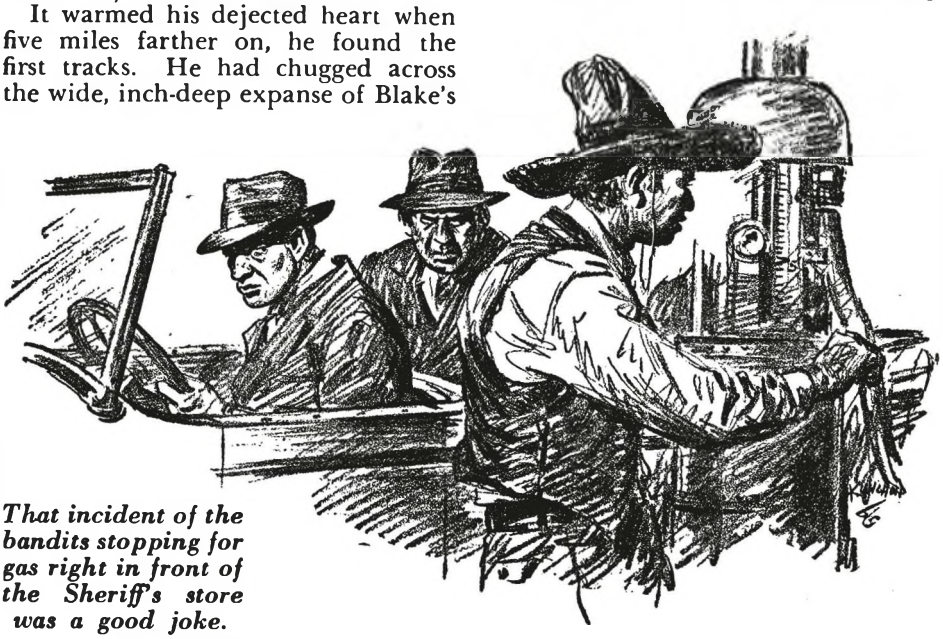
It warmed his dejected heart when five miles farther on, he found the first tracks. He had chugged across the wide, inch-deep expanse of Blake's Creek and crossed a gravel bar. Here he found the prints of boots where wet sand had stuck to the soles. It was not much of a discovery, however. The outlines were too vague, except that he could count two sets of prints besides the light nimble hoofmarks of burros. In other words, he was trailing the two prospectors who had already been interviewed and eliminated.

He bumped along, churning a cloud of alkali like a posse. He banged and clattered in ruts as deep and rocky as washes. A chaparral cock got out of his way, but a sage rabbit cowered while the dust cloud rolled over it like sheep's wool. The Sheriff's mind went back to those flares again. He had wound up the breast of a mesa, and according to his old habit of breathing a horse at regular intervals, he gave the car a rest till it stopped boiling. Down in the bottoms, the gasoline flares of the roadside winked in the purple shadows of sundown. He did a lot of thinking.

It was lonely up here, the infinite soul-satisfying loneliness he had known in the mesas since he was a boy. He used to wear a holster and gun, but that was long years since. It was Jen who used the gun now. Pedigo insisted that she keep it in the delivery-car, because of so many hitch-hikers. The vague feeling that he was on one of his old-time man-hunts prompted him to reach back behind a case of soda pop to make sure the gun was there.

He hit the trail again, stopping where the rocky road gave way to crusted sand. It was these spots, not the rocky ruts or gravel bars of the creeks, that would give sign. But he found nothing except those burro-tracks and the prints of the two prospectors trudging along.

He caught up with them where the mesa benched off on the other side.



That incident of the bandits stopping for gas right in front of the Sheriff's store was a good joke.

"Seen any suspicious characters pilgriming up this way, gents?"

They were leading their burros leisurely, the little jacks packed high with provisions, pick, shovel and cradle rocker.

He tried to recall the faces of the two men as he pulled up side and side. A lot of young fellows had packed in for the Cavita Mountains, with the rise in gold prices, outfitting themselves at Pedigo's General Store. But the light had waned and he could see little under the wide sombreros of these two, except that they were unshaven and well scorched by the desert sun.

"Seen any suspicious characters pilgriming up this way, gents?"

"Not a soul since we left the road camp down yonder. We heard about the pay-roll."

"Don't seem like I've met you fellows before. I'm sutler at Ten-Lode—and Sheriff."

"We been trapping most of the summer. That's why you aint seen us."

The other added: "With winter coming on, we figured on prospecting the Jimson Flat country. Lot of red rock over there, looks like a good copper deposit."

"You're on the wrong road to Jimson Flats," Pedigo said. "Turn off up yonder where you'll see a monument right by the crick wash. Not much there but surface float, accordin' to Hurley. It's old Tim Hurley's monument where you fork off."

"Old Tim Hurley—what do you know about that! Didn't know he was dead. Good old Tim!"

"How long you two boys been pocket-hunters?"

They looked at each other. One of them said: "The Sheriff's quite a card, aint he?"

"Well, *adios,* boys," Pedigo said. "Got to hurry. Sorry I can't give you a lift. But you got those burros."

He did not turn around and head for camp as he had at first intended. He just kept on going. This business had to be thought over carefully. He banged and bumped over the rocky ruts for a furlong and then stopped, smothered in his own alkali. Choking, he reached back to the soda-pop case. A drink would help his salty throat. But there was no time for that. What he reached for was Jen's gun.

Those two rats were not desert rats. Pedigo had had a vague inkling of it back in camp when the company cook said they came from the desert for provisions and packed out again. All prospectors Pedigo had known went to Ten-Lode; first to the assay-shop, then to a saloon. It was a routine observed in most dry-country towns for generations. Of course there was no proof in this any more than in the boots which one of them wore. The boots were high laced, with a stitching of stars at the top.

What interested Pedigo most was that they had betrayed themselves as Easterners every time they opened their mouths. But he had to straighten out a point or two. He remembered they had trailed into camp after the robbery instead of before. It kettled him. On second thought he realized that this did not eliminate the chance that they had robbed the camp, left by that creek wash, picked up their hidden burros, then back-trailed as if they were entering camp for the first time. Since they could easily be traced and caught, plodding off on foot with two burros, it was wise to throw off suspicion.

Sheriff Pedigo had stopped his car after checking the ground as he used to, when in the saddle on a man-hunt. He chose a spot where he could dive for mesquite. These rats did not know the convenient properties of a mesquite patch, but Sheriff Pedigo did.

The mesquite saved him. Standing on the shady side of his car so the glare of the sunset sky did not reveal him, he waited for the two rats and their burros to trudge on up the trail. In the hanging dust the men had not seen him climb down out of his car, but someone else had.

A rattling tattoo like one of those drills down in the road camp shattered the air and fed a string of slugs into the old canvas sides of the delivery-wagon.

Pedigo dropped to his stomach. Those slugs certainly came faster than any gun-throwing he could remember in his long and smoky life. The only difference was that the man firing that Tommy-gun was not much of a shot. And a Tommy-gun at best, the Sheriff had always said, was too hard to aim and too slow for a quick draw. He had just time enough to scurry on all fours into the brush like a chuck-awalla.

He was somewhat surprised, for the two "prospectors" were still quite a way off. He had time to think about it

as he crawled under the intertwined roof of branches and thorn. He did not care if they all had machine-guns now. He just lay there on his stomach in a pleasant warm darkness, with two feet of space between the ground and the thick thatch. The gunman came into the mesquite, trying to wade. He stopped, frustrated, then raked the patch with a futile tattoo of fire. When he tried to hop out into the clear, the mesquite caught him by the knees and for a moment he was like a horsefly in a web.

In a small spot of red light Pedigo caught a quick glimpse of his feet kicking and pounding at the brush. He put a slug in the man's leg, and then listened to his swearing.

The two fake prospectors had come up on the run, leaving their burros. They helped the wounded one up to the seat of the car; then one of them gave the mesquite-patch another combing with Tommy-gun slugs. It got pretty hot. It was certainly a faster life than the Sheriff had bargained for.

But the patch was acre-wide, and humped over many sand dunes. Pedigo inched himself into a trough of sand and roots where he was as safe as a tick on an unshorn sheep.

The robbers had no more time to lose. He heard them start the car, spinning the wheels in sand, racing the engine. He uncinched his tall peaked hat, poked his head through the branches. One man was shoving the car, swallowing the sand fountaining up into his face. He got the car started, and then fell as the Sheriff blasted his gun arm. Another shot got the front tire. The third brought the man with the Tommy-gun toppling back into the car body.

THE Sheriff rode into camp at supper time. The chow tent emptied. All who were in camp, from the Big Boss down to the corral buck, gathered around the dusty, boiling car and gaped at the unshaven prisoners. Two of them were wounded; the third had been tied up with baling-wire after the Sheriff made him change the tire.

Old Pedigo singled out two men in the crowd—the State trooper and the deputy from the county sheriff's office. "Did you two shorthorns say you'd talked to these pocket-hunters?"

The State trooper swallowed hard. "I just asked 'em if they'd seen anyone on that desert road."

The deputy added: "They were the only ones who took that road. I checked up on that, right enough."

"But you didn't notice they were leading their burros instead of thwacking 'em ahead on the trail like any honest-to-God desert rats since trails were first made."

The two officers looked at each other sheepishly. "You have to yank 'em sometimes," the deputy said lamely. "Done it myself."

"Sure, but I talked with these leppies about two minutes, and they gave their hand away five different times. They thought red rocks mean copper instead of iron—copper ore being gray-green. Likewise they spooked up plenty when I called 'em pocket-hunters, thinking I was accusing 'em of thieving instead of prospecting. Further and more, they said they'd been trapping in summer, and turning to prospecting now that winter's coming on. Which the schedule is the other way around. Besides which they thought a discovery monument is something put up for a dead man."

The deputy was glum, but the State trooper took it with better grace. "Pretty slick. But do you just shoot up folks because they aren't prospectors?"

The Big Boss asked the same question. "Who are they?"

"Get this half-portion coot with the wounded leg down and see if anyone knows him."

Jen had run out of the supply tent to see what was happening. She stared hard as two swampers dragged a whimpering, groaning youth from the seat.

"I've seen him before!" she cried excitedly. "He bought some things from the wagon—can't remember what—bandanas and belts, things like that."

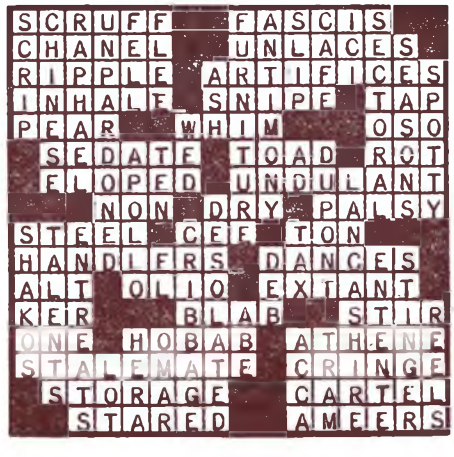
The timekeeper also stared. "He came into the office tent awhile back asking for a job, but I couldn't swear to it."

The cook said: "Maybe you remember you give him a meal-ticket and he had some grub."

The supply man stared hardest. "He bought some clothes at the commissary tent. Reason I remember is, he wanted two-three pairs of everything, including Levi's."

Pedigo stepped down, carrying a shoe-box and a paper shopping-bag. He handed the latter to Boss Carter. "Here's your pay-roll. I'll keep this shoe-box for the bank at Filer."

Solution to Crossword Puzzle on page 73



Everyone gaped. Pedigo looked down at Jen, who was wan and exhausted. He saw the agony of that long suspense in her eyes. She looked as if she had crossed a desert and had dragged herself at last to a water-hole—where there was life!

PEDIGO himself was exhausted and thirsty after those clouds of alkali. He got an orange from the car and began to cut a hole in it.

Several men, including the State trooper and the deputy said: "You mean these are the gunmen robbed the Filer bank!"

"Maybe you and the county sheriff's office can figure it out," Pedigo said. "When they got gas at my store a couple weeks ago, they took this road. Now I been trying to figure what would some rustlers or renegades do if they saw the flares you got on your road? Your whole outfit looks like an army camp, leastwise like a State inspection bureau on the border. They get scared and head off on the desert road. Maybe they find their car can't get places in that burro country, so they burn it—I'm just supposing—and cover it with tumbleweed and sand. Hiding in the desert a couple weeks like prospectors was their best play. They needed boots and air-tights, but didn't come to my store on account they'd stopped there for gas and might've seen my Sheriff's sign. They might be recognized, they figured, not knowing that I never had a look at 'em myself—which you all have taken as a good joke. Well, one of 'em comes down here to your camp and sizes up the lay-out and finds it easy. They needed some cash aside from the bank bills, which were as hot as their car."

Although every man in camp listened tensely, Sheriff Pedigo broke off in what seemed the climax of his speech. "Well, I got to go now. I'm busy."

He went to the supply-tent door, where the watchman stood with Dick Burling. Jen got there before her grandfather and was already in Dick's arms.

"Guess you two kids can come along home now," Pedigo said. "Dick will be wanting to stay with us tonight and talk over plans where you're going to keep house."

The Big Boss was the only one who left the crowd around the prisoners. He came over to the tent door, put out his hand to Dick and grumbled something. He looked at Jen. "Good luck to both of you," he said, and then held out his hand to Pedigo.

The latter had a shoe-box, an orange and a knife, but managed to free one hand.

"Nice work, Sheriff!" the Boss said, for the first time calling him by his right title.

Drawn by JOHN FULTON

"Thank God," said Dan, "he's only unconscious. But his pulse is terribly faint.... Get Admiral Cheney —oh, there he is." Without a word, the Admiral helped Dan lift the unconscious man.

The Museum Murders

A complete book-length novel

by GRANVILLE CHURCH

DAN BURGESS pushed the Admiral into a chair overlooking the spacious front lawns and went on with his dressing.

"Let's talk like a couple of Dutch uncles," he said. "Every time you come to Rangecrest, you have a different bug in your ear."

The Admiral leaned forward. "Nonsense! All I want you to do is flash your winning smile on my wife and get her off my neck so I can have a go at your father. I have a favor to ask, and it can't wait. Speaking of Washington—"

"We weren't—"

"Well, we are now: Dan, I was there last week. Flew both ways. Went for a purpose and got the run-around as usual. God'lmighty, what a place! Well, this's something that came to a head during Madame Chiang's visit, though I'd already been in touch with her staff. Now, Edward still has friends in—"

Dan groaned and threw up his hands. "Whatever it is, Admiral, *no!*"

"You don't even know what I'm after. It's distinctly personal, a favor that won't cost your father time or effort. Dan, there's a war on, and I want in on it. The Navy won't take me back, on account of age and—little moments of indiscreet frankness on my part over their blindness to the decreasing value of the battlewagon. The blinkin' fool idiots that had the making of naval policy—"

"Nope," cut in Dan. "Look, Admiral: I know just how you feel, and I wish you were my age so we could get in it together. But just sit back and take a deep breath. . . . Edie and I are getting married tomorrow. So whatever's in your mind, you'll have to wait until after we get away, then take your chance with Dad if you can duck Aunt Ella."

Dan put down his dinner jacket. Thoughtfully he brought a chair forward and straddled it to face the other over its back.

"Admiral, I'm not easy about leaving Rangecrest even for a three-day honeymoon. But you're here, and that makes it all right. You say you have a favor to ask of Dad, but it's really Dad who needs a favor from you. He's been working pretty hard lately, and he needs a rest. If you can get him away from the library for the next few days, and stick with him all of the time—*all* of the time—especially when out on the grounds—"

"Quit beating around the bush," snorted the Admiral. "Does this have anything to do with that little business between you and Chong on the terrace this morning?"

Dan chuckled and rose. "I might have known better," he admitted. "Never miss a trick, do you?" He paced a few steps, made up his mind, went to his bureau and took something from the top drawer. It was a six-inch square of drawing paper sharply creased, and on the buff ground was stamped in black silhouette—apparently with a rubber stamp—a dragon rampant. Black fire breathed from its mouth and nostrils; its black forelegs pawed the air fiercely. He handed it to the Admiral.

"Chong found it when he put your car in the garage. It's what flew into the car as you took that hairpin turn halfway up the mountainside. You said it was a grasshopper. It wasn't meant for you, however, but for Dad."

Admiral Cheney stared at the small sheet.

"The Black Dragon!" he exclaimed, and perked up. "What does this mean, Dan?"

"You know how many Japanese we had in this country when war came," Dan said. "You know how they hated Dad. You know what opportunities they had to prepare for December 7th. The F.B.I. was efficient in rounding them up, sure; and the Army later when they took over control—those Japanese they knew about or could trace! But how many illegal Japs did we have in this country, holed up in secret hideouts when war broke out, waiting for the day they could be of service? Japanese liners and freighters were in and out of our ports day after day. Japanese fishing fleets operated up and down the length of our shores—"

"You don't have to sell me!" exclaimed the Admiral. "I'm not a boot in one of your classes. What I want to know is, where does the Black Dragon Society horn in here? It doesn't seem to me your father's memoirs is a sufficient reason. Before the war, yes, but they're scarcely afraid now of anything he might say."

"I shouldn't think so myself."

"Then why this?"

"I don't know. But it isn't the first Dad has received. It's the fifth. There's been one a day for the past four days. Mailed at night from a different town each time. What I don't figure out is why they took this method today."

"What did you do about this one?"

"You mean, did I beat the bush for the guy that nearly ran you off the road?" snickered Dan. "No. He wouldn't have hung around waiting to be picked up."

"Well?"

"Dad won't have any fuss stirred up. Actually, we should notify the Western Defense Command, or the F.B.I., as I wanted to do. But you know Dad."

"Yes, I know him. He can be obstinate in that gentle, considerate way of his."

"So this is why I'm especially glad you're here. I couldn't have left if you hadn't come."

"Well, what're you doing about it, since he won't turn these things over to the Army?"

Dan shrugged. "We're patrolling the boundaries, and our fence is a good one—though I could wish it were electrified. You probably noticed extra men loafing at the gates. That's all."

"Hmm."

"By the way," added Dan, "don't say anything about this before the women. They don't know, and Dad's a bit old-fashioned. He thinks it would frighten them!"

Edward Simms Burgess, still a fine figure of a man at seventy-three, his white hair full and crisp, sat in a tall chair, head back. A stranger might have thought him asleep. It was the cocktail hour, the one time of day when he truly relaxed, resting for the evening session on his papers with Dan following dinner.

With the bulk of a lifetime spent in the Far East, he was intensely interested in compiling his memoirs and building up the case against Japan in such a manner that none, he hoped, could possibly make the mistakes with Japan after the war that the world had made with Germany after the last war.

No secretary could have been of such help to him in this task as was Dan, who for half of his twenty-eight years had worked closely with his father on Edward Simms Burgess' lifelong ambition—the establishment at Rangecrest of the finest museum of Oriental art, culture and philosophy in America. Already Rangecrest had a reputation among students of the Orient.

Mr. Burgess knew Japan well. He had never favored the State Department's policies of sending sympathy to China and oil and scrap to Japan—and often had used his voice both privately and publicly against them.

Mr. Burgess yawned and cocked an eye at his old friend, the Admiral. Mr. and Mrs. Maynard E. Cheney, Rear-Admiral, long retired, visited Rangecrest two or three times a year, or whenever they hit the Southland. Opposite sat Dan Martin Burgess, adopted son, and Edith Hewitt, Mr. Burgess' orphaned niece. These two were to be married, and a charming couple they made.

In one corner was Adelaide Martin, Dan's mother. Mrs. Martin had managed the Burgess household, wherever it had been, since the death of her husband while an under-secretary to Mr. Burgess, at that far time an ambassador in the Orient. She was a quiet person, often lost in her own thoughts, and she usually left the talk to others. She was smiling now at the arguing Cheneys.

The Admiral didn't care for string music. Tonight it was the radio rather than records. He was bunched down in his chair, hands folded over his paunch.

Ella Cheney didn't care for chamber music either, but it went with a visit to Rangecrest. So she fingered her beads and held her peace as she kept an eye on her husband to see his hand didn't stray to the decanter by his side. He'd had his one drink before dinner.

The music came to its pale end, and the Admiral cleared his throat.

"Damn' nonsense, music," he said grumpily, "—this kind."

Mr. Burgess opened his eyes and smiled. "But a Navy band, that's different, eh, Maynard?"

"It certainly is. Symphonic music, phooey! There's virility to a Navy band. Strength. Purpose. It does a job. Take—"

DAN, lounging on his shoulder-blades, shot a grin and a wink at Edith, and her dress splashed light as she sat up, more than willing to oblige.

"Shame on you, Uncle Edward!" she cried. "Every time you two get together, you deliberately bait the Admiral into an argument. And it isn't fair. You have the advantage. He's only a fighting man; you're a diplomat—"

"Which is to say, a liar," hastily threw in the Admiral, as he tossed down his authorized chaser.

The music was signed off, and a news-caster broke in.

". . . and concerning the Vatican peace rumors as reported from Berne the State Department announced—"

At the first trend of this newscast Dan lunged from his low chair across three yards of space to snap off the radio.

He mopped at his brow and glanced with exaggerated apprehension at the Admiral. Too late! Admiral Cheney had clambered to his feet and was stamping about.

"The State Department! Of all the sad chapters in all the history of a virile country, where can you find a sadder one than has been written by that bunch? When Japan launched the world on this mad, bloody era of conquest with her grab of Manchuria twelve years ago, we struck a most noble pose. Yet we contented ourselves with a protest just for the record. When Ethiopia begged for her life, we sat by with crocodile tears flowing like a waterfall over our—"

At that moment dinner was announced by Jung Lu, who stood inside the double doors to the room, hands thrust into the big sleeves of his brocaded robe, and bowed.

An exotic picture, Jung Lu, the servant, but not out of place, for the house in all its details was modified Chinese, in keeping with its ultimate museum purpose. Throughout the big building were works of art gathered for every country of the Far East, and Jung Lu's dress blended with his background.

So Jung Lu smiled and bowed, and Dan pulled Edith to her feet to lead the way to dinner.

BEFORE the meal had progessed far, the extraordinary happened. Or at least the unprecedented for Rangecrest, where Adelaide Martin saw to it that life flowed smoothly and evenly, without flurry or fuss.

Jung Lu entered, and went to the head of the table.

"Yes?" said Mr. Burgess.

The man bowed and spoke. In speech as well as in dress Jung Lu assumed a certain prerogative. His own children, young on arrival and schooled here, spoke satisfactory English—Chinese only with their elders. His grandchildren spoke only English, and of pretty modern tempo when not within their grandfather's hearing. But Jung Lu never used the barbarous tongue if he could avoid it. His words now were Chinese, his voice thin and melodious; reedy, flutelike.

Mr. Burgess listened. "Kuei Feng?" he asked with some curiosity at the conclusion.

Jung Lu bowed.

"And he won't say what he wants? Ask him to be good enough to wait."

Jung Lu bowed again and left the room.

"I understood," said Dan. "Would you like me to go?"

"No, no, it can't be so important. I'm not expecting anything. After dinner will do."

He was mistaken. Jung Lu returned with a silver plate. On this plate was a small bulky envelope. He went to Mr. Burgess again and spoke briefly, this time in English, which gave the stamp of his personal disapproval to these proceedings.

"Kuei Feng, he say it mos' ve'y impohtant." The old Chinese had never mastered the letter *r*, but he avoided the common substitution of *l*. This gave his English a clipped sound. He added an observation in his own tongue, while extending the plate.

"Jên wu pai, nien shen, ch'ang, huai ch'ien nien yu."

Mr. Burgess smiled faintly, accepted the envelope, tore the end, slid something out onto his palm. For a long moment he looked at it in silence, frowning.

"I see when Kuei Feng put it in envelope, and I look in museum," Jung Lu went on. He referred to a wing built solely for museum purposes. The rest of the house, now living quarters, would one day be converted. "Something ve'y st'ange. This not it. This be one moah. Otheh one still in museum."

Mr. Burgess' frown deepened until came a shock of surprised recollection.

"Bless my soul!" he said, and rose. "Excuse me, please. Go on with the dinner."

Jung Lu followed him from the room. Dan had a fair working knowledge of the Mandarin spoken by Jung Lu. His education and training had been to the end of

carrying on the museum plans, and included Oriental tongues—so far, Mandarin and some Japanese. He told the others the reason for the interruption. Roger Kuei—that is, Kuei Feng—had brought some sort of package to Rangecrest.

Dan had no need to explain the visitor. They all knew him. Kuei Teh-sheng, foremost dealer of Oriental art in Southern California, had many dealings with Rangecrest. Feng, his son, was a frequent visitor. But usually Feng came by appointment. A surprise visit like this was not in the cards.

When Mr. Burgess returned to the dining-room, there was a look of abstraction in his eyes, and his fingers flexed on the envelope in his palm as he spoke to Dan, rather than to the group as a whole.

"Very curious," he said. "Feng was gone when I reached the hall. There was no sign of him anywhere. Nor his package. I suppose he must have left. He wasn't in any of the other rooms on this floor."

"I can't believe," objected Dan, "that he'd come way out here at this time of night, commit such a breach of etiquette as to disturb you at dinner, then leave without seeing you."

Mr. Burgess looked down at his closed fist. He seemed about to say something further, but to change his mind. He dropped what he held into his side pocket and concluded with: "Well, there's nothing to be done about it. I'll phone Teh-sheng after dinner."

The table settled once more. The women chattered; Dan puzzled over the interruption—more and more strange it seemed, as he thought it over.

Mr. Burgess' thoughts had wandered afar, that was sure; and in one of the lulls he broke out irrelevantly:

"I've been carried back to another day, Maynard," he said, bitterness in his voice. "I remember my days in Korea."

Korea! thought Dan. *There's a connection somewhere. What is it?*

"I was twenty-two and fresh from college when I entered the diplomatic service," Mr. Burgess went on. "I was pretty eager then. I had ideals. The world was before me. Tokyo was my first appointment, and I was there for three years as an under-secretary. At first I liked the atmosphere. It was unique to me, to be sure, but I also saw beauty in Japan. A harsh beauty, perhaps. It was a different Japan from that of today."

THE Admiral also remembered. He'd been stationed in Far Eastern waters soon after that, fresh from Annapolis. He too knew the Japan of that day, a proud and ambitious Japan floundering to establish herself in an amazing new world so recently opened up to her. A world full of strange ideas, strange customs, strange but useful gadgets; and she was determined to have everything for fear of missing something.

"But I learned!" said Mr. Burgess forcefully. "People are much the same the world over. Their processes follow much the same pattern. Hitler brought forth no new formula. It wasn't even new to Japan when at the turn of the century she spent years preparing for the absorption of Korea. Her methods then were creeping tactics, infiltration of spies and trouble-makers, and, when ready for war, a treacherous surprise attack first, with no regard for her word of honor.

"Korea was the weakest of the Far Eastern countries. China pretended to a sort of suzerainty over her—whenever it suited China's purpose, but there was no one of sufficient strength to aid the small country against Japan's ruthless aggression. Korea herself had been awakening, to be sure, but it was a slow process. Centuries of apathy cannot be flung off overnight. In three hundred years she hadn't recovered from the horrors of Hideyoshi's invasion, when Japan sacked the country from end to end, murdering, pillaging, destroying, looting the land of its libraries and art treasures.

"Yet there was behind the throne of Korea, in this new period of stirring consciousness in the Orient, one of the ablest women in Far Eastern history; a Nineteenth Century forerunner of Madame Chiang. Had Korea been undisturbed—"

HIS generalization dwindled away. When he took up the thread, it was in a warmer tone. He went on: "The royal family of Korea was the Yi clan, but the Min family was older, and the most noble in the country. To patch up a quarrel between the two, a Min princess was married to the young king. This was before my time there, of course. The new queen was very young, but in spite of her age and sex—women of the Orient had no rights, you know—she was well educated, and had character far stronger than the king. He was a rather ineffectual person. She became a real stumbling-block to Japan's ambitions.

"So Japan sent army officers in civilian guise to stir up trouble, and reporters from Tokyo and Kobe to garble the truth—and for the rough work, hoodlums comparable to our prohibition-period muscle-men; even criminals loosed from jail for the purpose. *Soshi,* this rabble was called.

"They tried more than once to assassinate the queen. . . . Well, they finally succeeded—in October, 1895. The terrible thing was done at the direct order of Viscount Miura, who organized the whole callous program.

"The queen was seized by these gangsters, this Japanese scum led by the Emperor's own representative, brutally hacked down, and thrown while still breathing onto a pile of brush and burned to death in the palace deer park.

"Naturally," Mr. Burgess continued, "I'm not as sensitive and quick to react now. But I was moved by this cold-blooded ruthlessness then. I requested a transfer from Tokyo—and was sent, of all places, to Seoul. While there I learned to love the mild-mannered Koreans. You'll find courtesy in the Korean—and in the Chinese! A gentleness that is born in the heart, not in rules of etiquette.

"I became friendly with a prince of the Min family, the clan of the murdered queen. They were of Chinese origin some centuries earlier, and had considerable prestige in Korea, which accounts in large part for Korea's leaning toward China, the Tai-kuk, rather than Dai Nippon, of whom she still had such frightening memories. . . .

"And now, tonight—"

Mr. Burgess drew a fist from his pocket. He folded his other hand over it, rubbing the knuckles absently, and stared at the table. *There is a connection,* Dan was thinking. But if so, it wasn't yet to be cleared up.

"The Koreans have a proverb," Mr. Burgess went on slowly. "'A gentleman is known, though he be naked in the desert.' This friend was one of the truest gentlemen I have ever met. He committed suicide in despair at seeing his country so overrun and ruined by the ruthless Japanese, unable to do anything about it."

"Suicide!" snorted the Admiral. "The culminating act of an effete line of thought. Yet who knows but suicide is just what we're headed for as a nation? With the Nazis knocked out of Africa, Russia and England can hold Hitler, and we don't have to worry about either making a separate peace. But Japan gets stronger by the hour. She holds now the richest empire on this globe. All she needs is time to develop and consolidate and make it impregnable, and time is what we're giving her. Handing it to her on a silver platter!"

Mrs. Cheney snickered at her husband's histrionics, and the Admiral glared.

"It's a good exit speech for us girls," Edith said airily. "Let's leave them to simmer down."

With the women gone and a break reached in the conversation, the men sat silent.

Dan was still trying to dovetail the interruption at dinner with his father's reminiscences of Korea, but he got nowhere. Perhaps if he knew what it was that Kuei Feng had put into that envelope, or the "otheh one still in museum—" But since the older man hadn't chosen to speak it was out of the question to ask.

Mr. Burgess sighed and stirred.

"I think, Maynard, we may leave the war to the makers of policy who have the over-all picture clearer than we have it. It's too bad we aren't strong enough to attack in all quarters at once. It's too bad we weren't strong enough to hold back Japan when she first broke loose. True, some of us saw it coming and gave what warnings we could. But for all the slowness and indecisiveness of a democratic system, we would rather have it this way than risk the type of government that can act instantly and with purpose—and possibly not always to good purpose, as you will say the State Department has done in the past." He smiled. "Things are not so bad but that they could be worse."

The Admiral said nothing.

"I know you think the work I'm doing on my memoirs comes too late to be of service. I don't think so. You will find I'm presenting the case of Japan as it has never before been given the public. You will find I do not seek to lessen Japan's guilt, and I have a studied plan for the punishment of her guilty war lords. Yet my main concern, I repeat, is to build a better world after this war."

"Dan told me of these Black Dragon warnings," said the Admiral. "Is this—well, this punishment idea, the reason?"

"No." Mr. Burgess chopped the word. "Only Dan knows the thoughts I've put along these lines."

"Then it's the memoirs?"

"I can scarcely suppose that either; yet I know of nothing else it might be."

Admiral Cheney gave a crooked smile. "And now, a year and a half after war breaks, getting on the job? Humph! Don't try to kid me. Anyway, whatever's behind it, I think you should hand it over to the Western Defense Command."

"I won't do that, Maynard. It would be folly to suppose there is absolutely no pro-Japanese activity in this area. Yet one or two loose Japanese—or pro-Japanese—can scarcely be of consequence; and I won't give them any such satisfaction as calling in the Army."

He chuckled. "The Japanese are such fools in some respects—if sharp fools. No sense of proportion! For instance, thousands of Japanese have been released from relocation centers. I know the Japanese. I cannot believe there aren't some among those thousands who protest allegiance on the one hand and yet sneak back to the Coast here to see what they can do for their Son of Heaven. Well, I have a reputation among them. These childish warnings might well come from some unbalanced Japanese who merely sees himself as doing his duty against an enemy. They might well have no significance."

He became serious again and said—to Dan's delight and the Admiral's amusement:

"But say nothing of these warnings before the ladies, please. There is no need to frighten them."

Mr. Burgess had started to rise, to lead the way to the living-room, when Jung Lu entered again. He went directly to Mr. Burgess and spoke quickly in his flutelike tones, so quickly that Dan caught little of it. Mr. Burgess paled and stared, then started for the hall. The others followed, Jung Lu bringing up the rear.

They turned down the corridor to the curved staircase in the center of the house; and there, in the semicircle of space where the stairs rose on either side, they were stopped short.

On the floor before the open door of a closet lay the body of the Chinese caller, Kuei Feng. The position of the body told the whole story even before they saw the pool of blood inside the closet and the stain spread over the young man's clothing.

Two of Jung Lu's grandsons, the upstairs servants, in spotless white jackets, stood open-mouthed on the stairs.

Dan sank to one knee. He felt vainly for the pulse, turned back an eyelid. Then he exclaimed:

"He's dead! Stabbed! Why, it's murder!"

Chapter Two

DAN rose to his feet. Murder—here at peaceful Rangecrest. "It's murder, Dad!" he repeated. "We'll have to call the police." Admiral Cheney dropped to a knee to examine the body. "He's dead, certainly," he said and rose.

As his father still said nothing, Dan moved toward the phone on a table in the curve of the stairs. Only then did Mr. Burgess come to himself. He dropped the envelope into his pocket and said: "Dan! Wait!"

To the two Chinese boys dithering on the stairs: "Luke, Matthew, go upstairs and remain within call."

As in many Christian Chinese families, the names of the younger Jungs, the American generation, came from the Bible. Luke and Matthew bobbed their heads and slithered up the stairs.

"Maynard, will you join the ladies, please, and keep them in the living-room? Excuse me in any way you can, but don't let them learn about this."

"Certainly, Edward. But call me at once if I can be of any service."

Mr. Burgess turned sharp eyes on Jung Lu.

"Tell me again exactly what happened," he said. "And speak in English." He knew that in using English the old Chinese would be less prodigal of words.

Jung Lu bowed and commenced his tale haltingly. "Kuei Feng, he come many minute ago, mebbe-so twenty-five, thuhty. You at dinneh. I not disturb, ve'y impolite. Kuei Feng, he ve'y impatient. He come many time but nevch see him like this. Ve'y af'aid, sit on edge of seat, look about, chase tongue oveh lips."

"Where did he sit?"

"Longside numbeh one table inside big glass do'."

The main entrance was a double door of heavy plate glass. Each leaf was three feet wide, covered with wrought-iron grille-work of phœnix and dragon design. These opened onto a wide hallway that led directly to the stairs; a narrower ten-foot cross corridor extended the length of the house, thus quartering the building and forming a broad, squat T of hallway. At the top of the T, the junction of the two corridors, the stairs curved upward from right and left, bow-shaped.

These corridors at Rangecrest were in effect reception salons. They were furnished with tables and cabinets on which stood objects of Oriental art—fine jars, chiseled and jeweled table screens of jade or enamel; jade gongs; plates, vases, bowls, small figures. There was a large cloak-room on either side of the wide entrance, and carved tables and chairs stood against the corridor walls on either side of the cloak-room doors.

"Go on, Jung Lu," Mr. Burgess prompted.

"Kuei Feng, he have squa' package—like this." The Chinese spread his hands apart about eighteen inches. "He sit on edge of chaih and hold package on knees. He say ve'y impohtant, mus' see you immediate. I go tell. You say Kuei Feng, he wait. That right to do. Kuei Feng then excited and send that thing I give."

For the first time Jung Lu permitted his voice and expression to show some feeling. "That thing" appeared to

be an object of contempt with him. Mr. Burgess nodded —once.

"I take to you," Jung Lu continued. "You know why is, and go to see Kuei Feng, but—"

English became too much for him, and he lapsed into his musical intonations. Dan missed some of it for his Chinese was not fluent enough for rapid conversation.

"What made you look in this closet?" asked Mr. Burgess.

"I not satisfi' about Kuei Feng. I call my grandsons to help look mo' fo' package. Hing open do', find."

Hing was Luke. Mr. Burgess called him. While the boy scurried down the stairs, Mr. Burgess turned to Dan.

"When I came to the hall from dinner, I found no one. We looked throughout the first floor—except in the museum. That was locked. Jung Lu inquired in the service quarters. There was nowhere else Feng could have gone except upstairs. I didn't suppose he'd done that, so I concluded he'd slipped out. He was right there at the door."

The boy was waiting before him. "What do you know of this?"

"I was upstairs for the past hour or more; Matthew was with me," Luke answered. "I didn't know Kuei Feng had called until Grandfather asked if he had come upstairs. He had not, or we would have seen him. Grandfather told us to look very carefully for a large square package. When I opened this door, Kuei Feng fell out on me."

"Did you see anything of the knife?"

"No sir. I looked, but there was no knife."

"Nor the package?"

"No sir."

"Return to your brother and wait in case I need you. Caution him not to talk, and remember that yourself."

The boy disappeared upstairs again.

"Dan!" Mr. Burgess hesitated as though gauging how much he should say. "I don't know what it is," he went on, "but I suspect it's gravely important. There is more here than murder, Dan. Round up the outdoor men and set them to scouring the grounds. For a prowler, Dan, not a murderer! They mustn't know of this. I shall be phoning Kuei Teh-sheng to come here. Send the car for him, and tell Chong to hurry. He can get to town and back in two hours, with no traffic at this time of night. And come back to me at once, Dan."

WHEN Dan returned, his foster father was still standing by the telephone. Jung's two boys were setting up a screen about the body. They trotted on upstairs again. Jung Lu stood by, not impassive as usual, but glowering angrily, hands in sleeves.

Mr. Burgess was turning something over and over in his hand—the item sent him by Kuei Feng as the boy had sat so frightened in the hall. The envelope now lay crumpled on the table.

"I've got all the gardeners searching the grounds," Dan reported, "but I doubt it will do any good. There are a thousand places a person could hide, especially at night; and in any case, whoever did this wouldn't hang around. And I sent the car. It should be back by"—he glanced at his wrist—"by ten-thirty. I told Chong to hurry."

His father said nothing.

"Did you call the police?" asked Dan.

His father shook his head.

"But Dad, we must do that, you know. At once! This is murder," he insisted.

Again only a shake of the head.

"There is nothing to be done until Kuei Teh-sheng arrives," Mr. Burgess said.

Dan sensed that his father's thoughts had gone delving. But the police should be notified at once.

"Perhaps if we look around a bit," Dan tried again, "we may get some idea as to how this was done. Let's start with Kuei Feng's arrival."

He took his father's arm to walk him to the door, thinking the movement might bring the old man back to the present. On the way he said, by way of making talk: "Feng drove out in their light delivery truck. It's standing on the drive."

As they passed the table against the right-hand wall, where Feng had sat, Dan stopped short, puzzled.

"There's something wrong here," he said, and studied the top of the table. "Of course! This jar—I never saw it before."

"Nor I."

"There was another jar here of about the same size. Blue and white K'ang Hsi, if I remember correctly. What do you suppose—"

Dan lifted the jar from the table and turned it about in his hands while holding the lid in place. It was a large "ginger" jar, of fine porcelain, with white base and an all-over "thousand-flower" design in pastel colors. Modern—not an especially fine example, either. "Trade goods." It had a plain lid—that is, without a knob by which to lift it.

BUT curiously, a dragon had been outlined on it in quick-drying black enamel. The dragon encircled the jar, and its fangs were buried in its tail. The painted lines were thin ones, not noticeable at any distance, and the paint had not been baked on. Dan chipped it with his fingernail.

He removed the lid and pulled at some stuffing he found. Then Mr. Burgess came to at last.

"Let me have that, Dan." He took the jar and pulled the cotton stuffing further from it, but his eyes narrowed, his lips tightened, and he pushed the filling back, clapped on the lid. "I'll be in the library," he said abruptly, and at once headed for his office-study.

Dan followed as far as the space before the stairs and stared down the left corridor after his father. The library door closed, and Dan was left gazing into a silent hallway.

The left corridor led to the "business" end of the house. The museum wing opened off the end of it, but those carved teakwood doors were closed and locked. Dan's office and workshop, where he studied, catalogued and photographed items as received—before his service with the Army—was across the corridor from the library.

Dan was uneasy. He glanced down the right strip of the hallway. The living-room doors were closed—the Admiral had seen to that. Dan was wondering if he was justified in getting Admiral Cheney. He couldn't call the police on his own against his father's orders; yet time was passing and something must be done. But in scarcely a minute after entering his study, Mr. Burgess came to the door and spoke.

"Get me a can-opener, please," was what he said.

A can-opener! Dan hurried to the service quarters himself and brought one back. On his father's desk stood the jar, now empty, and a big wad of cotton. Nothing else that wasn't ordinarily there.

Curiosity was eating him, but his father had made it clear he wanted to be alone. Dan returned to the hall and paced.

This latest angle pushed to one side his worry over not reporting to the police. A can-opener! That meant there was a metal container hidden in the jar. But why? It was as easy to pass along a tin as a jar. Easier. Then the jar was camouflaged. Again, why?

Mr. Burgess presently joined his son.

"Dan," he said, "this is important, so pay close attention. Don't ask questions, just do as I say." His voice was as masked as his face. "Use the two boys upstairs who already know about this, and search the house from top to bottom carefully. Every room, every corner. If there's an intruder in the house, we must find him. I have an idea the murderer may still be some-

where about. Arm yourself, and be careful, for he won't stop at further murder.

"Lock all doors and windows on this floor. See to this yourself. Set two of the gardeners to guarding the house all night. Make especially certain that the gates are locked. Understand?"

Dan nodded. There was nothing in this to misunderstand.

"As soon as you set all this in motion," his father went on "join the women. Just say I'm working and wish to be excused. Jung Lu will remain here in the hall. I'll want you both again when Kuei Teh-sheng arrives."

Dan left to carry out his orders, going first to his room for a target pistol,—the only small arm he had,—while round and round in his head went his father's earlier words: "There is more here than murder, Dan."

More than murder? What could be more than murder!

Chapter Three

Admiral Cheney, Dan found, had inveigled the women into a bridge game—a sacrifice of magnificent proportions, for the Admiral liked women and he liked bridge, but not together. . . . Mrs. Cheney was in a mellow mood. Her score was mounting tonight—perversely enough. "I bid three hearts."

"Ella!"—from the Admiral. "Did you say hearts?"

"Oh, excuse me. I meant spades."

"Pass," said Edith.

"Three no trump," offered the Admiral. "Heaven's sake, Ella," he grumbled, "look at your hands. I have all the hearts in the deck."

Adelaide Martin protested Mr. Burgess' absence—at his desk, she supposed. Dan did his best to excuse the older man, but not to her satisfaction. "I'll look in on him again soon," he promised. "I'll try to bring him back."

The minutes dragged by. At last his straining eyes caught a faint sound of the hall chimes announcing someone at the door. The others, not listening, hadn't noticed. He excused himself and left.

He found Jung Lu in the act of ushering in Kuei Teh-sheng, an old man of patrician face and carriage, dressed impeccably, and carrying a cane. He was shaking hands with Jung Lu as Dan approached, and Dan heard a few murmured words in Chinese.

Kuei Teh-sheng smiled uncertainly at this, but surrendered his cane, his hat and gloves, and turned to greet Dan. He went with Dan down the corridor, past the big screen that hid the body of his son, and to the door of the library.

Mr. Burgess took Mr. Kuei's hand silently, and still holding it, nodded almost imperceptibly to Dan as he drew his visitor into the room.

If the minutes had been long before, they were even longer now. Dan paced the corridor, pausing every time he passed the screen that hid Kuei Feng. The picture rose in his mind of Feng hovering over one particular camellia bush every time he came to Rangecrest. This plant, cross-bred and developed here, had a specially fine white waxen flower, semi-cup-shaped, with three heavy golden stamens. It was a kind of pet to Feng. He'd stop by it even when it was not in bloom, and actually brush dust from the glossy leaves with his handkerchief. Something flared up hotly in Dan as this picture came to mind. Feng—gentle, inoffensive, always-smiling Feng—had never harmed a soul in his life.

It seemed an eternity, but it was only twenty minutes before the library door opened and Mr. Burgess appeared, half supporting his aged visitor.

Kuei Teh-sheng walked with difficulty as they approached his son's body. Jung Lu silently moved back some leaves of the screen. The old man stood for a moment looking down at his slain son before his will gave way. Then his legs failed him, he fell to his knees and buried his face in his hands. His whole body shook. The Chinese are not as stoical as one is led to believe.

At last Mr. Burgess dropped a hand gently on the other's shoulder and spoke in a whisper. "Thank you, my friend," were his inexplicable words.

Jung Lu and Mr. Burgess helped the man to his feet. With tears streaming down his face, Kuei Teh-sheng turned away from his son's body and walked toward the front door, aided by Jung Lu.

Mr. Burgess spoke to Dan. "Can you lift him?"

"Why, yes," said Dan, surprised. "I suppose so."

"I'm afraid I'm not strong enough to help. Please carry him to the car. His father will take him home."

Dan hesitated. "But Dad, I don't understand. This is murder," he insisted, "and the police—"

"The police cannot be told of this; they cannot be brought here. Do as I ask, Dan!"

Dan stared in amazement, but his father's tone made him stoop and lumberingly pick up the body. Fortunately, the dead man was slight in build.

Jung Lu seemed to know precisely what to do; he turned off all the lights in the corridor, before Dan appeared from behind the screen with his burden. Lights showed on the terrace outside the glass doors, but these too were turned off before Dan left the house and crossed to the terrace steps, where on the driveway just beyond stood the delivery truck in which Feng had driven out here. Chong had put the limousine away. Dan lifted the body into the back of the truck, then helped Mr. Kuei up beside Chong, and the car moved off into the night. No other word was spoken; nor did anyone speak until they had returned inside and the lights were snapped on in the corridors.

Jung Lu called his two grandsons from above-stairs. He had them bring water and hand mops to clean the floor behind the screen and in the closet. Then they carried the screen back to its accustomed place, trooped off to the service quarters, and everything was as though nothing had happened.

Except that now there was a rug quite out of place before a closet door to cover the damp spot and remaining stain, and the blue-and-white K'ang Hsi jar was missing. As for the jar, among the wealth of other objects placed about, no one would miss the one item. Dan slid the carved pedestal on which the jar had stood into a drawer of the table.

Dan was not only puzzled, but also hurt that his father hadn't taken him into his confidence. What passed behind the library door between Mr. Burgess and Kuei Teh-sheng, however, remained between them alone.

Mr. Burgess had sunk into a chair while the process of restoring order was in progress, and his face had slipped into an abstracted yet angry mask.

"Dad," Dan insisted, "isn't there anything at all that I can do?"

"No, son." Mr. Burgess looked up. His eyes lost their coldness for a moment. "I know I can trust you; but this is something I cannot share with anyone."

The phone rang. Dan was standing beside it and automatically picked it up. His brows ran together at the words that came to him.

"It's for you, Dad. Long distance."

"Yes, I know. I'll take it in the library." He turned at once to the library, but stopped a few paces away to say to both Dan and Jung Lu, who still lingered:

"It is essential that no one know anything about what has happened. Speak to your grandsons, Jung Lu. See to Chong. They *must* not talk. Dan, impress this on the Admiral as soon as you can make the opportunity. Nothing has happened. Everything is quite as usual."

As Jung Lu silently bowed his assurance, the door of the library closed. Presently came a click over the wire, and Dan replaced the receiver on its hook and started slowly for the living-room.

He was stopped by Luke, who came from the rear of the house. One of the gardeners wanted to speak to Dan. The man was waiting in the service hall with a square box in his hands—a box of corrugated board, nearly two feet square.

In broken English interspersed with a little Chinese, the gardener reported that he'd found the box in the lathhouse. He was angry about it too, for the lathhouse was his special province, and two flats of fine seedlings had been destroyed.

Inside the box Dan found the missing blue-and-white jar. He returned it to its accustomed place and put the box in his work-room. Now, he thought bitterly, looking about, everything was as it had been, and the whole grim tragedy was only a nightmare he'd had. But his eye caught the small rug out of place.

He shook himself and rejoined the others in the living-room; and presently he found a chance to speak to the Admiral in a low tone, to one side.

"Kuei Teh-sheng has come and gone. He took Feng's body with him. Dad says the police are not to be notified. No one is to know a thing about what happened."

The Admiral looked his surprise.

"You can't keep a thing like this secret, Dan. But—I know Edward. If he says to keep it quiet, then we must do so. Yet murder will out. I'm afraid—"

Dan stopped him. He'd caught Edith's eyes upon them. She was closest, and the Admiral's voice had risen a little. Or perhaps that was his imagination. . . .

A little after eleven they went to their rooms.

Lights in the corridors were now dimmed. Jung Lu sat stiffly in a chair by the stairs, waiting for any further request. Dan paused before climbing the stairs. Jung Lu knew something that Dan wanted to know more than anything else right now. The old Chinese knew what "that thing" was. But since his father had seen fit not to tell him, Dan couldn't very well ask Jung Lu. Instead, looking squarely at the other, he asked:

"Have you no idea at all who could have done this?"

"Who knows?" The old man's face told Dan nothing, but bitterness was in his tones. *"Hei hsin lan kau!"*

Dan hesitated, then said: "Go to bed, Jung Lu. Dad won't want anything. You need your sleep. I'm sure he'd rather you didn't wait up."

He watched the ancient pass through to the service quarters—Jung Lu slept in the house, while most of the staff had their own miniature village a short distance beyond the garage—then continued on upstairs slowly and thoughtfully.

"'*Hei hsin lan kau*'," he repeated to himself. And impatiently: "'A vicious rascal with black heart and rotten liver.' That says nothing."

Chapter Four

DAN tossed in his bed, staring at the sky through open windows. His jaw set as his thoughts raced over the events of the evening. Kuei Feng had been killed for what he brought to Rangecrest. Only the premonition that caused him to switch jars in the package while waiting for Mr. Burgess had saved whatever it was from the killer.

But now, Dan thought, his father had it. And if someone wanted it badly enough to kill for it once, he wouldn't give up the quest easily.

True, the gardeners had beat the grounds about the house, but there were twelve hundred acres in all, much of it landscaped in gardens and wooded parks offering hundreds of places where a man could hide.

At least, though, there was no place inside the house where the killer could now be after their thorough search. And with all the doors and windows below-stairs locked and two men pacing about outside, how could anyone get in?

So the murder had been done for what the jar contained. And his father had asked for a can-opener! That meant a metal container. It must be quite small, for the neck of the jar was only two inches across. But it could be ten or twelve inches long. The jar was that deep.

Dan had been listening for the sound of his father's bedroom door directly across the corridor from his own, and knew he had not come upstairs. What could be keeping him this long?

Dan nervously left his bed and went to the window facing east. The breakfast terrace was just below. He saw one of the gardeners moving slowly about. The man disappeared in shadows at the back. Beyond, in the dark, Dan could barely distinguish the ghostly white of the tennis court through trees, the thick white rim of the pool. . . . But then—

There came a scream. A woman's scream—Edith's! Then her voice shouting: "Dan! Aunt Adelaide! *Dan!*"

In three bounds he was at the door; he flung it open, raced to the stairs.

Edith, a robe knotted snugly about her, was on the left curve of the stairs, hanging onto the balustrade as though too weak to stand.

"Dan! *Dan!*" she cried as he ran down the stairs to her. "Uncle Edward! Something's happened to him! In the museum!"

She followed as he sped along the lower corridor. The heavy doors of finely carved teakwood stood open onto the museum wing. The fluorescent lights in the museum, concealed above the ground-glass ceiling, were full on and glaringly brighter than the dim lights of the corridor.

A few feet inside the door and facing it stood a bronze Cambodian Buddha. It was of heroic size, more than seven feet high. The figure sat cross-legged on a lotus blossom, the whole resting on a square block of black marble.

In front of this lay Edward Burgess, face down, his head against a corner of the marble block. One arm was outstretched, the other doubled under him.

"Dad!" Dan dropped to his knees. "Dad!"

There was no answer.

Dan reached blindly for the wrist extended along the floor and felt for the pulse. He looked up with overwhelming relief.

"Thank God, Edie! He's only unconscious. But his pulse is terribly faint. Quick! Get Dr. Ridley on the phone!"

Dan found a deep, ugly gash on his father's head. The blood had stopped flowing, but there was a good deal of it dried and still drying about the wound. It matted the crisp white hair.

He looked up again as his mother reached the scene. For once, Adelaide Martin's composure was gone.

"It—it may not be serious," Dan faltered. "Run up and see that his bed is ready. Get Admiral Cheney—oh, there he is."

The Admiral was still buttoning his shirt, Mrs. Cheney struggling with a lacy robe. Without a word to spare, the Admiral helped Dan lift the unconscious man, and between them they carried him slowly along the corridor to the stairway. Jung Lu appeared suddenly from the entrance to the service wing. And for the first time that Dan could remember, the man's face was not impassive; there was alarm there, and consternation. Dan flung a brief command.

"Lock the museum. Get one of the boys. Come upstairs."

Dan and the Admiral had trouble negotiating the stairs, for Mr. Burgess was a sturdily built man. Then they managed to get Mr. Burgess' outer clothing off and settle him in bed. One arm with loosely closed fist hung over the edge of the bed. The fingers let go of a small object, which fell to the rug.

Dan noted this subconsciously from a corner of his eye. No one else saw it. Unobserved, he scooped the thing up and dropped it into the pocket of his pajamas just as Edith appeared to say the Doctor would get there in twenty-five or thirty minutes.

Dan telephoned the gatehouse—which was quarters for the two men responsible for the gate—to make sure there would be no delay there. Then he got hold of Jung Lu and sent him to question the men set as guards about the house.

When, garbed in flannel trousers, turtleneck jersey and rubber-soled shoes, he returned to his father's room, his mother was rubbing Mr. Burgess' wrists. Her eyes never left his face as she waited for some flutter of the eyelids.

Edith was saying:

"I simply can't say what it was that woke me. I don't remember any noise, but there might have been. My room is closest to the head of the stairs. I lay awake for a few minutes, but something told me to see if Uncle Edward was still at work. Perhaps I could get him a cup of chocolate or something—"

"Then we don't know how long he was lying there," said Mrs. Martin.

She continued to rub the unconscious man's wrists. It was a mark of affection rather than hope. She knew it would do no good.

Dan took a chair, faced it to a window overlooking the winding climb to Rangecrest, and stared into the night. He remembered the object that had slipped from his father's hand—the thing that, not even glancing at it, he had scooped up. In changing to trousers and jersey he'd forgotten it. He went to his room and took it from the pocket of his pajama jacket.

It was an ivory *netsuke,* carved in the shape of a jumping frog!

Dan stared in astonishment. Jung Lu's previously incomprehensible words at the dinner table flashed into his mind. "I look in museum. Something ve'y st'ange. This not it. This be one moah. Otheh one still in museum."

The *netsuke* Dan held in his hand, if it hadn't been taken from the museum below-stairs, was an exact replica of one attached by silken cords to a decorated *inro* which occupied the place of honor in the glass-covered case of *netsukes.*

THE thing that held Dan's rapt attention was that though he had handled countless *netsukes,*—thousands, indeed, and naturally many which were similar,—he had never yet seen two identically alike.

The Burgess collection of *netsukes,* numbering some four hundred odd, was exhibited on black velvet in pyramid fashion. The pyramid was rectangular, the top shelf four inches by sixteen. It was here the *inro* rested—a richly lacquered Japanese medicine case—with the jumping-frog *netsuke* so like the one he held.

Netsukes, originally small wooden carvings used in Japan some five hundred years ago by which to handle strings of keys, became popularized in ivory early in the Eighteenth Century and were used widely as ornamental pieces fastened to the cords of tobacco pouches, purses, medicine cases. These miniature carvings took the form of flowers, animals, insects—anything the artist fancied; and the workmanship was often exquisite. This one was presumed to trace back to Masanao of Kyoto.

But Dan had never before seen such exact duplication.

Dr. Ridley arrived in the time promised. Mr. Burgess was still unconscious, and breathing stertorously. It took only a brief examination before the Doctor looked up at Dan and Mrs. Martin and shook his head slowly.

"This may be quite serious. There's every indication of a severe concussion, and I suspect a skull fracture. . . . I need water—not too hot."

Luke Jung ran for a bowl and a kettle of boiled water. Dan moved a low table to the bedside. Soon the wound was washed, examined further, and treated. The Doctor rose.

"There's nothing more I can do at the moment. He may not recover consciousness tonight. We must have a nurse. I'll have to use a phone."

Dan clapped his hands. Luke sped off and returned with an instrument which he plugged into a wall socket.

"Very unfortunate," the Doctor muttered. "It's a serious blow. Though I don't see how he could have struck so hard by merely falling. And on the back of his head."

He spoke into the phone—a short call—then said:

"You'd better put me up for the night. I'll remain until he comes to, of course. In the morning I'll arrange for a relief nurse if it seems necessary. —You can do no good here, Dan. Better get some sleep."

FOR a moment Dan looked at his father on the bed, then left the room. He found the others waiting about the upper landing.

"Dr. Ridley thinks it's serious," Dan said shortly. "There's a nurse on the way. We're to try to sleep until morning. . . . Like a smoke with me, Admiral?"

Maynard Cheney caught the look and assented.

"But Dan," commenced Edith.

He put his hand over her lips. "Look, sweet, back to bed! Please!" He took her in his arms, then led her to her door.

Mrs. Cheney returned to her room, and Dan and the Admiral passed on downstairs, where Dan produced cigarettes. But the Admiral declined, and Dan's was crushed out after one puff.

He drew the ivory *netsuke* from his pocket and held it out to the Admiral.

"He had this in his hand when he fell. It's the thing Jung Lu brought him at the dinner-table."

Admiral Cheney took the carving and looked it over.

"A jumping frog! But what does it mean?"

"I don't know. But I'm going to find out," Dan answered. "Come."

He led the way down the corridor, past the tables and cabinets lining the walls, to the entrance of the museum wing. A pair of man-size Satsuma vases, on carved ebony pedestals that raised them another foot, flanked the wide doorway. The doors were locked, as Dan had ordered of Jung Lu while he was carrying his father upstairs.

"After Kuei Teh-sheng came and took Feng's body home, and while you folks were at the bridge-table, I took two boys and searched the whole house thoroughly. I left one boy in the hallway upstairs to guard against an intruder possibly slipping from one hiding-place into another spot already searched. Jung Lu stood at the foot of the stairs. I went over every room, every closet, upstairs and down here. I swear there couldn't possibly have been anyone hidden. The museum was locked all through the evening and was still locked, so I didn't look there. You know, I set two men on guard outside. Jung Lu says the men are still there, and nothing has happened to alarm them. But—"

He unlocked the doors, snapped on the lights.

The first thing to catch the eye was the Cambodian Buddha a few feet within the entrance. The benign countenance of the statue was in strange contrast to the grimness of what had taken place at his base. One arm of the statue was held up against the breast; the other was

outstretched from the elbow, the hand palm up. The shoulders of its molded garment curved upward, and the tall pointed hat accounted for no less than fifteen inches of the statue's total height.

Dan paused before it, stooped and examined intently the corner of the marble against which his father's head had lain. When he rose, he spoke vehemently.

"If Dad tripped and fell against the statue, what did he trip on? There's no rug here, or other obstruction."

"Perhaps he had a stroke," the Admiral offered. "His heart isn't strong."

"Not strong, no, but not bad. Dr. Ridley has been keeping an eye on him. I'm sure a heart attack is the last thing to be expected."

The Admiral shook his head. "Well, we'll know as soon as he regains consciousness."

"We'll know before then," said Dan blackly. "You saw how Dad lay—on his face. And the injury was on the back of his head. There's no trace of blood on that marble block. He did not fall, and he did not hit against the marble. He was attacked. It must have been by Feng's murderer. Well, if the murderer is still in the house, we'll find him! We'll start here and search again."

"Right, my boy! But if it's the murderer of young Kuei, don't forget he has at least a knife. Better arm ourselves."

"I have this," Dan said, and pulled from a hip pocket his target pistol. "Here." He fumbled among a stack of bronze pieces which when set up would be another exhibition table, and handed the Admiral one of the legs. A dangerous club.

But despite the most careful search, they found no one in the museum—not even any sign that an intruder had been there.

This room comprised the entire one-story wing. It was eighty feet by forty, of generous height, and there were no windows in any of the three outer walls. A conditioning plant supplied the air. The ornamental ceiling was of ground glass, through which sunlight from the roof windows was diffused during the day, and a strong light from fluorescent tubing at night. There was but one entrance, the double door from the corridor.

Nearly every type of Oriental art was represented here, and the room was quite crowded. Fine embroideries and paintings on silk hung upon the walls. The far end was given over to huge glass cases of life-size forms displaying gorgeous golden court robes, colorful Mandarin robes, embroidered nearly every inch.

There were cases of carved jade figures, shelves of exquisite Chinese ceramics—plates, jars, vases, bowls, each on its carved rack or pedestal. There were glazed ceramic statues of considerable age. These things, housed in the museum proper, were of historical value. The pieces scattered about the house were generally more modern or less rare, valued chiefly for their beauty of design or execution.

But there was no trace of the intruder here. At the door Dan turned for a final baffled look about the room. There must be some clue here, he felt.

"I *wish* he'd called the police," he said with feeling. "I should have myself in spite of his orders."

"Aye," put in the Admiral heavily, "and that's something I don't understand. First the murder, then Edward's tremendous concern, yet his refusal to call the police. But I've known Edward longer than you have. I'm sure he had a reason for it, a good reason. Yet it was actually inviting this attack."

There was a gasp behind them. They whirled, to find Edith standing in the doorway. Her face was white.

"What murder?" she asked brokenly. "Who attacked Uncle Edward? What about the police? What were you two talking about in the living-room tonight? I heard the word *murder* then!"

Dan groaned.

"Edie! You shouldn't have come down. I told you to stay in your room. Oh, honey, I'm sorry. Dad didn't want anyone to know about it. I don't know why, but since you've heard this much—Kuei Feng was murdered here tonight. In the hall. Stabbed in the heart. He brought a package to Dad, and it had disappeared, but we found it after Kuei Feng's murderer got away—"

"You found the package!" The Admiral's tone was surprise itself.

"Yes. And neither of you must say a word of it to anyone. Dad's strictest orders. I forgot you didn't know about the package, Admiral."

"Where—where is—Kuei Feng now?" asked Edith.

"We sent the car for his father, and he took the—took Feng home with him. Dad wouldn't let me notify the police. The murderer must have returned to get whatever it was Feng brought, and I don't know whether he got it or not. If he didn't, he may still be about. Please, Edie darling, go back to your room and stay there."

He'd been leading her to the stairs as he spoke.

"Now then, Admiral," Dan said grimly. "You take the east end of the house; I'll take the other."

Dan inspected first the library, then turned to his own "office" across the corridor. The windows of both of these rooms were tall French casements—as were all the others on this floor—but these were securely fastened. There was no sign of any disturbance in either room.

He proceeded to the large cloak-room at either side of the main entrance. The first was empty and undisturbed. He turned to the second, and as his hand seized the knob of the door, a sixth sense flashed a warning to him.

As he flung open the door, a man hurled himself from the low sill of the wide-open window out onto the front terrace. There followed a brittle crash of shrubbery as the man scrambled through it.

Dan raised the gun in his hand and fired, but this was pure reflex action and done without aiming. In fact, there was nothing at which to aim. It had happened in a split second. There was the black hulk on the sill, then only the square outline of sky and slashing shrubs.

Dan ran for the window to jump in pursuit, but that too was reflex action, and his brain worked quickly to haul him up short. It was dark on the terrace. The sconces at either side of the front door were on, but their light didn't penetrate far. If he jumped now, he'd flounder in the shrubbery with scarcely one chance in a dozen of finding his man.

He spun on his heel and raced through the hall to the big glass doors, snapping on the terrace floodlights on the way without losing stride.

"Admiral!" he shouted. "On the terrace! *Quick!*"

Chapter Five

DAN fumbled in his haste to unlock the doors. Then he was through them and down the steps in a bound. The crashing in the shrubbery had brought the guards to the front of the house on the run, one from either end; and as Dan reached the flagged terrace, he saw the Admiral floundering in the bushes under one of the living-room windows.

But there was no sign of the intruder. The terrace lights created an island of bright glow that only made the surrounding darkness all the blacker. They beat among the bushes and trees for some minutes, and found there was nothing to do but give up the chase. In fact, there was no chase. There was nothing to chase. The man was gone, swallowed in the blackness.

Back in the cloak-room again, Dan examined the window. He remembered now that in locking up earlier on

his father's orders, he'd found this window unlatched. He'd thought nothing of it at the time. It was not unusual.

But a round hole had been cut in the glass near the catch, from the outside, through which the window had been unfastened. So definitely the man had not been hiding in the house. He'd been on the outside from the time of his discarding the wrong jar in the lathhouse, until the house had been locked tight throughout. It was some relief to Dan to know he had not been remiss in his search of the house earlier.

Nor had the guards been at fault. There'd been but two to cover the four sides of the house. Dan made a mental note to see that Jung Lu did not abuse them tomorrow for dereliction. The sill of this window was but a few inches from the floor inside, four feet from the ground outside. There was an outer sill wide enough to stand on. The man had needed only to watch his chance, then work at the window behind the shrubbery. The sharpest eyes could not have seen him.

Another thing impressed itself—most importantly. The man very easily could have got away unseen before Mr. Burgess was discovered. But he hadn't. He'd stayed, running definite risk of capture. This meant only one thing: he had not got what he came for.

"Dan," said the Admiral, "initiative's a very good thing in its place. I'd have trusted Edward while he was able. But you and I don't know the issues involved. We don't know what to guard against. I'm for calling in the police. Or the Army. There are those warnings he's had."

Dan shook his head slowly. "No," he said. "A few hours ago I might have agreed on the police. But the body's been moved, and it's too late on that score. And if Dad wouldn't call them in for murder, he certainly wouldn't call them in for this. We'll have to handle this Dad's way now."

The Admiral shrugged.

"One thing is certain." Dan added: "if we can't bring in the police, at least we can double the guard. We'll run no further risks!"

He did this. All of the gardeners were roused and put on watch, armed with pick-handle or iron bars.

The shot had roused no one, for sound did not echo in this house; the walls were thick and doors solid. Had anyone heard it, they'd no doubt thought it a door slamming.

Back in his room, Dan stood scowling. His training had been in art, literature, religions and philosophy, languages, history of the Orient—to fit him one day to carry on the purpose of Rangecrest. It hadn't included violence and criminology. Nothing out of the ordinary had ever before happened at Rangecrest. If there were but one item on which he could fasten—

THE jumping-frog *netsuke!* That was the key to the riddle, he thought bitterly, if only he could read it. He plopped himself onto the bed without undressing, and pulled a blanket over him.

For a while his thoughts dwelt on the jar Kuei Feng had brought, and the dragon sketched in black around it. As for the dragon on the paper shot into the Admiral's car that morning, it had nothing to do with the dragon on the jar. Of that Dan felt sure. The jar was from Kuei Teh-sheng, but the paper warnings could have come from only one source.

There was in Japan a man who nearly sixty years ago had had the same grandiose ideas for Japan that Hitler has today for Germany. There had always been elements available for his purpose—sons of Japanese noblemen who found themselves bankrupt through the industrialization that destroyed the feudal caste; ambitious army officers, sons of the samurai to whom war was a career; and riffraff, scum from jails, to be had for small cash.

This man, Mitsuru Toyama, first trained these elements as terrorists. He organized a secret society to break up political meetings. An opportunist, he used popular dissatisfaction with internal affairs to jockey himself into position, and then, as power came to him, this "Toad of Kyushu" thought war would be good for Japan.

He chose Russia for the first victim. Looking on a map of Asia, he pretended to see that the Amur River dividing Siberia from Manchuria spelled *Black Dragon* in Chinese characters. So he named his band the Black Dragon Society.

It came into power throughout Japan. It grew like the beanstalk, and Mitsuru Toyama's ambitions grew with it. He caused to be murdered all conservative opponents who might reach high places, until today this mad ascetic, who boasted he could live on leaves and grass—

Dan didn't expect to sleep that night. But youth is resilient to shock; the next he knew, it was morning and the sun was streaming into his room.

For a moment he stared at the ceiling, vaguely confused, until memory of the night before flashed to him. With a bound he was off the bed and across the corridor. He opened his father's door cautiously and looked in. Mr. Burgess, head swathed in bandages, lay still as a figure in death.

An efficient-looking woman in trim uniform came quickly to the door with a finger on her lips.

"You're Mr. Dan Burgess?" she inquired, holding her tone low. "There is no change, but we'd better not have visitors. There must be no commotion or excitement. We'll let you know as soon as there's any sign of returning consciousness."

With this, Dan found himself shut out, staring at the firmly closed door. He went back to his room, had a shower, shaved, dressed for the day. Then he knocked at Edith's door.

Edith opened to him. "I was waiting for you," she said. She looked refreshed and rested, but her lips trembled. "Oh, Dan—"

"Don't do that," he whispered sharply. He held her close, rubbed her cheek with his. Presently they went downstairs, and found the Admiral and Mrs. Cheney already at coffee on the sunny breakfast terrace. Dr. Ridley was there too, walking about the terrace with coffee cup in hand, alternately sipping his drink and sniffing at what blossoms he found.

With a muttered "Good morning," Dan sank into a chair and stared out over the valley. As far as one could see were trunk roads striking off straight, with cross laterals marking the valley into huge squares. From Rangecrest's perch atop the San Gabriel Range, cars moving along these roads looked like crawling bugs.

Suddenly Dan rose and strode to where the Doctor was bent over a rose bush. One glance, and the Doctor held up a warning hand.

"All right, son," the Doctor said. "Take it easy. There's no change yet, and I can't say when there will be. We'll have to wait for his system to recover from the shock."

"You'll stay until all danger is past?"

"Of course. I've already arranged for another physician to take my patients today. The best thing for all of you is to go about your affairs as though nothing had happened."

That wasn't so easy. For one thing, the daily routine of Rangecrest had been upset by the war. For more than a year now Dan had been giving his days to the Army, which left only evenings to help his father on the "memoirs." With Mr. Burgess out of the picture, life at Rangecrest was stopped.

But for another thing, this was the day he and Edie were to have married! This was the purpose of the Cheneys' present visit.

Directly after breakfast, Dan called the minister on the phone and postponed the ceremony.

Then he and the Admiral made a long tour of the grounds. The entire acreage was enclosed by a high steel wire fence, topped by strands of barbed wire on extending angle irons. The two-story gatehouse built over the roadway, with its wrought-iron gates, was the only entrance to the grounds.

These gates ordinarily stood closed but unlocked daytimes, locked at night. Dan now repeated orders that the gates were to be kept locked at all times. No one was to be admitted without permission.

After lunch Dan tried to catch up on some accumulated details of the museum work, but he couldn't keep his mind on what he was doing. The house phone rang, and the gatekeeper told him a gentleman wanted to see Mr. Burgess.

"Who is it?"

"He say, Mr. Howland," replied the gateman. "He come in car with soldiers."

Soldiers! thought Dan. *Or does he mean police? How could they have found—* Of a sudden he felt relieved. He was glad they had found out, without his having been the one to betray his father's command.

"Send him up," he said.

Chapter Six

JUNG LU ushered the visitor into the library. Dan saw a well-set-up man somewhat older than himself, probably in the middle thirties, with straight black hair brushed back from a lean, tanned face. He had steady blue eyes and pleasant lips. His clothes were good but rumpled, and he needed a shave badly.

After the quick scrutiny, which the visitor bore with a growing quizzical grin, Dan spoke.

"Mr. Howland?"

"Yes, Lee Howland. Are you Mr. Burgess?" It was a good voice, but the tone indicated mild surprise.

"I am Dan Burgess."

"I came to see Mr. Edward Simms Burgess."

"What is your business with him?"

Howland's grin stiffened. "I'm here at his request."

This set Dan back. "I'm acquainted with my father's business, but I know of none with you."

"He telephoned Washington last night, and I came here to see him."

"Oh!"

So the long-distance call was to Washington. But that was after ten last night!

As though reading his thoughts, Howland said: "The message appeared urgent. I came in an Army plane. It took about seven hours. I was just driven here from March Field."

"I see." Dan thought fast. That explained the gatekeeper's words—soldiers, an Army car. This man looked all right, and his explanation seemed reasonable.

"Well?" prodded Howland.

Dan cleared his throat. "I'm sorry, Mr. Howland, but I'm afraid you can't see my father right away. There was an accident last night. He's been unconscious since midnight."

Howland's straight eyes never wavered.

"That's unfortunate," he finally said. "Nevertheless, I'll have to see him. I'm under orders, and it's his own request. I suppose you could give me a chance to freshen up and wait?"

"Certainly, Mr. Howland."

"Then I'll dismiss my car and put myself in your hands."

Dan rang for Jung Lu and gave his orders in Chinese. The visitor, Dan directed, was to be given a guest-room and the necessary toilet articles. Mr. Howland's clothes were then to be removed for brushing and pressing—after the man had gone to his bathroom and could not object. Jung Lu was to leave a robe in their place.

This in Dan's mind would take care of two needs. It was an ordinary courtesy—which would also keep the man confined to the one room upstairs while he, Dan, checked on his story.

Jung Lu led the caller from the room. Dan at once called the long-distance operator.

"We called Washington from this number last night at ten twenty," he said. "I must have that connection again now. It's quite urgent, and I've misplaced the number. Please look it up and repeat the call."

"Whom do you want in Washington?" asked the operator.

Dan thought fast. "This is a station call, not person to person. Just get me the number called last night."

It took a little time to convince the operator in the matter of priority for the call, but at last she got to work on it. Dan drummed impatiently on the top of his father's desk while waiting. The Chinese jar with the dragon was still there.

At length the operator called back. Soon a patient voice at the other end came through to him.

"This is Mr. Bryant's residence."

Dan hadn't quite known what to expect. His father had a number of personal friends in Washington. He'd supposed the call had been to one of these. He hadn't anticipated an under-secretary of the State Department.

"This is Mr. Bryant's residence," said the voice again, with less patience.

"Yes, yes," cried Dan. He realized his voice was loud and lowered it. "This is Dan Burgess, calling from California. My father, Mr. Edward Simms Burgess, called you last night, very late. I must speak with the person he talked with then. Will you connect me, please? It's quite important, I assure you. With whom did my father speak last night? With Mr. Bryant?"

The voice hesitated. "Yes."

"Will you please let me speak to him? It's most urgent."

The voice wasn't yet convinced. Then: "Hold the line, please."

It was some minutes before another voice broke in, a dignified, cool, leisurely voice.

"Mr. Bryant?" Dan introduced himself. "Please accept my apologies for disturbing you. A man announcing himself as Mr. Lee Howland has come to Rangecrest, stating that he flew from Washington after my father called you—"

"Yes. Well?"

"My father had an—an accident last night after he called you. He is still unconscious. I'm making this call to assure myself about Mr. Howland."

"Mr. Howland is a responsible person. He carries identification. What has happened to Mr. Burgess?"

Dan told him briefly.

"And he's still unconscious? This is most unfortunate. Are you in your father's confidence?"

"Ordinarily, yes. But not in this matter. Some—rather serious things have happened here in the past twenty-four hours, that I'm afraid only my father can explain."

There was a pause. "I may say the matter is of some importance and urgency, young man. Confide in Mr. Howland as far as possible, but, otherwise keep your counsel until your father recovers."

"Very well, Mr. Bryant."

"And will you have Mr. Howland contact me as quickly as he has something to report?"

"Yes sir."

Dan hung up, not fully satisfied, yet content to have made certain the man upstairs was friend, not foe. His eye fell again on the decorated ginger jar—with the dragon outlined in black. He scowled at it. Tentatively he tried the drawers of his father's desk. As he expected, they were locked. He went upstairs.

Lee Howland looked a new man. The blue was gone from his jowls, and his hair was still damp from a shower. He stood at a window looking out over the Rangecrest acres. He was smoking, and the tobacco in his pipe gave forth a pungent fragrance.

"I—happened to think, Mr. Howland, that—perhaps you carry identification," Dan said uncomfortably.

The other smiled and drew a leather card-case from the pocket of Dan's robe, which he was wearing, and handed Dan an official-looking card. Dan gave it a glance, then a stare.

"Oh!" The card identified Captain Lee Howland of Army Intelligence. "Why didn't you tell me this before?"

"You seemed to have the situation in hand. I could see you wanted to investigate me for yourself." The man's smile broadened in friendly fashion as he spoke. "That's why I mentioned Washington and how I got here. It gave you something to go on."

"Yes," Dan said. "I did phone Washington. Some things have been happening here, and I—thought it best."

"Right. I sensed at your gates that something was very wrong—more than merely locked gates would account for. I have a nose for that sort of thing," he said dryly. "Anyway, you're now better satisfied than if I'd simply produced my credentials at first."

"I suppose so."

"So let's shake on it," Howland said, and extended his hand. The handshake and the steady probing of the man's eyes pulled Dan over the line.

"Look here, Mr. Howland," he said: "I spoke with Mr. Bryant. He told me I could talk to you. I'd rather like to—go over some things with you."

"That's my trade."

PRESENTLY the two were once more in the library where the G-2 man sat in silence, drawing on his pipe and watching calmly as Dan walked the floor and fumbled over an opening.

The truth was, Dan couldn't forget that his father had made himself an accessory-after-the-fact in a case of murder. He wasn't quite sure what exposure might mean. So he did a bad job of starting half an explanation.

Howland stood this for a moment, then held up his hand. "Dan," he said, "I can see you're in a fog. Now, either you trust me or you don't. If you don't, we'll wait on your father. If you do, you'll have to give me all of it."

Dan quit pacing. "Okay," he said. "My father did not have an accident. He was the victim of a murderous attack."

No reaction to this.

"Prior to that, there was a murder here—earlier in the evening. A Chinese who made an unexpected call on my father during the dinner hour—"

At this Howland stopped him again.

"Let's take it in order," he said. "First, I know of Edward Simms Burgess. At Washington there's no time for past history. Everyone lives in the present and future. Even so, anecdotes get around, and your father has a share of them to his credit. I did not know about Rangecrest. You'd better give me the background here, and the people. Then the events."

Dan did this. He explained the purpose of Rangecrest, listed the family, gave their daily routine. He told of the long friendship between Admiral Cheney and his father, mentioned the Admiral's pet phobia—Japan—and the trend of conversation at dinner.

Then he related the events that led to the finding of Kuei Feng—how Jung Lu brought first the announcement of a visitor, then later returned with an envelope, the contents of which surprised his father into leaving the table.

"What was in the envelope? Do you know?"

Dan reached into his pocket and silently extended the jumping-frog *netsuke*.

"Interesting," the visitor commented, "but it doesn't tell me anything. What is it?"

"It's a Japanese *netsuke*. But there's something peculiar about it. It's exactly like one we have in the museum, and I've never seen an exact duplication before. Furthermore, this one started Dad off on reminiscences of Korea when he returned to the table. Later, it was in his hand when we found him struck down."

Howland's pipe went out during the telling. At the conclusion he sat back and refilled it with care. The *netsuke* lay on the arm of his chair, and he eyed it thoughtfully.

"Regarding the—ah, item," he ventured at last, "contained in the ginger jar, I'm here, as you've probably guessed, to take it to Washington. One of two things presents itself. If the murderer got it when he returned and attacked your father, it's hard to guess why he didn't make an immediate get-away. I'd say your father in all probability succeeded in hiding it before he was struck down."

He paused. The jar stood on the desk close at hand. "This is the jar?"

"Yes."

Howland picked it up. The dragon outline came in for some attention, and he turned the jar around and around. He tried the black enamel with his fingernail as Dan had done last night, and flicked a piece of it from the jar.

"What does this dragon mean?" he asked.

Dan scowled.

"Well," he said, "it may sound like a fairy story to you. The Black Dragon is an immensely powerful Japanese secret society. It's run by Mitsuru Toyama, an old man who has more actual power than the Emperor himself. Determination of war with us came not from the Diet or the Imperial House but from the headquarters of this Black Dragon Society. They are fanatic-mad on the subject of Japanese hegemony over all of Asia—"

Dan cut himself short and looked resentfully at Howland. The Army man was smiling, but not in derision.

"Well, that's enough, anyway," Howland said. "I know of the Black Dragon Society. I wanted to know if you connected this business with it."

"But I don't," said Dan sharply. "I don't think for one moment that whatever it was my father received came from them."

"I see we're at cross-purposes. No, I don't suppose it did. But couldn't this sketch on the jar be a warning from the sender to beware of the Black Dragon?"

"Yes," said Dan slowly, "I suppose so."

"That the dragon is biting its tail," went on Howland, "could mean the Society is beside itself with rage—"

He was cut short by Edith's voice, raised and urgent. She was running down the stairs, calling: "Dan! *Dan!*"

Dan ran to the door, flung it open. "Here I am, Edie! What is it?" He ran to meet her.

"Uncle Edward's calling for you!"

Dan raced up the curved stairway three steps at a time. He found his mother, the Doctor, and the nurse grouped about the bed. His father was twisting his head jerkily from side to side, eyes still closed.

"Dan—Dan—" he repeated over and over.

Dan dropped to his knees by the bed and seized the hand lying outside the bedclothes.

"Here I am, Dad. Here. It's Dan."

The words must have penetrated to his father's subconsciousness, for the head stopped twisting, and the muttering ceased for a long moment. Edith and Howland entered and stood silently at one side of the door. Then came another murmuring from the partly conscious man.

"Dan—trust you, have to trust you . . . Dan, it's very important . . . Dan . . . Dan—"

"I'm here, Dad. I'm here."

There was no further movement from the man on the bed. The only sound was his difficult breathing. He'd slipped back into total unconsciousness again. Dan looked up appealingly to Dr. Ridley. The Doctor shook his head slowly and motioned for them all to leave the room.

"It's not a bad sign," he said encouragingly. "But he must have complete quiet. I'll let you know as soon as there's any definite change."

He closed the door on them.

Chapter Seven

EDITH was in danger of another fit of tears. Dan consoled her for a little, there in the hall, introduced Howland with a brief word that he was here concerning last night's business, then led her to her room and made her lie down.

He and Howland continued on downstairs. The Army man dropped a hand on Dan's shoulder for a step or two. "Show me the place where he was attacked."

Dan led the way to the museum. There, before the big bronze Cambodian Buddha, he pointed out the spot.

"He was lying face down, and the wound was on the back of his head. Earlier in the evening he'd been so insistent on secrecy that when the doctor arrived I let him believe Dad had fallen. I don't think he swallowed it, but at least he hasn't pressed the point."

Howland glanced to left and right. His eyes fastened on an open cabinet of jade statues. Dan caught the same thought at once. They went to the cabinet. Howland examined the statues intently and methodically; but Dan, roving the shelves quickly, was first to find it.

"Look!" His hand shot out to pick up a foot-high standing Bodhisattva. Steel fingers clamped on his wrist.

"Okay! I can see it!"

Dan relaxed. "Of course," he muttered. "Fingerprints."

Howland shrugged. "Could be."

There was no doubt about it, this was the thing that had struck the blow. A stain of blood showed, and a few white hairs had caught in a crevice.

"We'll come back to this," Howland said. "You say you have another ivory carving—*netsuke,* you call it?—like the one received."

Dan took him to the case of *netsukes* and explained what they were. He pointed out the top exhibit in the case.

"You see how precisely similar the two are. I'm convinced this second one has some meaning for my father. Furthermore, Kuei Feng used it only when he had to, in order to get an immediate interview."

"You're conversant with these exhibits. Does this *netsuke* in the case have a special history?"

"Not that I know of. It's an old carving, and a good one, probably by Masanao of Kyoto. Seventeenth Century. Beyond that, I never knew it had any special significance for Dad."

They returned to the library. Howland carried the jade statue, handling it in such fashion as not to destroy any possible prints it might bear. He lowered it carefully to the desk. Dan's eyes followed the movement. Noticing this, Howland placed a jeweled table screen around the figure.

"Kuei Teh-sheng and your father talked for twenty minutes in here alone," Howland said.

"Yes. I suppose about taking Feng away. If there was anything else, I don't know about it. But murder is not something to be covered up! I can't forgive myself for not insisting on the police."

"Forget that, Dan. There's more here than murder. Your father knew what he was doing."

Dan made no answer. His father had used those words—something more than murder.

"It seems curious you haven't looked for whatever it was that Kuei Feng brought." Howland's probing eyes held Dan's.

"Dad didn't take me into his confidence in this matter," Dan answered. "I didn't think I should—"

"Have you any idea where it's apt to be?"

"I suppose in the safe, or perhaps in this desk."

"Then?" prodded the Intelligence man.

"They're locked," Dan said. "I can't go into them."

"Can't, or won't?"

Dan hesitated. "Won't, without permission." But he said it uncertainly.

"Dan," said Howland earnestly, "your father's call to the State Department concerned a—ah, 'bulky message' of importance. I'm not in on the secret, naturally, but Mr. Bryant's concern in speeding it to Washington under utmost secrecy proves its urgency. I appreciate your position and feelings, and I don't like to insist, but you'll have to use his keys!"

Dan was torn between regard for his father's confidence in him and the Army man's argument. At last he nodded silently, eyes averted.

He knew the combination to the safe. He stooped before a wall table, reached under it, fumbled a moment; then one of the inset wall panels slid upward above the table-top to reveal the face of a safe.

To open it, took only a moment. It took but another to convince the two men that what they wanted was not there.

They turned to the desk. Dan produced his father's keys and unlocked the middle drawer, which in turn released the catches on the others. He went through the desk carefully, Howland standing by. He came to the deep double drawer at one side. He pulled it out slowly, reluctantly, for he knew what was there—and shut it hastily. But not quickly enough to hide what he hadn't known was there.

"What was that?" asked Howland sharply.

Dan hesitated. Resentment flooded his face. He'd gone to great pains not to reveal the nature of the work his father had been pressing. It was his father's wish that it be kept secret until the job was done.

"I'm obliged to ask for your confidence," said Dan slowly.

"Is what we are looking for in that drawer?" asked Howland sharply.

"No. At least, I don't think so. I saw nothing new."

"Then why the secrecy?"

Dan, obstinately silent, leaned against the drawer.

"Very well, I won't breathe a word of it," Howland said sarcastically—then ended roughly: "Unless I find you're deceiving me!"

Dan pulled open the drawer again. It was filled with manila folders, that bulged with typed sheets, handwritten sheets, letters, memoranda, photographs and snapshots, innumerable clippings from magazines and newspapers, most of them yellowed with age.

But on top of all this, with the effect of a jack-in-the-box, were the several dragon warnings Mr. Burgess had received. Dan spread them out on the desk and said between straight lips:

"My father has been assembling data on his diplomatic career in the Far East for many years. He could never bring himself to publish in deleted form, and uncensored publication would have been embarrassing to Washington in our relations with Japan prior to the break of war.

"Now he's working on the final compilation. This is it—a folder for each chapter. Some of it's already completed and typed in draft. He planned to have it published this year."

"So that's what you were holding out on me. I knew there was something. But why? The publishing of memoirs, even on the international scene, requires no secrecy. Especially concerning Japan."

"Dad's orders," said Dan shortly. "My father's awake to the power of public opinion, and this work is being pointed up in such fashion that it may well have an effect on the final peace with Japan. The kind of peace that might work with peoples of conscience will not work with the Oriental fanaticism of the Japanese. Even now, after Pearl Harbor, not all Westerners appreciate this properly—even in Government circles. Of course, one can never be sure of public reaction. Nevertheless this is potential dynamite that the State Department might not like.

"Now you know why I had to have your promise. I have your word on this until after publication. I'm sorry I can't explain it any better."

"You've done pretty well," said Howland dryly. "And what are these things?" He pointed with his pipe stem to the rubber-stamped dragons spread on the desk.

"They are the reason I had to tell you this. Dad believes that some Japanese or pro-Japanese elements are at large here in the Western Defense Area, despite the vigilance of the Army Command, and that they've become aware of his work and are using this method of threatening him into silence."

Howland stared. "How did these—uh—Japanese or pro-Japanese elements learn of what your father was doing?"

"Simply enough. Dad has had to verify certain data from time to time, names and places and dates not clearly enough defined in his own records. He did this by phone. He's had to make a number of calls to different sources, so he has no idea where the leak occurred—assuming, of course, that a leak did occur. These—warnings, I suppose they are—came from the Black Dragon Society, without a doubt. They had some thousands of members in this country prior to the war, and my father has always been on their blacklist and under a kind of surveillance. That was not unusual for an anti-Japanese figure like my father."

"And of course he kept silent on these warnings?"

"No. He—didn't want the women to know of these. They'd find out if the Army snooped around and be alarmed."

"I suppose, it never occurred to you these warnings could have been in advance of his receiving the very stuff I'm here to pick up?"

"Why?" Dan objected. "What they seem to want is whatever Kuei Feng brought here. Why show their hand and maybe spoil their chances?"

"You, who seem to know something about the Japanese, can you always tell what illogical quirk their minds will take when they get fixed on one idea? In this case, such as preventing this matter from reaching Washington?"

Dan was silent.

Howland examined the square sheets closely and silently. He tamped his pipe full, lit it, and studied them some more. He re-examined the dragon on the ginger jar.

"I hardly see," he said at last, "digesting all you've said, where these two things tie in, unless young Kuei was bringing your father additional data of an important nature. That being the case, Mr. Burgess would hardly have got in touch with Washington so urgently."

"No," Dan replied positively. "Kuei's visit was entirely unexpected. I'm sure it had no connection with this."

Again they went over the contents of the desk. They were looking for a metal container not over a foot long and two inches thick—or for any item new to Dan that might conceivably have been received in such a tin. They found nothing. Nothing but the can-opener, which was in the top middle drawer of the desk. Howland fingered this.

"It seems reasonable to suppose," he finally said, "that the message is still in the house—and that it's probably either here or in the museum—and probably still in the tin, or we'd have found the receptacle on which he used this opener. We'll have to search both rooms, Dan. Let's go."

They had hardly finished with the library when called to dinner. It was a silent affair. Warned against it, none of the group said anything that would launch the Admiral into one of his tirades against Japan—though this was scarcely necessary, for with his old friend laid low upstairs, the Admiral was a very subdued person.

It was necessary to introduce and explain Howland to Rangecrest. Dan presented him as having a business matter to take up with Mr. Burgess, and simply said he had invited Howland to stay a day or two. It might be possible to conclude the business in that time. His mother and Mrs. Chency might have thought this odd, but they said nothing. Edith already knew, and Dan saw the Admiral caught on at once.

After dinner, on the excuse of showing his guest the museum, Dan and Howland spent a long time there. They searched slowly and carefully, but again met with failure.

Howland shook his head.

"Throughout the house," he said, "you have chests and cabinets, jars and vases and carved boxes, hundreds of places where an item of that size could be hidden. We'll simply have to extend the search."

This they did throughout the first floor as soon as the others had retired for the night. They ended their efforts at sometime after midnight, still far from success.

AT the start of their search, in the library, Dan produced a hefty bunch of keys from his father's desk. They supplemented his father's personal key-case with which Dan had first opened the desk.

For the sake of convenience, and to avoid fumbling, he switched each key from the big ring as used to another ring. At the end of their search all the keys had been transferred to the second ring. Not one had been missed. But with the small personal key-case, after accounting for the doors to the house and the museum, to the desk and compartments in the safe, there was one key left over—a very small, flat key. Howland pointed to it.

"I can't say I ever noticed that particular key before," Dan frowned. "I don't know what it's for."

"It doesn't appear to be an American key," said Howland.

"It could be," Dan objected. "In any case, many of these others are not. That wouldn't mean anything."

In the end, Dan slipped the solitary key into his vest pocket.

"We can't search upstairs tonight," said Howland. "We'll take that on tomorrow—for whatever it's worth. But there's one thing we can settle now: fingerprints." He thought a moment. "I've no equipment with me, but face powder might do the trick. Can you get some without causing comment?"

"My mother's with Dad. She rested today so she could relieve the nurse. I can get some from her room."

Howland shook his head over the powder Dan brought. He tried a little on the figure, but the carving was of pale jade, and the powder didn't show up too clearly.

"Well, it'll have to do," he muttered.

Clearing the top of the desk and spreading paper, Howland dusted the statue with infinite care, gently blowing away the excess. The statue had many smooth surfaces, but they were small. At last he straightened, nodding with satisfaction.

"There's no full print left, but here are three partial prints." He pointed them out with a pencil. "It's entirely possible two of them are sufficient for identification. Now for the box in your study. I'll get it. I probably know how to handle it better than you."

This was an easier job. The surface was darker.

"Full prints that match those on the statue, though some are blurred by other prints—maybe yours, or Kuei's or the gardener's. The man who attacked Mr. Burgess is the same one who murdered Kuei Feng—at least," he corrected himself, "the same one who stole Kuei's package. Now let's get pictures."

All items at Rangecrest were photographed and catalogued, and Dan did this work. He brought his photographic equipment and set it up, and they soon had several exposures.

"Good," grunted Howland. "Let's get at the developing, and we'll call it a day. The negatives will be dry for printing by morning."

Morning came and there was still no change in Mr. Burgess' condition. After a hasty early breakfast, Dan and Howland first ran off a number of copies of the prints. He had no special drying apparatus, so they improvised with a heat lamp. Then together, while the rest of the house was at breakfast, they made a quick but thorough search for the hidden cylinder upstairs. There were fewer places here where it could have been concealed. Jung Lu assisted. Dan had to tell the Chinese who Howland was—and ordered that every courtesy and assistance be afforded Howland.

The search turned up nothing.

"We can't wait," Howland said. "We'll have to try to trace the message to its source. We'll call on Kuei Teh-sheng."

Dan hated to leave Rangecrest even for the three or four hours it would take to make the trip. However, he drove Howland in his own coupé.

Howland had called for a manila envelope and stuffed it with photographs of the fingerprints and a brief note. Dan did not see the address he hastily scratched onto it. At the first telegraph office in town Howland dispatched the envelope by messenger, so Dan knew it was to someone in Los Angeles. Howland also made a phone call—and came back from it with a poker face.

The shop of Kuei Teh-sheng was a famous one, filled to overflowing with thousands of items of Oriental art, though few of the quality or nature required by Rangecrest. Dan accosted the one clerk in view.

"Mr. Kuei," he demanded.

The clerk bowed politely. "Please, Mr. Burgess, Mr. Kuei's son—"

"I know, but I must see him."

The clerk hesitated. Then: "You wait, please."

It was some minutes before Kuei Teh-sheng came from the back of the shop, where there were stairs leading to living-quarters above. He bowed to the two.

It took a little time to get past the conventional phrases of courtesy. Mr. Kuei's eyelids flickered at the introduction of Howland, and he invited the two with a wave of his hand to a room at the rear of the shop.

It was a plainly furnished room, scarcely more than a large closet, with a small table and two chairs. A landscape in dull colors on silk was on a wall. There was no window, but vents high in the walls allowed a circulation of air as a small fan on a corner shelf was set in motion by the switching on of the light.

Kuei Teh-sheng clapped his hands and a Chinese woman of slight figure appeared. She needed no word. She brought first a chair for the third man, then tea and tiny cups. When tea was poured, Mr. Kuei said carefully:

"My son was much disappointed when the local draft board rejected him for the American Army. He then wanted to enlist in the Chinese Army and learn to fly. But I would not consent. He left a note before he committed suicide. He was my only son. I could not let him leave me. He will be buried tomorrow."

So that was the explanation cooked up to get around a police inquiry!

DAN reached the point of his call, telling about his father's "accident." Mr Kuei had not known of it, and a deeper shadow fell across his face.

"That is why this visit became necessary. Your son"—Dan bowed politely—"brought my father a ginger jar that night. This *netsuke* accompanied the jar."

He laid the small carving on the table. Kuei Teh-sheng's eyes merely flickered at it and returned to Dan's face as he waited for him to go on.

"The jar contained something of importance. My father arranged for Mr. Howland to come from Washington to take charge of it. But it's not now to be found, and my father is still unconscious. We have come to ask you about the message in that jar."

The Chinese regarded the two men inscrutably. Finally he said: "Haste is not one of the eight virtues. Can you not wait for your honorable father's recovery?"

"Mr. Howland has made a quick trip by air to get this message. He must go back quickly."

"I cannot tell you what you want to know."

"You mean you do not know what the message was?"

A bow.

"But you know where it came from."

Stony silence.

Dan looked at Howland inquiringly. It was clear Mr. Kuei would tell them nothing voluntarily. But Howland merely brought up the question of the dragon painted on the jar.

Mr. Kuei evaded this too. "It was just a jar," he said.

To Dan's surprise, Howland put an end to the visit without getting what he came for. He was silent on the drive back, yet Dan had a feeling he was not entirely dissatisfied with the trip. Dan thought back. There was that brief phone call Howland had made at the telegraph office. Now that the call came to mind, Dan realized that Howland had thereafter been less anxious about the trip.

Howland stirred from his thoughts once during the return trip to ask Dan for the ivory *netsuke*. Dan handed it over without a word, and Howland dropped it into his own pocket.

Dan's glumness deepened as they came within sight of Rangecrest. He brought the car to a quick stop before the terrace steps. Chong would get it and take it on to the garage. He ran up the steps and into the house, followed closely by Howland.

Entering the wide corridor, the scene broke on the two at once. In the curve of stairway directly ahead were his mother, her face set, the doctor, the Admiral and Mrs. Cheney. Edith sat a little apart, her eyes red.

Dan felt his way blindly to a chair and sank into it. Dr. Ridley left Mrs. Martin and came forward.

"I'm very sorry, Dan," he said, "but it would have done no good had you been here. Your father didn't regain consciousness. His heart began to fail definitely. I gave him the strongest possible stimulants, but it did no good. The end came just a few minutes ago. He didn't suffer. He was unconscious through it all."

Dan answered nothing, just stared up at the Doctor.

"He made a tremendous effort to get through the curtain of subconsciousness toward the last," Dr. Ridley was saying. "That was the coramine taking hold briefly. He kept muttering your name, Dan. But don't blame yourself for not being here. He wouldn't have known you."

Howland spoke. "Is that all, Doctor? He simply called for Dan, nothing more?"

"There were some jumbled words. They didn't make sense."

"What were they?"

"He said, 'Dan—Dan—trust you, have to trust you. . . . *Netsuke* proves—' I didn't understand the word *'netsuke,'* but Mrs. Martin says that's what it was. Probably speaking of some purchase for the museum. Just *'Netsuke* proves—' There were a few other words, quite jumbled. *'Very important get to Washington'* and *'the hand of Buddha.'* He repeated all these things, especially *'the hand of Buddha'*, several times. He was quite incoherent, I assure you."

"Nothing about 'Black Dragon'?" asked Howland.

"No."

Mrs. Martin, holding herself in hand by pure will, had gone to Edith and was comforting the girl. Dr. Ridley went to them, and Dan muttered hoarsely:

"It's murder. Another murder! We should have called the police the first time. I shouldn't have sent Jung Lu to bed. We could have prevented it. It's my fault!"

Fortunately, no one heard the words to understand them. Howland bent swiftly, clutched Dan's shoulder in a vise-like grip to focus his attention, and spoke low.

"Get hold of yourself, Dan. He's trusting you to carry out the job he can't do now. Your father was a brilliant man, Dan; and if he said this thing is important, rely on it that it is. Get a grip on yourself."

Dan rose unsteadily, and without a word or glance at anyone, passed down the corridor to the library and closed the door behind him.

Howland remained standing by the chair where Dan had sat. He leaned back against the wall and closed his eyes as he studied over the dead man's last words.

"'*Have to trust you, Dan.*' Unable to take care of the matter himself, he *had* to trust another. Wouldn't have done it otherwise. And Dan, because Dan was closest to him. *'Netsuke proves'* definitely links the carving as a key to the whole matter, though there'd been no doubt before. But nothing about the Black Dragon. Then perhaps that had no great significance—at least in his mind. But his mind wasn't clear.

"'*Very important get to Washington.*' We knew that. It was too important to talk about in detail over the telephone.

"And *'the hand of Buddha.'* Ah, there's another puzzle. *'The hand of Buddha.'* Could that be an abstract figure of speech, some analogy? Or a physical reference? There are any number of Buddhas here. He was struck down at the base of one. That Cambodian Buddha has two hands; one upraised, the other outstretched.

"'*The hand of Buddha—the hand of Buddha—*'"

Chapter Eight

IT was already noon; time was passing, and Howland's job an urgent one. Yet so long as there were things he could do alone, he couldn't force himself on the people of Rangecrest at this moment of shocked grief. He did seek out Jung Lu, however, though the old man was as grief-stricken as any member of the family, and confronted him with the *netsuke*.

Jung Lu's eyes blazed at sight of it, but so briefly that Howland couldn't be sure of what he saw there. Mr. Kuei's reaction had been the same. But he got nothing from the Chinese.

"Do' know what this is. Neveh see this befo' one-two nights ago. It jus' like one in museum, but neveh see this one befo'." Then: "I mus' sit down."

In truth, his legs were shaky. Howland quickly pulled forward a chair. The sight of the small carving had jarred the man for a moment, certainly; but he was Chinese, the *netsuke* Japanese. The man's reasonable hatred of the Japanese might well account for this. Then too, the curio definitely tied in with the deaths of two men here, and there could be no doubt of his affection for Mr. Burgess.

But to none of the Army man's questions about this *netsuke* or the one in the museum did Jung Lu have an answer. Nor did he have any notion of a possible hiding-place for what young Kuei had brought here. Howland tried another tack.

"Mr. Burgess' last words were something about 'the hand of Buddha.' What did he mean?"

"Jung Lu do' know."

"You must have at least an idea. Think! What Buddha? The Cambodian Buddha? That's where he fell. Or another?"

"Jung Lu do' know."

Howland gave up on Jung Lu and spent an hour in the museum examining Buddhas. There were big ones and little ones, full figures and plaques—of ivory, jade, glazed pottery, metal. He remembered two of stone in the garden. The big bronze Cambodian Buddha came in for most attention, but at length he turned from it.

He borrowed Dan's car—from Jung Lu—and made another trip to Los Angeles, where he called on the F.B.I. He'd been F.B.I. himself before the war, going over into G-2 by request. He had friends among them here, and could get what help he needed there as well as from the Army. It was to them he'd sent the fingerprints earlier. There were no results yet.

He also called Washington. It was nearly twenty-four hours since he'd reached the Coast, and he'd made no progress; but Mr. Burgess' death and the added complications made a report necessary.

On his return trip he stopped at several stores in Pasadena for a supply of toilet articles and small clothing —and equipment for fingerprinting.

It was dusk now, and nearly dinner time. He had a shower and changed from his own tweeds into a suit Dan had lent him yesterday. But Edward Simms Burgess' death was a heavy blow to Rangecrest, and no one wanted dinner that night. Howland ate by himself.

After dinner he went outside for a walk around the house, and on the terrace he found Dan with Edith cradled in his arms, crying softly. Howland would not have stopped, but Edith saw him, dabbed at her eyes, straightened up from Dan, and went into the house. So the Army man leaned against the balustrade, tamped tobacco into his pipe, and held a match to it.

Howland puffed in silence for some minutes. Finally he spoke quietly, gravely.

"Dan, your father had a job to do. Now it's your job. That message he received and reported to Washington so urgently has to be found, or it has to be traced back to its source. Better go to bed and get what sleep you can. There's a heavy day ahead of us tomorrow."

Dan answered nothing.

"Dr. Ridley held up filing the certificate until late this afternoon," Howland went on. "That avoided reporters today. The gates are locked, and I have instructions no one is to be admitted. I'll answer the phone tonight. But we can't avoid them tomorrow. You'll have to face them then. Better get to bed now. Don't forget, we have more than a message to recover. We have a murderer to track down."

The next forenoon was a busy one. Early in the morning Howland came out in his true colors. The situation had to be told those of the family from whom it had been kept. The truth was a further shock to Adelaide Martin. She'd been too concerned with the injury itself to dwell upon the source of it. Mrs. Cheney wasn't as tough as she made out to be, either, but she recovered soon and Dan diverted her to the care of his mother.

As a matter of routine Howland had to take the fingerprints of everyone at Rangecrest, and he got at this promptly. Then he sorted the cards and studied them. Not one matched the prints taken from the jade Bodhisattva or the paper box—save that Dan's and a gardener's were on the box.

"Not that I expected anything," Howland sighed.

The gates were opened to the press, who came and went and were less trouble than expected. A little friction was aroused when photographers were denied the house, but they finally settled for shots of the grounds. One of the reporters was smart enough to remember Kuei Feng's "suicide" and fish for a connection with Mr. Burgess' "accident." But it seemed it was the display of Oriental objects of art that furnished the slim link to him, and Howland fended for Dan.

The morning was gone before the two found themselves free again.

"The job is still to find that message," growled Howland. "We'll search once more, though I don't see how we could have missed any bet. . . . Well, first the museum."

They went there. Howland stood before the Cambodian Buddha and stared up at the benign face.

"Remember your father's words, '*the hand of Buddha*'?"

Dan nodded.

"Was he ever given to speaking in metaphor? I mean, he must have known he was dying. Did he mean his dying was the work of fate—the hand of Buddha—or do you think he was passing on to you some definite message?"

"No, he never spoke in metaphor. I'm sure he meant something by those words, but I've no idea what."

"There are many Buddhas here. I've examined them all and found nothing. We'll go over them again and start with this one. After all, he fell here at its base." He eyed the big statue malevolently. "It's hollow, of course," he muttered.

"Yes," Dan admitted, catching the thought at once, "but it must weigh two or three tons. Dad couldn't possibly have tilted it and put something under."

They proved this when the two of them together couldn't budge the statue.

"It took a small derrick and four men to place it," Dan said. "It's never been moved since."

"The hand, the hand," growled Howland. "One is upraised, the other held out. This one outstretched—could he have meant it pointed to something? That's a pretty involved way of hiding a thing, but let's see if it does point."

He threw open the doors of the museum. The hand of the Buddha pointed straight to the far end of the corridor that split the lower floor lengthwise. There was nothing at that end of the hall except the glass doors leading onto the breakfast terrace, and beyond that the bush-bordered path leading to the swimming-pool and tennis court.

"He certainly wouldn't have left the house," Howland reasoned. "He'd already set guards outside, indicating danger there." They turned back to the statue. Dan's hand shot out and fastened on Howland's arm.

"Wait!" he cried. "We're looking for a metal cylinder not over two inches in diameter, or over ten inches or twelve inches long. Anything else couldn't have been contained in the ginger jar. This is a hollow casting. If that hand—"

"Yeh, I thought of that too," said Howland sourly. "The hand is solid; it doesn't come off. I've tried it."

But Dan jumped up on the base of the statue, grasping the outstretched bronze arm for balance. His other hand reached to the head of the statue for additional support. He thought he felt the arm give. It was only a tiny tremor, but the arm was seemingly a part of the solid casting, and that it should give at all puzzled him. He tried it again and again; he struck it and shook it. There was no further tremor, he didn't again get that fleeting impression. The arm was entirely solid.

"Well?" asked Howland.

Dan didn't answer. He gave his attention to the hand itself. He pulled at the hand and twisted, but it wouldn't budge. He knew his father could never have exerted the strength against it that he did.

The casting showed a long-sleeved garment which ended at the wrist. Dan brought from his study a magnifying glass and both men went over the wrist of the casting minutely. It offered no explanation.

They turned their attention to the other arm and hand, upraised against the body, and had as little luck. Both hands were solid parts of the whole.

Whatever else the phrase meant—"*the hand of Buddha*"—it certainly didn't mean that whatever Kuei Feng brought was concealed behind either hand of this statue, hollow though the arm might be.

"There's nothing for it, Dan," Howland shrugged, "but to search the entire house again, with special attention to all Buddhas."

ROOM by room, they went over the house once more. As before, they started with one bunch of keys and a second key ring to which they transferred the keys one by one as used. And again they ended their search with the one small flat key left over for which they could find no lock.

"Of course," Dan muttered, "it could be an old key simply overlooked and not thrown away. But it was in his personal key-case, and I don't remember of our disposing of anything with a lock on it."

Returning to the library, they sank into chairs. It had been an exhausting job. Howland stoked his pipe.

"The next thing," he said musingly over the steaming coffee Jung Lu brought them, "is to make Mr. Kuei talk. You'll go with me, of course? We can't waste any more time. We must get to the source of that message."

"Very well."

Dan gave Jung Lu a strange order, and when the two men sped toward the city, they carried with them a camellia bush, its roots balled. It was the particular one which Kuei Feng had always admired. It should do well in the small fenced space at the back of Kuei Teh-sheng's shop. There were blossoms on the bush now, and dozens of buds.

The elderly Chinese received the gift stoically. He already knew of the death of his friend at Rangecrest, and they had no difficulty with him today. He was willing to speak now, since Mr. Burgess couldn't. He told of receiving from a compatriot in Honolulu, by messenger—an ordinary seaman on a Hawaii-California freighter—a small can perhaps two inches in diameter and ten inches long. With it came the jumping-frog ***netsuke*** and a letter stating the can was of great importance and must reach Edward Simms Burgess as quickly as possible. . . .

No, Mr. Kuei had destroyed the letter; it was confidential and had spoken of other matters. Why had a messenger, a common seaman, brought it? Because it was safer and quicker than to risk it through public channels, with inspection of articles and censorship of letters.

The letter had said strictest secrecy was essential, that there were those who would stop at nothing to prevent it from reaching its destination. Therefore, he had camouflaged its delivery—by means of the ginger jar.

Who would stop it? Kuei Teh-sheng could not say—or would not. But he admitted painting the dragon on the jar. Was it the Black Dragon Society he was afraid of? Mr. Kuei would not say, and his face told nothing.

In what way did the *netsuke,* to be passed along with the can, prove the authenticity of the cylinder's contents? The Chinese did not know; only Mr. Burgess might have known that.

One thing remained: The name of the Chinese in Honolulu who had forwarded the can and the *netsuke.*

"Dr. Shun Kow Lin," they were informed.

And that was all Kuei Teh-sheng could tell them.

"Or *would* tell us," muttered Howland on this way back. "It's little enough. Just a name. And it didn't originate with Dr. Shun. He's just a pawn in passing it along, as Mr. Kuei is. Kuei is smart, but he's been known for some time as a clearinghouse between Chinese in Chungking and sources of possible intervention and influence here in America. Sort of extra-curricular activities. Unofficially official stuff. But his actions were not inimical to us, and there's been no reason to interfere with him. I learned this on our way in the first time. I phoned a friend in the F.B.I. Well," he concluded, "a call to Honolulu is in order. Let's hope that does it."

THEY placed the call on arriving home, and the connection was made in good time. Dr. Shun listened politely, but as Howland commenced a description of the can, he interrupted.

"Do not speak too freely, sir," Dr. Shun said. His English was precise. "Please explain your interest in the matter."

Howland told of the two murders and the loss of the tin. But in the end he got nowhere, for Dr. Shun would not talk.

"Wires are not private," he said. Nor would he even write of the matter, for it would mean writing names, and that he would not do.

"I will have someone call on you," said Howland. "A responsible official."

"And how, sir, will he relay the information to you? By telephone or by writing, either of which I could do. I assure you, sir, it is not safe—for me or for others."

Howland thought fast. He'd secured the admission that the matter had not originated with Dr. Shun. It came from beyond Hawaii; and that being the case, Howland in Honolulu would be that much nearer the source. Would Dr. Shun talk with him if he should go to Honolulu?

"Certainly," said Dr. Shun calmly, "if you come with credentials and will treat what I tell you confidentially."

Howland hung up, disgusted. "Credentials! I suppose he means that *netsuke.*" He drummed the desk-top for some minutes. "Well, I'll have to go. We've got the bull by the horns, Dan, and we can't let go. I only hope there's no joker in it, after all this fuss and fury!"

Howland in a matter of seconds had decided on a twenty-four-hundred-mile trip across water for the few words Dr. Shun could speak! Getting to Hawaii seemed as simple as taking in a movie.

As Howland scowlingly reported to Washington—failure at Rangecrest, next logical step Honolulu—he was told to hold the line. After several minutes he received instructions that wiped some of the chagrin and anger from his face.

"That's the first bit of luck we've had," he said on hanging up. "A flight of planes takes off from San Diego for Pearl Harbor on Monday night. They're putting through orders for me to go along. This is military information, of course. No need for anyone else to know."

"And if you have to go farther? You probably will."

Howland shrugged. "I'll cross that bridge when I come to it. Meanwhile, there's something else to think of: That message is here. Our not finding it doesn't mean someone else won't have better luck—if he gets in. And he won't stop at further murder. So for proper protection we must have guards who know their business."

Dan frowned. "You mean Army operatives?"

"No." Howland measured his words. "This isn't an actual Army assignment," he said carefully. "So far, I'm my own boss on this case—such as it is. I won't be if I call them in, but I'll still be the one who has to answer back East. There's been no reason yet to go beyond the F.B.I. and I'd—rather work with them. Call it first love. Anyway, I made arrangements with them yesterday. A phone call will have men here tonight."

The guards arrived and took over the patrolling of Rangecrest. Cots were set up in the lower floor of the gatehouse, others in a garden pavilion. Here Admiral Cheney found something to do. He and Howland mapped Rangecrest and outlined the duties. Since it was difficult at night to cover the entire boundaries, attention was centered on the house and surrounding terrace and lawns. Dan was easier in mind with the stronger guard. The women were scarcely aware of them. . . .

The funeral was to be on Monday, a private service in a chapel at the cemetery. But on Sunday the body lay in state in the big living-room at Rangecrest, for Mr. Burgess had had many friends despite his years of retirement from public life. And so Sunday saw a flow of visitors at Rangecrest to pay their last respects.

In this run of visitors, however, Howland thought he saw a thousand-to-one possibility. A smart murderer will not return to the scene of the crime: but in this case there was a lodestone to draw him. There was still something here that he wanted.

Howland didn't overlook the chance that the murderer might even know where the item was hidden—might have seen it secreted, attacked Mr. Burgess to get at it, but been driven away before securing it by Edith's coming downstairs. That could explain his hanging around dangerously after the attack when he could have got away.

If a Jap, of course, he couldn't risk an open daylight entry, even among the mourners, in this restricted Western Defense Area. But it would be foolish not to suppose the Japs had agents of other nationalities planted before Pearl Harbor.

So Howland placed men strategically, and hoped. But nothing happened. The day passed without incident.

HOWLAND'S orders were to report to an air base at San Diego by six o'clock Monday. The funeral was at noon. He remained at Rangecrest giving orders to the men he'd brought in, and completing his packing. At two o'clock Dan returned from the services and left again at once, with Howland, on the trip to San Diego.

The Rangecrest driveways were of gravel. An asphalt-surfaced roadway led from the gatehouse down the mountainside to Foothill Boulevard. It wound about the steep slopes above sharply falling ravines, the curves protected by white-painted posts and low boardings. Dan was a careful driver, and the car had powerful brakes; yet on the first sharp turn beads of perspiration popped out on his forehead. The pedal worked loosely. The brakes wouldn't grab! He shot a hand to the emergency brake, got control of the car, and breathed again.

"Damned careless of Chong," he muttered, to answer Howland's look. "He's supposed to keep these cars in condition. Always has. Well, there's a garage on Foothill. If repairs take too long, we'll phone the house for another car."

It was a considerable downgrade, and the curves were bad ones. With one hand on the wheel and the other busy manipulating the emergency brake, driving was

difficult. He should have switched into first, but he'd driven this road so much he thought he could make better time this way. Rounding one curve and heading straight for another, Dan had to jerk the wheel sharply. There was a snapping sound, and the steering-wheel tore free in his hand!

This time there was no safeguard. The car crashed into the rocky hillside, and all one side of it was smashed in. Dan wiped his face. Had the break occurred on an opposite curve, with the car pointed for one of the ravines, it would have catapulted over the low guard-rail and plunged down the steep mountainside.

He turned in his seat to look at Howland, slammed into the corner of the seat. The man's face was ghastly. He stirred, winced, forced himself upright.

"You're hurt, Lee!"

"Caught my elbow," said the Army man with an effort. "Raised it to protect my head. Broke the right arm—and the collar-bone, I guess."

Blood commenced soaking through his clothing. Dan helped him from the wreckage, and Howland's face was dripping wet from pain-sweat before he was out on the road, glaring at the ruin.

"Brake lines punctured," he gritted, "and the steering knuckle sheared through to give under stress. More proof of what we're up against—if proof were needed!"

Dan was still shaken. "But how could anyone get at the cars in the garage?"

"Your guess is as good as mine." Howland winced with pain. "What I want to know is how they knew about this trip. For they wanted to stop me, of course, and I reckon they've done it."

Anger and bafflement showed in his eyes. Then they lit up with sudden decision. He was a man who could make up his mind fast.

"But they haven't blocked the job in hand. You're going in my place!"

"Me!"

"Yes. And time is short. Fix me a spot, Dan; I'll have to sit."

Dan rolled a small boulder to where the hillside would furnish a back rest, and Howland eased himself onto it.

Then the Army man talked. He was brief. Dan would get the limousine—and Chong, to bring back the car. He'd take the suitcase packed for him, Howland, and continue on to San Diego, producing his own identification at the air base there. By that time, Howland would have got in touch with Washington and stirred the wheels in motion that would put Dan aboard one of those planes in place of himself.

"But you're pretty badly smashed up," cried Dan. "You need a doctor. I'll have to get you out of here—"

"Sure, sure," muttered Howland, from behind clenched teeth. "Phone Dr. Ridley while Chong's getting the car ready."

"I'll be back in twenty minutes."

Dan kept his word. When the big car shot down the mountainside and stopped by the wreck, he found Howland chalk-white but grinning feebly. He had tried to remove the shoulder holster from under his left arm. He'd got his coat off somehow, but had only succeeded in pinning that arm to his side with the shoulder harness half off.

"Give a hand, Dan. I'm stiffening up."

Dan worked the straps gently, carefully removed the holster and its automatic.

"Off with your coat," ordered Howland. "Strap it on. You'll need it, or I miss my guess. Wipe off that blood first."

Dan did as told. Howland also handed over his full supply of cash. Then his voice took on a rasping quality, partly from the pain, partly from the necessity of impressing Dan.

"It's up to you from this point on. Don't forget what's happened up to now. Keep your eyes open. Take no chances. Trust no one. Keep your guard up all the time. There's no telling where the chase will end. It all depends on what Dr. Shun tells you. Keep in touch with me far's you can."

As Dan made no move to leave, the Army man growled: "Well, what're you waiting for? Get going!"

"And leave you here like this?"

"Sure. Why not?"

It wasn't necessary. Dan spied a car turning up the Rangecrest road. It was Dr. Ridley. Dan's summons had been urgent.

"Before he gets here, Lee, there's a thought came to me: Dr. Shun is probably the best bet, for he must know where the can came from. But it seems to me there may be some mention of that jumping-frog *netsuke*—"

"Hey! I forgot, dammit. In my vest pocket, Dan!"

"There may be mention of it in Dad's notes." Dan transferred the carving to himself as he talked. "Remember that drawer of notes? This *netsuke* had so much meaning for him that I think it quite possible there's some mention of its origin there. I've worked on a lot of that material, dealing mostly with China. Skip anything that's been typed. But there's quite a stack on his earlier days in the Orient that I'm not thoroughly familiar with. Look at the Korea section first. His reminiscences ran on Korea after receiving it. Get Edie to help. Here are my keys—and the one we couldn't find use for."

"Fine, Dan." Howland grinned, a heartier effort. "But get going. You've none too much time."

As the other car drew up, Dan turned over the injured man to Dr. Ridley with a wave of the hand, and to the Doctor's surprise hastily swung into the big car without a word and got under way.

Chapter Nine

IT took Dan a little time to realize fully he was a special agent now. He found on arriving at the air base that they had a wire-photo picture of him and another of his thumbprint to compare with a print made on the spot. Howland had worked fast in spite of his injuries. Dan also had his driver's license—issued three years previously, which helped—showing his thumbprint, and his civilian's pass for the Army camp at which he worked. They left nothing to chance in examining him.

He was bound to secrecy regarding anything he might see or surmise about the planes, or the flight, then allowed out onto the field. Here there was some delay, but at length the roar of activity settled to a hum and the hum to a buzz. Dusk was gathering fast, surrounding and blanketing the field thickly. Lights were turned on, but only those essential to the job were used, and they were so shielded from above as to play every ray upon the ground.

Dan was put in charge of a soldier, to be delivered in his plane. The pilot officer, a stocky, snub-nosed, red-haired fellow named Hanford, had been told of his passenger. He gave Dan a good grip and wasted no time on suspicions. This was his first important job, and he was nervous as a prima donna on opening night. Yet in spite of this, the set of his shoulders, the depth of his eyes, gave an impression of confidence.

He introduced Dan to some of the crew on the ground. "Lieutenant Merrick, co-pilot."

Two others were handy for introductions. "Lieutenant Raubb, bombardier. Lieutenant Hurstle, navigator." Both were blond, of medium build, very much alike. They might have been track stars.

On the side of the plane, forward, was painted a girl of many and goodly curves, and the name: *Jive Jenny.*

Hanford took Dan aboard and introduced Sergeant Denning, the radio man, and a couple of others. This ship was manned by ten men, not the nine on previous types of fortresses. Dan met the others during the night.

"You won't resent it if I expect you to stick pretty well to this bay," Lieutenant Hanford said. "Actually, there's no good reason I can see why you shouldn't look us over, but it's just as well if I can say in the morning that you've seen nothing. They'll probably ask. Anyway, we're kind of crowded for moving around."

"That's okay. I'll make out."

IT was true they were crowded. Freight was stowed where it could be, and in Dan's bay was a giant airplane motor in moisture-proof diaphanous covering like a Christmas package, strongly blocked in place.

It was fully dark outside. The long runway was outlined with lights as one by one the planes took the air. There was a squadron of them, and they flew in two sections. Dan's was the first division, and it hovered aloft until all nine had risen; then they headed west in a V-of-V's.

He was comfortable enough. He had blankets for bedding down on a shelf cot that hinged on the wall of the plane. Beyond an abbreviated jutting partition was a tiny galley, and through the night one or another of the crew was getting coffee or a sandwich and would stop to trade a few words with Dan.

They were a cheerful lot, except for Lieutenant Hanford. They were headed for trouble, and it did something to them. They'd worked and waited a long time for this moment.

Dan stretched out on his cot and after a time fell asleep. Bumpy weather woke him sometime after midnight. Thoughts had been running through his mind while asleep, and they continued now he was awake.

Edie! In the excitement of the wreck and the urgency for haste, Dan had forgotten to say good-by to her—and to his mother. Now his spirits were at low ebb. If only he'd gone to the house to telephone Dr. Ridley, instead of using the garage phone!

Presently Dan drifted off once more. He slept uneasily until six o'clock by his watch. Then he remembered the two and one-half hours' difference in time, and set back his watch to three-thirty.

Lieutenant Merrick was gulping hot coffee in the tiny galley. He saw Dan stir awake, and gave him a grin.

"Good sleep?" he asked. "We're almost in. We'll set down in half an hour. Have some coffee."

He flipped a hand toward the coffee bottle. Dan poured himself a paper cupful, and the warmth of it tingled on his empty stomach. . . .

True to the co-pilot's promise, the plane touched ground in the half-hour's time. One by one the others followed.

There were formalities to be got through. Dan discovered they even had wire-photos of his face and thumbprint here too. A careful lot, these service men! Inspection over, an open-faced young officer came up at a trot and singled him out.

"Mr. Dan Burgess?"

"Yes."

"Jones—Lieutenant." He had a good grin. "Detailed to make things easy for you. At your service."

A nice courtesy, if true; but Dan was inwardly annoyed. He needed no help in locating Dr. Shun Kow Lin. Was this Howland's idea? Or the Army's idea, here on Oahu?

"Thanks," he said, "but that's hardly necessary. Right now I'm merely headed for a hotel."

"As you wish. Where will you put up?"

Dan named a small hotel. He knew the bigger ones had been taken over by the Army.

"That's Army too," Jones said easily. "There's a shortage of space here for stray travelers, so I took the liberty of hunting a room for you. I engaged one, but that needn't bind you. The place was a private home on the beach, but the owners tacked on a temporary addition and operate it as a hotel."

"It should answer. I'm not fussy. Thank you."

"Meanwhile, Mainland's had a call in for you. You're to get the Los Angeles operator at once."

Los Angeles. That would be Rangecrest—Howland. Could something else have happened? Dan scowled. In any case, he was here to see Dr. Shun Kow Lin, and the sooner he saw him, the sooner he'd have something to tell Howland. He'd see Dr. Shun before phoning.

"Very well," he said.

"I can take you to a phone here," offered Jones.

"I'll wait till I get to town. Isn't far, is it?"

"Six-seven miles. I have a car here—such as it is. I'll drive you in."

"Thanks." Dan had to smile, for the other was a likable fellow, though too determined to be of service, and that made Dan the more determined to be neither spied upon nor interfered with. "Just tell me where to go, and I won't bother you. I can get a taxi, can't I?"

"Not here. Nor outside the reservation at this hour."

"Okay, then I'll accept."

It was still gray when the Lieutenant pulled his coupé up to the hotel. There Dan asked Jones:

"Know where Dr. Shun Kow Lin lives?"

"Shun Kow Lin!" Jones stared at him. "You came to Honolulu to see Shun Kow Lin?"

"Yes," growled Dan. "Any reason why I shouldn't?"

Jones said gravely: "Dr. Shun Kow Lin was murdered last night."

"Murdered!" Dan's jaw set; the muscles formed hard ridges.

"Yes." He eyed Dan mildly. "You haven't called Los Angeles," he observed. "Didn't you want—"

"No," said Dan shortly. "I wanted to see Dr. Shun first."

Jones settled behind his wheel, lighted a cigarette. "Well," he said, grinning, "think it out. You can let me in on it or not. Personally, I'd like a little dish of excitement. I haven't had much out of this fracas so far. But the Army will want to check if there's any connection between Dr. Shun's murder and the fact of your being on the way to see him at this particular time."

Dan glowered. Dr. Shun had been murdered before he landed, but he felt as though he'd muffed the job on which he'd come. Yet what good would it do to call in help now? How could Jones help, anyway?

AT the hotel, Dan took the call in his room. It was Howland, and he came to the point. "Glad to get you so soon, Dan. Had to give you further warning. You may be in some danger there—"

"How'd you come to call me?" asked Dan. "Find the wires tapped?"

"Yes. We captured a Jap in a cleverly grassed-over dug-out in the mesquite of a small cañon outside your grounds."

"He cut into the line before it entered the conduit?"

"Yes. This one had fallen asleep with ear-phones on. Blankets and eating utensils showed he had a pal on the job who got away. It still doesn't explain how they got at the car, of course."

"What did you do with him? Is he the one—who—"

"No, he's not the murderer. I locked him in the toolhouse and had him out for questioning later. On the way back he tried to escape, but your gardeners caught up with him before my men did and clubbed him to death."

"Was he Isei?"

"Isei?"

"First-generation Japanese. Japanese-born."

"Oh, yes. *Nisei* is American-born, huh? He was full Japanese, all right. That brings up the question of whether he's one of those released from relocation centers, or if he escaped the round-up when war broke and has laid low all this time. That wouldn't be astonishing. The Japs knew what was coming and were certainly prepared. I'd be more surprised if there aren't more loose. This one had both Chinese and Korean identification. Stolen or forged. Haven't had time to check yet. I have some bloodhounds on the way to see if we can track the second one back to their base. It's probably somewhere in the mountains behind us, and bound to be so well camouflaged we'd never find it by ordinary searching.

"But let's cut it short, Dan. Listen. We're not up a tree yet in following that message. Edith and I spent all evening going over your father's notes. Smart girl you have there, Dan. In brief, she found there were originally *three* jumping-frog *netsukes* exactly alike. Your father picked them up in Japan when stationed there.

"After Japan, as you know, he went to Korea; and while at Seoul seems to have run a good deal with men from other legations. Well, he went on a hunting trip in the interior with a member of the Chinese Legation. They were guests of a prince of the Min clan, Min Yong Sik. The account of the trip and of Prince Min is mighty good reading, but the point is that on their return to Seoul the three exchanged token gifts of friendship commemorating the trip.

"Your father's gifts to these other men were two of the three jumping-frog *netsukes*. Prince Min's to your father was that Jap *inro* to which your father's *netsuke* is attached. Of course this was forty-odd years ago, and that's a long time in any language. But with nothing better to go on now, we're going to have to chase down those leads."

"I've heard Dad speak of Prince Min," said Dan. "Who was the Chinese?"

"I gather he was a high-ranking noble of the day, an aristocrat certainly. Name of Kuo Tso-lin."

"Kuo Tso-lin!"

"Know him?"

"Yes. I've met him twice on trips to the Orient. He was a banker with headquarters in Hongkong. He and Dad were good friends. They had frequent correspondence, mostly about art purchases made through escrow arrangements with Mr. Kuo's bank. Mr. Kuo was a famous collector himself, by the way. And Lee—"

"Yes."

"That Cambodian Buddha! It was a gift from Kuo Tso-lin years ago, when Dad started building up his collection for museum purposes."

"So?" There was a short silence. "Well, at the moment I don't know what we can make of that. I note you use the past tense. Is he dead?"

"No. No reason to use past tense except he's no longer in business in Hongkong, of course, and I don't suppose he's collecting art treasures now."

"Know where he is?"

"Well—no. He escaped from Hongkong and is somewhere in China, I believe. We had but one letter from him since Hongkong, and that didn't tell where he was. He sent it merely to set Dad's mind at rest concerning his safety."

"But I take it he's a man of some prominence. We should be able to reach him through Chungking."

"Well, I don't know, Lee. We know the banking house got its books and gold and securities away to Chungking, and continues there under Mr. Kuo's two sons. In fact, we still have funds with them for purchases made in the Orient. But we know of two instances in which his sons refused to tell their father's whereabouts to big commercial customers of theirs. We know, because these people tried to get us to find out for them. Dad wouldn't."

"Hmm." Howland pondered this. "That all sounds promising in a way, yet discouraging too. If the sons have refused to give out up to now— Dan, you've got to get in touch with Mr. Kuo. He's our last clue, and we can't lose time. You'll have to talk with him in person, for whatever he can tell you can't be trusted to cable or phone.

"Now, as I get it, he's apparently not in Chungking. You think he's in China, but he could be anywhere—Australia, India, some safe island of the South Pacific. Even there in Hawaii. If you can get the sons to tell you where he is, it may save you time and travel. They can use our diplomatic code. That should be safe. If they won't, you'll have to go on to Chungking and get it in person.

"I'll set the wheels in motion to get you priority for messages or for transportation on westward if necessary. Report to the commanding officer there—in say, three or four hours. It'll take a little time."

"But, Lee, that raises complications. I had only five days' leave. If I have to go on, I'll be overdue back to work, and that may cancel my draft deferment. I can't afford that. I have a job on my hands that no one else can do, now that Dad's gone, and it can't wait until after the war—"

"I know, I know. I'll take care of all that. You're still working for the Army. And Dan, if you have to go on, remember you're on your own. Good luck!"

Chapter Ten

WHEN Dan hung up he stared glumly at the phone. If this was the life of a special agent, he didn't care for it. *If* he had to go on—of course he'd have to! Kuo Tso-lin was an old man. He would never have left China.

Dan had asked about his mother and Edith. They were taking things quietly. The Admiral and Mrs. Cheney were keeping to themselves. The Admiral had taken over one shift of the guards, honorarily.

Howland's arm and shoulder? Painful, of course, but Dr. Ridley had patched him up. Had a cast on his shoulder, and the arm was bound to his side. Working up a fever from his activities, but he'd get some rest now. The whole thing was up to Dan from this point.

Dan snapped out of it. He went down to Jones.

"I find my job isn't finished. I may have to go west from here," Dan said. "At any rate, I have to send a radiogram. Don't know how long I'll be in Honolulu, but it looks as though I could use some of that protection you're handing out."

Jones grinned. "My orders are for the day. Have to get them extended if the job's to run over. How do you mean, you're going west from here?"

"I don't know. I'm to call on the commanding officer later this morning. I suppose I'll find out then. There's a very slim chance I can avoid it. I'm to try by radio first. Right now, how about that Army check-up?"

Dan found his session with the Army officers a rather uncomfortable one.

The chief interrogator was a lieutenant-colonel whose voice, eyes and manner were as coldly impersonal as the gun-metal steel desk behind which he sat. Which was as it should be, of course, with a man who must weigh every word he heard for its truth or falsity. But each passing minute under Colonel Sherrauld's stare would make even an innocent man feel guilty.

Dan was on a spot. He'd never had much experience in dissembling. The reason for his hop to the islands was the reason behind the killing of Dr. Shun, and the inquiring officers wanted to get at that. Dan couldn't see where it would do any harm to tell them the bare facts—that a message Washington was anxious about had become lost, and he was tracing back to its source. Yet they'd not be satisfied with that; that would tell them nothing; they'd only go on from there until they'd squeezed him dry. And then what would they have? Nothing that would put them onto the murderer of Dr. Shun.

So Dan fell back on the simple fact that he was here in place of a G-2 man on special assignment. "Look for Japanese elements," he did say. "The Black Dragon Society is tied in with it, if that will help." Beyond that he refused to elaborate.

DELVING into Dan's background, the name of Edward Simms Burgess had come out. Colonel Sherrauld, gazing speculatively at Dan for several long minutes while his fellow officers carried on, cleared his throat and said—to everyone's surprise:

"I think this need be all for the present, gentlemen."

Jones and Dan rose to go. He added: "Lieutenant, bring Mr. Burgess to my home for cocktails."

"Yes sir," answered Jones, on an up note. Outside, to Dan: "That's funny. He has a rep for being a pretty cold fish. Better watch it. Maybe he's going to try a new line."

It was past ten. "You've had no breakfast," observed Jones.

"I'm not hungry. Can't we call on the commanding officer and get it over with?"

"Okay," grinned Jones.

It wasn't necessary to see the commandant. One of his staff, a Captain Ederly, was expecting Dan. This may have been one of Captain Ederly's bad days, or he may have been allergic to civilians of military age, or perhaps he was simply the official "no" man of the commandant's office. At any rate, he wasn't impressed.

"We have orders from Washington concerning you, Mr. Burgess," he said gruffly, a little sourly. "Rather brief orders, not very explanatory." And not very satisfactory, said his tone. "I understand you're to have emergency priority on some radio messages."

The captain shoved a pad across his desk without a word. Dan wrote: *"Kuo Sung or Kuo Shan, South China and Peking Mercantile Banking Corp., Chungking."*

It was an old concern, Kuo Tso-lin's banking house, and they'd kept the old name—even, in Hongkong, kept the ugly old stone building with its massive stone gingerbread of another era. Until the Japanese came.

Dan got this far and paused. He thought carefully. Kuo Tso-lin's sons had refused two good commercial customers their father's whereabouts. But they knew him, knew the long personal friendship between their father and his, must know of Edward Simms Burgess' death. Dan decided and wrote:

"My father's death makes imperative I contact Kuo Tso-lin immediately. Urgent private reasons. Please favor. Embassy will forward in code."

He handed back the pad. Captain Ederly read it; his lips thinned, his hand made an impatient movement. He stared coldly.

"Private reasons? You have good connections in Washington," he commented.

Dan reddened and flared: "I have no connections in Washington. I'm not doing this for myself. I'm doing it for Army Intelligence—if there is such a thing."

Another stare, then an almost imperceptible twitch of the lips. Captain Ederly looked down at the pad, read the message again, scribbled on a corner of the pad, rang a buzzer. To the orderly who appeared, he said: "See this is got off instantly."

He now looked over Jones for the first time, and Dan again. "Until your answer comes," he said, "is there anything else I can do for you?"

"Thank you, no."

"Where will you be?"

Dan told him, and the Captain scribbled on his date pad. "Very well!" The interview was over.

Headed for the hotel again, Jones glanced sidewise at Dan and chuckled, "You have a temper, I see." As Dan said nothing, he went on imperturbably: "It—uh, doesn't do any good, you know."

They had breakfast. It was lunch for Jones. They dragged it out. When they could get no more coffee, they took to iced pineapple juice and cigarettes. It was noon when a phone message brought word an answer had come. This was extraordinary time, especially considering it was scarcely daybreak in Chungking. The two returned to Captain Ederly's office, where the Captain with the faintest of smiles handed Dan the slip:

"Profuse apologies. Cannot oblige. Will gladly assist otherwise."

Dan stared at the paper. So it was on to Chungking. And then where? But he'd expected no less. He shouldn't have been disappointed. He sat down.

"Do you want to send another message?"

"It would do no good."

"I take it you want to continue on to China."

"Yes."

"I've had instructions to arrange it," Captain Ederly said. "The flight of heavy bombers on which you came from the mainland is continuing to Australia tonight. They take off at dusk. You'll go along in the same ship. I understand you have no passport with you? Then you'll require emergency identification. It will be ready for you. There are diseases in the Orient. Working for the Army, have you had any immunization shots?"

"Smallpox, typhoid, and anti-tetanus, because they were available. Yellow fever and cholera three years ago on my last trip to the Orient."

"Well, here is a schedule, Lieutenant. Take Mr. Burgess to the hospital and let the doctors have their say. Get his picture and fingerprints taken at once for identification. Follow the schedule. Have him on the field at the given time."

Jones glanced at the memo. It said nineteen o'clock. It was now one. They had six hours.

The details were not long keeping them, and then the afternoon was left. Heading back to the hotel once more, Jones broke a stretch of silence.

"I've been thinking—uh, Dan. You're not at the Moana or the Royal Hawaiian, of course, but your hotel has its own little piece of beach, and you get the same sun and the same surf. How would you like a dip first and then a nap on the—uh, sand?"

Dan turned and looked at Jones. There was something behind this. "A little open, isn't it?"

"Why—uh, yes, come to think of it, it is." Then in a burst of confidence: "Look. We picked up a 'breed this morning in connection with Dr. Shun's death. That breed will talk, sooner or later, and Mr. Hon'able Jap, the guy behind him, knows it. He knows he'll be picked up, too, for no one can get off these islands. It's only a question of time before Mr. Jap's usefulness to his Son of Heaven is over. Well, you're the guy's next job, probably, so while you're available and he has his freedom, why shouldn't he take a risk to get you? He's lost in any case. He might's well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb. Does that sound reasonable?"

"Yes."

"So he'll be laying for you as you go in or out of your hotel, or most any other time or place when you least

expect it. Why not create the chance for him when we'll be expecting him and be prepared?"

"I get it. I stretch out on the sand like a piece of cheese on a spit."

"Well—uh, crudely put. But," he went on hurriedly, "I honestly don't think you'd be in any danger. I can get any number of good men on the job, and we'd spring the trap before anything happened. Look, I'd be risking a court-martial if anything happened to you. Would I take that chance?"

"Yes," said Dan, "I think you would." He smiled. "You haven't had much out of this war so far, and wouldn't mind a little excitement. Huh?"

"There is that," Jones said with candor. "However, it might mean capturing these fellows who've pledged allegiance to us and still carry a knife up their sleeves."

"Which will be done sooner or later in any event, according to your own say-so."

"By somebody else, yes, not me," said Jones carefully.

"Okay," Dan said after some thought.

Jones grinned, stepped on the gas, turned the car for his quarters. The room was one of a couple of dozen leading off the corridor in this officers' barracks.

HE got on the phone in the corridor and rounded up half a dozen soldiers, the best pistol-shots available. They came to Jones' room, and Dan found them a hardy-looking outfit. All were non-coms, browned by the sun, pretty straight of eye.

The Lieutenant sketched his idea. There was actually nothing to it. One by one they were to dispose themselves at certain vantage points completely ringing the small section of beach where he was later to show up. One would be a bather, another asleep in the sun, the others hidden. None would be at a greater distance than fifty yards. Jones knew the spot and was handy with a pencil to show the men their stations.

By the time he was through, the scheme sounded foolproof, and Dan was less uneasy about it as he realized he was in any case legitimate bait for any moment of the time he was here. It began to seem much more sensible to have the showdown tailored to safety regulations and thus get it over with.

The Lieutenant's last orders were to shoot, not to kill but to capture. Dead Japs revealed no accomplices. Too often even live ones didn't.

He and Dan waited an hour to give the men time. Then grabbing up a pair of trunks, Jones led the way out to the car and they headed now for the hotel.

Howland knew how to play as well as work. He'd packed a pair of Dan's trunks into the suitcase for himself. Dan put them on. Jones donned his at the same time, but carried his belt and pistol in hand as they walked out onto the beach.

They had their dips separately, so that one of them was always by Jones' pistol. Not to appear wary might tip their hand. Then Dan stretched out. The sun felt good. The surf was lulling. Dan was tired. Nothing had happened, nor even looked suspicious. It seemed that nothing would. After all, the spot was pretty open. The light was too bright on his lids, so he rolled over, cradled his head on his arms, and dozed.

It seemed the next instant—it was actually half an hour—when a yell startled him wide awake. There were shots, and a body flung itself on top of him. He struggled to throw it off. Jones barked in his ear:

"Stay down, damn you! Lie still! Stay flat!"

Shots from a submachine-gun kicked up sand close to him, traveling in a series of dusty dots. Other shots rang out from several points. He twisted his head to see a small man falling, dropping the submachine-gun, another small man running to grab up the gun. More shots, and the second one fell before he had the gun off the ground. Fell on top of it! Then Jones' half dozen soldiers were racing from every quarter, converging on the two writhing Japanese. It was all one continuous blur of action, over in less than thirty seconds. It was only later when he picked the scene to pieces in detail that Dan remembered all this in its proper perspective.

Dan wriggled out from under Jones and rose. The Lieutenant came to his knees, a look of most awful consternation on his face. His hand was exploring his rear and it came away red. Dan saw the trunks Jones wore would never be of further use. They showed four rips, exactly an inch and a half apart as though spaced with a rule, and the white wool that had shown up so well against Jones' dark tan was rapidly reddening.

"My God," moaned Jones, "if this gets around, I'll never live it down!"

"*If* it gets around?" Dan had to grin. "How can you help it? You're bleeding like a stuck pig. Bend over." He looked closer, and straightened with relief. "It's not so bad. One went through the flesh; one plowed a furrow, and the other two are scratches." He sobered. "Looks as if I owe you one, Jones. That was fast thinking."

The two Japanese were badly shot up in hands and arms—bone splinters showed through; one of them also was wounded in the leg and shoulder. But the soldiers had stuck to their orders and preserved the men for questioning.

One of the sergeants gave Dan a hand with Jones. Try as he would to hide it, a grin was getting the better of him.

"I'm going to hate you, Baker," warned Jones.

The grin stretched. "Then you'll have to hate the rest of us too, sir," said the man. "Honest, sir, it's too bad it happened, but it is kind of funny."

Dan didn't laugh. Those cuts had come from bullets that might very well have found some vital part of himself.

At the hospital, he was treated for abrasions on face and arms, made when Jones in jumping to cover him had pushed him pretty roughly in the sand. Minor bruises; they'd heal in a day or two.

JONES had yet to turn over his prisoners officially and make out reports. Voluminous reports! This was an even sadder business to him than his injury. It was five by the time they were through for the day.

They didn't forget Colonel Sherrauld's "invitation." Dan drove, Jones riding the running-board and directing the way. The Colonel was alone, and as he returned Jones' salute the Lieutenant saw the story had begun the rounds. But the Colonel said nothing, only turned to Dan to shake hands gravely.

He mixed Martinis, handed them over, and solemnly arranged cushions in a deep chair for Jones. The Lieutenant flushed, stalked to a tall radio-phonograph and hooked an arm over a corner of it belligerently. The Colonel faced Dan.

"Anything that passes among us will go no farther," he said. "You've probably wondered why I asked you here. I hoped it might be possible to be of some personal assistance. I owe as much to your father's memory."

Dan looked his question.

"I'm a black sheep," explained the Colonel. "Mine is a Navy family. I still have two brothers in different seas right now. My father and grandfather were Navy. So even though I chose the Army, I was raised on Navy legends and traditions. Your father was one of those legends."

"Oh. That incident of the Boxer Rebellion."

"Yes. Your father's brilliant rescue of those Christian Chinese refugees is one of the legends in our family. Almost of the Navy, I might say, among the older men. It

was my father who was in command of the gunboat that held off the army of rabble that would have massacred the lot. But it was Edward Simms Burgess who invented the ruse that gave him time to marshal them in small boats to the island offshore, and then returned to face the leaders and disperse them. How he came through that alive is one of the mysteries of the white man's time in the Orient."

"He was pretty well respected, even as a foreigner," Dan said, a little stiffly. "He always said it was the insolence of facing them alone that made them listen, and logic that did the rest. Plus the Navy guns trained on shore."

There was a silence. Dan was remembering that Jung Lu and his family were one of those thus saved. The Colonel spoke again.

"I read of Mr. Burgess' death. You have my sincere sympathies." And he added: "It must be an important errand that wouldn't let you wait for your father's funeral."

"The funeral was yesterday. I was there."

"Oh. The paper said his death was the result of a fall. Unless my memory fails me, he was never very favorably disposed toward the Japs. Is it stretching the imagination to suppose it such a fall as you nearly had today?"

Dan hesitated. Then he said: "Very well. Yes: my father was murdered. There's a connection somewhere between these men today and my father's killer, but I don't know of anything you can do for me unless you can make these Japanese talk and show the link. That won't end the job on which I came, however. I shall still have to go on to China."

"If it's possible to make them talk," the Colonel said harshly, "they'll talk. I assure you we won't be squeamish about the methods used."

Jones had been looking at Dan. He now said embarrassedly: "I'm sorry. I didn't know your father had just died. I could have been less—flippant today. I read an item about Mr. Burgess a couple of days ago, I think, but I didn't connect the name. I'm sorry."

A Chinese servant announced dinner.

"I took the liberty of supposing that you would eat with me," said the Colonel. "As for the Lieutenant, I think we can make him comfortable enough."

The Colonel's idea of comfort was a spot at the buffet from which Jones could eat standing.

THE meal was pushed through, for there wasn't much time. The Colonel did most of the talking. "It's not surprising we still have here some Japs at large who would strike a blow for the Son-of-Something," he said. "Even on the mainland, among native-born Americans, we have would-be traitors. Every few days you can read of another being caught up with. And the Lord knows Allied espionage is one of Hitler's most annoying headaches within Europe itself. Our problem with the Japs is much more difficult than yours on the mainland: yet we're really in good shape—considering."

He had a word for Jones. "You did well today, Lieutenant. You took a chance, true, which you should not have done. I scarcely recommend brash action, naturally. When a soldier is given an order, even a negative order such as yours was, simple protection of a civilian, it is to be respected. Yet wars are not won without taking chances, and if we deny that basic truth, we might as well throw up our hands. Initiative has its value. The saving feature here is that you planned well and thought fast, without regard for personal safety. I hardly think you need worry about an inquiry."

He added off-handedly, with a smile: "Of course, if you had your mind fixed on some scene closer to action, I'd say this might be a good time to request a transfer. Merely a suggestion—scarcely that, perhaps."

Dinner over, the two got away.

"Did you hear that?" demanded Jones. "Man, that little paper goes in tonight! There's going to be action in Burma. If I don't see some of it, it won't be my fault."

They picked up Dan's suitcase, and by six-thirty were at the flying-field.

The planes were lined up, ready. Tonight there was no confusion of loading, as at San Diego. Dan reported to the *Jive Jenny* and found the crew pleased to have him again. But they'd have been pleased over anything, he reflected. They were a happy crew. Lieutenant Hanford, from having completed the first leg in good order, was less anxious tonight. He was a veteran now.

Merrick, the co-pilot, produced an oxygen mask and gave Dan a quick lesson in its use.

"We may fly high at some time tonight," was the reason. "Probably not so high or so long at a time that a mask is absolutely essential for you, not being on duty. You can stay stretched out in your bunk. But you might's well have it."

In a further burst of explanation: "We're not traveling our regular ferry routes. We're under extra precautions to keep the Nips from learning where we're going, what we are, how many there are of us, and so forth. You can see why."

Dan was grinning. Lieutenant Merrick grinned too, then chuckled. "Well, no need to draw you a picture, I guess."

There was a final smoke with Jones, a good-by, and Dan was aboard. The take-off was in no way different from last night's.

Dan was tired. The flight was monotonous, and he let down his bunk. He lay cold even with the blankets given him and so didn't drop to sleep at once. He began to speculate on their route. They were headed generally south: he knew that. But would they continue straight south or swing to the left or to the right? He wasn't boned up on the South Pacific. . . .

Well, his curiosity would be satisfied in the morning. With that he dropped off to sleep.

But he didn't learn in the morning what island was their steppingstone. In fact, he didn't even find out later. The landing was in the last of night. It was still not real dawn as the planes were turned over to ground crews and hauled to dispersal among coconut groves that stretched as far as one could see.

One thing he did learn. This squadron in choosing names for their planes had gone decidedly feminine—in an alliterative barroom fashion. Dan caught the names of a few in his division as they came down and were hauled off. There was *Sad Sadie*, *Mad Mabel*, *Bad Betty* and *Awful Annie*.

Mountains were discernible some half-mile away on one side of the camouflaged runway, the sea on the other. The ocean side appeared bare and unprotected. Dan's first thought was that enemy ships or submarines could shell the field with ease—if they knew of it and could push their way close enough. Which alone was reason enough for the secrecy employed!

The flyers—there were nearly two hundred of them—headed at once for a ragged row of thatched huts, breakfast at long tables in the open, showers under homemade bucket arrangements among the coconut trees, and some sleep.

But Dan had slept pretty well. Not easily, but through the night. So he spent the morning swimming and loafing on the sand. By noon some of the crew of the *Jive Jenny* joined him, and the afternoon passed smoothly.

It was a pleasant camp. Food was good. There was a radio to pick up news and some fairly recent magazines. There were hammocks for loafing, a volley ball and two tennis-courts, a boxing ring. Some of the men had a

roughhouse contest in climbing the coco-palms in sneakers and shorts. Some played poker, pinochle, bridge. The sun dropped low soon enough.

Again it was dusk when they took off, this time heading west. The airplane motor and most of the freight his plane had been carrying had been removed during the day, and so the plane was roomier and thus by illusion more comfortable.

Once again they landed before it was quite light. This time there was no secrecy as to where. Lieutenant Hanford, his face clear, the last pucker between the eyes gone, grinned and announced it:

"Brisbane! Change here for the Philippines, China, Tokyo, and all points north."

Chapter Eleven

IT was the third day from home and Dan had reached Australia. He was met at the field by two American soldiers and driven in a peep to a hotel. He was given time to shave, bathe, and change to a linen suit, while breakfast was brought to his room. Then the two soldiers whizzed him off to what was once a loft building, now a military headquarters with the Stars and Stripes flying over the entrance.

Dan was passed along from one man to another pretty rapidly—through sergeant, lieutenant, captain—until finally ushered in to a Colonel. It was still early. The Colonel had only just arrived himself, and he hadn't settled down to his day's work yet. Dan was introduced.

The Captain added: "Mr. Burgess is the man, sir, about whom you have a memo on your desk."

The Colonel was a tall, spare, wiry man, gray-haired, lined of face. Taciturn, by the look of him. He grunted something that could have been a good morning, motioned Dan to a seat, and fumbled through papers. He came upon one, read it over, and grunted again.

"Thank you, Captain." As the Captain left, the Colonel turned a saturnine gaze on Dan. He read the memorandum again and grunted again.

"I sometimes suspect it would help," he said sarcastically, "if we of Liaison knew what we were doing. So you want to go to Chungking?"

Dan was tired. In spite of sleeping through most of the last two nights, it hadn't been good sleep. He wasn't refreshed. He flared briefly and said:

"That seems to be the idea. If someone has a better, I'll listen. I could be bounced in a blanket back home and not take up space in your bombers."

The Colonel stared, then smiled frigidly.

"You didn't like the trip?"

Dan said stiffly: "I exaggerated. Actually, it was a pretty smooth flight. As smooth as a clipper trip I once made to the Orient, in fact. But it hits me at a bad time. I have work to do at home. Also, I scarcely know enough myself about what I'm doing here."

The Colonel cleared his throat.

"Speaking of the trip, however, of course you were cautioned about letting any slightest detail leak out. You can't have failed to guess we're building up for attack. The element of surprise is of incalculable value. The Japs haven't yet had a chance to learn about the type of plane on which you came in this morning. Until they do, we have that much of an advantage."

"I understand all that, sir," said Dan patiently.

"Yes. Well, no harm to impress it once more. It's most important. So you want to go to Chungking," he said again. "We occasionally put a plane through from Darwin. Space is limited. I don't know if I can find a place for you on the next scheduled trip, nor how soon we'll have another chance. Your best bet to reach Chungking would have been crossing to Africa, thence over to India."

"Colonel Lambeth," said Dan, "when I left the States, it was presumed my job might have ended at Hawaii. In any event, I had to go there first. Now I'm here, and the route *via* India is out. Actually, I don't know just where I'm going. I have to go to Chungking merely to find out where the man is whom I must see. He is not there. I suppose—"

He paused. Since he'd come this far, proving the urgency of his business with Kuo Tso-lin, perhaps the sons would loosen up if only to the point of passing on a message to their father and transmitting a reply. If he could word a radiogram carefully enough—

"I tried from Honolulu, by radio," Dan went on slowly, "to shorten my trip by that much. I suppose it would be the thing to do to try again from here."

"Then do so, by all means. Write your message. If it contains nothing censorable, I'll see it gets off quickly."

Dan wrote Kuo Sung and Kuo Shan another message similar to the one he'd sent from Honolulu. He made it longer this time, more urgent. The Colonel studied it.

"I see no reason why that shouldn't be sent," he said. "You don't mind if I reword it?"

Dan stared. "You think this may be code?"

"I think nothing," coldly. "Do you object?"

"Not at all, if you'll keep it as strong and as courteous as I've made it here."

"Very well. I'll let you know as soon as a reply is received. I've said we sometimes push planes through to Chungking. It's an irregular arrangement and can be on short notice. It would be well for you to stay within easy reach."

Dan returned to his hotel, and this apparently ended the detail for the two soldiers and their peep.

He set his watch, stripped to shorts and had a nap. There was no phone in his room. A knock on the door woke him about noon. It was a summons to return to the Colonel's office. He dressed hurriedly and went with the orderly.

The Colonel had a glint in his eyes. He tossed a paper across his desk.

"It came through the Embassy and was reforwarded in military code," he said coldly, and watched as Dan read.

"Proceed airfield Yenpingfu, Fukien," the message ran. "Necessary know time arrival. Courier will meet you. Prepare for two-day trip. Kuo Shan."

"What makes you think we could put you down there?" the Colonel asked sharply as Dan finished.

Dan looked up. There seemed some implication in the words and the tone was unpleasant.

"I don't," he snapped. "I don't know Yenpingfu. I don't know your airfields. But I'd not be surprised at one there. Any eight-year-old knows we're not going to win the war sitting on our hands. Everyone in the States knows we're turning out the planes, and we know we're building bases in China for future use."

The Colonel only stared.

"Apparently it's known in Chungking that there's a field at or near Yenpingfu where you can set me down. I can't imagine any secret is being divulged. Besides, if there is such a field, I'd bet two to one the Japanese know all about it."

COLONEL LAMBETH said nothing for a full minute. Then, in a brittle voice: "Well, I should remember General Clark, I suppose. Nobody knew what he was doing but himself and his pals."

"Listen, Colonel," said Dan, reddening with sudden anger. "You seem to suspect collusion in uncovering information about air bases. You seem to be annoyed that you don't know more about my mission than I do. Maybe you have a reason. Maybe you want to gauge its im-

portance in terms of a plane and its fuel. But that's hardly up to you. I don't myself know what my errand leads to. I'm only following orders to see a person in China and get back to the States as quickly as possible."

He'd got rid of this in a hurry and now began to cool off. After all, he was in a war zone. Of course they had to be careful.

"I have good reason to think my errand is important, and Washington seems to think so. My father was murdered a week ago over this business. There have been two other murders in connection with it. I was attacked myself, when in Honolulu. You can check that; it's a matter of record. Your office went over my papers pretty carefully. You have orders to send me on my way. I suppose you can make it easy or tough, and stretch it out or speed it up. It's up to you."

The Colonel wasn't impressed. He only gazed frostily at Dan throughout this, and at the end said, overpolitely: "Suppose you wait outside for a little while."

Dan left. He smoked nervously and sat on a bench or tried to calm himself by reading the bulletin-board loaded with general orders, special orders, office memos.

Meanwhile, into the Colonel's office passed presently several officers, who stayed some minutes and left. Then Dan was called in again. Maps were spread on the Colonel's desk, and he was rolling them up and replacing the articles that had held down the corners—ash trays, a paper weight, a desk set.

The Colonel spoke with care.

"I don't want you to suppose that your own loyalty or intentions are in question. That is not the case. Too much is at stake to overlook certain implications. We are building up air strength here in the Far Pacific, including China, of course. That much you know. We can take no chances on tipping our hand prematurely. This is so easily done in so many ways that we can take nothing for granted."

He paused.

"It has been decided to send you on to Darwin in the same plane on which you came. That division is moving on to the north coast tomorrow, Saturday. You will wait at Darwin until Sunday night, when we shall have —ah, opportunity to send you on to the Fukien base mentioned. You will arrive on Monday morning."

Chapter Twelve

THE flight to Darwin was in the morning, Saturday, over a fertile coastal strip, mountains, then endless desert, red and gray. They arrived soon after noon. Until now, take-offs and landings had been in the dark, or at best in dusk, with lights guiding them. Dan had seen weird evidences of camouflage on landing, before, but not the effect of it from above.

The lead plane in his division had a guide from Brisbane to direct landing. The others followed the leader. It was well they had someone to copy, for nothing could be seen below but virgin jungle. Dan's plane was third in line. As it circled awaiting its turn, he saw the first two planes dive into that jungle—straight into the bush! Yet they landed safely, and were hauled at once into further jungle.

The answer was that the landing strip was so cunningly blended with the bush on either side that it could scarcely be distinguished even from close above.

Dan's plane dropped, braked to a stop, was instantly hooked by a waiting tractor and hauled off the strip into a pocket at the side under camouflage netting.

This field was some few miles from Darwin. It was hot here, and there was nothing to do until the cool of the evening, so the flight personnel took to bunks.

Dan sought the day room and a wicker chair and fought off heat drowsiness, to sleep the better that night.

The afternoon passed drearily. It was only after an early supper that Dan discovered the crew had been resting for a continuation of the flight that night. Further, that he was going along, still in the same ship. He was inclined to be annoyed that they'd been so close-mouthed about it, until he grudgingly admitted they had to be, for they were under orders. So the false schedule of a Sunday-night flight had been given out by the Colonel, apparently, as just one more precaution, and he'd arrive at Yenpingfu on Sunday morning, not Monday!

They took off from Port Darwin as the sun was setting and flew high throughout the night. This called for oxygen masks and stratosphere clothing, an inconvenience that soon became irksome. No one slept or took it easy. They were on full alert all night.

They went in over the China coast, safely west of Canton and Kongmoon, before dawn. To Dan's surprise, the division turned west, while the *Jive Jenny* peeled off from the formation, continued north to cross the Hungshui, then headed east.

They searched for the ridge of mountains that outlined Kwangtung and Fukien provinces, and followed along the southern slopes. Finding the field was another matter, though it was fully light now and they knew what to look for—a farming valley west of Yenpingfu of certain size and shape, with landmarks learned by heart from aërial maps that would guide Lieutenant Hanford onto the runway.

He found the valley all right, but even then couldn't believe there was a field below despite a man in an open spot wigwagging an okay. He circled twice and made a low practice run before venturing to land, for—as seen from above—the valley was broken up in farms and pastures, with a village, scattered trees, a brook, a road, and there wasn't an unobstructed run of five hundred feet in any direction.

Only Dan left the plane here. There were quick good-bys and good-lucks, and Lieutenant Hanford idled his motors long enough to exchange brief courtesies with the men who ran up to meet the plane, then took off to rejoin his squadron.

In command here was a rather young major named Newlan—Air Corps man, a flyer, knocked out of combat flying temporarily from mild eye-and-ear injuries received in action in New Guinea. He had two aides, a captain of Army Engineers and a lieutenant of Air Corps Engineers.

Word had come only an hour ago, and they expected Dan; and for once he didn't have to go through a long business of proving himself. These men weren't policemen. He did have to explain, however, that he was to be met—by whom, he didn't know. He'd arrived twenty-four hours early, and would have to wait. If this was a trifle mystifying to the Major, it didn't set him back any. He had no responsibility in the matter.

After breakfast in a screened open-sided mess shack set up under cover of trees, Dan slept a good part of the day. On waking, he asked to see the field. They were all proud of it; Captain Williams for the engineering, Lieutenant Brascombe, a camouflage expert, for the concealment.

They had one plane here now—an "administrative" plane, whatever that meant. Dan guessed for studying the field from the air with a view to improving the camouflage—or for studying the surrounding terrain to map emergency landing-spots. But they were ready for fighters and bombers and crews to maintain them.

Workshops, storerooms, barracks were already provided. Most of these were prefabricated buildings well scattered over the length of the valley, where natural growths of oaks and chestnuts and groves of bamboo gave

cover from the air. There wasn't such cover for all, however, as many trees were needed for dispersal areas for the planes they would one day have, and some quarters had to be in open ground. These were dug-outs, lined with cement. with nearly flat roofs that left only a mosquito-wired eighteen-inch space above ground for light and air. Sod from the excavating had been relaid on the roofs to blend with the ground. The concealment was perfect.

There were other marvels of deception. Two areaways that had to be utilized for proper scattering of ships had no natural cover. In one case they'd rigged what could only be seen from a plane, a group of three thatch-roof peasant huts not worth the smallest bomb. In the other they'd constructed artificial trees, horrible to look at from the ground, but "dead ringers for live trees," so the lieutenant said. from the air. A "wrecked plane" standing on its nose at one end of the valley was an anti-aircraft gun. Others were hidden as well.

But the field itself was the masterpiece. The landing strip was painted variously to blend with the fields on either side. Where trees had been removed in laying the runway, new ones had been painted in their places. There had once been a meandering brook in the valley. It now passed under the flight strip by flume, with its original course painted in black upon the runway. In a faint depression in the cement along this course ran live water to give proper water-reflection from above; the black paint was for illusion of depth. The original earth road across the valley continued its age-old course; across the flight strip it was now a sprinkle of dirt.

Steel-mesh runways led to dispersal revetments, with grass growing through the mesh. The valley had been farming country from time immemorial. It was still farming country to all appearances, even to some grazing cattle. The original small village remained, but it now housed Chinese soldiers who continued the farming.

NOT often did the officers here have a fourth for bridge, and Dan was led to the card-table like a lamb to slaughter. A game got under way, proceeded through cocktails—and went on after supper.

It was soon after lighting the lamp that they heard a plane in the air. The three Army men rose suddenly as one at the sound. listened a moment, tensed, anxious, then settled back as one.

"Foxy," said Newlan, as he'd speak of a frequent visitor. He picked up the cards to shuffle and deal.

It hadn't the sound of a powerful plane. It landed close by and in the dark—no doubt with the plane's own landing lights—which bespoke familiarity with the field. After an interval an orderly announced a Mr. Foxxe.

"Show him in," said the Major.

The man who entered was middle-aged and a cheerful sort, who limped badly from an old injury. He was quite British. There were introductions; then Captain Williams made him a drink, and the newcomer pulled up a locker trunk for a seat. He looked on as they played, and there was some good-natured badgering.

After a while Dan became aware the Englishman had been observing him rather steadily. As he looked up and their eyes met, Foxxe with a grin let it be known he had come to meet Dan.

"I expected you tomorrow morning," he added in the tone of a question.

"Change of plans," Dan replied briefly.

"Oh. Well, I can change my plans too," Foxxe was saying. "I came down for a game myself while waiting for you. But I'd better take you off tonight. Otherwise, have to wait twenty-four hours. We prefer to use our field at night."

The three Americans had been looking on curiously.

"Not this field," the Major explained. "He means to put you down up in the hills, evidently. He works for the Tiger. Guerrilla outfit. So that's where you're headed."

Dan said nothing. A guerrilla outfit! The Tiger! Aristocratic old Kuo Tso-lin? Past eighty, frail, a man who loved the Chinese classics and collected old poems, old paintings, old ceramics? The Tiger! There'd been stories of the Tiger as far away as America, and the mystery of him was as great as his accomplishments. Why, the Japanese had offered first fifty thousand yen reward for him, dead or alive; then one hundred thousand; then two hundred thousand.

Old Kuo Tso-lin the Tiger? Yet there was Mamma Mosquito and her miraculous exploits; and if this were true, it would account for the great care with which Kuo Tso-lin's whereabouts was guarded. And now Dan wondered had his father known this all along? It would also account for his cool acceptance of Mr. Kuo's one letter—if there had been but the one—since Hongkong, his failure to be concerned over Mr. Kuo's safety, the stoppage of their interchange of friendly correspondence. Any unnecessary correspondence could be a risk. Why, this could explain a lot of things.

DAN was brought back to the bridge-table as he heard Newlan saying: "Let's finish the rubber, anyway." The Major spoke to Foxxe. "Need gas? I mean to say, petrol, what-what?"

"No, I've enough. I'll be back tonight, so don't put those cards away. I planned to work on the ship tomorrow. I'll still have to."

"What's the matter with it now?" Newlan snickered. "Or I'll put it this way; what isn't?"

"Well, the landing gear's tip-top," Foxxe said gravely, "and the wings have reached the point where they flap nicely. I figured we might maybe change the engine, and then by knocking together a new fuselage, I might get a few more hours out of her."

There was a general guffaw that didn't do Dan any good, but as they finished the rubber and he picked up his suitcase where he'd bunked for the day, and all five walked out on the field in the dark to the small plane, Major Newlan took off some of the curse.

"It's a museum piece," he said, "and don't ask me how it flies. Still, you needn't worry. Foxy here was an ace in the First World War. Lost a leg then. Been flying in the Orient ever since. Come this war, they wouldn't take him on, so just to prove he's not a has-been, he leased out to guerrillas and is flying this piece of junk that no one else would touch with a ten-foot pole. He'll get you down okay."

Then he said softly: "I guess this is the time to tell you. I reported your arrival, and later today had word that I'm to start you back on Thursday. That's four days from now. Is that when you expect to finish your —uh, business?"

Four days! Someone was counting two to go and two to come, according to the message from Chungking. But Foxxe had said he'd be back here tonight.

"I understood it would be a two-day trip from Yenping-fu," he said to the Englishman.

"Two days? Oh, no," Foxxe answered. "Someone's pulling your leg. It isn't two hours."

So all the precautions against possible Jap espionage hadn't been on the one side, Dan thought. Chungking had doubts of American discretion, perhaps.

"It shouldn't take one day to get what I came for," he told Newlan. "I'm supposed to get back to the States as quickly as possible. Will I have to wait four days?"

"Well, that's the set-up. I could send a message, I guess. Get an okay to fly you earlier. How about leaving it as it is until you get back and we know for sure?"

Dan had plenty of misgivings as he climbed into the plane. It was an ancient two-seater cabin plane, and

even the faint light from the stars showed the patchings over bullet-holes. Yet there was nothing for it but to hold his breath as they lumbered down the dark field. They used no lights in taking off. Two soldiers had run on ahead to be sure the surface was clear, then flashed pocket torches briefly in an okay.

When the plane got into the air and started rattling, more doubts piled up. The job wasn't fully soundproof, and talking was out. Yet once Foxxe yelled in Dan's ear:

"Glad you didn't mention the boss' name down there. No point in advertising, you know. We have two planes in our stable. The other's a better one. I used this tonight so I could work on it tomorrow. They have facilities I don't have up in the hills. Don't worry. We'll set down all right."

They'd been flying scarcely an hour when Dan realized they were now simply circling over some very black and rugged mountain-tops. He also realized that Foxxe was revving his motor in a definite pattern of sound. Even as Dan discovered this, two long lines of pinpricks of light appeared below, and the pilot made a final circle to run in on a narrow field.

True to his promise, Foxxe set the plane down safely, and it was instantly surrounded by black figures, all the blacker as the torches that had lined the runway were snuffed out. There were muffled sounds of swords and rifles, and a blue-covered flashlight studied Dan as he jumped from the plane.

Foxxe spoke up in Chinese—Cantonese, which Dan couldn't follow. He didn't get down from the plane. He was introducing a uniformed officer, apparently, for such a man smiled broadly in the ghostly beam, and bowed.

Then Foxxe said: "Well, old man, I'm off again. These fellows will take care of you. This is Captain Chen bowing. Good scout, but doesn't speak English. The boss doesn't sleep much, and is probably still awake. But if not tonight, then you'll see him in the morning." Then to prove he knew what kind of talk Americans expected: "Toodle-oo, cheerio and pip-pip!"

Men swung the plane around; and Foxxe, using his landing lights this time, for here was not the smooth runway he'd had down below, made his run, was in the air, and gone.

Chapter Thirteen

DAN was led to the very hillside itself. A black figure held up an edge of heavy canvas curtain, and Dan passed beyond it into blackness thicker than the night outside—and thicker smell. Another curtain was raised, to disclose a candle-lighted hangar dug into the hillside, large enough for two small planes. One was here now.

The walls were shored with stone masonry, the roof heavily timbered. All around the walls and even under the plane now here were straw pallets, most of them occupied by soldiers who slept with their rifles by their sides. Japanese rifles! Dan knew that .25-caliber imitation Springfield.

Here Dan was required to wait while Captain Chen announced his arrival. He upended his suitcase, straddled it, and lit a cigarette, marveling anew that he should find Kuo Tso-lin in such surroundings.

He hadn't long to wait. The Captain returned and beckoned for Dan to follow. They walked in the dark, stumbling along an uneven rocky trail to what seemed another opening in the mountainside, door size. There was, in fact, a wooden door here, set in a deep recess of rough boulders. It was the entrance to a hut built cunningly in a narrow fissure of the hills to blend into the very earth. A fir grew through it and stretched branches over its roof.

An oil lamp lighted the single room. This was perhaps twenty feet wide at the front, and narrowed to a length of thirty feet. It was fitted out as a bedroom and study. The bed was a comfortable one, the furnishings excellent pieces. A fine carpet covered the none-too-smooth pavement of the floor. There was a radio, a heavy-laden bookcase, a desk, a large rack of maps, and several rather fine ornaments, incongruous in these rough surroundings.

At the desk sat an old, old man in plain black silk. A black skullcap accentuated the parchmentlike qualities of his skin; but his eyes were bright, and he was holding out a hand across the desk even as Dan paused to let his eyes become accustomed to the light. With a polite murmured word, Captain Chen left.

Kuo Tso-lin had been a good-sized man when young, and he'd neither bent nor shrunk appreciably with age. But he was shadow-thin, and showed his eighty years.

"Welcome, son of my old friend," Mr. Kuo said.

His voice also was old, but certainly not weak, and he spoke in flawless English, like a book.

"Welcome to my poor quarters," he said again. "I scarcely expected when last we met it would next be under such rugged circumstances."

Dan, as he advanced to take the proffered hand, had been formulating his greeting in Chinese, and this he delivered in conventional style. The bright eyes before him twinkled again from among their radiating wrinkles.

"Well done, my friend," Mr. Kuo said. "Your Mandarin has improved. But do be seated and let us not indulge in formalities. We live in a faster era now. It seems frivolous to spend time on the old amenities of pride and station."

The "Tiger"? It began to be acceptable. Here was a new Kuo Tso-lin. Old? Only in body. The Chinese read his thoughts, and chuckled. It was like the whispering of dried leaves.

"You find this hard to believe?" He waved a thin hand. "Sometimes I can scarcely credit it myself. Yet not for decades have I so enjoyed myself. I had thought life was passing me by. It took the seizure of Hongkong to stir me out of my, ah, classical lethargy. I do not say former years were lost. I did rejoice in the discovery of ancient treasures. Perhaps I will again. But this is affirmative living. It thickens even such old blood as mine."

He clapped his hands. A servant came instantly from behind a screen that shut off the inner, narrower end of the room, with a tray of tea things. He left the tray on the table and retired. As Mr. Kuo made the brew, Dan said, by way of conversation:

"I learned only this evening about your rôle as a guerrilla leader. It was quite astonishing, of course. The Tiger's exploits have amazed many."

Again Mr. Kuo chuckled.

"Especially the Japanese! My friend, the Tiger is but a myth. Mine are a simple people. They require, let us say, a legend like 'the Tiger' to fix their imaginations. Then they are capable of anything. Ergo, we manufacture them a legend. In reality I am but a—you would say in America, perhaps, a coördinator. I listen to my many unit commanders, and agree when I like their plans. When they carry out these plans, it is 'the Tiger' who strikes. The Tiger is here, there, everywhere. It bewilders and baffles the enemy. A convenient myth, my friend, and a secret well worth preserving.

"You also have a term in theater parlance, I believe. I might be called an 'angel'." The chuckle became almost a laugh. "I have considerable wealth, as you know. It is true we do not need much money for ordinary operations. We can seize equipment, munitions, supplies

almost at will as needed from the Japanese. Surprise thrusts where least expected; then we melt away into the night. It is not too difficult. Our men never return empty-handed. And the countryside supplies freely much of our food.

"But upkeep of our planes is a trifle expensive, and they are most useful to us. And there is a certain new coastal maritime venture on which we are about to embark that will require outlay. That is where I am particularly of use."

He poured the tea in the tiny cups so like eggshells.

"No, the Tiger—strictly between us, my friend—is but a business man, an occasional adviser, a moneybags who made it possible to band together many small groups of guerrillas into a powerful small army who can strike in many places at once with more effect, through coördination, than by individual units. The real heroes are the men themselves."

He became grave. "But forgive me for talking so long of this, of myself. I have the wireless, you see, to keep up with events outside. I heard of your honorable father's misfortune and was saddened. I counted him one of my excellent friends. You have lost a father, and I sympathize with you indeed. Yet China too has cause to mourn. Mr. Burgess was one of our best friends in America for many long years."

Dan leaned forward.

"Mr. Kuo, my father did not die a natural death. He was murdered."

"Murdered!" There was no change in the face across the table, but it was clear Mr. Kuo was surprised.

"By Japanese agents, over a message he received from the Orient." Still no change in Mr. Kuo, and Dan's heart constricted. So far to come! "Mr. Kuo, my father received a message one night last week which he considered of great importance. He telephoned a high official at Washington about it, and then hid the message until the arrival of a confidential messenger to carry it to Washington."

"Indeed."

"But he was killed before he could deliver this message, and it remains lost. All our efforts to find it have been useless."

The old man was silent, his parchment face motionless. At last he said: "And you came this long way to see me. I must confess myself intrigued."

Dan's heart sank. That third *netsuke* flashed to mind. So far to come! Yet there was nothing for it but to go on. Dully, he took from a pocket the jumping-frog *netsuke* and held it out to Kuo Tso-lin.

"This accompanied the message to my father, as a token of authenticity, we presume. We are trying to trace that message back to its source."

Mr. Kuo stared silently at the *netsuke,* took it from Dan, placed it carefully on the desk before him, and continued to stare thoughtfully at it.

At last he chuckled, almost silently, opened a drawer, and placed on top of the desk a foot-square chest of elaborately carved and fretted ivory. It stood on eight golden legs, and had a golden clasp and lock. It wasn't locked. Mr. Kuo raised the lid, poked among its contents, then placed on the desk beside the other one a jumping-frog *netsuke* precisely similar in every respect to the one Dan had brought.

Mr. Kuo smiled as he read his visitor's mind, then chuckled softly again. "So you come to me. But you see, Mr. Burgess, I have mine."

"Then the one that accompanied the message—" Dan said, and broke off as he saw where this was leading. "But," he ended hopelessly, "Prince Min Yong Sik is dead."

"True," said Mr. Kuo; "but his son is not."

"His son! This *netsuke* must have come from him!"

"It would seem reasonable to suppose so," agreed Mr. Kuo.

"Then I must find him."

"That is easily done." Min Sok Ko is on the advisory staff of Chiang Kai-shek, though he is at Chengtu most of the time, I believe, engaged in rehabilitation work. I think I can promise you an interview. However, I cannot send wireless messages from here. The Japanese could thus locate us. I can only receive. But I can send you on to Chengtu; and once there, you will have no difficulty in reaching Prince Min."

Dan began a speech of thanks.

"No, do not thank me, please. I am enjoying this. Life here in the hills has its dull moments. But now I must beg you to excuse me. I am becoming rather tired, and I must yet make the arrangements to see you on to Chengtu. This will be good-by, then. I shall probably not see you in the morning before you leave. May good fortune go with you."

He held out his hand. His servant called Captain Chen, and Dan was escorted, not to the hangar cave but to a small cubbyhole in the hillside. This was similarly rock-walled inside and appeared to be one of several similar "rooms" reaching around the brow of one of these peaks.

It held a cot bed, a roughly-made chest of drawers, mirror, china basin and pitcher of water—and Dan's suitcase; and from the Illustrated London *News* cut-outs, Dan guessed it to be Foxxe's quarters.

Chapter Fourteen

IT was soot black when Dan was awakened by a rattle of the matting at the entrance to his sleeping stall—such a thick, solid blackness he could feel it pressing down on him, smothering. He called out: "Who is it?"

"Lieutenant Hu," was the answer. "Mebbeso I come?"

"Yes, come in."

Dan pushed back the covers, swung to the edge of the cot, and shivered in the damp cold. His head was ringing from the stale air. He fumbled for matches.

The matting was brushed aside, and through the oblong of gray light someone entered.

"No light? I got."

The fellow snapped on a pocket flash, set it on its flat end pointing upward, and Dan saw in the half-light outside its beam a medium-sized young Chinese in khaki uniform and visored cap, a Sam Browne fitting snugly and polished as shiny as the shoe-button eyes in his round moon face.

"Lieutenant Hu," said the visitor again. "I fly plane to Chengtu. Call me Bill."

Dan smiled. "You speak good English," he said, to please the fellow.

"Oh, sure, mebbeso-you-betcha. Shanghai International Settlement. I learn quick any tongue." He spouted a few curses in Italian, French, German, Russian, by way of proving it—even other tongues Dan did not identify.

Dan laughed. He pulled on his shoes and dressed.

"Hot tea coming up," Hu said smartly, and clapped his hands.

An orderly brought in a tray. There was a piece of boiled fish, a boiled vegetable Dan did not know—some kind of squash, he thought—and tea.

Dan drank the tea, lied politely that he didn't take food in the morning. . . .

The next thirty minutes held many surprises. First dawn was now coming sharp outside.

Captain Chen was waiting outside with a complimentary escort squad. The plane was being rolled out of its

hangar, and two mechanics instantly ran over it. Other men started fueling it from five-gallon cans.

Dan saw that the mattings over the openings to the several sleeping-holes, and the big canvas over the mouth of the hangar cave, were painted to simulate the mountainside.

This was rough, rocky country, but nature and man together had made a flat table here of some few hundred feet. Scanty enough for small planes, it was impossible for larger ones or the fast fighters now produced. Dan was astounded that the British pilot last night could have found this spot, in the light only of the stars.

There were lookouts on the ridges, men at a sound pick-up device, and forty or fifty others scurrying over the small field picking up and carrying to one side or the other huge boulders. Dan stared at such prodigious strength—then laughed. The "boulders" were no more than wooden slats and cotton cloth. No doubt each had its own numbered position, reverted to after every landing or take-off, so that no changes in terrain would be noted in case photographs were taken from the air.

"Wonderful!" He laughed again and looked up at the sky, at the ridges making a bowl of this spot. "And the Japanese think they can lick China? Ha!"

Lieutenant Hu was pleased. "Oh, sure, you-betcha." He grinned broadly and translated Dan—generously, from the Niagara of syllables—to Captain Chen and the soldiers standing by. The Captain became all smiles and bows and pleasant chattering.

With the runway cleared and each man standing by the "boulder" he'd just removed, the plane was now trundled into position. It was an old, open job, built for observation, with two narrow seats, and had Chinese military markings on the underside of the wings, on the tail, and forward on the fuselage. Hu took over to warm it up and give it a final quick inspection of his own.

The Captain now held out a wool-lined leather coat. It smelled pretty bad from use in all weathers, and Dan had instant thoughts of becoming inhabited. But there was no help for it. It would be bitterly cold, and he'd have to wear it. He put it on. There was also a helmet with goggles. Dan thanked Chen gravely, bowed, shook hands, and was given a leg-up into the back seat.

In the one circling as the plane took off and headed west, Dan looked below and located the field only by the scurrying figures replacing "boulders." Already it was no more than a rough rock-strewn ravine. The curtain over the mouth of the cave; so crude-looking close at hand, blended to perfection with the mountain at this distance. There were few trees. Dan saw the fir that he knew hid Mr. Kuo's hut, but no slightest sign of the hut. There was nothing below on which the Japanese would waste a bomb, or even a piece of film.

THEY came down outside of Chengtu in mid-afternoon, and the plane was surrounded by soldiers with fixed bayonets before the two could alight. These men spoke no English. They were not quite unfriendly, but even after Dan showed a small American flag by way of announcing his nationality, they eyed him with some suspicion, and handled Lieutenant Hu no less coolly. Both were searched and disarmed, and each was taken in charge.

Lieutenant Hu was unperturbed. "Everything okay, mebbe-so," he told Dan. "We do what they say."

They were taken to the officer in charge of the guard at this field. Dan produced proof that he was American, and tried out his Mandarin. The officer said blandly: "I speak Engliss."

"I've come to Chengtu to see Prince Min Sok Ko," Dan told him.

"So? Why you think he here?"

"I've come from—"

Dan glanced at Lieutenant Hu, who shook his head slightly. No help there.

"I was told I'd find him in Chengtu. I've come a long way to see him, all the way from America. Please don't delay me. If you can't send me to him yourself, let me see someone who has the authority."

It took twenty minutes to convince the officer that was the thing to do, and then only after using his telephone.

Lieutenant Hu stayed with his plane, but Dan was driven by car—at breakneck speed for the car and the roads—to a street of mud-brick houses on the outskirts of the city.

Dan was taken to the largest of the houses here. There were soldiers about, indicating that these buildings comprised a military unit.

Inside, at work on papers, was a Chinese officer. Dan didn't recognize the insignia, and for lack of a better title, called him "Colonel." He had forbidding features and was not in good humor. He looked Dan over, then waved a hand at the sergeant in dismissal. The soldier saluted smartly and wheeled to leave.

At this, Dan shot out his hand and spun the soldier around. He pointed to his pistol dangling in its shoulder holster from the man's hand, and said crisply: "My gun!"

The soldier hesitated, then at a word from the colonel dropped it on the table and left.

"You American," the colonel said, in English. He had an unpleasant, raspy voice, as though something had happened to his vocal cords. It went well with his harsh face.

"Yes."

Again Dan produced his credentials—the emergency passport given him at Honolulu, everything in his pockets with his name. The other studied these things closely, but at last brushed the papers aside and looked up sharply.

"What you want?"

Annoyance was building up in Dan, but he smiled, agreeably, he hoped. He might have attempted a few flowery phrases in Mandarin, but since the other had chosen to be abrupt and unfriendly, in English, Dan answered to the point, also in English.

"I came to see Prince Min Sok Ko, attached to the staff of your Generalissimo Chiang."

"What! Not the Gissimo?"—with a sneer.

"Prince Min," said Dan.

"What you want with Prince Min?"

Again Dan smiled and shook his head. "That is for the ears of Prince Min."

"Prince Min not here."

"I was told yesterday that he was here," said Dan, sharply now. "That is why your military flew me to Chengtu."

"South China plane," the officer spat out contemptuously. "Mean nothing here. Prince Min fly to Chungking this morning."

Dan scowled. If this were so, more trouble, more delay! But a scowl wouldn't help. He made an effort and wiped it off, determined not to lose patience. He'd get nowhere if he did.

"When will he return?"

"Not know. Maybe today, maybe tomorrow."

"My mission is urgent. Time is lost. It is important I see Prince Min as quickly as possible."

"Important for who?" asked the colonel.

"For me, for you, for my country, your country," said Dan.

The officer stared. At last he said abruptly: "You wait!"

He clapped; a soldier entered, and Dan was taken to another room, given some old American and British magazines, mostly picture weeklies, and a bottle of whisky. The soldier stepped outside but didn't leave the door.

At length the colonel who had interviewed him appeared suddenly. His movements were still militarily abrupt. Dan now suspected injuries in the field that had affected his nervous system as well as his voice. He spoke more agreeably than earlier, but still did not smile.

"You see Prince Min tonight. He returning now." He returned Dan's credentials. "I send food. You stay here. Tonight I take you to Prince Min."

Now that this man was letting down the bars, Dan thought it time to be conciliatory too. He thanked the officer in complimentary Mandarin. The colonel left in a pleasanter frame of mind.

It was growing dark. Supper was brought him—enough for two men: Noodles with a hot, peppery sauce, a green vegetable, a tough chicken, a pot of tea, some rice-cakes.

Time wore on. An oil lamp had been lighted. The smell of it made the room unpleasantly stuffy, and Dan dozed in the chair. Sometime later he came to, at voices at the door in mild argument. There was finally a grunt, and the sentry—guard or orderly, whatever he was—opened the door to let in a soldier with another pot of tea enveloped in a quilted jacket to keep it warm. It was not the man who had brought Dan's supper. This one slithered forward and set his burden on the table.

SOMETHING clicked in Dan. Perhaps it was the words at the door, as though the sentry had had doubts about admitting the man; perhaps it was the man's rapid, sly glance about the room as he entered. Perhaps it was Dan's good gremlin on the job. At any rate, he followed the man's movements narrowly.

As the fellow turned to leave, he whipped a bayonet from under his tunic and lunged viciously. Dan saw what was coming before the knife was clear of the blouse. The man's tenseness had telegraphed his intention. Dan slid from chair to floor in crouching position, and the ugly blade passed over his shoulder.

This threw the soldier, if that's what he was, off balance, and gave Dan just enough time to spring upright, seize the chair, raise it above him, and bring it down on the man so hard that the chair splintered to pieces.

The man's skull might easily have been broken had he not raised an arm above his head in that split second. The arm was smashed instead, the knife clattered to the floor.

All this took scarcely five or six seconds. There'd been no scuffle—only the sound of the chair as it splintered, and the man's bitten-off cry when his arm took the blow. But it was enough to bring the sentry from outside, who shouted an alarm.

Dan had a quick feeling of surprise, while help was coming, at being attacked here in the very stronghold of the Chinese, only to answer himself immediately with the realization that of course the Japanese had their spies here as everywhere.

The alarm brought more soldiers at a run, then the colonel who had questioned Dan.

Dan nodded jerkily toward the man in the corner and said: "Japanese spy."

The colonel stared.

"I've been attacked before by Japanese agents determined to prevent me from seeing Prince Min. This must be another. He tried to kill me with this."

Dan kicked the bayonet toward the colonel, who finally found his tongue.

"I am disgrace'!" he said with feeling.

Then anger surged, and he let off such a flow of language that all the soldiers but the sentry backed out of the room. This one seized the wounded man and hustled him out with no regard for his cries over the broken arm.

"We see," said the colonel to Dan. "If this man is spy, we know how to handle. I am humble'. You have been put to danger in my house. I am disgrace'."

Dan waved his protestations away.

"Prince Min," the colonel went on. "It is time. I take you to him. You come now."

"Bring my gun with you," Dan said. "I'll want it again."

Dan was led to a military car, and presently they were bumping through twisting, narrow streets toward the city proper. The streets got better after a while, wider and smoother. In due time they stopped at the gate of a high-walled compound.

The two entered the manned gate. They passed around the inevitable devil screen, and crossed a narrow courtyard to the house. It was a house of no special merit, neither large nor small. There were two stories, with some heavy rough-carved beams and square columns painted and gilded garishly. Two stone lanterns showed this much. Stone lions guarded the steps. It might have been the home of a middle-class merchant.

They were expected, and there was no waiting. They entered the large "hall" of the house.

The colonel took a seat here while a servant led Dan into another room. Seated behind a long, littered table was a broad-featured man of middle age, small in stature, but clearly patrician to the fingertips.

Dan spent no time on preliminaries. Here, he felt, was a man who would accept the direct approach.

"I am Dan Martin Burgess," he said, "son of Edward Simms Burgess. I have just come from Kuo Tso-lin."

"And I am Min Sok Ko," the man answered gravely. "I am pleased to make you welcome."

The Korean spoke Oxford English, curiously precise. It was much like Mr. Kuo's speech. He spoke more slowly than Mr. Kuo, however, as though he used the language less and had to think it out.

"It is kind of you to see me, Prince Min. Let me be brief. Some twelve days or so ago a message was received by my father, in America."

A slow nod.

"When he received it, he telephoned our Government for a special agent to carry it to Washington. He hid the message until the special agent could arrive. But he was killed before the man reached him. By a Japanese."

Dan paused. He fancied a shadow fell over the Korean's face. The man became so still as to seem to hold his breath. As he didn't speak, Dan continued:

"With my father's death, the message became lost. We have made every effort, but cannot find it. Nothing was left but to trace it back to its source. This *netsuke* was received with it. That is why I have come to you."

Dan placed the jumping-frog *netsuke* on the table. Prince Min looked at it expressionlessly. He said nothing for so long that Dan wondered if he had been understood.

"Have I made myself clear?" he asked.

"Indeed," said the other in low voice.

"Did you send the message to my father?"

The Korean raised his head and Dan saw two tears were trickling from his eyes. Again it was a long moment before Prince Min spoke.

Then, "Yes—and no," he said. "I think that is the way you would say. The message came from my eldest son. And now it is lost." He faltered, dropped forehead to hand for an instant to shield the pain in his eyes, recovered with an effort. "Forgive my emotion. Alas, it meant so much. To Korea, to China, to all of Asia. To all the Pacific. It had cost so much already, and now your esteemed father too."

Too! Dan scowled. If that meant—

"Did it originate with your son?"

"Yes."

"Then I can have him duplicate it?"

"My son is no more," said the Korean slowly. "He has joined his ancestors."

Again! Fury was rumbling down inside of Dan, rising. He'd known this was coming. He was angry with himself for the very rise and fall of his hopes. He choked his feelings down and heard the next as through a fog.

"My son died at the hands of the Japanese. He served our cause in Japan."

So the message originated in Japan! There was that much to work on. *"Our"* cause. The Korean cause. Well, it was no secret that Koreans maintained a considerable and excellent intelligence service there.

"The message came from your son, Prince Min. Do you mean that he sent it through you as intermediary because he couldn't make proper contact direct?"

"Not precisely."

"Do you know what the message contained, Prince Min?"

"Yes. Or perhaps I should again say, yes and no. I did not see it. I do not know some of the details." The Korean's eyes were bottomless holes in his gray-tinged face—not staring, not seeing through Dan as though focused beyond, simply open wells. His shoulders sagged, his hands dropped tremblingly to the arms of his chair. "Then the message is lost," he said again, his thoughts still not in pace with Dan's. "And Mr. Burgess also has paid the price. Alas, that I should have brought this upon your house. What can I say? How can I make amends for this greatest of all injuries?"

Dan knew grief himself, but he had a job to do. He must keep the other on the subject.

"My father's last wish was that I carry on his part," he said. "I face that duty now. You say 'Yes and no.' How much can you tell me, Prince Min?"

The Korean sat up, said slowly: "Have patience with me, my young friend. Let us have tea while I collect my thoughts."

HE pressed a button, and Dan heard a buzzer sound at some distance beyond doors—a strange note in these surroundings! Soon pale tea was steaming before him and not until then did the other begin to speak.

"I must give you the background of the matter, Mr. Burgess. You know the miserable condition of Korea. The unscrupulous barbarians seized our country by treachery and force, and have practiced every cruelty upon us. In exploiting us and our resources they have made slaves of our people, ground them into abject poverty, butchered them on the slightest pretext.

"Some of us live only for the day when we shall break Japan's abominable rule. My family is trained in that tradition. We are over twenty-three millions of persons, and we want our complete freedom and independence as a sovereign nation, Mr. Burgess.

"But we can attain this only through the utter defeat of Japan, the building of a Japan of peaceful intent, and the friendly hand of a state more powerful. Very well. The message sent you will further this end. Thus you see the matter originates in the interest of Korea; but I assure you it also truly concerns all countries of the Pacific. Indeed, of all the world, which must know one peace or none at all."

"How did your son get his information?"

"He established himself in Tokyo many years ago as a Japanese. Oh, very carefully. Much can be done with money, even in Japan. There he made contacts, and through the years identified himself with the more moderate elements, even though this called attention to him as the militarists rose higher and higher.

"We have a very able organization in Japan which works under direction of a council sitting here in China. I am on that council. Thus I know what was in those documents, though I do not know the full details. I know the end toward which we were working.

"My son's orders were to prepare his information when he found the moment ripe, and to forward it to your esteemed father, using the *netsuke* which Mr. Burgess gave my father so long ago as my seal of approval. A copy at the same time was to be sent to me."

"But why to my father?" asked Dan. "The message was for official attention, was it not? We have an ambassador in Chungking."

"Official Washington has never harkened to our petitions with interest," the man said sadly. "You must know that, Mr. Burgess. We needed a champion. Your father was our friend. I felt we could best secure attention and credence in this matter through him."

"But the message, Prince Min? Your copy?"

"Alas, my copy never reached me. My son was becoming too zealous, the Japanese suspicious. He was discovered at last, and killed within a few hours of his forwarding the two copies. I learned of this from others of our men in Japan. My copy was destroyed by our courier only just in time to prevent its capture. The courier was seized, and paid the price my son paid. Since no word reached me about the American original, I had hoped it would get through. You can understand what a blow it is to learn the papers are lost."

"You say you do not know the details. But you know the general contents."

"Useless without the data contained in my son's lists, and the pledges and plans and detailed information, the references by which your former ambassador to Japan will recognize their authenticity. But—"

Min Sok Ko paused, and his eyes burned into Dan's.

"I can tell you the trend of the matter. Japan has become drunk with military conquest and the promises of her leaders that she will rule the world. Well, she will lose the fight. That passes without question. And her present leaders cannot be left in power. That also is clear. In fact, they must be destroyed, not only as a punishment but as a potential danger if left alive.

"The Emperor is a weak thing who may not personally have wanted war, but who none the less failed to exercise as much will as he might have done to divert Japan from her path. He cannot be left upon the throne, for he cannot be depended on or trusted.

"Obviously also Japan cannot be isolated and forgotten, for she would fester in her chaos and breed more trouble in future years. She must be admitted to the world brotherhood of nations which is sure to come out of this world war, and must abide by the doctrines assumed by all peoples.

"Then, what to do? There is but one hope for Japan today. China knew what to do in 1912. Russia knew what to do in 1917. It is time for Japan to be reborn!"

Dan stared. "Revolution?" he asked dispiritedly.

"Not necessarily, though there must be a complete break between the old and the new. Do not misunderstand me. The time is not ripe while war rages. Not until Japanese cities have been devastated by bombings, her war industries destroyed, her ports and transportation system disrupted, her people faced with utter defeat, will it be possible to work to this end. Only then can those who opposed Japan's present wars of aggression come forward to take the helm, and this can be by investment of the western victors, if they succeed in landing operations, as well as by revolution. Whichever comes first. In planning, we must account for all contingencies."

Dan sank back. It was to him only a theory.

Prince Min seemed to read his thoughts.

"You think such a movement cannot succeed? Think back to the Satsuma Rebellion of 1877, when the Emperor and a people's army overthrew the Samurai in civil war and thus completed the abolition of the landed feudal caste system which had existed for centuries.

"They now have another feudalism. Today's is an industrial feudalism, with the wealth and power of the country still concentrated in a few families. But feudalism of any type depends on the fealty of the masses. The Emperor appealed to the masses and overthrew the politico-military feudal lords. Cannot this be done again?

"The present Emperor is out of the question, as I have said, in any new government. But the people for generations have been held together by worship of the Imperial House. This cannot be taken from them without scattering their aims and making any sort of cohesive plan difficult. Even impossible. In a word, they must have this symbol of divinity to follow until they learn to create their own leaders.

"There remains an alternative. There are moderates in Japan, and among them one of sufficient stature to replace Hirohito; and if we are to secure the peace after this war, then we must work with them to turn the Japanese mind in a new direction, one in which coöperation will be the keynote, not conquest."

Moderates! Dan's heart sank. It was folly to suppose there were "moderates" of any influence left in Japan. As fast as a "moderate" became known he was tossed into a concentration camp—or murdered if he was of sufficient importance.

Prince Min had gone on talking, still slowly.

"I speak of the Emperor's brother. Prince Chichibu was connected prominently with a strong peace party in 1941, a party which gained so many adherents and such momentum as to alarm the militarists. Indeed, it was this that forced them into war against your country earlier than they had planned.

"The militarists have usually murdered opponents of any position and power, but they couldn't kill a member of the Imperial Family. They could only arrest Prince Chichibu, which they did on the day they attacked you, December 8, 1941. December 7th in America. The charges were 'being sympathetic to an enemy country.' Even the Emperor's intercession gained little modification. The Prince is under house arrest, closely guarded."

Dan sat up. Perhaps this thing was beginning to jell!

"Prince Chichibu was contacted by our men, even under guard. It was not too difficult. As I have said, money has a language of its own in Japan as elsewhere. Prince Chichibu at last gave pledges by his own hand of coöperation with the Allies in bringing his country out of chaos after defeat of the militarists.

"Not that I am interested, Mr. Burgess," and the voice was icy cold, "in alleviating the horrors that would accompany anarchy in Japan. Had you lived in a country once taken over by the Japanese militarists, had you lived through a bombing of Chungking, witnessed the rape of Nanking, you would have no compassion for the Japanese people who made the militarists possible. You would doubtless welcome the worst that can befall them.

"But a new Japan under the leadership of democratic-leaning moderates is essential for the peace and welfare of Asia—and of my country, the closest to Japan.

"Prince Chichibu has formulated plans for the reconstruction of Japan after the debacle of war has weakened the militarists to the point where, possibly with outside help, the moderates can gain control. They are plans that I believe should work and should be acceptable to the Allies, and there is every reason to suppose that Prince Chichibu on the throne can command as much respect and loyalty during the formative period of the new government as the present Emperor.

"These pledges and plans, together with lists of men the Prince believes can be of value in the new government, are contained in the package of documents forwarded to your father. This package contains more. It proposes a method of escape for Prince Chichibu to a strip of coast where an American submarine can pick him up. Your submarines have touched the coast many times already in this war. This offers no difficulty. To contact the Prince and arrange time and signals is more difficult, but even this can be accomplished through our organization.

"Naturally, we do not suppose a plot of this magnitude has gone entirely undetected. My son's death proves otherwise. We know the militarists suspect a plot against them, but I truly believe they do not yet know the direction or strength of the plot, nor the men involved."

Dan passed a hand over his forehead. So there was good reason for his father's great concern on receipt of the tin of papers! Too much reason.

Prince Min had something more to say and his fervency drew him to his feet, doubled his hands till his knuckles showed white.

"Mr. Burgess, you have said your father 'secreted' this message, and died before he could turn it over to proper authorities. There are no duplicates. We cannot get other pledges.

"Return home, Mr. Burgess. There must be means of finding it. That message *must be recovered!*"

Chapter Fifteen

DAN had no sleep that night. He was given a cot in a small room on his return from the meeting with Min Sok Ko. It was so cold he caught a chill that shook him till morning, but it was mostly his thoughts that kept him awake.

He knew an ounce of satisfaction—he had discovered what he was after. But there was a pound of defeat.

There was impatience too. Even if he couldn't see it as worth the effort involved, still he had a duty to perform. His father had died for it. Others had died for it. He had to find that tin of papers! And how could a search be more thorough than those he and Howland had made? They had all but torn out the walls. Well, now they'd have to do that.

The dawn was colder than the night had been. Dan's muscles were so stiff he had to use setting-up exercise to restore circulation. His mind, too, was as sluggish after its all-night run-around as was his bloodstream.

His moon-faced South China pilot joined him, bringing strong bitter tea, hard-boiled eggs, and a tin of English biscuits. Also a jovial disposition. Dan greeted him with grave courtesy. Lieutenant Hu was hurt.

"Aw, call me Bill. Me no old-style mandarin. Me new China, you-betcha."

Dan burst into a laugh and held out his hand. "Okay Bill."

He noted Lieutenant Hu was wearing his gun now, he called for his own—Howland's weapon. It was brought to him. Dan did not see again the colonel who had taken him in hand last night.

It was scarcely dawn when they were driven to the field. Dan stood by while Lieutenant Hu went over his plane meticulously and warmed it up. Then the two were in the air, headed south and east. It was stingingly cold. In all his life Dan had never known such cold and for so long as these last few days and nights of flying.

The trip was uneventful. They refueled at the same spot as yesterday and were gone again. Today also Hu avoided cities and towns, and they sighted no other craft. They hopped all of the treacherous terrain and found themselves over the last stretch of rolling Kiangsi country. Ahead was a haze, the range that formed the inland boundary of Fukien province. Dan guessed it to be about fifty miles away and wondered if Hu would attempt to use the hidden mountain airfield in daylight He'd have to, or land in some field until dusk.

Dan debated the advisability of a radio message to Howland telling him to start ripping out the paneling of the museum, tearing up the floor. Not that he felt there was any great rush about it, now that he knew what it was all about, but the sooner that "message" was found and taken to Washington, the better.

Then the bottom fell out of everything.

Dan came out of his deep study to discover Lieutenant Hu was banking the ship sharply, upping the revs, streaking for the north and east. At the same time the Chinese flung a pointing arm. Dan stared. He could see nothing. High clouds, that horizon haze, nothing more. The sun was blinding, even through his colored glasses. But he knew Hu wasn't playing games. Something was amiss.

At length Dan spotted some scattered specks. There were four. No, six. They were converging and heading this way. Dan knew they must be Japanese planes.

There were clouds, but they were too high and too scattered for protection. Hu never bothered to climb to them. He kept twisting his head to see behind him, and centered his efforts on getting the utmost out of his engine. Soon he began a sweeping curve south again. He'd maneuvered the pursuers behind him so they couldn't cut him off, but if they should prove fast enough, they could certainly overtake.

The Japanese ships had dropped to four in number, but these four were definitely gaining.

Lieutenant Hu put his ship into a dive. Ahead were foothills, rising to the mountains that had been the haze of a few minutes ago. Below was a fat pear-shaped valley, grain lands and pasture, with widely scattered boulders thickening in number as the land rose.

In the wider part of the valley were three small villages strung along a roadway. A tiny cloud or two of dust along this road were possibly carts or herds of sheep or cattle headed for market.

This plane was not built for diving. It began to hum and shake. Hu had to ease it out in a long glide, but they hit the ground gently, bumped once, and taxied for the cover at the upper end of the valley. The four Japanese planes were now overhead. Dan could see they were light bombers, used also for reconnaissance, no doubt.

He heard a sharp burst of thunder over the roar of the the engine. The plane was flung off the ground, landed again jarringly but upright, and Hu braked it to a stop. Two more explosions. The planes above were dropping bombs, and now Dan forgot the job he was on, forgot everything except those bombs. A stick of four made a line of giant puffs—earth, sod, rocks—well to the right.

There'd been a lot of "firsts" in the last few days for Dan, and here was another. For the first time in his life he knew pure, stark, paralyzing terror.

LIEUTENANT HU had been through bombings before. He jumped from the plane while Dan was still frozen to his seat. He yelled: "Quick! They get lucky mebbeso. We run like hell, you-betcha!"

Dan came to, managed to drop to the ground, and the two raced for the ravine opening up ahead. There were more sharp, quick-increasing screams of falling bombs, more thunderous explosions, but few came close. Some dropped a full quarter of a mile away.

The lower slopes were wooded, as were the ravines where water gathered. There were big boulders and outcroppings of rock, increasing as the hills rose to brush-covered humps.

There came a sharper whine. Dan saw Hu fling himself to the ground and bury his head in his arms. Dan's mind didn't respond so quickly. He was still on his feet when the bomb landed scarcely a hundred yards away. He was thrown flat, and the air was filled with whistling, screaming splinters of metal and flying debris, while the ground shook as from an earthquake.

Dan lay in a daze. Lieutenant Hu was on his feet again. He pulled Dan to his, and Dan suddenly realized he was yelling something at the other, but he didn't know what, and he couldn't hear himself because his ears were stunned by the concussion.

Other bombs dropped. No more came so close, however. Good cover was still a couple of hundred yards away. The roar of the planes became louder, louder, and there was a spitting of machine-guns. The earth was torn in lines of spurts, but the two raced on until they reached the woods. There they dropped to the ground exhausted.

It was several minutes before they recovered breath. They looked at each other.

Suddenly the Chinese began to laugh. He pointed at Dan. "We plenty much frightened, you-betcha," he said, and went off in another spasm. Then he lost his good humor. He'd come to his feet and was staring down the valley, and he commenced cursing in Chinese—and all his other languages—and shaking his fist at the sky.

Dan raised himself to hands and knees, then to his feet, and clung to a slender tree trunk for support, for his legs were still trembling from the exertion. It wasn't that he was out of condition. He'd just never run for his life before.

He too stared down the slow-rising slope. The Japanese had a few bombs left, small ones, and they were trying to hit the plane. Lieutenant Hu broke off his shouting long enough to turn to Dan with anger in his face.

"I think you bring curse of Black Dragon!" he said.

Then he fell silent, and tears came flowing. A bomb dropping close to the plane lifted the ship twenty feet in the air, and it fell back on one wing. The wing was smashed.

Dan gripped Lieutenant Hu across the shoulders and turned him to higher ground.

In a copse of trees some distance from where they entered cover, they took stock of themselves. Lieutenant Hu was unhurt, but Dan was utterly amazed to discover he himself had a flesh wound in the left shoulder from a flying fragment. He hadn't felt it hit, he hadn't been aware of it while he ran. He didn't even feel it now.

Lieutenant Hu knew what to do. He eased Dan's arms out of the leather coat and cut away the shoulder and sleeve of his suit jacket and shirt. He unbuckled the shoulder harness that held Howland's gun under the left arm, and stuffed it all into Dan's right-hand coat pocket. Then he went to work with his first-aid kit.

Three of the four planes had landed, and the fourth was circling low. Four men hopped from each grounded ship and deployed over a wide front heading for the foothills. They had no rifles. Two turned aside as they approached the smashed Chinese plane. One drew back his arm and flung something.

"Grenade!" exclaimed Dan automatically.

There was a flash, an explosion, and the plane burst into flames. Hu said nothing, but his body stiffened, his hands clenched, his face blackened.

Twelve pistols plus grenades were not to be faced. The two turned and made off through the woods up the ravine. Lieutenant Hu carried the heavy leather coat, now too much for Dan. For half an hour they kept going at forced speed.

Hu was first to give in when they came upon an ancient stone temple. It was more a glorified shrine than temple, most of it cut from living rock. The ornamental façade was composed of huge stones fitted together without mortar and carved fancifully. There seemed no apparent reason for its existence at this spot, for it was off all beaten trails. Not even a footpath led to it. Any approach had been obliterated by nature long ago. It housed a huge stone Buddha—also snakes and lizards. They didn't enter.

Dan's arm was numb now, his shoulder becoming painful. However, the bleeding had nearly stopped, and Lieutenant Hu sprinkled a powder on the wound from his first-aid kit.

He fastened a square bandage over it with adhesive tape. There was nothing more they could do about it.

They had a fifteen-minute rest here, and now Dan took the lead. He mapped a plan. They would circle the valley by the ridge, keeping to cover. . . .

The going was tough. There were washes to negotiate, bamboo groves to circle because too thick to penetrate. They lost sight of the valley for most of the route. Before dark set in, however, they'd worked their way to a point sufficiently near that one roadway across the valley.

"Twenty li, you-betcha," panted Lieutenant Hu.

Only seven miles! Dan felt he'd fought rocks and brush and trees for seventy. He was done in. The wound had bled more. His whole side was numb, with the shoulder and arm aching dully.

From here they could see the whole valley. The Japanese planes had left, and presumably the two men were in the clear. But it was impossible for Dan to go on. He fumbled with his right hand, couldn't reach his money, had to have Hu take his wallet out and empty it. He had ninety-three dollars and some silver. He had some large bills tucked away in his watch pocket, but wouldn't need that. He gave the ninety-odd dollars to Hu and sent him on to see what could be done about transportation, food, and fresh bandages for his wound.

"First me fix you. Be plenty hard wait, you-betcha."

The Chinese cleared a spot against a broad tree and made a cushion of grass. He arranged Dan's coat about him gently and helped him down onto the seat. He drew Dan's pistol, put it into his hand, and said:

"Anybody come but me, you shoot, you-betcha. No can tell what they do you."

Then he was off down the hill at a trot.

DAN was brought out of a daze by the sound of airplanes. The roar came louder and louder, yet he could see nothing. There must have been several. He didn't place them until they first loosed parachute flares and then started dropping bombs and incendiaries on those three villages.

There were two planes over each village, and there was no anti-aircraft here to keep them high. They flew low, and they couldn't miss. Quickly, almost simultaneously, all three villages were burning fiercely.

Those houses, Dan knew, would be of mud. Mud-and-straw cakes piled upon one another, or mud plastered onto a framework of bamboo or saplings. But with roofs of thatch. Torches!

After the bombing, the planes made run after run over their targets, riddling the houses with machine-gun bullets. It happened so quickly that few if any of the inhabitants could have escaped.

Dan had known terror from bombs himself that day. He knew the horror there must be in the flames of those three giant bonfires. He choked on the thought that it was because of him the Japanese were wiping out those villages of people—who asked nothing of anyone but to be left alone, who would never even know why!

He was suddenly nauseated and violently sick. His aching shoulder and the loss of blood and the lack of sleep and nourishment took hold. His last conscious thought was that he must not close his eyes—there could be danger, he must not close his eyes—he must not—

Then the brilliant stars, the flames, went black. . . .

Dan came to, with someone shaking him by his shoulders, the good one.

He brought up his gun—but the gun was gone from his hand! He saw a coolie standing over him, loose cotton jacket and pants, conical straw hat. This much was outlined against the stars, and in the dull glow of an oil lantern the man held.

"It's me, it's Bill Hu," said the man, and Dan slumped back.

"Wha-what—those clothes—" Dan's voice came between a croak and a whisper. His hand went to his throat, but there was no relief in massage.

"I bought them from farmer, you-betcha. No can tell who we meet, what they do one soldier, one sick man. Bought his bullock and cart. Got them down at foot of hill, you-betcha. You okay?"

"Yes, I'm—I'm—" Dan tried to rise. He couldn't make it. He was stiff as a board and pretty far gone.

"Take it easy," said Hu. He picked up the gun from where it had dropped to the ground and shoved it in Dan's pocket. "Everything okay now. You wait. Got food to eat."

"Where did you go? I didn't see you leave the hills."

"Found bigger village other side of hill, you-betcha. Here. Got tea. Not good, but you drink."

"Then you could use the money."

"Oh, sure." The Chinese grinned evilly. "American money good when I got this." He patted his gun.

The next Dan knew he was lying on his back in straw and being jounced unmercifully. He was in the bullock cart Hu had "bought." Lieutenant Hu, the coolie clothes over his uniform, was driving, and the dust rose through the cracks in the floor and dozens of little melons were bouncing around. Not on Dan, for Hu had rigged a ridge of straw around him.

The leather coat, thrown over him, had slid off and he was cold—chilled through and shaking from it. Yet the clothes next him were wet with sweat. He tried to call out, but no sound came, and on the second try only a whisper, so he gave it up. Besides, what did it matter where they were?

The wheels of the cart were higher than the body of it. He could see them roll around. They must have been six feet or more in diameter. Solid wheels, with iron bands for tires. They might have been square, so sensitive was Dan from his feverish condition, and each revolution made a number of distinct jolts in a fiendish pattern that was torture. It beat a rhythm—must do, Bill Hu, must do, Bill Hu. . . .

At length Dan once more lost consciousness, this time in sleep from his utter exhaustion. When he awoke, it was bright day, and the sun was climbing. The aching, throbbing shoulder reminded him instantly of all that had happened, and he lay still. A twist of the head showed the Chinese pilot nodding with each jolt of the cart as the ox plodded on.

This time Dan found his voice on the first try. Not much of a voice, for his throat was pretty sore. Lieutenant Hu came awake instantly. His moon face split into a broad, toothy grin.

"You okay, mebbeso? You look pretty much good," he said jovially. "You like hop out, run around?" He chuckled at his joke. "Okay, lie still like baby, you-betcha."

"Where are we?"

"Not lost. Only thirty-forty li from air camp Be there before night, mebbeso, if I make this dam' beast trot. Olà!" he shouted at the ox. "Olà!"

Followed some sulphurous language in Spanish and French, Portuguese and English, and the ox plodded on with lowered head and grinding jaws.

It was a few hours after his waking when Hu stopped the cart. They had left all roads long since and were following an easy, upward trail. Lieutenant Hu first eased Dan onto the ground in a warm sunny spot, then climbed to an open knoll and made signals to the horizon, squinted, made more. Then he brought water from a brook in the tin that had held the meat and rice, made

a small fire, heated the water, and made tea from a small paper of leaves he produced with the patter and air of a magician from one of Dan's pockets. He was bent on entertaining his charge. He carved a cup from a melon, and Dan gargled the hot brew several times. It eased his throat considerably, and the hot liquid warmed him.

They settled down to wait. After what seemed an eternity—the sun was getting low and the air was chill—four soldiers came trotting down the hillside trail, two of them bearing a pole chair.

Dan still had strength enough to get into the chair by himself, with a little help, after which came a three-hour trip up the mountains, climbing, climbing, the chair carried in turn by the four men, while Lieutenant Hu trotted on ahead. The men not on the chair led and prodded the ox along with them.

THEY reached the guerrilla camp well after dark, but Dan was no more than just aware of this. He'd passed out again on the trip up the mountain, and handling him from the chair to a bed brought only a half consciousness and a muttering about something he had to do.

So when hands lifted him from the carrying-chair and eased him down onto a bed, he let go, and his last conscious feeling was of sinking into the ocean, a deep, dry ocean. He never knew when the fresh bandage was applied to his wound, or his throat looked after, or his swollen arm soaked in hot water, or his clothing removed and his body cleansed of lice. He lay drowning in a dry ocean hour upon hour. It was wonderful at first, but there were moments of choking and suffocation, and these brought on a continuous kaleidoscopic nightmare of weird and horrible and colorful things.

There were bombs bursting in fountains of debris, and grenades, and yellow faces, olive faces, brown faces, gray faces. The nightmare bristled with guns and bayonets. There were burning villages, zooming planes, machine-gunning. Then a fanciful interlude: He was in Bali—or Bangkok, or Saigon. A dozen little brown-skinned girls in metallic costumes were doing mechanical dances. Their movements were short, stiff, angular, all of a pattern. They had peaked pagodalike hats on their heads. To twanging music and drums they moved. One started to swell, bigger and bigger, and sat cross-legged while the others danced around her. She became a Buddha, and a lotus flower blossomed beneath her. She was the Cambodian Buddha in the museum back at Rangecrest!

One hand remained at her breast; the other was outstretched and kept pumping up and down. Slowly, slowly, up and down, while the head with its pointed hat nodded in unison. But nodded backward, not forward! Ah, this was important. He must remember this!

There were more voices. They came from a long distance. Familiar voices. It was as though he were back home at Rangecrest. Ah, but that couldn't be. He was drowning; he'd been down a long time. . . . Then suddenly he found he could breathe again. He pulled in deep breaths. He tried to open his eyes, but couldn't. There was no feeling in his body; it was as though he were suspended in air. He tried to move his arms and legs. He couldn't. He *willed* to move them, and still couldn't. He gave up and lay there, present yet not present, here yet somewhere far away.

The voices went on, they were coming closer. There was Admiral Cheney's voice. He could make that out. Funny. Admiral Cheney hadn't been in the nightmare. Now someone was standing over him, a hand at his wrist, a hand on his forehead. A new voice broke in—a Chinese voice speaking American English.

"I believe he is coming out of it," this voice said.

At this, Dan managed to raise his eyelids, with some blinking, and to keep them lifted. He could move his eyes but not his head. There was a Chinese standing over him.

"Ah," said the man. "You are awake. You've had quite a sleep. Open your mouth, please; I want your temperature." He inserted a thermometer under Dan's tongue. "Don't bite on it."

Dan's eyes roved. He was in Kuo Tso-lin's hut, in Kuo Tso-lin's bed. Mr. Kuo was standing at the foot of it, a faint smile on his lips; and beside him—beside him. . . . It couldn't be! Dan blinked, but the figure remained.

It was Admiral Cheney, and he was in uniform!

"Surprised, my boy?" chuckled the Admiral. "Hah! You wouldn't let me at your father that day at Rangecrest, would you? All I wanted was this. He had friends in Washington, and could put in a word. Well, as it turned out, I didn't need him. Those brass hats moved, for once. Or maybe some office-boy ensign put it through by mistake. I was on the retired list, wasn't I? And the Navy wasn't going to use me, were they? But I can still do some good, can't I? And I had to have permission to join up with the Chinese. So here I am!"

"I'm afraid he doesn't quite follow you, Admiral Cheney," said Mr. Kuo in his dry, rustling voice.

"Dan, my boy, I'm going to have a hand in this fracas after all. I was mulling over the idea for a long time, and I finally made propositions that came to a head during Madam Chiang's visit to the States. Dan, I'm going to have the damnedest navy you ever heard tell of. It'll be nothing but small boats—some PT's China talked us out of, some armored sleds driven by airplane motors, motor boats, such stuff.

"But we're going to carry guerrilla warfare to sea along this stretch of coast. American subs are driving Japanese shipping closer in. The Japs have more need for their Navy at sea and can't spare so much for shore patrol. I'm going after their merchant shipping, Dan, from river-mouths, coves, bays where we can lie camouflaged, and if we don't do damage even with this small stuff, operating by night and hiding by day, then my name isn't Maynard Cheney!"

Dan rolled his eyes upward and shut his lids by way of answer. The Chinese doctor removed the thermometer, read it, shook it, and nodded with satisfaction.

"You have a remarkable constitution, Mr. Burgess," he said. "It seems what you needed most was a good sleep. Still, you are not well, and must remain in bed. Let me see your throat. Wider, please."

He stirred a liquid in a glass, helped Dan into a sitting position with a pillow at his back, handed him the glass, and held a basin.

"Gargle with this. I've been spraying your throat while you slept, but that's not quite satisfactory. This will be better."

So that was the red-hot poker that choked him throughout his nightmare.

Mr. Kuo had gone to the rear of the room, behind the screen that shut off his servant's nook, and now brought the man forward with a steaming bowl.

"Chicken soup, Mr. Burgess, prepared American fashion. It will do you good."

Dan essayed a few mouthfuls but his arm got heavy. The Admiral came forward and sat on the edge of the bed to feed him. Between spoons Dan spoke up.

"Guerrilla navy!"

"Yah," growled the Admiral, "you're a fine one to talk. Damn' slacker! What're you trying to do, get permanent exemption?"

"How did you get here so quickly? I came fast myself. What day is this?"

"It's Thursday, nearly sunset. You've been asleep twenty hours. I arrived yesterday. Left Rangecrest the day after you did, and flew along the South America-Africa-India route."

"How's—how's—"

"Everyone was fine when I left. Nothing for you to worry about—except maybe Captain Howland making time with Edie. Has only one arm, but that's a help. Brings out the mother in her." The Admiral chuckled.

Mr. Kuo was standing at the foot of the bed again, hands in sleeves, quizzical smile on his face. Dan suddenly remembered the dancers in his dream.

"Admiral, you won't mind? I have to talk with Mr. Kuo."

"Certainly, my boy. Finish this first. You need it. Meanwhile, I'll get my shaving kit and come back and whack those whiskers off your face."

Then Dan was alone with his host. He came to the point quickly.

"Mr. Kuo, perhaps you remember a big bronze Cambodian Buddha which you sent my father when he first put his museum plans into operation."

Mr. Kuo looked at Dan. "Yes, I remember."

"Mr. Kuo, there's something I must ask you. There's something I must know."

"Yes?"

Dan hesitated. He grinned faintly and lost the grin at once. "I almost dread asking it, for fear—" He pushed himself further upright. "Mr. Kuo, that Buddha—my father's last words had what seemed to be a message for me—"

Dan fumbled the words, but asked the question that was tearing through his mind, the thing that now seemed so simple, that he should have known from the first, from that day when he jumped to the base of the Buddha.

Mr. Kuo heard him out and raised his brows, the equivalent of a stare.

"Did you not know, then?" he said. "Yes. But I must explain—"

Chapter Sixteen

CHENGTU again. Dan was doubling on his late tracks, this time in an American plane, and heading for home. Newlan flew him on this leg of the trip. At Chengtu he connected with a squadron of returning cargo planes. His ship held half a load, and there might be room for a dozen Ferry Command pilots, a correspondent, and himself.

No time was lost; he moved right along. Came Siberia. Chita. Yakutsky. They were taking the north circle route and it was miserably cold.

But it was also the quickest route home, and now that he knew—*knew* where the message was, he was more anxious to get the job done. Under their noses all of the time! Yet as safe as if buried at Fort Knox.

Much of the trip was rough. His flight across the Pacific in the new giant bomber had been luxury in comparison, smooth as a Pullman for the most part. But in the south he'd had better weather. Here they ran into storms, bucking winds, icing troubles. He was airsick and it didn't help that his fever was gone. He still had a bad throat.

He'd had a fight to leave Mr. Kuo's camp so soon, and won it only by promising to follow instructions about gargling and keeping himself bundled, and because he needed better facilities for the care of his wound. This didn't hurt so much now. The inflammation was subsiding in shoulder and arm, and the arm rested in a sling to avoid irritating the torn flesh.

His clothes had been cleaned and repaired while he slept the clock around that day, and heavy underclothes were found for him. At the Yenpingfu field Major Newlan had made him a present of two Army blankets, for which Dan would be eternally grateful, for during most of the trip he wrapped in them and stretched out on the deck of the plane or braced himself up against freight.

Dan put in a lot of sleep. But he thought a good deal too. What a quixotic thing for the Admiral at his age. He was nearly seventy. War was a young man's business, especially such body-shattering engines of destruction as tanks and planes—and PT boats.

PT boats indeed; air-motored sleds; Q-boat junks! Against coastal gunboats, destroyers, airplanes! Grenades against bombs, popguns against rifles!

Yet it was true as the Admiral pointed out, Japanese sea strength and air strength was being stretched tighter and tighter. They couldn't cover everything. They hadn't succeeded in an overland route from Malaya and Indo-China, they still had to depend on sea lanes. They used the Taiwan Strait and undoubtedly there was damage to be done them. At a cost.

Besides, it was the Admiral's sea experience and tactical knowledge that would come into play, not his physical direction. There'd be others for that, younger, tougher in body, stronger. He'd be as safe in some hidden shore base as Kuo Tso-lin in his mountain fastness. He wouldn't be going on these one-chance-in-ten missions.

Or would he?

Dan had been curious about how the Admiral could have made his peace over this thing with Mrs. Cheney.

"Dan," said the Admiral, with a caught-with-the-jam expression, "she didn't know a thing about it. You know what I'd have been up against. I just left and sent her a letter about it after I was on my way."

"What!"

"Well, she'll be all right, won't she? She'll probably stay at Rangecrest most of the time. She and your mother get along well and your mother will need company, you and Edie getting married and Edward gone. She'll play bridge and drive around—if she can get the gas. She likes that country."

Dan thought frequently about Edith on this monotonous journey. She'd come to mind constantly throughout the entire trip, but it was senseless self-torture and he'd put her out of mind as often as she crept in. Besides, he'd had other things to think about.

Now, however, his mission was completed—practically. He knew where the message was concealed. He needn't put another thought on it. With every passing minute in the air he was getting another couple of miles or more closer to home. So as visions of Edie returned, he welcomed them. He closed his eyes and brought her to him. He remembered her in moments of the past, dreamed up moments of the future.

As for that future, there was no planning to be done. Life was already cut to a pattern for them. First there was the job on which his father had been working. At the rate they had been completing the draft together, when he'd had only evenings, it would have taken months. But his father's notes were complete, and steady application now could finish it in a matter of weeks. Then he'd join up—the Air Corps Engineers, perhaps, if he could make it; camouflage work had taken his fancy since the examples he'd seen in the Far East—and after the war settle down to carrying on his father's museum plans.

They hit Seimchan. Then Fairbanks. Getting closer. And colder! His throat was still raspy, but there was plenty of hot coffee in vacuums and he kept it trickling down. At each stop there was hot food and heated sleeping quarters overnight.

There was one thing he made a mental note to do. A *must*. Lieutenant Hu should have a new plane. It would take some doing to buck the priorities boys, he knew, but surely his services in this matter entitled him to a voice. Surely one small plane out of the thousands rolling off the lines each month was not much to ask. It could even be an old plane and Hu would be happy.

His ship came down at Juneau, but was in the air again at once and catching up with the squadron. Matter of picking up a few passengers.

Then Seattle, and he was changing into a commercial passenger plane, and the comfort of those seats no one ever had more appreciated.

San Francisco. Sufficient stop-over time to get shaved and cleaned up, and to send a wire to Howland at Rangecrest. A long wire rather than the phone. He wanted Dr. Ridley when he reached home; he'd had to take a rain-check on his wedding and wanted to do something about that; incidentally, he told Howland he could arrange for a plane to Washington for himself.

ALL the way to Los Angeles, Edith came to mind. Little mannerisms. The touch of her hand, the lift of her chin. How she looked at breakfast in linen skirt and wool-embroidered jacket, a favorite of hers; at dinner in a flame-colored frock, a favorite of his. With camellias in her hair.

Edith had an impish smile, and she kept turning it on in his mind. Then the plane was grounding, and there she was, with the smile—until she saw his arm in the sling.

No time for words. He held her close and there were her lips—her ears for whispers.

Someone tapped his shoulder. "Hey, hey, three minutes is long enough. A man can drown in that time." It was Howland. "There are others here. Your mother, for example."

Adelaide Martin had her turn. Then his injury required an explanation.

"Bomb splinter," Dan said briefly. "In Kiangsi."

At the limousine Chong was waiting, wreathed in smiles. As the women entered, Howland pulled Dan aside. He was anxious, even if he didn't act so.

Dan reassured him. "I know where the message is. It's safe. Did you do what I asked?"

"About the doctor?" Howland said innocently. "Yes, he'll be there."

There was a time for jokes and a time not for jokes. Dan waited. Howland grinned.

"Oh, all right. Yes, I called the reverend gentleman. But you should know how a woman is about her wedding, Dan. She wants fixings. She wants to plan for it and look forward to it and get flustered about it. Edith won't like this. You'll have to break the news to her easy. However, Jung Lu's doing what he can on the spur of the moment, making a bower in the living-room, and so forth. I found one of his grandsons can play the Hammond, and he's practicing. It'll be better than canned music. That would really be the pay-off. But if I were you—"

His grin spread. He'd carried it far enough. He held the door with his one good arm and followed Dan into the car.

Howland may have been half serious, but he was wholly wrong about Edith. As the car wound up the drive to Rangecrest in the day's last rays, and they entered the wide hall and Edith saw the bustle of activity awaiting them, she fell into the spirit with a laugh.

It was Mrs. Cheney who was reluctant. "Men!" she snorted. "They're all alike. You can't trust one of 'em. If I were you, my girl, I'd think twice—"

Dan still had one thing to do to complete the job on his hands.

"Go get ready, Edie. Howland and I have some business to finish. You can make it in half an hour, can't you?"

"Half an hour!" she cried. "To dress for my one and only wedding? Little you know. You might as well take your time about your business."

"But Howland has to leave for Washington—"

"Who cares about Lee? I'm only going to be a sister to him. Two hours, Mr. Smarty, since you thought you'd pull a surprise on me . . . Oh, well, an hour, then!"

Dan and Howland went to the museum. On the way Howland said: "We caught the murderer, Dan. Proved him by the fingerprints on that Bodhisattva. Tracked him with bloodhounds to the cleverest hidden hut you ever saw way back in the hills. Apparently planted before Pearl Harbor for whatever job might come up. Had dry and canned foods, a well for water, a short-wave set—to get instructions, of course. Killed himself when he saw escape was impossible, so that matter is ended."

Dan said nothing, only scowled and unlocked the museum with the keys Howland handed over. He locked the door again behind them and walked to the big Cambodian Buddha. With malice in his eyes as he stared up at it, he recounted his trip briefly, his interview with Prince Min. He was starting to give a quick summary of the interview when Howland stopped him.

"Not that I'm not curious, but my job is only to get that thing to the Secretary, and what you know about it is something you'll have to carry inside of you. At any rate, I'm glad you know what you're looking for so there'll be no mistake about what I take back with me."

Dan stared up at the statue.

"Remember that day I felt the arm give? It *did* give! It's a part of the casting, but there's just enough spring in the metal to trip a clever little dog-lock when the head is pressed back. It'll take the two of us. We have only two hands between us. The head must be pushed and the arm pulled down together. You pull on the hand."

Dan sprang to the marble block on which the statue stood and made ready to push back the head. It was hinged at the back of the neck, a concealed hinge, and broke at the line of the molded garment. It fitted so well that a magnifying glass would not reveal the secret.

As the head swung back, a small door was disclosed in the solid neck, leading into the head. It had a lock.

"Now for that small key we had left over after each search," said Dan.

Howland felt in his pocket silently and produced the key. From the bronze head of the statue Dan withdrew a tin cylinder two inches in diameter, ten inches long. He locked the small door, caught the head back in place. Without a word he offered the tin to Howland.

"Better have a look at the contents," said the Army man. "We want to be sure."

He wandered off among the exhibits while Dan spread the papers out on a display case, looked them over, put them back. "It's the stuff," he said.

"Fine. Now wrap it and seal it."

Dan did this in his study close by, and Howland had him fasten the package to his right forearm where his sling effectively hid it.

THEN Howland grinned. "A couple of cripples, but the job is done. And speaking of cripples, Dr. Ridley's waiting to have a go at you."

As they passed down the hall to the stairs, strains of "Lohengrin" came faintly from the living-room wing. It gave Howland one more chance to dig.

"There's one little item left. You'll have to make a report on your trip, in detail, including all Prince Min said. You can forward it to the Secretary by registered mail marked *private and confidential.*"

He grinned.

"I hate to see you get off on the wrong foot with Edith. She won't like this. But it looks as if you'll have to postpone the honeymoon for a day or two and get that report done. Unless, of course, you can work the two together—say, five minutes of honeymoon, a page of report, and so on."

THE END

"Why shouldn't I buy it? I've got the money!"

Sure you've got the money. So have lots of us. And yesterday it was all ours, to spend as we darn well pleased. But not today. Today it isn't ours alone.

"What do you mean, it isn't mine?"

It isn't yours to spend as you like. None of us can spend as we like today. Not if we want prices to stay down. There just aren't as many things to buy as there are dollars to spend. If we all start scrambling to buy everything in sight, prices can kite to hell-'n'-gone.

"You think I can really keep prices down?"

If you don't, who will? Uncle Sam can't do it alone. Every time you refuse to buy something you don't need, every time you refuse to pay more than the ceiling price, every time you shun a black market, you're helping to keep prices down.

"But I thought the government put a ceiling on prices."

You're right, a price ceiling for your protection. And it's up to you to pay no more than the ceiling price. If you do, you're party to a black market deal. And black markets not only boost prices—they cause shortages.

"Doesn't rationing take care of shortages?"

Your ration coupons will—if you use them wisely. Don't spend them unless you have to. Your ration book merely sets a limit on your purchases. Every coupon you don't use today means that much more for you—and everybody else—to share tomorrow.

"Then what do you want me to do with my money?"

Save it! Put it in the bank! Put it in life insurance! Pay off old debts and don't make new ones. Buy and hold War Bonds. Then your money can't force prices up. But it can speed the winning of the war. It can build a prosperous nation for you, your children, and our soldiers, who deserve a stable America to come home to. Keep your dollars out of circulation and they'll keep prices down. The government is helping—with taxes.

"Now wait! How do taxes help keep prices down?"

We've got to pay for this war sooner or later. It's easier and cheaper to pay as we go. And it's better to pay more taxes NOW—while we've got the extra money to do it. Every dollar put into taxes means a dollar less to boost prices. So . . .

Use it up . . . Wear it out . . .
Make it do . . . Or do without

A United States war message prepared by the War Advertising Council, approved by the Office of War Information, and contributed by the Magazine Publishers of America

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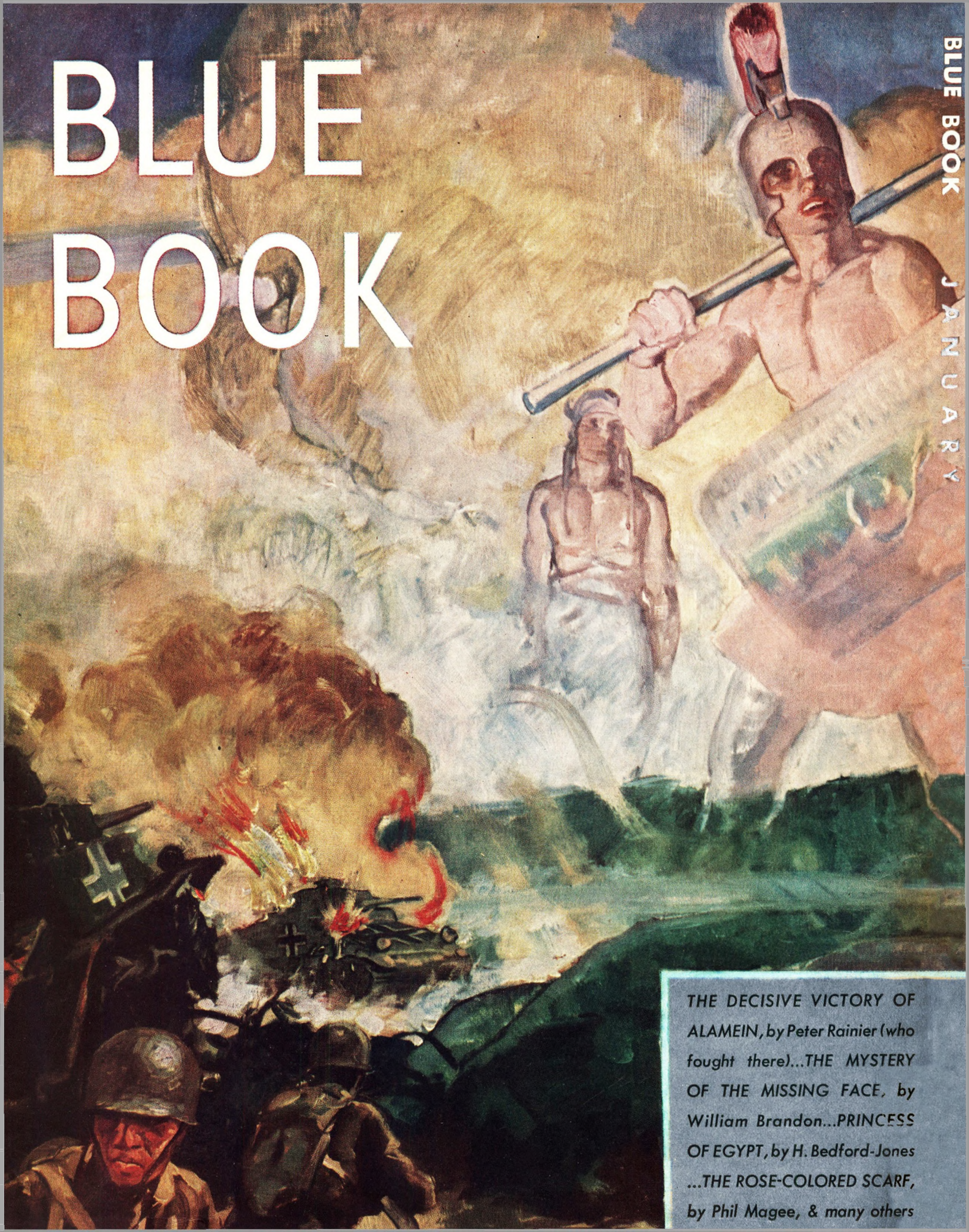

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