BLUE BOOK
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Christmas

It Needn't Be Only One Day

by HAROLD CHANNING WIRE

THIS was in the Panamints, that stark range of desert mountains which border Death Valley on the west. It happened years ago. But always in December I still think of Shorty Harris "feeling Christmas," there in his barren prospector's camp.

As we rode horseback toward the place, a mining man named Calahan and I, Calahan warned me: "Some folks say old Shorty Harris is a mite queer. I never thought so. Sometimes he just won't talk, that's all."

Shorty did talk this time. He saw us coming down the darkening cañon, and stood up from his campfire to give us a wave and a hearty yell.

His camp was like any other: blackened coffee-pot set upon two rocks, frying-pan, a burro pack-box with his food, and a water keg. But he had found boards somewhere and made a table. And on it was a bunch of desert holly, a few branches of the silvery leaves thrust into a red-labeled tomato can. I saw it the first thing when we left our horses. Then about the first thing Shorty said was: "I'm fixin' up for Christmas. What's the date now?"

"The twenty-fourth," Calahan said.

"That's what I'd figured," Shorty said. "Funny how a man can feel Christmas in the air!" His wrinkled brown face beamed happily. "You two stay here tonight. We'll have a Christmas feed tomorrow." Quickly he added: "I've got plenty, sure I have!"

He didn't have plenty. His food-box was open, and I could see there was not much in it. He would have to tramp a hundred miles, round-trip, to get more for himself if he fed us a Christmas dinner. And we were not carrying anything to leave with him.

Calahan must have been thinking that too. "We'd stay, Shorty," he said. "But we've got to get across the desert tonight while it's cool."

Shorty looked around his barren camp, searching. "Well—" he said. "Here!" He reached down into his pack-box and brought up the supreme gift of a man so isolated and alone—a bottle partly filled with wine. "Want to give you something," he said. "Here's the best I've got."

Firelight, and the feeling inside him, seemed to warm his old face as he poured the wine into three small tin cans that he used for cups.

We drank to his good luck, and ours: and then we started on, with Shorty calling after us: "Merry Christmas, boys!"

I kept thinking about him, his little bunch of gray desert holly in the red tomato can, his spirit of wanting to be generous, feeling Christmas in the air. When we were out of sight, I shook my head and grinned at Calahan.

He chuckled. "Just goes to show you," he said, "that feeling Christmas needn't be only one day in the year. Might be a good thing if more of us could spread it out."

"I guess you're right," I said. For somehow Shorty's reckoning of time had slipped a month. It was January twenty-fourth.

Readers' Comment

Five Reasons

My acquaintance with Blue Book begins with the August number. I like it mainly because—

(1) The contents are interesting, comprehensible, and satisfying. There is a pleasing proportion of fiction and factual articles.

(2) The print is easy to read—good typing, and no slick-paper glare.

(3) The stories and articles are not printed in fragments with other matter sandwiched in between.

(4) Every page is regularly numbered.

(5) There is no advertising matter. I feel that I am getting my money's worth when I buy Blue Book.

I sincerely hope that every issue suits me as well as the August issue.

William F. Gingrich

A Super Blue Book?

After reading Blue Book for the last twenty-five years and missing but one copy, I would like to express an opinion. Some readers complain about the continued stories that you used to print; others would like you to reprint old stories.

Now here is my idea: Why not print a super Blue Book every three or four months, with nothing but stories dating back ten, twenty or even thirty years ago? This super Blue Book not to be put on news-stands.

Have your readers plunk down one buck thirty days before publication, so you would know how many to print. I for one would send my buck sixty days before publication.

J. W. Prouty

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The short stories and novel herein are fiction and intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or actual events. If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence.

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The Madness of Sir

AME BRAGWAINE *rode to the court and told the queen, La Beale Isoud, that Sir Tristram was nigh in that country. For joy Isoud swooned; and when she might speak she said: "Help that I may speak with him, outher my heart will brast." Then Dame Bragwaine brought Sir Tristram and Sir Kehydius privily unto the court and into a chamber; and to tell the joys that were betwixt that queen and Sir Tristram no pen can write it. And when Sir Kehydius saw La Beale Isoud, he was so enamoured upon her . . . privily he wrote unto her letters and ballads. . . . And when she understood his letters, she had pity of his complaint, and unavised she wrote another letter to com-*

Tristram

COMEDY AS WELL AS ROMANCE AND HIGH TRAGEDY DISTINGUISH THE GREAT MEDIEVAL LEGENDS—ESPECIALLY WHEN OUR FRIEND SIR DINADAN IS INVOLVED.

by THEODORE GOODRIDGE ROBERTS

fort him withal. . . . And as it mishapped, Tristram found the letter that Kehydius had sent unto La Beale Isoud and also the letter she wrote unto Kehydius. . . . Then upon a night Sir Tristram put his horse from him and unlaced his armour, and so he went into the wilderness and brast down trees and boughs. Then was he naked; and he waxed lean and poor of flesh. . . . And he fell among swineherds; and when he did any shrewd deed, they beat him with rods.

—Sir Thomas Malory.

SIR DINADAN drew rein and addressed his squire.

"'Tis twenty days since we rode forth from Camelot."

"Twenty-three," the squire amended, in a patient voice.

"And in that time I have encountered and bested four knights-errant."

"Five, sir."

"Four or five, our pouches are still empty."

"You are too soft, sir."

"But each and every one of them swore by his halidom that his arms and horse were the whole of his worldly possessions; and all pleaded hungry wives and children at home."

"If you had kept your visor shut—"

"Just so! With my visor shut, they'd not have seen my foolish face. I get your meaning, my friend."

"Nay, sir—the kindness in it."

"Nay, good Kedge, don't spare me. I'm a fool, and I admit it—but only to you. I distrust my own judgment. What would you do now, in my place?"

"Well sir—since you ask me: if I were you, we'd turn right around an' head back for Camelot at a gallop."

"But we left there of necessity—this time as upon former occasions—because our money was spent and our credit exhausted. Why return now, with our pouches still empty?"

"To refill them, sir—your pouch, that's to say—and boxes an' strongrooms to boot—the easiest way."

"Ah, my poor Kedge, are you still harping on that frayed string?"

"You asked my advice, sir. With a rich wife, you could live at court the year around, and give every day to the inventing of songs and *bons mots*, and every night to the reciting of them in the highest and merriest companies, with never a thought of the cost, and no risk to life or limb."

"But you know my opinion of women!"

"I've heard it often enough, sir—the gibes and the raillery; but knowing that it's all because some designing or frivolous chit has made a monkey of you upon occasion, and having frequently witnessed the pleasure you take in female society and the pleasure women of every condition and age appear to derive from your company, I cannot accept it as final, sir."

"Made a monkey of, d'ye say? Ah, my dear Kedge, my heart has been nigh broken more than once and twice by their trickeries and faithlessness. As for my apparent partiality

for their society, it is because of their intelligence. They are capable—save in exceptional instances—of appreciating my best efforts both as a poet and a wit. Their attraction for me, as mine for them, is solely of the mind."

"Very good, sir. Then why not a marriage of minds? But with a gold ring, of course, and a bishop to perform the ceremony. I could name half a dozen ladies of superior intelligence—three widows and three spinsters—two of them duchesses—and all rich enough, who would jump at your offer, sir."

"I COULD name them too. Forget them!"

"Yes sir. But I could name others just as intelligent and—"

"Forget *them* too! I've learned my lesson. I've no further use for the so-called fair sex—hah, but most unfair!—save only as audiences and hostesses. If I sing of love, 'tis with tongue in cheek; and the while the fat ones all but brast their stays, and the thin ones scream like peahens at my quips and quirks, my bitter heart gives their merriment the lie. They have made a cynic of me at twenty-eight—a disillusioned cynic, which is a thing no poet can afford to be—the devil take them! But for their gleaming false eyes and soft lying lips, I'd be the greatest poet in Christendom now, instead of just one of two or three, and also the knight-at-arms of most prowess and honor in the world, instead of just one of half a dozen. And all in ten years. Ah, me!"

"I mind the first one like yesterday, sir. You were but a squire then, and I but a groom. A designing chit, I grant you, sir—but it was for that affair of that Princess and her sire's beard the King made a knight of you, and you promoted me to squiredom and gentility. She played you false, and wed Sir Kay the Seneschal, and broke your heart. But may I suggest, sir, that Sir Kay now looks like an even bitterer cynic than yourself? After all, she was, and still is, a redhead."

"A redhead? She was beautiful—externally—as a summer dawn and a night of stars."

"A redhead none the less, sir. And with green eyes. And so was the next one who broke your heart a redhead, sir. And the third was a towhead, and the fourth kind of betwixt and between. And so on. And you stuck your neck out for the chopper every time, sir, till I've blushed for you. Hell, sir, I'd be a gibing cynic too if—well, in your boots, sir. Why don't you fall for a brown-haired or black-haired damosel for a change, sir, for your peace of mind? Their hearts may be of truer stuff. I know of one such who is beautiful enough to inspire any poet and—ah—well enough heeled, in her own right, to support him."

Dinadan was conscious of a great urge to champion her, whether or no her case called for championing.

Dinadan cried out: "Have done! I trust none of them between the ages of eight and eighty. I'd as lief jump into a river with a millstone round my neck, or pull an oar in a Turkish galley, as take on the gyves of wedlock. I'll starve first—by the knuckle-bones of the twenty-seven lost virgins of Mount Gomery!"

Kedge heaved a sigh and said: "In that case, sir, shall we go straight forward, or turn to the right or the left, in search of a quiet spot in which to starve peacefully?"

The horses lifted their heads and pricked their ears; and Dinadan raised a cautioning hand and whispered: "Hark! A harp."

Kedge nodded and murmured: "Ay, sir, a harp. And a right heart-breaking tune."

Knight and squire dismounted and went forward softly, and the curious chargers went after them almost as softly. So they won through the leafy underbrush to the edge of a little glade, and beheld a ferny well in the glade, and a damosel seated beside the well with a small harp of silver on her knee. They checked at the sight. The harpist's tresses, which were long and luxuriant and dark as seaweed, veiled her face.

"Her attitude matches her music," whispered Dinadan. "Both are eloquent of bereavement and grief—and both are false, probably."

Kedge protested: "You'd not say so if she was a redhead or a towhead!"

"I trust none of them!" Dinadan retorted, louder than he had intended.

The damosel ceased her harping, raised her head and swept the veiling tresses back from her face. For the passage of six heartbeats she regarded

the knight, who was slightly in front of the squire, with eyes which Dinadan himself would have hesitated about attempting to describe, then veiled their mysteries with white lids and curling lashes. Dinadan, staring like a zany, opened and shut his mouth several times without uttering. But Kedge did better.

"Lady—at your service!" he gasped.

The white eyelids and their appendant dusky lashes fluttered up and instantly down again. Then Dinadan found his voice, or a sliver of it.

"Not so fast!" he whispered aside to Kedge, but with his eyes still upon the damosel. "I can speak for myself."

Kedge muttered an apology. Then Sir Dinadan spoke up.

"Damosel, I am a knight-errant, hight Dinadan, of King Arthur's court when not abroad in search of chivalrous adventures, and am always ready to bring spear and sword to the succor of any overmatched cavalier or lady in need of a champion."

Kedge muttered: "A redhead or towhead, for choice."

Dinadan ignored him. The damosel looked again. Her eyelids and lashes fluttered like the waving wings of white-and-black butterflies.

"I am not in need of a champion," she said softly and uncertainly, yet clearly enough. "Or am I? I thought I had a champion—a slightly mad one, but brave and strong. But he is gone. He is lost. He wandered away—he often wandered in the wilderness; and that time he did not return; and I fear some evil thing has befallen him. My poor heart is broken."

Kedge said: "Lady, Sir Dinadan here is an authority on broken hearts. His own has been broken so often that he has become a cynic. But I doubt that he knows how to mend them—with the exception of his own, of course. He mends that by being a cynic and reviling all women as false and unworthy of love."

Dinadan didn't so much as glance aside at his trusted squire. For why? He didn't hear him. In truth, he heard nothing save the damosel, and he saw nothing else.

"But that is not fair!" cried the damosel. And she stood up; and she lost nothing in the standing. And her eyes were wide upon Dinadan's stricken optics. "It's not fair or true! And I wonder at you, sir—a generous knight like you—I can see your kind heart in your handsome face—speaking so knavishly of women."

Dinadan, having heard only her contributions to the conversation, felt confused and embarrassed, and looked the parts. But he was even more conscious of a great urge to champion her, whether or no her case called for championing. He moved forward dazedly yet determinedly and halted within a pace of her; and the squire and the horses advanced and halted with him.

"Mad indeed—to wander away from you!" he exclaimed. "But if you want him found, I'll find him for you. If you want him back, I'll fetch him back, mauger my head! And his too! Who is he? What's his name?"

"I don't know his name. He never said it. I think he did not know it himself—had forgot it, or he would have told me."

"A nitwit!"

"Nay, no nitwit! Slightly mad, but no fool! And fie upon you for defaming him behind his back. You'd not dare do so to his face, I trow, for I judge him a knight of more prowess than yourself. And he loved me dearly—and I him again."

Dinadan shook with conflicting emotions, but only for a count of seven. Then, to his attentive squire's not unmixed relief, he answered meekly:

"Ah—love. Beware it, lady. Stuff for songs! Forget it, even as I have forgot it. Broken hearts? Broken bubbles! But about your strayed lover, now? How am I to know him when I find him for you? What is the device on his shield?"

"I don't know. He had no shield when he came to us. I think he had cast it aside. And no horse, neither. I think it had run away, hours and miles before—for he was foul with mud to the knees, and his golden spurs were tangled with weeds. I was playing on my harp by candlelight when he came suddenly out of the dark like a—like a shining angel."

"Hah! A shining angel! Just so. He was still fully armed, I take it."

"God save us! Rack and ruin! Is everyone dead here?"

"He had lost his lance, but only a few bits of his harness. And his casque. But he still had his sword."

"And you say you were playing on your harp."

"Yes, it was my music that brought him from stumbling about in the apple-yard. I looked up, and there he was looking in at me. And when our eyes met, he came in through the window. But it is a long story."

"I must hear it all, however, or how am I to know him when I find him?"

Then Kedge, who had for minutes maintained a considering silence, spoke up respectfully but to the point.

"Lady, may I presume to suggest that Sir Dinadan might keep his attention more closely upon the story of your lost lover—pay more heed to your words than to the play of your lips and eyes, that's to say—if he were seated; and I don't mean on the greensward. And if he had horn and trencher within easy reach. For we have come a long, dry and hungry way since our last bite and sup."

At that, the damosel blushed from the V of her bodice up to her sable tresses; and she apologized in pretty confusion for her thoughtlessness, and begged them to follow her.

THEY had not far to go. The fields and hedges were weedy and ill-kept. The moat was extensive, but choked with bushes and reeds; and for water it had nothing to show but mud-puddles. The main drawbridge was down permanently, and its ponderous hoisting-gear rusted and broken. The manor house—or castle, rather—was as extensive as the useless moat and in as sorry a plight. Outer and inner walls were breached and gnawed by time and weather; half the roofs were fallen; a half of the battlements of a tower had tumbled into the moat; stables, byres, middens and unpruned orchards crowded in on the flanks and rear; and the massive flagstones of the courtyards were upheaved and cracked by wild roots and fringed with weeds.

"God save us! Rack an' ruin! Is everyone dead here?" Kedge growled.

At a call from the damosel, a lout in leather appeared and made to take the horses: Kedge would have none of him, however, but unbitted and unsaddled and stabled the chargers himself, and saw to their baiting in a masterful manner, then left them in the lout's care with a promise of a slashed skin and broken bones should they come by any mishap; and he cuffed the fellow, to show that he meant what he said. . . .

Later the damosel and the knight and the squire sat at a table in a high hall. From the rafters depended spiders' webs as heavy as curtains with dust and the wings and shells of flies. The board was dressed with platters and trenchers, horns and jacks and leather bottles, but the meats were salty and ill-cooked, the loaves and scones soggy or scorched, and the ale was thin and the wine sour. Sharp and dry though the cavaliers were, they ate and drank in strict moderation. The damosel took neither bite nor sup, but told her sad story as follows, though more wordily.

The unnamed knight had come in at her window, drawn to her from the darkness by the music of her harp, like a moth to a candle. Without a word of greeting, but with an enchanting smile, he had knelt at her knee, taken the harp gently from her hands and played upon it himself with such matchless skill that her heart throbbed and sang and wept with the music as if the harpstrings and her heartstrings were one. And he had given her back the little harp, and she had played for him as well as she could—ah, better than she had ever played before. Then he had taken the harp again, and played again and handed it back again; and so, turn and turn about, they had exchanged wordless songs of love and yearning until the flame of the candle had fallen and drowned in the hot grease. Then he had kissed her. And so love had enveloped them; and for sennights or maybe months—she had lost count of time—her life had been all loving and musicking and this ruinous demesne a heaven on earth.

Kedge muttered: "More like a fools' paradise!"

BUT that crack passed unheeded: and the damosel told how, whenever he was out of her sight more than a few minutes, she had only to call him back on her silver harp. One of the melodies they had wrought together, and sometimes but a fragment of one, always brought him to her through brush and brier. Always—till the last time he had wandered. That had been nine desolate days and nights since. She had played the harp all about the inner courts and the pur-

lieus of the place, and even around the outside of the moat and as far abroad as the sylvan well beside which they had found her—but never farther, for fear of gypsies and unicorns. All to no purpose, alas!

"I will find him," Dinadan assured her softly. "And fetch him to you," he added after a moment's pause, and not so softly.

"Alive or dead," said the squire cryptically.

"Not dead!" she cried.

"Nay, do you not worry," Dinadan soothed her. "He will come willingly enough, I doubt not."

"Or the more fool he," said Kedge; and he looked at the damosel and added: "On two counts, lady. First, a man would be indeed a fool to resist being brought back to you; and second, Sir Dinadan shows a stubborn nature in his dealings with men, no matter how often he is made a monkey of by— But let it pass!"

The three agreed that the likeliest method of gaining touch with the lost lover would be to lure him with harp music; and as the damosel could not desert her aged grandparents to carry that music afar in the wilderness in person, that she should teach Sir Dinadan the mysteries of that instrument.

"And that should not take long, for he is musically gifted and one of the world's best lutanists," Kedge assured the lady; and Dinadan admitted as much with a modest smirk.

Thus it came about that Sir Dinadan added harping to his many other accomplishments. But it was not done in a day, nor five even, though he received instruction every morning, every afternoon and then again after supper by starshine or candleshine. School was kept mostly in the cobwebby high hall, and sometimes in a runaway rose-garden or a natural bower in the wild orchard, and more rarely in the dusty chamber where old Sir Gyfyl and old Dame Ingrid dozed time away in cushioned chairs. The little harp passed back and forth a thousand times between teacher and pupil, twanging high and low, fast and slow.

As for Kedge, he felt out of the picture and busied himself with other matters. By example, and then with well-judged cuffs, he taught the louts around the stable the proper care of horses. He invaded the kitchens, and there he distributed instructions and cuffs among the loafers of both sexes so effectively that next day's broths and roasts and puddings came hot to the table. He mustered a force armed with brooms and hayrakes and hop-poles and ousted the fat gray spiders and their curtainy lairs from the high hall. He set complaining fellows to work with bushhooks and spades.

"This place might be saved from rack and ruin even yet," he told the Damosel Alyne one morning, where she and Dinadan sat in a bower with the little harp idle between them.

"Nay, the place is well enough," she said.

Then he asked: "Has Sir Dinadan proved an apt pupil?"

She averted her face and murmured: "No, his poor fingers are all thumbs, I fear."

So he looked at Dinadan; and the knight avoided the glance and muttered: "I haven't got the hang of it yet, my friend."

At that, the squire exclaimed "Hah!" with a wry grimace. "Just so. Lady, I was mistaken in him. I see it now, on second thought. For twiddling on a lute and crooning of love-ditties, at which Sir Dinadan is as good as any wandering troubadour, is mere child's play to the mastery of the harp. I had better myself undertaken to learn to lure your strayed lover home to you, though I have no more gift that way than yonder moldy haystack."

Dinadan sat upright with a jerk and cried: "Say you so? Twiddling on a lute is child's play, is it? And twanging on a harp calls for more skill than I am capable of, does it? Saint Swithin's whiskers! I'll show you!"

He snatched the little harp to his knee, plucked a string or two, then went at it like a cat sharpening her claws on a table-leg. There was tinkling, then a singing, then a sobbing. (Kedge smiled behind his hand and the damosel arched her pretty brows.) There was a buzzing as of bees, then a rushing as of a plunging eagle's wings, then a high and thin crying as of angelic voices and the horns of Elfland and the harps of heaven. (The damosel sighed and veiled her eyes and the squire's square face took on a dreamy look.) Then Dinadan's voice joined the singing of the strings.

When the music ceased, Alyne was in tears and Kedge was sighing like the bellows of a forge. Dinadan himself looked none too happy, and his voice was grim when he addressed the lady.

"Could your own harping crack-brained lover harp better than that?"

The meats were ill-cooked, the scones soggy, and the wine sour. Sharp and dry though the cavaliers were, they

Her only answer was more tears.

"And you, my friend?" he asked of Kedge.

"Sir, I gibed but to bring you to your senses," Kedge whispered. "I knew you had mastered the thing, however you may have hoodwinked the damosel—but I feared you were losing the mastery of yourself."

"What then, good Kedge?"

"What then, sir! Do you ask? Your pledged knightly word, sir—to seek the lost knight, the lost lover—and fetch him back to her, by your halidom and mauger your head!"

The knight gnawed his lip and bunched his brows.

"You are right. It is time we were gone. Trust you to keep your feet on the ground! But this time—ah, 'twill truly break."

"Sir, better a broken heart, or a broken neck even, than your knightly word broken."

"Yes, yes, honest Kedge, I quite agree with you. But it hurts! We shall go tomorrow then, bright and early—and no matter what gets broken, my knightly word will remain inviolate."

But Sir Dinadan departed alone next morning, and not very bright and early either; for Kedge, while setting a gang of hedgers to work at break of day, when he had better have

ate and drank in strict moderation.

been seeing to the horses, had fallen into a ditch and sprained an ankle. So, after binding the ankle, Dinadan had left his squire in the damosel's care and gone forth alone on the quest of the strayed nameless lover. He took both horses, using Kedge's for a beast of burden, for the search might prove long and victuals and drink hard to come by in the wilderness. But he carried the damosel's little silver harp in his hand.

Dinadan's heart was not in the quest ahead, but behind him in the tumbledown castle. He would liefer fail in it than win it, for his private opinion of its object was that he was not only a fool but a dishonorable knave and faithless deserter too—wickedly designing rather than honestly mad—a dirty, cowardly, despicable scoundrel, in short. His heart was not in the search, but his hatred was, hot and waxing hotter with the passage of every mile.

"If I find him—and I'll do that, by Saint Peter's key!—I'll take him back to her willy-nilly, and show her who's the better man and the true knight—if he dies of it!" he swore.

NEVER before had his susceptibilities been so mortally stricken as by Damosel Alyne: and he really believed it, God help him! So he rode in a daze as well as a maze, letting his horse take what forest track he would—of deer, wild swine, unicorn or half-wild human. So he chanced upon a shaggy hut shortly before the sun went down. A shaggy woman and some shaggy children were before the hut, but the children vanished like young partridges at the sudden appearance of the armored knight and the two tall horses. But the woman stood her ground, with an axe in her hand, and glared suspiciously.

"Fear me not, good woman," said Dinadan. "I come in peace—sword in scabbard, see!—and harp in hand. I seek a wandering cavalier who is slightly—ah, you know." And he cocked an eyebrow at her and tapped on his forehead with a forefinger.

"Hah, that poor gentleman!" she exclaimed, with obvious relief and amusement. "He was here, lord, and et like a wolf an' drank all our brown ale. But he was mad without the drink—shouting and climbing trees. But harmless, lord. Wouldn't hurt a fly. Why d'ye seek him, lord? Is he Yer Honor's brother?"

"God forbid! No, that's to say—no kin to me. I seek him for a lady."

The woman laughed and asked: "Wot would a lady want with that poor soul? He passed the night he was here high up in yonder oak."

Dinadan shook his head and asked: "Where is your man?"

She came closer and spoke confidentially.

"We found a dagger he cast away—a rich tool with gems like white and blue fire in the hilt of it; so Gart followed in his tracks to give it back to him, poor soul."

Dinadan said nothing to that, whatever he thought. He gave the woman a roasted fowl, a great scone and a cake stuffed with plums from one of his hampers, then resumed his journey, though twilight was thickening to dusk in the forest. And he went faster than he had gone before, despite the obscurity. Soon he dismounted and went afoot, with both good horses following close. So they stumbled through thick and thin till close upon midnight. Then Dinadan unsaddled, unbitted and watered and grained the horses, supped well and, after partially disarming himself, took a hint from the reported behavior of the lost lover and climbed into a convenient tree, taking his sword with him. He was down and about at the lift of dawn, after an uneasy night. They rested at noon, beside a brook; and there he found a pair of knightly greaves in the reeds, still undimmed.

"If he be more knave than fool, he turned to his left here and went downstream, for easy going: but if he be more fool than knave he held straight across and through bush and tangle," he reasoned.

After an hour of such reasoning, during which he and the horses dined and rested, he tossed one of his three remaining pennies for a decision: heads, the knave's way, tails the fool's.

Tails won; so he forded the brook and plunged again into the tangled ups and downs of the wilderness. A few hours later, he stumbled upon a great sword in a scabbard studded with bright stones, and the great belt too; and these he hung to the saddle of Kedge's charger. Next day, he found a fine breastplate and a backplate to match it in a thicket of hollies.

"The madman must be all unarmed and unharnessed by now," he said, marveling; and there he tarried and played the silver harp a long hour, on the chance that the object of his quest might be lurking close at hand. But nothing came of it.

THREE days later, within an hour of high noon, Dinadan's ears were startled and offended suddenly by an outburst of rude shouts and jeers and hooting laughter. He dismounted, drew his sword and moved cautiously toward the sounds through the intervening underbrush: and the horses followed as cautiously. Soon he looked out at an extraordinary scene. Here was a forest glade hedged with crude huts and smoking potfires along its farther side and alive with people between himself and the huts; and in the midst, a naked man skipping, leaping and turning this way and that the while men and women and children lashed at him with green rods and dry sticks and whooped at his antics. But the naked man was silent.

"Hold!" bawled Dinadan. "Stay your hands, churls!"

All eyes, save only the naked man's, turned and fixed. All hands were stayed. All sound, and all motion save the skipping of the naked man,

ceased as instantly as if struck by a deathly frost. Only the naked man paid no heed.

Dinadan shouted again, "By God's wounds!" and stepped forth fully from the covert with the long sword in one hand, the silver harp in the other and all his armor flaming white from crest to toe. And the tall chargers came after, tossing their heads and pricking their ears.

"You there!" he cried. "You, sir! If you're a man, stop that capering and come to me!"

But the naked fool—for a fool he looked, and a piteous one at that—continued to skip and twist to right and left and forth and back without so much as a glance at the fierce intruder. Then Dinadan tucked the sword under his left arm and took the harp in both hands and struck the strings. He struck again and set them all ringing and singing. At that, the naked man stumbled and fell, staggered upright and stood for a minute as still as stone, then gripped his head in his two hands, and looking at Dinadan, he uttered a piteous cry and started staggeringly toward him, shouldering the petrified beaters from his path. Dinadan harped on, and even more inspiringly than before. Still crying out piteously, the naked man stumbled to a stop and looked back, and his outcry changed in volume and tone to a furious roar; and, turning again, he hurled himself forward, wrenched the sword from its scabbard under Dinadan's left arm and, still roaring like an avenging lion, leaped and turned in the air and rushed upon his late tormentors. Then the people came to life and scattered like partridges—all save a big man who held a stout oaken staff instead of a green sapling in his hands. He was not quick enough. In the very act of jumping aside, he was caught by the whistling arc of steel.

The naked man stood gazing down at the thing before him on the reddening greensward. Dinadan went forward and stood beside him.

"In two pieces!" Dinadan exclaimed, shaken. "But doubtless he deserved it. A shrewd stroke, by my halidom! But come away now. They'll be swarming upon us with spears and axes in a minute, and arrows will be flying. Come away. I have a spare horse."

But the naked man paid no heed to the words but continued to gaze down grimly upon the dead man.

"Come away—or we'll both die like wild boars," Dinadan urged. "If you're a knight—for that was a knightly stroke—you'll get no honor here, nor come by any reward, though you carve and split a score of these savages, but only a messy and ignoble death. Come away now, good knight—or poor fool, whatever you are!"

So saying, Dinadan laid hold of the other with a heavy hand and made to turn him and draw him away; whereupon the naked man struck and staggered him with a naked left fist to his helmeted head and started to raise the wet sword against him. This was too much for Sir Dinadan's sore-tried temper. Quick as a flash, he retaliated with a shrewd bang of the little harp on the other's unprotected head. Down crumpled the naked one—fool, knave, mad knight and lost lover or whatever he was—and lay still. Shaken then with remorse, Dinadan flung the broken harp away and lifted the pathetic figure—thin and bramble-scratched and welted and bruised, yet formidable withal—in both arms and turned back to the horses.

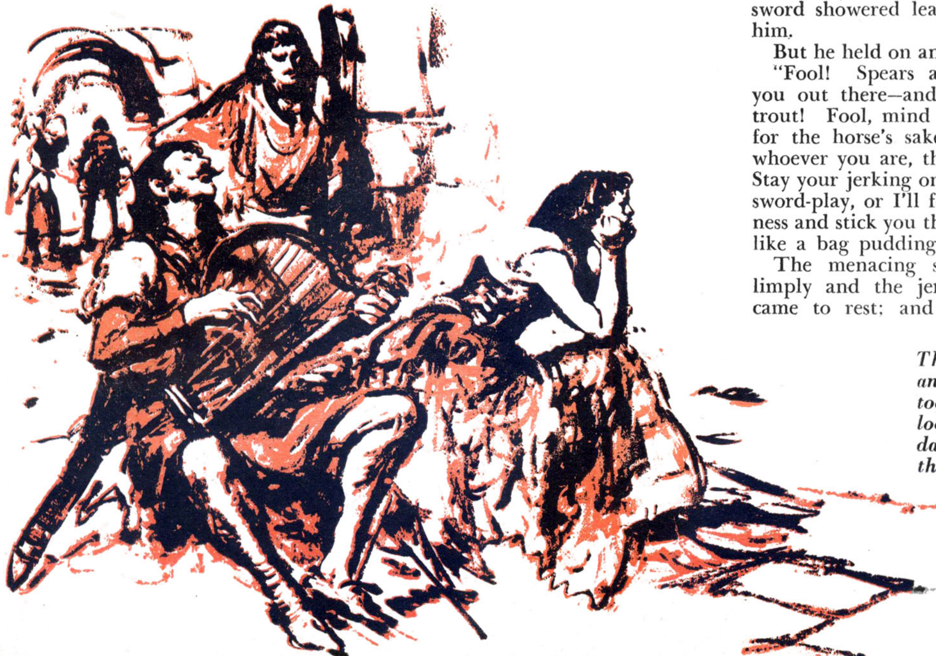
An iron-headed arrow knocked on his armor somewhere and fell harmless. He urged the good horses backward into the coppice, laid his senseless burden on the ground for the half-minute it took him to rearrange the arms and gear on the spare horse, then lifted it to Kedge's saddle. He bolted from cover then, snatched up his sword, which the madman had dropped when bashed with the harp, and bolted back quicker than the telling. But quick as he had been, he could hardly believe what he saw upon his return: The limp figure upright in the saddle, with the left hand on the reins and the right pulling the castaway sword from its gem-studded scabbard. And even while Dinadan gaped, the four-foot blade came clear and whirled in air, shearing saplings like grass, and the tall horse reared, spun on its hinder hoofs and would have dashed into the open if Dinadan had not jumped to its head and dragged it down.

The naked man roared: "Unhold him—or you die!" And the great sword showered leaves and twigs on him.

But he held on and roared back:

"Fool! Spears and arrows await you out there—and you naked as a trout! Fool, mind that sword! But for the horse's sake I'd let you go, whoever you are, the devil take you! Stay your jerking on the bit, and that sword-play, or I'll forget your nakedness and stick you through the middle like a bag pudding!"

The menacing sword-arm sagged limply and the jerking bridle-hand came to rest; and the naked man



The damosel sighed and the squire's face took on a dreamy look. Then Dinadan's voice joined the singing of the strings.

Illustrated by JOHN FULTON

The big man was not quick enough. In the very act of jumping aside, he was caught by the whistling arc of steel.

stared down from the high saddle at the full-harnessed knight, and Dinadan stared up at him.

"Naked, d'ye say?" he asked, in a dazed voice. "Am I mad, then? Or bewitched or bedeviled?"

Dinadan exclaimed, "Hah! I know you now!" and let go his hold. "But we must win clear of this, or feed the foxes! Here's my shield. It will cover your front—or better still, sling it to cover your back."

He mounted.

"Follow me!" he cried, launching his tall charger through thick and thin.

The other followed. But by now they were surrounded; and vengeful rogues armed with boar-spears and axes sprang up before them from the underbrush. The long swords flashed to the right and the left, and the battle-wise horses dodged and charged as nimbly as terriers. The long swords ran red to their hilts. The shouts and screams fell and faded away to rearward; and still the tall horses crashed through thick and thin.

Dinadan drew rein and dismounted and turned.

"How fared you, sir?" he asked.

The naked man dismounted too. The long shield hung down his back. He drew it around to his front and smiled grimly at the hatchet embedded in it.

"That would have done it," he said, quietly. "A good shield. Gramercy, sir."

Dinadan nodded and fell to examining the horses. Neither of them had taken so much as a nick.

"Lucky," he said, with a sigh of relief, and loosed the girths of both and lowered the saddles and gear to the ground.

"What now?" the other asked.

"We'll rest a little, then return to Sir Gyfyl, Dame Ingrid and their granddaughter the damosel Alyne," said Dinadan, regarding him searchingly. "*Alyne.* Don't tell me you've forgotten *her*—or are you quite mad?"

The naked man heaved a sigh and moaned, "I've forgot everything, God help me!"

"Don't you know who you are?"

"Nay, nothing. If you know who I am, and what I was—I can see what I am: a poor naked fool—be merciful and tell me."

"Don't you know that sword in your hand?"

"I know it. It is my sword."

"And the shield that but now saved your naked back from the hatchet there?"

"A good shield—but not mine."

"Your name is Tristram. Sir Tristram, a Cornish knight, young, but of prowess both horsed and afoot."

"Hah! Tristram."

"Now you remember?"

"Nay, I remember nothing. But now that you have said it, Tristram—I know it in my marrow."

So they ate and drank; and they conversed pleasantly, for Sir Tristram was knowledgeable despite the fact that his conscious memory was a blank. Then Dinadan bathed Tristram's welted back, treated the worst hurts with a healing ointment and gave him his only other shirt, which was of fine linen, and an old buckskin tunic. Then Dinadan brought the greaves which he had found beside a brook, and the breast and back plates he had found in a thicket of hollies, and the gem-studded belt and scabbard he had stumbled upon in a tangle of eglantine. Tristram knew them all as well as he knew the sword, but rack his brains as he would, he could not remember when or why he had discarded any one of them.

"Even before you won to that ruinous castle, you had lost your horse and shield and helmet," Dinadan told him. "You came to the damosel's harping afoot and muddied to the knees and bareheaded. You came in to her through the window, from the outer dark."

Tristram sighed and said, "I know nothing of it."

"And you kissed her," Dinadan persisted. "D'ye tell me you know nothing of that?"

"Even so, my friend. Nothing."

Then Dinadan told him all he knew of that affair, as he had heard it from Alyne's own lips.

"All news to me," said Tristram. "Damosel, kisses, old ruins—I remember none of it. It's all lost to me—it and all else of my past. I was the sport of savages—an abject clown beaten with rods—when you saved me. Before that, nothing. I might as well have been dead, or unborn."

Dinadan believed him.

They rode on, good companions. On the second day after their dramatic

meeting, they came upon a dismal swamp.

"I never saw this before," said Dinadan. "I must have made a wrong turn somewhere."

So they made a turn which he hoped was a right one. Next day they came upon another landmark that was strange to Dinadan—a ruined and deserted hermitage and chapel.

"I never saw this before," said Dinadan.

So he changed direction again: and so they were lost completely in that vast wilderness.

A sennight later, the wanderers drained the last of the leather bottles and ate the last stale scone and rasher of rancid bacon. As for the horses, they had been for so long reduced to a diet of thin grasses and other bitter herbs of the wilderness that they had all but forgotten the taste of oats and beans. Then, for three days, the cavaliers browsed with their steeds and grew thin on wild berries.

"This is all my fault," Sir Dinadan complained, as the two stumbled aimlessly through brush and brier with the horses stumbling after. "A blind guide would have served you full as well."

"Nay, Din, 'tis my fault," said Sir Tristram. "Had I not lost my wits, you would not have come in search of me and so lost both of us; in which case, I should still be as you found me, or dead of their rods and staves, and you still enjoying the hospitality and harping of that damosel Alyne. But this will be a more honorable death than the one you saved me from. But, even so, I'm in a fair way to die in ignorance of the cause of my stark madness."

Dinadan stood and turned and said gently, "Nay, Tris, I can enlighten you. If it will be of any comfort to you, my dear friend—and since you may not live to learn it from another—I will tell you what I heard of you before I left Camelot."

At the word *Camelot,* Sir Tristram struck a hand to his head.

"That love had smitten you suddenly to madness and driven you raving into the woods," Dinadan continued; and Tristram continued to stand like one stunned; and Dinadan went on, "Love, my poor friend! A bitter brew at the best—but hell's drink, in your case, and it scalded you to madness. For you loved a queen—Queen Isoud of Cornwall."

At that name, Sir Tristram uttered a stricken cry, then shouted: "To Camelot! To Camelot! To horse! To horse!" and he looked 'round about him wildly.

But the horses were not there, for they had gone on while the knights stood: but they were soon discovered, drinking at a well. At sight of that well, Dinadan gaped.

"This is it!" he cried. "'Twas here I first saw Alyne!"

Tristram cared nothing for that piece of information, but was for mounting and spurring blindly in quest of the fount of his madness. Dinadan was hard put to it to hold him and bring him to reason. They did not come to blows, but it was touch and go. Tristram came to his senses at last, thanks to the queasy prompting of his berry-lined stomach.

"You're right!" he gasped, clinging to Dinadan for support. "Your damosel must provision us. I see it now—for now I'm as sane as you are. Lead on now—to the buttery-hatch."

They had not far to go. A banner flapped on the only remaining tower of the ruinous castle.

"That's something new," said Dinadan.

The drawbridge was still down and its outer end still embedded in the bank, but the moat showed almost as much water as mud now and only fringes of the bushes and rank rushes that had clogged it. Wondering, Dinadan led across the bridge, and there saw yet more to wonder at: trimmed hedges, cleaned ditches and mended walls.

"Kedge has been hard at work," he muttered.

Now Kedge himself appeared from behind a newly thatched byre, went back on his heels at the sight of them as if at a blow in the face, bestirred himself to a few heavy steps, halted again and stood gaping like a zany.

"What the devil!" cried Sir Dinadan. "What ails you? Don't you know me?"

The squire moved his lips, but nothing came of it. Dinadan advanced, grabbed a handful of the front of the squire's tunic and shook.

"It's me, dolt! What kind of knavish welcome is this? Speak up, friend Kedge—explain yourself—or I may lose my temper!"

Kedge managed a whisper then, though a cracked one.

"Not so loud, sir, I beg you! Very sudden, sir—an' unexpected. The damosel—the dame Alyne—had a vision in a dream."

And there he stuck, looking the very picture of confusion and distress. But Dinadan's temper was up, so he spoke again without lowering his voice.

"What gibberish is this?—damosel, dame, Alyne? Does something ail her? —an the good dame too? 'Not so loud!' quoth you. Is someone dead? Or everyone, perchance? And yourself gone mad? Speak out, or I'll shake you out of your shirt—weak with starvation though I be!"

"Nay, sir, but hear me—for old sake's sake! She saw you dead in a vision—stark an' cold. And her other harping lover too. The one you went after to fetch back to her, mauger your head. Both stark an' bloody on the ground. She went mad."

"So she is mad," said Dinadan, in a flat voice; and he dropped his hand nervelessly from Kedge's chest.

"Nay, not now, sir," Kedge stammered. "I—ah!—that's to say, she—a good abbot happened along and—married her."

"An abbot married her? Are *you* mad too?"

"Nay, sir—to me."

Dinadan was silent, blinking at nothing in particular.

Then Sir Tristram, who had endured the conversation with obvious impatience, spoke for the first time since leaving the sylvan well.

"The devil take all that! To the buttery!"

The hungry knights did not visit the buttery, however. Instead, Kredge and two scullions brought victuals and drink of the best to them behind a haystack; and the chargers were well served too, and also out of view of any window of the castle.

Kedge apologized: "It is wiser, sirs, not to destroy her faith in her tragical vision, I think. That's to say, better let sleeping dogs lie."

"Dead dogs," amended Dinadan, with a cynical grimace.

The knights departed between sunset and moonrise, accompanied by a tinker who swore that he knew the shortest way to Camelot as well as he knew the shortest way to his mouth with a bottle, and a strong forest pony hung about with victuals and drink. They went a mile, in silence save for the prattle of their guide and the snorts of their refreshed and rebeaned chargers. Then Dinadan railed out upon women, and particularly against damosels and never mind the tints of their tresses: red, yellow, brown and black, they were all unworthy of trust: and as for loving one of them—never again!

"You know nothing about it, good Din," said Sir Tristram, loftily. "Only the lover of Queen Isoud knows the meaning of the word love."

"God defend me from that knowledge then, good Tris, since capering naked in the wilderness is the fruit of it," gibed Dinadan.

Tristram sighed and said, "Nay, a misunderstanding of some sort. It has slipt my mind: but when I see her again, it will be explained and forgotten again."

Then the tinker exclaimed, "Lords, when I hear Your Lordships, I thank God that I'm but a poor tinker, with a wife in every hedge an' no worries save the leaks in other folks' pots an' cans!"

The Loneliest Journey

A SERGEANT-MAJOR OF THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED ENDURES A TERRIFIC ORDEAL BY ICE—AND LEARNS ABOUT THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN.

by HARRY STALLWORTHY

I HAVE traveled thousands of miles by dog-team in the Arctic, and by snowshoe and back-pack in the sub-Arctic, and been days and nights by myself on the ice and in the mountains. Yet probably the loneliest journey I have ever made was one of only thirty feet, twice the length of a harpoon-line. Perhaps it was the loneliest because, while it endured, I was helpless to return. For all that, I remember it chiefly as a lesson in the brotherhood of man.

It happened on a routine patrol, similar to dozens undertaken each year by members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. At the time—this was in March, 1931—I was a corporal in the Force, stationed on Ellesmere Land, and with two Greenland Eskimos, Inutuk and Noocap, each of us driving his own team of dogs, was traveling from Craig Harbour in the south to our detachment on Bache Peninsula, three hundred miles to the north, within eleven degrees of the Pole—the most northerly police outpost in the world. Ellesmere Land, off the north coast of Greenland, marks Canada's farthest northeasterly reach—a barren, virtually uninhabited island of lofty, treeless mountains, ringed by the ice-floes of the Arctic sea. Its area is roughly that of England, Scotland and Wales combined.

I had a good team of dogs, spread fanwise in front of me in the Greenland fashion, tails curved over their backs as they pulled against the traces. For the first part of the afternoon I had been running abreast of my two Eskimo companions across the ice on the bay below Talbot glacier, about halfway up the east coast of the island. The day was warm—not more than ten below—and I had taken off my *kooletah,* or parka, and hung it on the shoulder-high handles of the sleigh.

As we neared the glacier, the traces of my dogs became entangled, because of the deepening snow. I pulled up to unravel the lines. The two Eskimos went on, disappeared around a point of land as they mounted to the glacier. When I lifted my head to follow after them, I heard, far away, the shouted word, "Nanook!" Inutuk and Noocap, having sighted a bear, were making bear-talk to their dogs, explaining loudly that they needed his skin for clothes, his flesh for food for ourselves and them. As I hurried on, I knew that they would already be cutting the traces of their harness to set the dogs loose after this most-prized trophy of the Arctic—the polar bear.

THEY had, indeed, sighted not one bear, but four—a male, a female and her two cubs—and had come upon them as the heavy male, beating off the lighter female, was in the act of devouring the cubs. Rounding the point onto the glacier, I found at my feet a head and four little paws, all that remained of the first cub. The other was nearby, mangled and dying. To end his suffering, I dispatched him with a blow on the head with my axe and put him on my sleigh. For supper, instead of the usual pemmican or seal, we would have boiled bear cub.

Meanwhile, the two older bears had run up the glacier, pursued by the yelling Eskimos and their barking dogs. The female escaped; but the male, fat and sluggish—the seal hunting had been better than average—was turned by the dogs and later shot by the Eskimos on the sea ice below the glacier. The killing of the cubs by the male was the first instance in my knowledge of cannibalism among polar bears. Why, when he was prime and in no immediate need of food, he should turn on the cubs, to this day I do not know.

However, now seeing the Eskimos a mile or more away, coming down the ice after him, I was anxious to be in on the kill. I left my rifle—two rifles were already up there on the glacier—anchored my dogs by digging two holes at right angles under the ice, leaving a bridge, under which I passed a seal-line attached to the sleigh. I took my parka from its place on the sleigh-handles, hung it over my shoulder and started out. All of this delayed me about fifteen minutes, and

bear and Eskimos were now out of sight down on the sea ice.

After a few steps, I paused. I was well out on the glacier; and before me, only a few feet away, the snow rose in a barely perceptible rounded ridge, resembling a shadow more than it did a material manifestation. But experience had taught me that beneath this curved innocence of white, now ruffled ever so slightly by the wind, would be a crevasse, opening down to bedrock, perhaps four hundred feet below. Long ago, frost or pressure had cleft the ice. Wind had blown snow across it and sealed it, and the updraft from below had lifted this new covering slightly above the level of the surrounding surface. I sat down, kicked it gingerly with my heel and drew back as I listened to the snow falling, with a murmur of mortal silence, into the depths. The Eskimos—we had not been in single file, but traveling abreast—had crossed this part of the glacier five hundred yards farther up, attempting to head off the bear feeding on the cubs, close to where I had left my sleigh.

I looked around and came to what, at the moment, appeared to be a wise decision. The tracks of that male bear were only three feet from me to my right. If the snow supported his twelve hundred pounds, it would certainly support my two hundred. I would go where the bear had gone. I rose to my feet. I took a step—and remember no more until I discovered myself staring up between green walls of ice to a crack of blue, where one white cloud, shaped like a beaver's tail, floated for an instant and was gone. Below me I heard my parka, which I had carried loosely over my shoulder, falling, falling, forever falling, slipping and swishing farther and farther down, with a shivering, bone-chilling sound which tugged at my very foot-soles. Then for some seconds I apparently passed out.

Trying to avoid the crevasse, edging carefully toward the bear tracks, so near and ultimately so far from me, I had stepped into a narrower and newer crack, at an angle to the main crevasse. Its snow had not yet been upbuilt by the under-draft. Falling, I had been providentially caught in a bulge in the ice. My feet were free. My head was free. I was upheld by the widest and thickest part of my body—my chest. On my way down, I had hit my chin. Blood spilled over my caribou-hide shirt.

Possibly I owe my life to the insulation provided by my native-style clothing—trousers and shirt of caribou hide, one with the hair turned in, the other with the hair turned out. Had it not been for that, the slight heat of my body might have sufficiently melted the ice which held my chest as in a vise, to let me slip through to follow my parka to the rocks four hundred feet below. Glare ice offered no purchase for my fingers. I feared to move, scarcely dared to breathe, so precarious was my claim upon the ice, which nevertheless, gripped me so tightly. That ice was old, immemorially old, older than man, a frozen eternity that smelled of the ages as it clasped me in its hug of death.

MAN in his final predicament, life and light behind him, the dread darkness before him, is said to find the years that have passed open to his vision. I recall no such experience. Looking back, I remember only the green walls, the blue sky and the occasional wisp of cloud blown by the wind above me. It is quite possible, however, that my past did live before me, and that I have now forgotten those long, ice-bound minutes when it did. If so, I would have seen again the rolling hills of Herefordshire, where, with my two brothers, I tended my father's white-faced cattle.

Later, when I was still in my 'teens, impelled by the romantic conception of the Canadian north gained from an English schoolboy's reading, I left for Canada and joined what was then—before the First World War—the Royal Northwest Mounted Police.

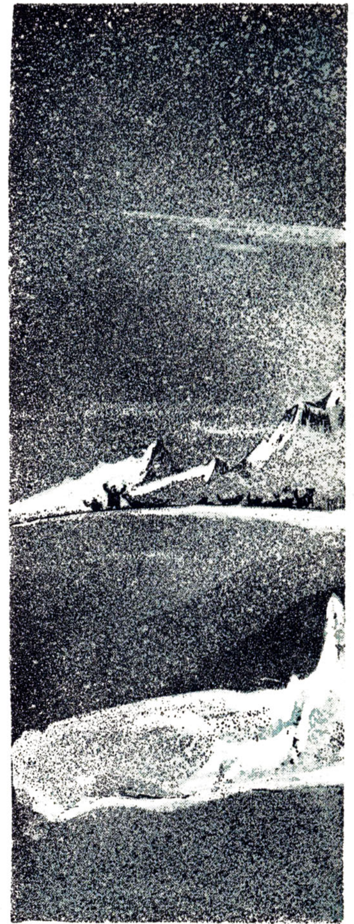
In the riding-school at headquarters in Regina, I was given a half-broken roan, fresh from the prairies. He bucked, slammed me against the stockade wall. I was shaken, bruised, but I stayed in the saddle.

From Regina I went to the Yukon, and from there volunteered in 1915 for service overseas. Returning in late 1918, I went back to the Yukon to prospect for gold. Two years of mucking, digging, of paddling and drifting on Arctic-flowing waters, convinced me that if gold was there, it was not I who would find it.

In the early 'twenties, I reënlisted in the Force, and was again assigned to the Arctic, which I came to know from the Yukon in the west to Ellesmere Land in the east.

Yet I suppose it was not of this that I thought in my chilly chasm that March day in 1931. Four years before, in Jasper, Alberta, where I had been sent for light duty to recuperate from a spell of pneumonia contracted in the farther north, I had met a girl. Her name was Hilda Austin. She, with her sister Ethylnd, taught in the village school. When my three years in Ellesmere Land were up, and I had returned to Ottawa, we planned to be married—as we were. Hilda, with her brown eyes, her fair hair, her way of pausing before she spoke, I think was close to me during my ordeal. . . .

Despite the mukluks which I wore, my feet were becoming cold. The



Illustrated by
JOHN COSTIGAN, N.A.

cold would creep up. In a few more hours, unable to move, I would freeze. In its slow progress, that part of the glacier in which I was encased would eventually reach the sea. There it would break up, and some future explorer would find my body perfectly preserved in an ice-floe on the waters.

I summoned my forces and my courage, and I called. I called, and I called again. My voice, in the frozen cavern, had a deep and funereal note. The Eskimos—down on the sea ice they had already killed the male bear—heard me, and thought I had fallen the entire depth of the crevasse and was lying broken, but miraculously still alive, at its bottom. The crevasse opened onto the sea, and my voice came out to them as from a great megaphone, like a voice from the grave.

As the entrance to that sounding funnel was blocked with great chunks

I heard, far away, the shouted word, "Nanook!" Inutuk and Noocap, having sighted bear, were making bear-talk to their dogs.

of ice, they could only reach me from above, so they climbed back up the glacier to my tracks. With their voices at last above me, never had I seemed to be so far from man, nor so removed from all familiar things and so helpless as in the loneliness of that obdurate ice which, upholding me, threatened at any moment to release its grip and cast me down.

Noocap straddled the crack—it was as narrow as that! He had tied two harpoon-lines together. The loop at the end of their thirty feet just reached to me. To get the loop under my armpit, I had to lift my arm. Still, lacking its support, I feared to move, for moving, I might slip suddenly deeper between the green and clammy walls before I could avail myself of the help which now dangled, like a hangman's noose, above my head. I worked one mittened hand, slowly, slowly, upward and grasped the noose. I put my arm and at last my head through its loop, gave myself to its grim but welcome embrace. Noocap, hardly more than five feet tall, but very strong, pulled my six feet of carcass up, hand over hand, taking up the slack in the sealskin line in his teeth, passing it to Inutuk, who stood beside him out of my sight on the ice. As I looked up and saw him, hair blowing in the wind, over the crevasse, he was a Colossus, bestriding, between ice and sky, the only world which, for those minutes, I could call my own.

When I was finally in the sun and saw my shadow, I crawled weakly on hands and knees through the snow, away from the dread crack which, for more than an hour, had been my prison. I said to Noocap, *"Oowunga takoo noga,"* meaning to say: "I didn't see it." He began to cry. He thought that I had said—and after all, I *had* been crawling on hands and knees—"I can't see." Later he explained to me that one of his Greenland relatives had had an accident similar to mine and, possibly as the result of concussion, had come up blinded.

Noocap—strong, gentle Noocap—cried because he thought that I too was blind, this though I was a stranger from a far land. But I was a man; we had traveled the ice together. Therefore I was his brother. Why could I not understand, he seemed to ask, that up here beneath the Pole, where men were few, all were brothers.

Noocap and Inutuk were laughing now as we went the few steps back to my sleigh, and from there down to the sea ice to gather up the other dogs, build an igloo and enjoy a supper of boiled bear cub. Man with his fellows had won another victory in the unending struggle against the powers of darkness.

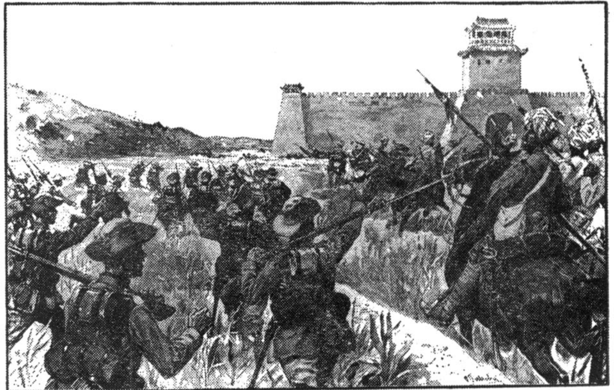
American Marines covering the operations of the British force at Tientsin. The first relieving force for the beleaguered foreign legations at Peking, 1,800 bluejackets and marines under British Admiral Seymour, was obliged to retreat before the Chinese Imperial troops and Boxers who stood in its way. An international force was subsequently sent from Taku, and succeeded in capturing the city of Tientsin on July 14, 1900.

Below: The Sikhs on the road to Peking. In all about 15,000 soldiers from Hindustan took part in this campaign in China.

The UNITED NATIONS of

WHEN TROOPS OF BRITAIN, RUSSIA, THE UNITED STATES, FRANCE,

On June 20, the German ambassador was murdered by Chinese troops. For this reason a German marshal Count von Waldersee, was appointed commander of the Allied expeditionary forces, but he arrived too late for real action.

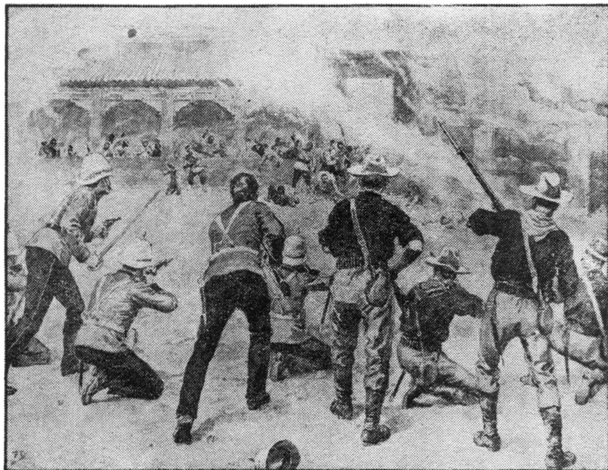


Bengal Lancers and German Marines storming Liang-Hsiang, southwest of Peking, on a punitive mission, September 11, 1900.

Below: A station of the Peking-Tientsin railroad, occupied by International Expeditionary Forces. Contingents of British-Indian Sikhs, French Zouaves, German infantry and sailors, and Russian troops are to be seen in this picture.

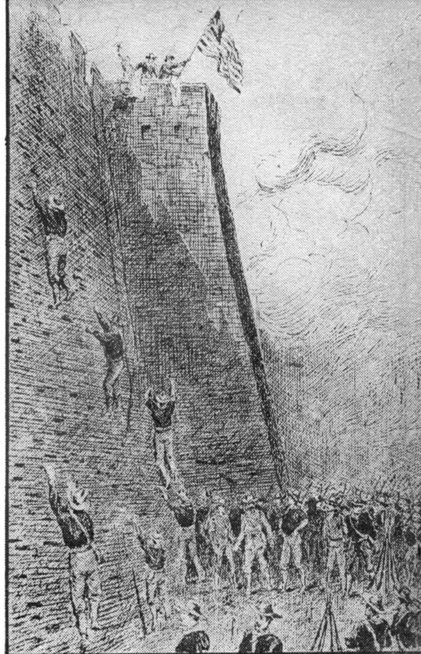
FIFTY YEARS AGO

Germany and Japan fought together against the Boxers



Sortie of American and British Marines during the siege of the foreign legations at Peking, June 22, 1900. The Boxers were driven out from the Hall of Hanlin Yuan, or National Academy, which was burned by the Chinese.

OLD PRINTS FROM THREE LIONS, SCHOENFELD COLLECTION



The American troops scaling the wall of Peking, August 14, 1900. At 11 A.M. two companies of the Fourteenth Infantry, under the immediate command of Colonel Daggett, had scaled the wall of the Chinese city at the northeast corner, and the flag of that regiment was the first foreign colors unfurled upon the walls.

Below: The fall of Colonel Liscum, Ninth U. S. Infantry Regiment, at Tientsin, July 13, 1900. On June 21-23 the International Expeditionary Force had forced its way, by the aid of fire from the fleet, into the foreign quarter at Tientsin, and had united with the Europeans there besieged by the Chinese Boxers and Imperial soldiers. On July 9, 11, and 13, attempts were made by the relief force to capture the native city. On the 13th Colonel Emerson H. Liscum was killed while leading his men. On July 14, the forts were captured, and the Chinese driven out with great loss. The casualties of the expeditionary force were 875, of whom 215 were Americans.

A Boxer leader being examined by an American, a British and two Japanese officers.

Below: Inspection of the Bengal Lancers by German Field-Marshal Count von Waldersee, commander of the International Expeditionary Forces, October, 1900.

WE HAVE ALL ASKED OURSELVES WHY THIS MAN BETRAYED US SO VITALLY. PERHAPS THIS STORY OF HIS PERSONAL LIFE WILL HELP US TO UNDERSTAND.

by KURT SINGER

The WOMAN behind KLAUS FUCHS

EVERY generation brings forth at least one man who personifies in himself the sickness of his times. For us today that man is Dr. Klaus Emil Julius Fuchs, the brilliant scientist, convicted traitor, seeker after a strange fulfillment which led him, like *Faust*, into a bargain with the devil from which there was no withdrawal.

Behind him stood a woman, as there was a woman behind Benedict Arnold and Vidkun Quisling.

A strange woman, almost naïve and innocent, and still completely willing to give herself to the fanatical forces of world communism, and to lead the man she loved to betray his adopted country to a foreign power.

Somewhere in the files of the Secret Services in London and Washington is a top-secret dossier on this woman in the life of Dr. Klaus Fuchs. Nobody knows her real name. She is called Hilda X in the files. In the language of the Communist Party she was called Brandt, which is *"fire"* in German. She also was called Heiss, Warm and Kalt, all German terms for various temperatures. Her case is still under investigation and will be so for many years to come.

In the same files, one can also find testimony given by the author of this book, who knew Hilda X when he was in Germany as a newspaper correspondent investigating Communist and Nazi activities. Other material used in this article is based on what Hilda X told her fellow-comrades and friends. I have good reasons to believe it to be true. . . .

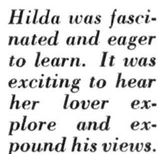
Hilda was dark, about five feet six, and started out as an idealist hanging around many left-wing groups. She met Fuchs in the early thirties at Kiel University, where both were studying. It was a pleasant North German navy city. Fuchs belonged to the Communist student group and she had met him in that way. Hilda Brandt was new in the revolutionary movement, but the minute she saw Klaus, tall, lean, scholarly-looking, she liked him, and she knew that he was the man she wanted for herself. Klaus visited her twice a week in her small run-down apartment down on Hindenburg Strasse. He was the new leader of the campus cell of Party workers, and both felt it was up to them to waste no time with young student love. Their mission was to cement the solidarity of the working class the world over, from Spain to Korea, from Kiel to Shanghai.

They worked hard together. Many a winter they stood at evening near the Kiel dockyards, passing out handbills, exhorting the workers to throw off their shackles of Nazism, capitalism and imperialism, and join the class struggle.

Hilda Brandt finally broke with her bourgeois parents, who never would be able to understand her. She'd been a coward, afraid to leave security, her comfort and home, and all the things she had been brought up to. Now she knew how empty they were. Klaus made her see. The Communist underground against Nazism had awakened her in this barbaric struggle for survival.

Underground in Nazi Germany they began to live as man and wife, devoted to their ideal of communism. That underground life, when they were hunted by the Gestapo in the heart of Germany, was one thing she

Hilda was fascinated and eager to learn. It was exciting to hear her lover explore and expound his views.



Illustrated by
MAURICE BOWER

One passed to the other an envelope that saved Soviet Russia ten years of research.

would never forget. But here she really had her only chance to know this man she loved, to study his moves, to know how his brain and heart functioned.

The Nazis had issued a warrant of arrest against all members of the Kiel University Communist cell. Because they must remain unseen, Klaus and Hilda spent many months alone in their room, only Hilda going out to shop occasionally for groceries. Would they be found? Klaus knew Hilda would never give him away, and he knew she would rather die than testify against him. He was sure of her, as few men can be sure of a woman. He was sure of her even when, almost fifteen years later, he was arrested in London as the world's greatest atom spy.

They had no money in this underground existence, and it was up to Hilda to get it from her relatives in spite of the fact that she had broken with her family. Klaus often wondered during these days whether they should take just a brief "honeymoon" and then go separate ways. But Hilda was not the woman to let him go voluntarily in the hour of distress, of common distress, when the Communist youth of Germany was slaughtered by Hitler and his hordes.

(In 1950, the sensational spy trial in London against Klaus Fuchs hardly

mentioned his past, hardly touched on his days in the Communist underground.)

The first week of their German underground life was heaven transplanted to these two lovers. On her first expedition for groceries, she bought a deck of cards, with which Klaus played diligent solitaire while she was busy.

In a honeymoon mood they discussed their future. They had to leave Germany. Somehow, yes, one day when the battle was over, they would have a home of their own, with their own books. He would be a great physicist, perhaps as great as Einstein. They would have records of Beethoven and Shostakovich, and pictures of the great revolutionaries on the wall.

Among the primary practical problems of their underground existence in the Nazi-ruled city of Kiel were the preparations for a life of security. They took stock of their clothing and removed all labels. The few letters and papers with identifying marks were similarly torn up and burned in the large metal wastebasket. Books were inspected for inscriptions, and Hilda's college diploma and their passports were put aside, eventually to be stored away for safekeeping.

It was a sunny morning in October 1934 when Hilda was detailed to go in

quest of the official papers vouchsafing their assumed identities, a precaution against emergencies. She enjoyed the trolley ride to her aunt, who always was friendly toward the radical movement. This was Hilda's first courier work; the first of many missions to come. She was elevated with a sense of her own importance, but terrified lest she fail, and vaguely oppressed by the thought she might be followed. The trip home seemed endless. But it was successful. Her aunt had given her a hundred marks.

HILDA was fascinated when Klaus outlined his tactics for the future. He told her how Communists outwitted the world's police from Berlin to Washington, from Alaska to Vienna. "If you are a Communist," he said, "they look for you in cheap waterfront bars, not at the Adlon Hotel or the Waldorf-Astoria. They think you have to ride by bus or coach or third class, but we know how to imitate their idols—we can ride in Mercedes or Cadillacs and tip the driver generously if we have to, too. Police agents are fine when it comes to bribery, spying or to corrupt renegades or beat up innocent people, but there never was a Nazi storm-trooper with brains."

But the Communist passion for dialectics and oratory became more apparent and more absorbing as their underground internment continued. Between love-making and meals and quarrels and waiting, Klaus instructed Hilda Brandt further in the Marxist doctrines.

When Hilda later was asked what Fuchs taught her, she declared: "He told me materialism did not mean as most stupid bourgeois believed, that communism was concerned solely with money, profits and material things. Materialism was the concept that the material cell was first on earth—somewhere in the ocean—and from it all life began. Idealistic philosophy, on which current society was based, derived from Plato or Immanuel Kant, and stood upon the notion that the idea—or the incarnation of all ideas—God—was the origin of life on this planet."

"And if somebody should ask you," Klaus Fuchs said, "what is at once the fundamental of life and its highest achievement, we Communists say *Nature,* not God. Although we may not know all of nature's mysterious secrets, one day we will, and in the meantime we don't burn incense to it."

Hilda was fascinated and eager to learn. It was exciting to hear her lover explore and expound his views. It reminded her again of the skill and the scope of his mind, and the extent of his knowledge, and she loved him for both. This was the life of the spirit—this was what she had missed in the pallid upper-class world of her own home and her community life. It was their meeting-ground, hers and Klaus', their church and castle and a fountain of love.

Still, Klaus and Hilda had to escape from Nazi Germany; only—how?

Hilda thought no woman ever knew her man better than she. For three months, day and night they lived in this rotten hole in Kiel, preparing their escape—and it was not easy.

She knew by now almost every minute of his young life. When Klaus was three years old, the German Imperial army unleashed upon Paris her big guns. Klaus' father, Emil Fuchs, was a Protestant minister and a real pacifist. The boy Klaus, in the provincial town of Ruesselsheim, near Frankfurt, was strictly forbidden to join in the cheering when the soldiers went off to the front. Little Klaus began life as an outsider, the onlooker, the nay-sayer. He had no close boyhood friends, he told Hilda, and except for his three older brothers and sisters, he lived in virtual isolation, shielded from the hysterical patriotism of the Prussians, and living in an antiseptic world of his father's making.

Hilda understood why he had come to her. He needed friendship; he needed love; he wanted to be wanted. The Fuchses were beings apart. They lived their own lives. It is this childhood which explains Fuchs' later ability to divide the different aspects of his daily life into watertight compartments, moving somnambulistically from one scene to another, from his rôle as scientist, meticulously careful of his colleagues' professional interest, to that of spy, blandly betraying the trust of those same colleagues—with one exception only: Hilda.

MANY have wondered why the greatest spy of our day confessed so willingly, almost volunteered his knowledge unasked. Perhaps, knowing he was discovered, he broke down and confessed to save the only woman he ever really loved: Hilda Brandt.

Hilda understood his background. She had visited his father's house many times. She has said that Klaus never felt at home there where a pacifist minister preached brotherhood, duty, internationalism, antimilitarism and religion.

Klaus was lost in this surrounding, Hilda once declared, "If he had remained a Quaker, I would never have met him; but then he would never have led us into espionage."

Later, at Kiel University, when the Nazis were a major political force, Klaus joined the Young Communist League. "Because," as Hilda later explained, "the Communists were the only ones who fought back, fought hard against Hitler. He fell in love with me because I was willing to fight, and he had been surrounded all life long by weak personalities.

"Klaus just could not see his family and our country destroyed by the Nazis. One of his sisters jumped under a train; another one went temporarily insane; his father was arrested and deported to a concentration camp. He wanted to strike out against this evil.

"It was then that I told him: 'We'll make up for it; we'll go to England, join our Comintern friends and become active party workers in this war against capitalism and fascism.'"

AFTER the conviction of her lover, Hilda is known to have said to a friend in Red Berlin, whither she had fled: "It was I who am really guilty." She felt she had pushed him into a field which he should not have entered. It was one thing to be a scientist who sympathized with communism, and another thing to become an active agent for the Soviet secret service.

Hilda and Klaus crossed the Nazi frontier separately. She went to England, while Klaus remained for a while in France, to join her later.

Then Klaus studied at Bristol University. He actually liked Britain and her institutions, while Hilda hated the new country. She hated everything in Britain, because Klaus lost himself in scientific studies. He almost lost interest in Communist work and her. When they met, and it was seldom enough, she called him a coward, a renegade, a bourgeois who had forgotten. Hilda also suspected he was attracted to the British girls.

They almost broke off their relations when Hilda left him with harsh and angry words: "Your new capitalist friends in Britain will betray you one day. You will see!"

Hilda left Klaus and left Britain. She went to France, to Denmark. She became a Communist courier, a secret agent for the West European Bureau of the Communist International. At the same time Klaus accepted Britain, the pleasures of British friends and customs. His field of research widened, and in 1938 he went to Edinburgh University where he took his degree as doctor of science. His original research in atomic and nuclear physics were placing him in the forefront of the younger scientists, and he published papers in the Proceedings of the Royal Society. The refugee-emigrant made a name for himself, a high place in scientific circles. The British were tolerant and helpful. A man was allowed to hold his convictions without interference. Communism as an idea was fading away.

Not so for Hilda. She had helped to organize spy rings by now in Po-

land, Czechoslovakia, inside Germany and Scandinavia. She had her hands in many Communist underground activities. She probably still loved Klaus, but the man who had taught her the ABC of communism never realized that his pupil would outdo the master. The two had even stopped writing to each other.

The Communist Party had dropped the man, and she had orders not to contact him; and party orders always come first.

But as historic changes influence our lives, so do new party lines affect the members of the Communist Party. On September 1, 1939, Hitler invaded Poland, and the war was on. Klaus Fuchs, who had become a part of scientific Britain, discovered he was finally regarded as an enemy alien. He, the anti-fascist, was to be interned and deported to Canada. He was told to pack his bag and get ready for internment.

At this point he remembered Hilda. She had been right: Britain had betrayed him. The English were still brutal, capitalist, fascist. Fuchs the Hitler-hater would be forced to make the trip as an internee in the North Atlantic through waters infested by submarines.

He felt like a martyr. He who had forgotten his Communist allegiance was ready to proclaim it. Yes, Hilda was right, how could he ever forget her. She was right; he still loved her; but where on earth was she? In Russia? Where?

In his Nissen hut in the Canadian camp it became all very clear to him: he had to find her. There were Communist leaders in Canada, in Britain, in America who would find her; the Red Cross would find her for him.

But he had not to look for long, because the miracle happened, as if she had heard his cry of despair. He received a letter from her. She asked him if she could help—she was in the United States—if she could send money. She reminded him he as a scientist would be free some day, and then he must remember all the things they discussed in the good old days in Kiel, those three months they never would forget.

When Klaus Fuchs was able to resume his work, his old convictions were firmly fixed, thanks to Hilda and thanks to the internment. In 1941 he was released from internment to continue his work, the research which was to help in the development of the atom bomb. Although it was known that he had a Communist past, he was cleared by all intelligence offices in Britain and the United States.

Hitler was threatening the world with a secret weapon. All atom scientists of the Allies were recruited to beat the Nazis. Klaus, the Communist, was admitted to all atom plans, all projects. He became a key figure in the development of the atom bomb. They gave him British citizenship.

He came to America, but Hilda had left. He came back to Britain, and Hilda had left. She traveled as a newspaper woman, but he knew what she was doing. They wrote wonderful love-letters to each other. It was Hilda who finally sent the fatal Russian agent to Klaus, the one who gave him a few hundred pounds to make sure he was from now on a member of the Soviet secret service, and Russia's chief atom spy.

Then Hilda met him in Britain. One night only, in London, a night in which they did not sleep, telling each other of their love. The next day Hilda had to leave for an important assignment, and so did Klaus....

It was on a wet Sunday afternoon when he walked down Charing Cross Road to Cambridge Circus. Hilda had not left yet, and she watched the scene secretly:

A self-absorbed man walked toward Trafalgar Square. Hilda Brandt noticed a lean, bespectacled man, hands in pockets, joining him. One passed to the other an envelope, the envelope that saved Stalin and Soviet Russia ten years of atomic research. Then Hilda saw her lover running down the stairs of the Underground, disappearing....

At the trial, Klaus called himself a schizophrenic, having a subconscious divided in two departments, one good and one evil. He declared he hated communism now, and knew Russia would not bring peace to the world. He confessed just as others confessed behind the Iron Curtain.

Still, he protects Hilda. He seeks psychological reasons for his treason. The name of his mistress is not mentioned once; she is safe, secure and probably unhappy somewhere behind the Iron Curtain.

Some saw her in the office of Soviet spy Gerhardt Eisler in Eastern Berlin; some say she has committed suicide. It is the old tragedy and irony again: we live in a time where ex-spy Whittaker Chambers goes free for stealing U.S. State Department papers, and his accomplice is punished. So we see Klaus Fuchs behind bars, while the woman responsible for the diabolical deed is forgotten somewhere East of the bloodstained Rhine.

THE GREAT WHEELBARROW PUSH

TODAY, if someone pushes a wheelbarrow for a few blocks down the street as the result of an election bet, much ado is made about it. Reporters are on the scene, photographers fire away with their cameras, and it is the talk of the town.

And occasionally you hear about somebody having pushed a wheelbarrow from one town to another. This too is regarded as quite something.

But the No. 1 wheelbarrow push of all wheelbarrow pushes occurred four decades ago. The pusher was one John A. Krohn. He was a New England printer.

Some of the stuff he printed on his printing-press dealt with other parts of the country and he commenced to develop a great hankering to see how the rest of America looked. In particular, since he was in Portland, Maine, a great deal, he wondered what Portland, Oregon, looked like.

So one day he decided to go ahead and find out. He decided while he was at it he might as well see the rest of the country too. He figured that what he would do was walk around the border of the United States. He got out a wheelbarrow and began pushing it. In the wheelbarrow he had some extra clothes and canned food.

He started his big push from Portland, Maine, on June 1, 1908. From Maine he pushed his wheelbarrow into New Hampshire and thence to Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Then he was back in New Hampshire, and then in Maine.

On July 21, 1909—one year and fifty-one days later—he was back in Portland, Maine, the starting-point.

He would have made it in maybe a year flat, except that he became ill along the way from ptomaine poisoning; this the papers of the day blamed on canned goods which they described as "of a very poor quality as well as a most uncertain age."

He had pushed the wheelbarrow for something like nine thousand miles, averaging 22½ miles a day.

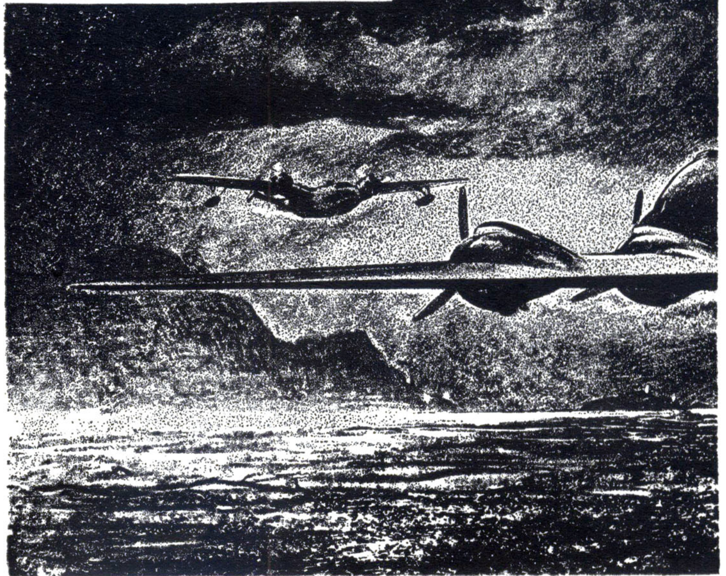
He wore out eleven pairs of shoes and five wheels.

—*by Harold Helfer*

No Turning Back

A DRAMA OF THE KOREAN AIR-LIFT, BY A MAN WHO IS FLYING IT.

by PETER DOLLAR



I looked and couldn't believe it. Small in the distance, but growing

THE storm was born in the Arctic Sea; it swept down over the gale-racked Aleutians and blanketed the flight lanes of the North Pacific. The Stratocruisers and 'Sixes, with their pressurized cabins, were getting through at high altitudes above the westerlies. But there hadn't been a DC-4 between San Francisco and Tokyo in days. I found that out when the airport called.

Dispatch gave me a rundown on the weather, and then transferred the call to the scheduling office.

"Captain Greg McKenna?"

"Still speaking," I said.

"Report for briefing at twenty-three hundred, Captain. You're taking the Honolulu flight out at midnight."

The crew scheduler signed off with a small, hurried click; the dead wire hummed; but I stood there still listening, as if I could hear it, waiting for the feeling of panic to come.

It wasn't that I was really afraid, I assured myself dully. It was just that I hated to make this trip. I packed a bag and backed the car out and drove across the Golden Gate Bridge in the rain.

The lights at the airport made a difference, and the familiar pattern of checking in. I'd done this a hundred times before. A slim gray-haired man in a business suit was talking to an Air Force major in the weather office. Captain Bowers, the operations manager, wasn't there just to wave good-by. The cargo carrying DC-4's were the life of the airlift, and he wanted to see this flight go through. The west wind was costing lives in Korea.

I glanced over his shoulder at the weather map. It looked like the work of a mad finger-painter on the loose with a bottle of ink. The isobars were wound up like balls of black yarn and two nasty-looking fronts curved across the track.

"Pretty," I quipped. "Who dreamed up this nightmare?"

De Rosa, the navigator, turned, saying: "Evening, Captain McKenna." And Arch Caldwell, my co-pilot, sauntered across the room giving me his unhappy, twisted half smile. "Nice night, Greg," he greeted.

"It may not be quite this bad," the meteorologist told us, stabbing the air nervously above the weather map. "We know those two low-pressure systems are out there. Frankly, we're not certain exactly where. We'd like to find out. Your terminal here will be open all night—eight-hundred- to a thousand-foot ceiling—if you have to come back."

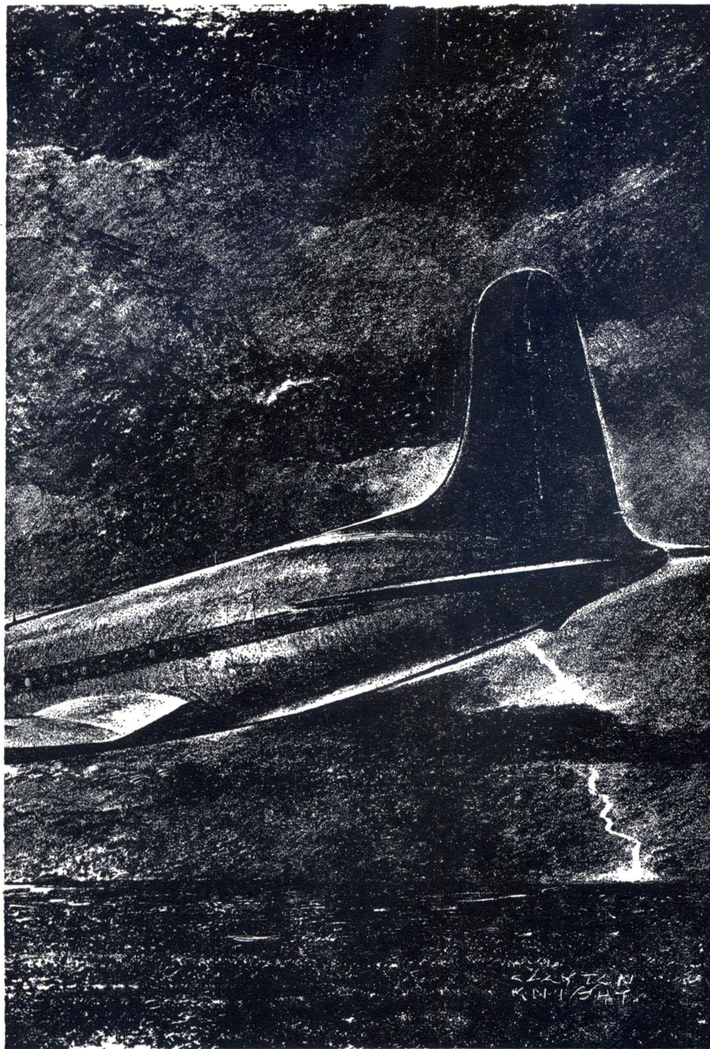
"Honolulu?"

"Wide open."

The Air Force major said: "This is a military charter, Captain. They really need your cargo over there. But we're not asking you to stick your neck out any further than you have to. It may be rough. You may have to turn around. That's understood."

I let him have what he wanted to hear. "There's only one way to find out," I recited bravely.

"Good, Greg!" Captain Bowers touched my arm with a paternal gesture. "We're giving you full tanks—all the gas you can carry. You'll have six passengers in addition to the cargo;



larger, was a PBM and beyond it rose the rugged cliffs of Molokai.

company personnel dead-heading to Tokyo."

He took off with the Major for the airport office, and I turned to Arch Caldwell, who was still bent over the map, eying it studiously.

"See something, Arch?"

"Who, me? Just another Honolulu shuttle, that's all. But I only work here, Captain."

He glanced up with a faint, mocking amusement, and I realized then Arch Caldwell knew I was afraid. Well, how could he help it, I reflected as I walked down the hall. There are some things you can't hide from the other man in the cockpit. I remembered the months I'd put in flying co-pilot to a captain who feared the air. Old Baggy Eyes, we'd called him. He couldn't sleep at night when he was on a trip, and we measured the days by the way the lines deepened under his eyes and the decisions got harder and harder to make, until we had to start making them for him.

I HADN'T minded too much. But I was just a kid then. I wasn't ex-Lieutenant Colonel Arch Caldwell, who had once commanded a squadron of B-29's. It must be tough on him taking orders from me, a jumpy young skipper of twenty-eight who had never flown a military mission.

Just another Honolulu shuttle. Arch was right. I had to start thinking that way again.

I had almost convinced myself by the time I got to Operations. The crew list was lying face up on the counter. I glanced at it; the bottom line read: *"Stewardess – Roxanne Lane"*—and everything changed.

I stared at it for a moment while the weakness flooded in like a physical thing, through the taut muscles at the back of my neck, in the palms of my hands. Now the fear had a name: Johnny Gill—the name of a pilot I hadn't known, who had taken off into a storm like this and never came back. He and Roxanne had been engaged when he died, a long time ago, but she couldn't forget.

"It's no use," she had said when I asked her to marry me. "Not again. Not after what happened to Johnny. I couldn't stand waiting, wondering each time if you'd ever come back."

"Look, Rocky," I'd told her gently. "Those things happen. People get killed crossing the street. You can't go on living and be afraid forever."

"Afraid?" That was all she had said, but when I got back from my next trip, she was gone. Transferred to New York—by request. That was when it started; the nameless uneasiness. It had happened to Johnny Gill. It could happen to me. Whenever I thought about Rocky I came back to that, until I dreaded to hear the telephone ring.

I pushed the crew list aside and initialed the flight plan. My hand shook a little. Then I turned and walked slowly the half dozen steps to the ready-room.

Six—no, eight—months, but I pictured her perfectly. Slim, long-legged, with her own sort of lovely, awkward grace. Jet-black hair, short-cropped, clean and silky to touch. A firm, full mouth and that stubborn rounded chin.

SHE was talking to Jake Gillespie, the little radio op, a pudgy, long-winded character whose favorite pastimes are feeding stray dogs and cats and sticking his neck into other people's business. He was in the groove, because when she saw me she said:

"Well, if it isn't Captain McKenna! And here Mr. Gillespie was just telling me the tale of my misspent life. Tell Greg, Jake. He loves sad stories." Her smile had changed. It was brittle, without warmth, and so was her voice.

"Hello, Rocky." I managed what might have passed for a grin.

"Hi," she said stiffly.

"You know," Jake cried, jumping into the breach, "this reminds me of another revoltin' development I ran into once down in Guatemala. My first wife, in fact. She was a lovely creature, daughter of a retired Maya chieftain—"

"A doubtful story," interrupted Rocky bleakly, "which I seem to have heard somewhere before."

I tried to sound happy. "It's nice seeing you again, Rocky. Like old times, almost."

"Almost." There was a note that might have been regret before her voice resumed its studied flippancy. "But not quite, is that it, Greg?" She reached for her raincoat. "If you'll excuse me, I'll take a short swim to the ship."

I watched from the doorway as she ran through the puddles in the glare of the floodlights.

Jake said, at my elbow: "You know what? I just been cogitatin' your future, Junior. Domestically speaking, it don't look so good."

He picked up his briefcase and stomped down the stairs, his small frame lost in an oversized slicker. A moment later Arch Caldwell, with the ship's papers, came out of Operations, and I followed him across the ramp and up the exit stairs to the plane.

THE plush had been torn out. There were a couple of bucket seats in the tail, and the cargo was neatly tied down at the forward end of the passenger compartment; wooden boxes with the black stenciled letters—ROCKET 3.5.

On the flight deck I tapped Jake Gillespie's shoulder. "All set on the frequencies?"

"Check and double check, Greg."

I stepped into the cockpit and glanced at the co-pilot's seat. That's where I belonged. I used to feel differently, flying from there. Arch was waiting behind me.

"Your take-off, Arch. You're driving from the captain's side."

He grinned crookedly. "How can I thank you?" he said.

We ran through the check list and wound them up. I got taxi clearance, and at the end of the runway we set the brakes for the mag check.

Number One. Left, right, both, okay. Number Two was slightly rough on the left. Three and Four okay. We went back to Two and ran it again. Still a little rough on the left mag. In the luminous glow from the instrument lights Arch looked at me questioningly and grinned. "Not a bad rpm drop."

It would probably work itself out. I knew that. But it would be nice to turn around. Now, before it was too late. One word from me, *"No,"* and we'd taxi back to the ramp. No long night wondering what was coming up out of the darkness. I found my thoughts mirrored in Arch's mocking grin, and reached for the mike.

"Tower from MATS triple-eight-seven. Ready for take-off. Over."

"Eight-eight-eight-seven," the control tower called back. *"You are cleared for take-off."*

The engines came alive with a deep, urgent roar. The wheels turned slowly, then faster—faster. The wings lifted, straining to be airborne, and we soared over the barrier and out the long valley, with a few lights showing through the breaks below and the wind-racked mist curling off the hills. Number Two smoothed out. Past the Farallones we leveled off, pulling the throttles back to twenty-nine inches, and the engines settled down to their mile-eating drone.

I got San Francisco on the horn and the message came back: *"MATS triple-eight-seven. San Francisco Radio. Eight thousand at two-seven. On instruments. Cruising eight thousand. Out."*

I slipped the mike into place. We were on our way now. Beneath the undercast stretched the Pacific, two thousand miles of ocean and darkness.

Five hours out, we were still on the gauges. We couldn't see anything, but it was actually smooth. Stratified stuff, no fronts, no turbulence. I lounged in the left-hand seat, keeping an eye on the Number One oil-pressure. It was down to sixty pounds and the volume was low.

Arch stuck his head through the curtain. "My watch, Captain."

"Okay." I climbed out of my chair and gave him a check on the compass heading. "Watch Number One. We may have to pump over a little spare oil."

He nodded. "Who's the new dish?"

"What?" My mind was still on the oil-pressure gauge.

"The stewardess, naturally. Stacked nice, but not friendly."

"She doesn't like pilots," I told him. "But I suppose you found out."

"Pilots?" Arch echoed derisively. "Does that include me too, Captain?"

"I wouldn't know," I said shortly. "Keep your eye peeled for a break in the clouds. We could use a star fix."

At the navigation table De Rosa sprawled on the stool, absently fingering a pair of dividers. I peered over his shoulder.

"How's it going, Rosy?"

"Not doin' nothin'," he kidded, indicating the clean expanse of the chart. "Just standin' around, not doin' nothin'."

Jake Gillespie cackled his approval from in front of the Loran box, the long-range radio-navigation device, where he had the cover off and was probing the insides. "Great sense of humor, that boy."

I forced a grin. "What's wrong with the gadget?"

"Burned a tube," Jake said. "It won't talk tonight."

I turned to the navigator. I didn't like the unmarked look of that chart. "I'll take it awhile, Rosy," I ordered. "You go up to the cockpit and keep Arch awake."

He ducked through the curtain and I studied the chart. Not much to go by. A few radio bearings close to the coast. The Loran was out. A star fix would solve everything, but there hadn't been a break in the clouds thus far. There was nothing left but the pressure pattern.

I WENT over De Rosa's figures carefully—one altitude reading every half-hour. We should have been crossing a lot of isobars, plowing westward into the low, but his findings showed almost no pressure change. That meant the forecast was wrong, I realized nervously. Actually, we might be skirting either the top or the bottom of the low-pressure area. It wasn't likely to be the bottom; we'd have run into the front, the tail of the cyclone. So it must be the top—and if that were true, we were getting a tail wind.

I sketched a hasty weather map on the chart. Twenty-five to forty knots on the tail instead of the nose—for five hours. That would put us way ahead. It would change the location of Equi-time Point; we might be close to it now.

But you don't operate on radio altimeter readings. Not according to the book; not unless you're interested in taking a swim. You either get a fix by Equi-time Point, or you do a one eighty, and head for the barn. I thought it over for five minutes, trying to make up my mind. It's a lost feeling barging around in the soup with so little to go by. If the overcast held for another half hour the safe thing to do was turn back to the coast.

Illustrated by Clayton Knight

"Get Honolulu on the horn," I ordered. "Tell 'em we're coming through." I glared at them. "Any objections?"

Jake was asleep at his desk with his head on his arms. I stepped into the after compartment, accustoming my eyes to the gloom. The passengers were hunched in the bucket seats, one snoring with his feet sprawled across the deck. At the end of the dim tunnel Rocky's blue gabardine moved across the brightly lit galley. One of the men said hopefully: "What's our speed, Captain?" and "Awfully smooth, isn't it?" The fat fellow with the mustache smiled a nervous, fleeting smile as I moved aft past him.

Rocky was facing the stove in the galley. She didn't look up.

I said: "Got some hot coffee?"

"On the left; just turn the handle. Cream in the icebox. Sugar here." Her face was slightly flushed, and a ringlet of dark hair clung to her forehead.

"Your memory's bad, Miss Lane."

"I forgot," she said in a low voice. "You take yours straight."

"I'm getting used to it," I went on. "It's not the first time you've forgotten. I enjoyed that touching farewell when you left."

"Perhaps you should thank me," Rocky murmured, turning back to the stove. "There are worse things than not saying good-by."

"Like what? Like what happened to you?"

"We've been over all that."

I grasped her upper arm and swung her around, feeling the long-dwelling anger beginning to rise. "I'm a nice guy," I said. "That's what they tell me. So maybe we haven't been over all that. You want to know what happened to you? Nothing happened, that's what. Nothing, except that you're feeling awfully sorry for yourself. It's not Johnny Gill you're crying about."

"Crying?" she retorted with a bitter smile. "Why, Captain, why should I cry?"

"I can think of a lot of reasons. Because you haven't the guts to face up to life. Because you're afraid. Afraid! Believe me, I know all about that."

She raised her face for the first time, and her eyes met mine, hot with a sort of angry shame. "Should I thank you now?" she asked quietly. "You're hurting my arm."

My fingers relaxed. "Sorry," I muttered lamely, half turning, and then swung back to face her. "Look, it isn't too late. Remember how it used to be in Honolulu? The afternoons on the beach. . . . Suppose we had dinner at the Royal tonight?"

"No," she answered wearily. "It's no use, Greg."

Groping down the aisle, I stumbled over the foot of a sleeping passenger. He stirred, groaning, and at that moment a sudden flash of orange light ripped through the darkness, showing his face in an expression of incredulous fear. The fat man cried out, a single, hoarse, spine-chilling sound, and I lunged for the door to the forward compartment.

Number One was on fire! In the cockpit Arch yelled: "That damn' oil-line broke!" He'd already punched the feathering button. I pulled the fire-control valve; the warning light went out; and he trimmed the ship while I fiddled with the power settings, giving us more push on the other three engines.

I played musical chairs getting into my seat, and flashed the Aldis lamp out along the port wing. The prop

"I'm not afraid any more—not after this trip. I don't know why—perhaps it's because I've seen that you aren't."

hung queerly, still in midair. No other damage. The engine hadn't burned long.

De Rosa popped his head into the cockpit. "Want an ETA for San Francisco, Greg?"

This was it. The chance to go back. I'd had a feeling about this trip in the first place. You turn around, the book said, if you lose an engine before Equi-time Point. But suppose I was correct about the pressure pattern and we were at Equi-time now. We could go either way. The weather was good back to the coast. Turning around would be smoother, safer. What was it the Air Force major had said? "They really need that stuff over there." But we hadn't had a fix. I couldn't be certain about our position. I called for the navigator.

"What's with the radio altimeter, Rosy?"

He was back in a moment. "Still about the same. No change in dog value."

Arch broke in. "How far to Equi-time Point, De Rosa?"

"Fifty minutes, according to the forecast."

"We're probably passing it now," I said suddenly.

Arch gave me a startled look. "Wait a minute!" He jabbed at De Rosa. "What's the score? What's your idea, Rosy?"

"Greg could be right, from the pressure pattern. It looks as if the low has moved south. But you can't always tell—"

Jake Gillespie poked his head through the curtain. They were all up there now. Just like with Old Baggy Eyes, I remembered bitterly, the captain who was too frightened to make a decision. So they were making it for me. This was what Rocky had wanted; a man who knew when it was time to quit flying. An unreasoning anger possessed me.

"So you can't always tell," Arch was echoing De Rosa. "What's the question, then? So we turn—"

"Shut up, Arch!" I blurted. "It may be hard for you to take, but you are still co-pilot. Or is that the way they did things in the Air Force?"

"Now wait a minute, McKenna—" He faced me angrily.

"Get Honolulu on the horn," I ordered. "Tell 'em we're coming through." I glared at them—at the ring of faces surrounding me. "Any objections?"

Arch had the mike in his hand. "*Honolulu Radio. Honolulu Radio. This is MATS triple-eight-seven on eighty-seven hundred.*" He read them our position, time and altitude. "*Feathered Number One engine. On instruments. Request re-analysis two thousand, four thousand, six thousand, eight thousand.*"

They came back to question our position before giving us the dope. No available change in forecast. Arch looked across at me bleakly.

THE hours drag through the long night of an ocean crossing. The ship hangs suspended, as if it were stationary, born aloft by a fragile balance of mechanical powers. Beneath it, you know that the earth is still turning, but now it is no more than a remembered thing, hidden in its cloak of gray, swirling mist.

Tonight the hours were even longer. We took turns flying. Two watches, then three. Still no break in the clouds. No stars to fix our position. My eyes ached from watching the instruments while my mind went wearily back to the problem.

So I'd blown my mouth off. *Tell Honolulu we're coming through.* The brave words echoed hollowly in the darkened cockpit. Sitting there, four hours later, I could think of a hundred reasons not to have said that. But it was too late now. There was no turning back.

Arch was flying. He leaned toward me once, as if to say something, then thought better of it, and I shifted in my seat, trying to find a comfortable spot. I dozed; my head tilted forward.

It seemed a moment later that the thunder sounded. The plane shuddered violently, dipping off to the left, and I started awake to a cry in my ear.

"Feather Two!"

Oh, no, I thought, feeling suddenly sick. *Not the port wing again!* And yet, somehow, hadn't I known this would happen? Wasn't this what I had been waiting for since the day Rocky left? The long months of anticipation took the edge off my panic as I grabbed the controls. We were losing altitude fast.

"Must have blown a jug," Arch shouted, pushing up the throttles on the two live engines.

We got it straightened out at six thousand feet in a laboring, crabwise glide. He gave Honolulu the emergency call, and I glanced out my window at Number One and Two props hanging dead in the air.

"De Rosa! Better get the passengers set." My voice sounded harsh. "Plenty of blankets. And break out the liferafts."

"With luck we may hold below a thousand feet." I'd got him into this mess, but there was no reproach in Arch Caldwell's crooked grin.

"Maybe." I looked across at him and added stiffly: "I shouldn't have blown up back there. You'd like to be flying it from this side, Arch. I don't blame you."

"Who wouldn't?" He spoke with his old jeering tone, but I imagined a different ring to it now. "Until that happy day comes, this'll do me fine."

It was light enough to see, and I glimpsed the surface as we barged through a leaning cumulus cloud. We should be close to the islands, very close, if my analysis of the winds had been right. But had they been right? The altimeter turned slowly. Four thousand feet.

Arch said quietly: "Time to start dumping cargo, Greg."

"Not yet. Let's play the string out." I leaned back through the curtain. "Anything on Hilo, Jake?"

"Too much sunrise effect. The bearing's swinging sixty degrees."

WE were still descending, but not so fast. Below us gray-blue rollers broke, whitecapped, into the wind, coming closer at two hundred feet a minute. We'd land in that sea, letting down crosswind in a long, slow glide, reaching desperately for the crest of a wave.

Thirty-five hundred feet. My hands were damp on the yoke. We bounced into a cloud and I buzzed the galley. Rocky came up.

"How are the passengers doing?"

"They'll live," she said tightly. She was pale, her eyes wide and very dark blue.

"You?"

"Scared."

"A sensible statement," said Arch unexpectedly, "and not without virtue. You never know if you have any guts until you get scared, do you, Miss Lane?"

Until you get scared! I wanted to think about that, but I didn't have time. Three thousand feet. We were in and out of the clouds, still going down. At twenty-five hundred we broke into a broad open space.

"Go ahead with the cargo, Arch."

He didn't answer. His mouth was open but no words came out. Then he shouted: "Holy smoke, Greg! Look at that, look at that!"

I looked and couldn't believe it. Small in the distance, but growing larger, were the gull-shaped wings of a Coast Guard PBM and beyond it, standing tall out of the sea, rose the rugged brown cliffs of Molokai.

"One forty on Hilo," Jake Gillespie sang out.

Arch yelled, "I've got the range!"

I jammed the phones over my ears. A lot of static, but behind it the tone. We were in the A sector close to the leg. De Rosa popped up with the plot, grinning crazily.

"Sixty miles out, Captain."

We sweated it down to eight hundred feet and held our altitude over the cross-currents of Molokai Channel, around Diamond Head and along the cluttered shoreline with the PBM following close on our tail. A power glide in toward the long, black-topped runway, the last tense, slow moment; then the wheels touched and bounced and settled again.

Arch went aft first with the briefcase. I watched them roll the stairs up, feeling the warmth of the new sun through the cockpit windows, and was tired suddenly. It was all over. Somehow we'd made it, and I understood now what Arch had meant. There is no end to fear. The bravest man knows it more than once in his lifetime—but not without reason. I wouldn't jump next time the telephone rang.

And Rocky—that was done too. Wearily, I picked up my gear and opened the door to the passenger compartment.

The ammunition boxes were there, still tied down, still neatly stacked. They'd transfer them to another plane, and tomorrow they'd be in Tokyo. I made my way aft down the aisle between them, and Rocky was standing at the exit door.

She said in a low voice: "It was close. We almost didn't make it, did we, Greg?"

"It was close enough."

"But it doesn't seem so bad now that it's happened, not as awful as I thought it would be."

"It never is," I said.

"I know." She faced me, eyes downcast, with a little tremulous smile. "I was wrong. Say it, Greg."

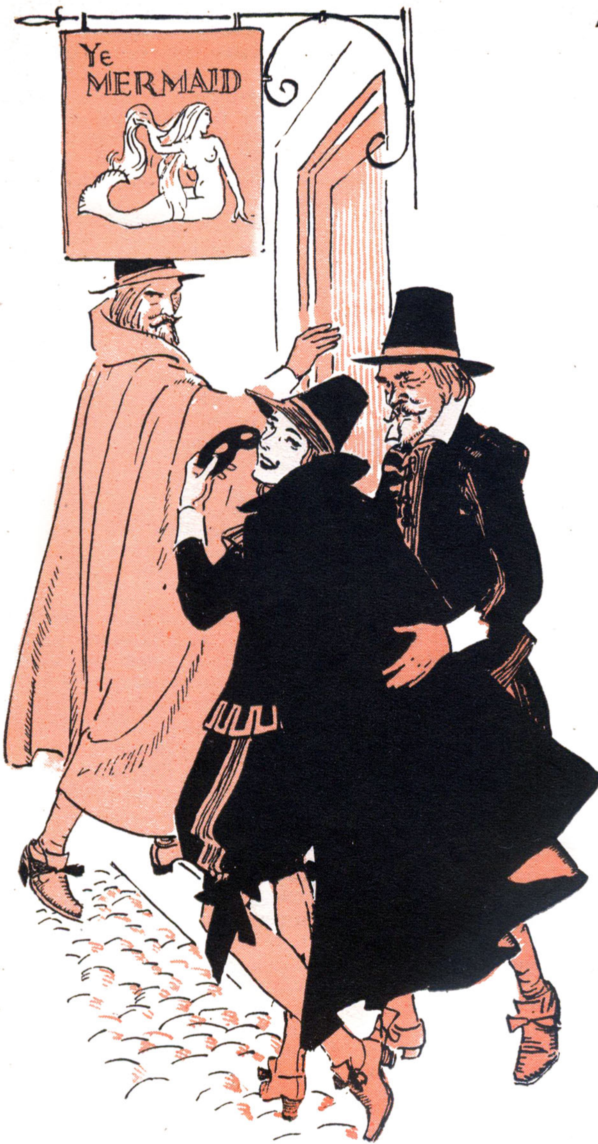
I TOOK a step forward and found it difficult to speak. It had been a long time since my lips were that close to hers. "There's nothing to say. I'm still a pilot, Rocky, and you covered it all in what you told me once—that you couldn't stand waiting, wondering each time if I would ever come back."

"I can now. I'm not afraid any more—not after this trip. I don't even know why—perhaps it's because I've seen that you aren't."

I'd tell her about that, about what Arch had meant. Some day, but not now. My hands touched her shoulders and she raised her face then. It was wonderfully soft, with an expression I had never seen there before.

After a moment she smiled, taking a deep breath. "That was close too," she whispered.

"Nice and close," I said, and kissed her again.



The Prince

BY WILLIAM LINDSAY

On an October afternoon in 1612 a little lean wiry man with a head like an egg walked into the parish church of Odcombe in Somerset, England, carrying a laurel wreath and a pair of worn-out shoes.

News spread swiftly as far as the village tavern. The villagers gathered quickly to watch. By the time the little man had finished nailing shoes and wreath to the church wall, there was a sizable crowd outside, as he had hoped. He came out on the church steps and made them a speech.

While he was talking, the squire arrived. "What goes on here?"

"Haw-haw!" said the villagers. "'Tis thon zimpleton, zur, t'oald preacher's zon!"—or, in less Somerset English, it was Tom Coryat, whose father had been rector of Odcombe, back from his travels and bragging about them at the top of his lungs.

"Says he walked over all Europe in one pair of shoes," said a villager.

"Ar," added another. "And only had them half-soled once."

Tom, seeing the squire, grew more grandiloquent. He had crossed the Alps; he had talked with highwaymen in Germany and daughters of joy in Venice; now he was off to India to see the unicorns, ride on an elephant and beard the Great Mogul in his den. Would Sir Ralph care to make a small contribution, perhaps, to the glory of English exploration and the expenses of one poor English traveler?

"Stark mad," said the villagers with conviction, "zame as t'feyther bevore un."

A liar, decided the squire, but zooks, a most entertaining liar. "Here, lad!" And he flung Tom the expected purse. Tom marched off in triumph to the tavern, where he bought a round of nut-brown ale for the villagers, and for himself drank to the squire's health and the success of his own journey in many cups of sack.

But Tom Coryat had not been lying. It was perfectly true that in those worn shoes now hanging in the church he had walked nearly two thousand miles over Europe, carrying his good suit of doublet and hose in a blanket slung over his shoulder, for he was a "bindle stiff" at heart. Comedian, panhandler, long-distance walker, author of England's first guidebook, and spy, Tom was one of the saltiest characters Elizabethan England ever produced.

The gift of bold panhandling Tom had inherited from his father. The Rev. George Coryat had a racket of his own. He wrote deadly dull but highly complimentary Latin verses. When a nobleman or a rich merchant married; when his son was christened; when his ships arrived with rich cargoes or his mother-in-law died, the Vicar of Odcombe would deliver his commemorative ode before the joy or the corpse was cool. In decency the gentleman had to reward him with a few shillings—and then there was sheep's-head and sack on the vicarage table.

Tom Coryat, the son, was born in 1575. He had three years at Oxford, where he distinguished himself not by scholarship but by clowning. It was natural enough for him to move on to London and to go direct to the Mermaid Tavern in Bread Street, Cheapside, for that was where the bright boys of Elizabethan England hung out. Great lords with a taste for literature; bawdy court ladies dis-

# of Bindle Stiffs

TOM CORYAT WAS A FRE-QUENTER OF THE FAMOUS MERMAID TAVERN ALONG WITH SHAKESPEARE AND BEN JONSON; HE WAS ALSO ON OCCASIONS A JESTER AT COURT; AND HIS SPECIAL GIFTS AS A MENDICANT ENABLED HIM TO FINANCE AMAZING JOURNEYS THROUGH EUROPE AND ASIA.

GRESHAM *Illustrated by* FREDERICK CHAPMAN

guised in boys' clothes with masks over their eyes; the playwright and soldier Ben Jonson, who had fought and sworn and got drunk everywhere; and the playwright Will Shakespeare, who had never been anywhere except in his dreams—they were all at the Mermaid. There, on the first Friday of every month, met a club which had been founded by Walter Raleigh himself. A man who had wit was welcome; and Tom, with no assets except wit and impudent resourcefulness in making a touch, was soon in the swim.

Tom Coryat's panhandling must not be judged by modern standards, for it was not a scrupulous age. A century before in France, the great poet François Villon had been reduced to burglary to take care of his bar tabs; in Tom's own circle, the brilliant and doomed playwright Kit Marlowe was a spy and informer. It was an era of patronage, intrigue, and shameless bootlicking in high places—and an era of adventure. The great captains, Drake, Hawkins and Frobisher, carried pirates' licenses from tough Queen Bess to prey upon Spanish shipping—and incidentally mapped the coastlines of unknown continents, whose interiors were as mysterious as the other side of the moon.

BUT heavy rackets were not for little Tom; his was a gentle grift. It didn't take many cups of sack—the heavy, dry, raw wine which they loved—for the Mermaid boys to find out that "Poor Tom Coryat" was crazy—like an old three-legged fox. They called him "that great lunatique," which meant, affectionately: "What a screwball!"

Making his own connections by sheer nerve, Tom moved in on the court of the new king, James I, as a sort of free-lance court jester. The King, a screwball scholar himself, but dour and tight-fisted, was a tough audience. Tom preferred the lovable young Prince of Wales; Prince Henry, who died a few years later, was so unlike his father that everyone doubted the Queen's virtue. In Prince Henry's household Tom ate at the second mess, returned the courtiers' wisecracks with interest, and reaped a gag-man's reward in plump purses tossed to him across the table. Meanwhile he saved his silver and made friends with the "coming men" of the day—young gentleman-adventurers and merchants who flocked around Prince Henry.

"Says he walked over all Europe in one pair of shoes," said a villager.

One of these was Sir Thomas Roe, whom Tom was to meet again.

In 1608 the Vicar of Odcombe passed to his reward, leaving Tom a modest inheritance, piled up shilling by shilling from the Latin-verse racket. Tom seized his chance. Far horizons were calling him, as they called the sea captains of Devon. Tom had no oaken ship at his command; but he had a pair of stout leather shoes.

He started walking. . . .

He had no capital except his quick ear for languages, his gift for getting out of trouble by impersonating a halfwit, and a few gold-pieces sewed in the lining of his jacket for emergencies. His trip started auspiciously in the great English tradition set by William the Conqueror—he got seasick crossing the Channel.

"I varnished the exterior parts of the ship with the excremental ebullitions of my tumultuous stomach, as desiring to satiate the gormandizing paunches of the hungry Haddocks," was the way he described it later.

The first thing he saw when he set foot in France was a gallows. Tom had another hobby besides travel and sack—he was a gibbet-watcher. Observing hangings was one of the simple pleasures of the poor in 1608—instructive to the young and amusing to the old. Let him who has never watched wrestlers on television cast the first stone.

In Paris, Tom saw the pride of his collection—"the fairest gallows that ever I saw." Nothing was said in his letters home about the performance; but it was usually taken for granted that when it came to beheading and hanging, boiling in oil, drawing the intestines out of a man by winding them up on a windlass, and such-like light sports, they did these things better in France.

Tom worked his way southward toward the Alps, stopping for various diversions, such as a nunnery at Amiens. He wanted to get in—to see the Sisters doing their fancy needlework. But two grim nuns guarded the door.

"No men," they said, "lest the younger Sisters be enticed to vanity!"

"Forsooth!" remarked Tom in injured tones, walking on. It was a polite way of saying: "Nuts!"

Over the Alps he went, on foot most of the way, topping crest after crest, where two thousand years before, Hannibal had driven his elephants. Surely this would be the top. But no—another snowy peak loomed ahead, the narrow road rushing skyward and vanishing through a lofty pass. To Tom they were purely hideous—the taste for mountain scenery had not yet developed. He never said whether he allowed the good monks of St. Bernard to rescue him and force brandy down his throat; but perhaps not, for after all, it wasn't sack.

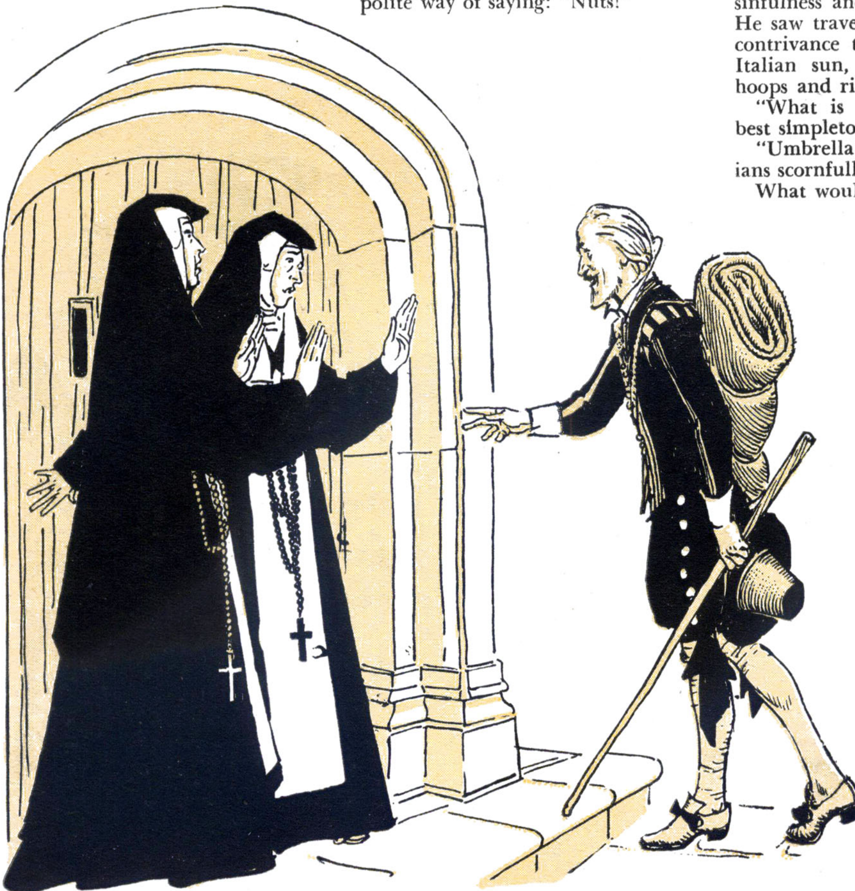
But at the loftiest point waited some ragged Swiss peasants with a chair-on-poles, asking eighteen pence for the service of carrying travelers over the top. And Tom, the resolute walker, the "Odcombian leg-stretcher" as he called himself—gave up. After all, said he, an explorer ought to explore unfamiliar modes of conveyance—and then, the relief of the poor was a charitable act. . . . He paid the eighteen pence.

After that the road descended into the plains of Italy. A strange land, full of poisoners and sorcerers and sinfulness and enticements to vanity. He saw travelers holding up a weird contrivance to keep off the burning Italian sun, a collapsible affair of hoops and ribs and thin leather.

"What is it?" he asked, with his best simpleton's gape.

"Umbrella!" said the knowing Italians scornfully.

What would science think of next?



Tom wanted to get in—to see the Sisters doing their fancy needlework. "No men," they said, "lest the younger Sisters be enticed to vanity!"

"Kind sirs," Tom wheedled, "please, alms for a poor man who hasn't eaten today."

Later on, at a tavern, Tom beheld another wonder. Instead of grabbing the leg of mutton with the left hand while slicing mouthfuls off it with a knife, the effete Italians had a fancy gimmick—a prolonged instrument of silver. You stuck it in the meat; then your left hand didn't get greasy, and the roast didn't skid off the platter. A fork, they called the thing. When Tom left the tavern, he had one in his pocket; at the Mermaid much later, demonstrating its use, he *said* he bought it. Coryat, that lunatique!

Every traveler, sooner or later, finds some spot which seizes him by the heart and makes itself his home. Tom was about to find his. "Most beautiful queen of cities," he raved, "this untainted Virgin, this Paradise, this rich Diadem and most flourishing garland of Christendom." Venice was Tom's town.

He walked into it across the Rialto bridge, where there was a great clock on which two brazen figures of "wild men"—savages—raised great hammers and struck a bell for the quarters and the hours. Tom looked up and admired, noticing idly that a workman was up there adjusting the mechanism. He passed on and went into a church on the other side, taking notes of the weight of gold in the altar decorations, most divers and curiously wrought. Outside the great bell went *bongg—thud*. Then there were screams.

Tom rushed out. On the Rialto bridge the workman lay dead, with his whole skull crushed in. Another English spectator told Coryat what had happened: the workman had forgotten the time; when the quarter struck, his head was between hammer and bell. Above, a brazen figure stood—its hammer streaked with brains and blood.

What a wonderful introduction to Venice! Better than a hanging—though Tom did wish the Doge would misbehave himself, so that Tom could see him hanged on the beautiful alabaster gallows which stood right outside the palace, and was reserved for the Doge's occupancy alone. He set out to see what other surprises Venice had for him, and it had plenty. For one thing, they let *women* act women's parts in plays, as virtuous England wouldn't dream of doing; and believe it or not, the women were just as good as the best boy actor.

Cataloguing the town for his book of travels, Tom reported that it contained "two hundred churches with 143 pair of organs, fifty-four monasteries, twenty-six nunneries—165 marble statues of worthy personages, partly equestriall, partly pedestriall, twenty-three brass statues—114 towers for bells to hang in, 155 wells, 185 most delectable gardens, ten thousand gondolas, 450 bridges, 120 palaces whereof one hundred are very worthy of the name, 174 courts, seven synagogues, one horse (a little bay nag feeding in the churchyard at John and Paul) and twenty thousand cortezans." This untainted Virgin, this Paradise!

Tom wrote home to his mother in Odcombe, assuring her of his untainted virtue; the book of European travels he later published contains an engraving of him pleading with a cortezan to mend her ways. The babe wore a dress with a neckline which not only plunged but got there.

From this and that in letters and the book, it is possible to reconstruct Tom's next adventure.

"Ride a gondola, milor'? Very cheap, very comfort'. See sights of Venice, yes?"

The boatmen at the ferry near the Rialto bridge grabbed Tom and wrangled over him, till the strongest won. After all, why not? You couldn't see Venice properly except from a gondola, and Tom had extracted a goldpiece from his doublet that morning, in case of temptation worth succumbing to. He settled back in the gondola with a luxurious sigh.

"Where to, milor'? See beautiful religious house?"

"Oh," said Tom with a lordly wave of his hand, "forsooth, why not?"

It was a beautiful house, but not especially religious. What a city, what girls! Their hair was dyed the famous Titian red; they wore it elaborately curled; their silks and jewels glittered. . . . Tom went aside with a willing wench, naturally in order to plead with her to mend her ways.

He had a pleasant time—until they presented the bill. Tom blanched. Had they really put away twenty cups of sack? And when had sack come so high? Not to mention the other charges. Tom edged unobtrusively toward the window and looked out. A pretty drop to the narrow sidewalk, but the Odcombian leg-stretcher thought he could make it. Seizing a moment when his fair companion was out of the room, he dropped lightly over the sill—and into the arms of two stout porters of the "religious house," stationed there for just such emergencies. They had stout cudgels, too. . . .

When his bruises healed, Tom wrote in his notes for the book that he, personally, had never gone upstairs in any of those houses, but to look for the gondoliers by the Rialto bridge.

Venice was Tom's town. But after six weeks his foot began to itch and he hit the road again, bindle over his shoulder, going north this time toward Germany. It was still mostly forest in those days; the cleared land and the towns showed the devastation of the religious wars; from behind every tree lowered the grim faces of peasants—"clowns called Boors," as Tom reported. On a lonely road near Baden, Tom saw two of these gentry coming toward him—wolfish, lean, ragged, long swords by their sides and daggers in their belts. These, he decided instantly, were Boors called highwaymen. He thought of the precious gold sewn into his jerkin, and of his still more precious throat; he had no weapon but a knife.

He dropped over the sill—and into the arms of two parties stationed there for just such emergencies.

Then the Coryat panhandling genius went into action.

He took off his hat and bowing, he walked up to the wolfish figures.

"Kind sirs," he wheedled in the monkish dog-Latin that was still something of an international language, "kind sirs, please, alms for a poor man—a wretched pilgrim who hasn't eaten today. . . . Alms, for the love of our Lord, gentlemen!"

Even without the dog-Latin, Tom's gestures were expressive enough. The ragged highwaymen looked at each other; could there really be a human being so destitute that to him *they* looked like big shots? They explored their pockets, consulted with each other, and handed the poor wretch four and a half tin pfennigs, then went on their way, feeling like princes.

Tom noted down that they had paid for half his supper that night. Any wolf that howled at Coryat's door was likely to end up inside—as a rug.

Germany lacked the wonders of Venice, on the whole. But there was one wonder Tom wouldn't have dreamed of missing—the Great Tun, an eighteen-foot-high hogshead of Rhine wine in the palace of the Count Palatine in Heidelberg. To drink from it, you climbed to the top on a ladder and dipped in. Tom went up the ladder like a monkey. To the Odcombian leg-stretcher the sweetest words in any language were: "Have another—this one's on the house."

Could Rhine wine compare with his beloved sack? Well, let's see—no, a pleasant drink but weak, weak as water. Still, it had a right refreshing taste; try another dipperful. The Keeper of the Tun, perched beside him, gestured encouragingly. Yes, after all, there was a certain something, a distinctive quality . . . Whee!

"Tausendpotzteufel!" shouted the Keeper in alarm. "Be careful, Englander, or you will into the tun fall and drown already!"

At last Tom had had enough; he began to pick his steps down the ladder. Had it always been so steep? And such a long way down—ten steps, twelve . . .

In his book he wrote of the Great Tun: "See that in any case thou dost drink moderately, and not as much as the sociable Germans will persuade thee unto—or thou wilt scarce find the direct way down from the steep ladder without a very dangerous precipitation." After all, it was the Keeper's fault. That last dipperful! Ar!

Having visited forty-five cities and covered 1,975 miles in that one famous pair of shoes, Tom arrived in London again on October 3, 1608. His tales of adventure bought him many a cup of sack in the Mermaid Tavern. But he considered that they ought to be worth much more than that. If that ignoramus Will Shakespeare, who had not even been to a good school, could write books, why not Tom Coryat, who after all was an Oxford man?

In 1611 he published his travel journal at his own expense, no London publisher being willing to take a chance on it. Publishing was a new trade, but already its practitioners had established a tradition of sometimes guessing wrong. Tom's book was a handsome quarto job of eight hundred pages, illustrated with excellent engravings. He called it "CORYAT'S CRUDITIES—*hastily gobbled up in five months' travels in France, Savoy, Italy . . . some parts of High Germany and the Netherlands; Newly digested in the hungry air of Odcombe in the County of Somerset, and now dispersed to the nourishment of the traveling Members of this Kingdom.*"

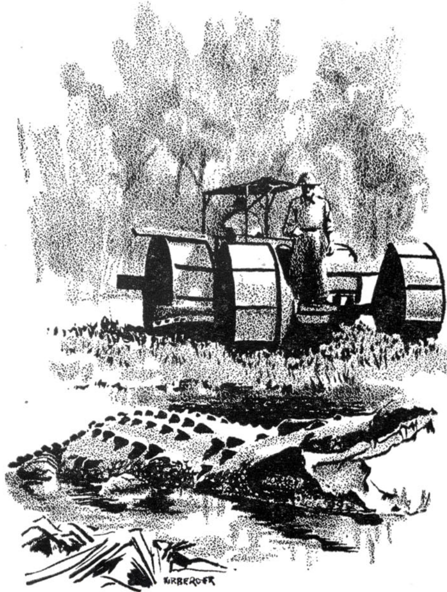
He peddled it himself, and it became a best seller. Yet there are only two complete copies extant today. The others must have been read to rags—taken abroad by young Englishmen on their travels, and lost all over the Continent. For Tom had invented the guidebook. And his guidebook was not only factual but funny.

His panhandling skill was put to work on the book. The first hundred pages of the *Crudities* are devoted to mock-heroic verses ribbing Tom, written by his friends of the Mermaid Club: Ben Jonson, Drayton, Donne, and many other "greats." Everybody who contributed probably bought copies; so did their admirers. It's still an axiom of the book business that if you want a man to recommend your book, you'd better get him to write the introduction. But Tom had only begun. He borrowed a trick from his dad—he took free copies of the book around to the King, the Queen, Prince Henry, and every courtier who could read and was a sucker for flattery. Along with the present Tom delivered a flowery speech. Even King James' tight-fisted Scots lords opened their sporrans.

They opened them again for Tom Coryat a little later. He printed a pamphlet containing all his flowery speeches; then he went back and sold the lords the pamphlet!

He didn't spend the money foolishly; it was saved to finance his next journey. The following year he hung up those two-thousand-mile shoes in Odcombe church and was off to India. His avowed purpose involved seeing unicorns, elephants and Emperors. But he may have had another. India was a land of rubies and spices and gold; little was known of it, but the Portuguese, who had trading posts, brought back unbelievable wealth, and now that the Americas had turned out to be mere wildernesses full of savages, the English were casting envious eyes on the Portuguese concession. Already Will Hawkins, of the famous Devon sea captain family, had visited the Great Mogul Jahangir and got drunk with him every night for two years, trying in vain to coax a trading treaty out of the wily Emperor. Coryat had friends among the merchant-adventurers who would have paid well for maps of the interior of India and advice about trading routes.

Tom Coryat's epic journey through Asia will be described in our next issue.



OIL IS WHERE YOU FIND IT. AND THE ADVENTURES OF MODERN OIL-PROSPECTORS IN SWAMP AND BACKWOODS AND DESERT ARE OFTEN SPECIAL.

By HARRY BOTSFORD

Illustrated by Fred Kirberger

Swamp Buggy and Seismograph

HELL may be a little hotter, but I prefer a dry heat to the depressive humidity of Louisiana swamp jungles in July. I was perched on the deck of a fantastic vehicle called a swamp buggy, in the middle of a weird sector composed of murky water, purple hyacinths and livid grass, with some of the most persistent gnats I have ever encountered.

Jorgeson, the man in charge of the exploration party, was trying to convince me that there wasn't any adventure, color or drama in the modern exploration for hidden oil reserves, secreted by Nature thousands of feet below the bottom of swamps, the dry wastes of deserts, or under mountains.

But I'm skeptical; I didn't believe a word he said. Around the high wide wheel of the swamp buggy, a water moccasin slid smoothly through the water, ugly, thick, unpredictable as to temper. The marsh sector is filled with moccasins. I watched a log lazily floating close to the inert swamp buggy. Jorgeson picked up a heavy iron nut and threw it at the log. Suddenly the log rolled and slithered

As the strange vehicle waddled through the grass and water, one passenger clung desperately to his precarious perch.

through the muddy water, and I realized that it was an alligator on some casual prowl.

A hundred feet away a dozen men worked in the swamp, stringing wire, in water above their waists, apparently indifferent to snakes or alligators. Three men in a slender pirogue slid smoothly through the water, and Jorgeson raised his voice and issued orders as to where they were to go, what they were to do.

He shifted his weight, stood up and watched a boat, powered by a spluttering outboard motor, chug through the tangled grass and water. It was piled high with cases of dynamite; and a bronzed young man, naked from the waist up, rested on the cases and casually smoked a pipe.

"The old dowsers, men like Abram James, who worked with the spirits, they were the ones who located wells back in the days when there was real color and drama," Jorgeson opined. "Just routine today—follow a pattern, put science to work, and the whole business is reduced to a mathematical formula that's usually correct. What we do is as prosaic as planting potatoes."

Trouble is, Jorgeson and his tribe have lost their sense of perspective. I happen to know that within the year, three of his men had been bitten by moccasins, and one had nearly died as a result. I also know that a lean Cajun, who should have known better, lost a leg from the savage bite of a swamp alligator. More than half of the crew, at various times, had been laid low by malaria, for the swamp is a fine breeding-ground for it. One had nearly died of heat exhaustion. A young engineer, wading in the swamp, had stepped into a deep hole and drowned. Several miles away, something had happened to an explosives boat, and three men had lost their lives in the explosion. In addition, one member of the crew became a mental case and had to be taken, tied hand and foot, to the hospital at Shreveport.

"This man James—now, there was a great guy," Jorgeson said dreamily.

I agreed. As I mopped my brow, fought for my breath in the humid heat, it was pleasant to think of the cool Pennsylvania hills and an October day eight decades back in oil-field history, a day when the hills were clothed in wanton scarlets and golds. Abram James, a plump and undistinguished visitor to the oil-fields near Pit Hole City, was driving back to Titusville with two companions. Just outside the little village of Pleasantville, the plump man grunted, reached out a gloved hand and abruptly stopped the horses. He said very distinctly: "Yes, Lalah, I'm coming!" He climbed from the carriage, galloped smartly across a field of buckwheat stubble, fell on his face in a fence corner. When his startled companions found him, he was in a trance, an index finger buried in the

ground up to the second joint. Revived, he gulped gratefully from a proffered flask of brandy. Then he took a penny from his purse, buried it in the hole where his finger had been.

He explained calmly that Lalah, his spirit guide, had told him that if he would drill for oil at the very spot to which she directed him, he would find oil. The friends scoffed, feared greatly for the sanity of James. But he was a persuasive individual. He borrowed money, drilled a well on the very spot where he had buried the penny. Lalah had told him oil would be found at a depth of 850 feet. Sure enough, the Harmonial Well started to produce oil at that precise depth. No gusher, the well produced about 150 barrels a day, enough to give James a daily income of $1000. He carefully preserved the penny, drilled other successful wells under the loving guidance of Lalah, became wealthy. Then he lost the penny, and Lalah deserted him. He died a poor man and spent his last days brooding over the obvious fickleness of female spirits. . . .

For many decades oil wells were located by hit-or-miss methods, often under the direction of dowsers. Some of them used hazel twigs; others used metallic Y-shaped gadgets or other devices, and most of them modestly admitted that they were infallible. Some of them, it is true, did locate good oil wells, but the oil producers became skeptical, hungered for a greater element of safety before they put a lot of blue chips on the line and drilled at some designated point. Eventually, science came to their rescue, put certainty into the process.

"Those must have been the exciting days," Jorgeson ventured, just as the engine of the swamp buggy roared into action. Gears clashed, and the strange vehicle waddled and splashed erratically through the grass and water. At least one passenger clung desperately to his precarious perch. Jorgeson, however, rode the pitching swamp buggy with the skill of an expert surfboard rider.

THE engine stopped with a tired gasp. We jumped from the buggy to an instrument-filled shed anchored on steel pontoons. Electronic instruments filled three walls of the shed, the gauge hands flickered delicately; lights snapped on and off. Jorgeson kept up a steady stream of technical talk with the geophysicists and the crew. In between times he explained to me what was being done. He made it sound very simple. A quarter of a mile from the shed, another crew had drilled a hole one hundred feet beneath the bottom of the swamp. Into that had been rammed 150 pounds of dynamite from the explosives boat. Geophones, watertight and sensitive, had been pressed into the swamp bed at 120-foot patterned intervals, wired to the shed.

Jorgeson picked up the telephone, waited a second. *"Shoot!"* he said quietly. A quarter of a mile away there was a black vomit from the drilled hole, the sound of a muffled explosion. In the sweltering shed, the electronic instruments clicked and hummed and started to work. The geophones picked up the sound waves as they reached downward a distance of three miles, and recorded certain things on a sixty-inch strip of photographic paper. When these strips are developed, they are hatched with curious lines that are meaningless to the layman. But the seismograph experts and the geologists read these findings as clearly as you read this line of print.

The scientific trick is to interpret the time it takes the waves to bounce off the various strata at different depths; this informs the geophysicists about the character of the sub-surface formation, revealing to them where a salt dome lurks, where Nature has a vast hidden store of liquid black gold trapped. If such indications appear, the exploration crew returns, does a precision job that may confirm the original findings. Then, into the swamp moves a parade of heavy barges loaded with massive and powerful oil-drilling machinery and tools. Presently a steel derrick, anchored on barges, rears high above the waving grass of the swamp, and the roar of rotary drilling shatters the quiet air. Eventually, the spinning drill taps the pay sand, precious oil gushes forth; then the well is brought under control and the oil piped to the waiting refineries at Lake Charles.

Jorgeson insists there is no romance, color or drama attached to the project. Jorgeson has lost his sense of perspective. To him, it is all routine. He's an MIT engineer, a sane and practical man, acclimated against heat, hazards, malaria, snake-bite and other occupational hazards. The Jorgesons are legion in this eternal, almost hectic search for oil. You will find them busily engaged in the inhospitable stretches of West Texas, fighting heat, lack of water, diamond-back rattlesnakes, tarantulas, cactus spines and wild-eyed cattle. They can be found in the bleak hills of Wyoming, or roosting high on a Colorado mountain, living dangerously, but concentrating on the job at hand. There are many crews on a fleet of power boats, doing offshore exploration work, and some of them work in deep water. They get results, too!

Suppose they find indications of an oil pool thousands of feet below deep water? Can an oil-well be drilled under such circumstances? Easily, and in different ways. Caddo Lake, in Louisiana, is dotted with hundreds of oil wells, the drilling having been conducted in different ways, always from barges or piles. But suppose the location is a salt-water one, subjected to waves and tides? This is a situation that calls for some crooked work—directional drilling, to be precise. The oil-drilling derrick is located on the solid substance of the shore; the drill starts on its probe; but after a certain depth is reached, the drill is accurately deflected to a gradual slant. Eventually it ends up right where the seismograph charts said it should, and it taps the hidden pool of oil.

GREAT people, these oil men! A physical difficulty is something to be conquered. Yet there is no excitement or drama to their work, Jorgeson tells me. But in Wink, Texas, I saw the cars of three members of an exploration crew; the cars were completely denuded of paint and varnish, and the windshields looked like ground glass. Caught in a blistering sandstorm, they were marooned for two foodless, drinkless days, while the blizzard blew itself out. The sand blast made the cars look positively naked. . . . Up in Wyoming, an exploration crew was caught in a blizzard and sub-zero temperatures. They holed up, rigged up a crude oil stove, kept fairly comfortable and resumed work when the storm was over.

An offshore crew on the Gulf Coast had the engine die on them in the middle of a hurricane from which they were retreating. The boat capsized, and two of the men failed to reach shore and safety. The brakes on a truck loaded with dynamite failed to function coming down a California mountain, and the driver jumped as the truck lurched over a cliff. The truck was destroyed, but the dynamite didn't explode. A *loco* steer rammed a horn through the thigh of a young engineer in West Texas, and he says he now knows how a matador feels when he has experienced a *cornada*.

All this happens because you require gasoline and motor oil for your car. In a way, you finance this ceaseless and adventuresome search for new and rich oil reserves. Jorgeson says there is no romance to the exploration. Several thousand miles separate me from Jorgeson. He is a husky individual, and he has a robust temper and is given to physical violence. I know; I've seen him in action. But several thousand miles is a considerable safety factor.

That's why I feel safe in saying that Jorgeson is—mistaken.

A STORY OF THE CHRISTMAS OF 1944 AND THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE; OF A TOUGH SERGEANT WHO DIDN'T BELIEVE IN MUCH OF ANYTHING; AND OF THE KID, WHO HAD FAITH.

Christmas

CONNOR could feel the wetness seeping into his clothes as the snow beneath him melted from his body heat. He shifted his weight and cursed as a lump of snow worked beneath his glove to sting skin that was rubbed raw by an ice-rimmed sleeve. Casting a final searching look around the snowy landscape, he turned to the huddled group in the hollow below. Bent double to take advantage of whatever protection the hollow afforded against the icy wind, they looked like four bundles of old clothes.

"Martin!" he called softly. "Take over for a while."

One of the figures detached itself from the group and clawed its way up the slope. Martin dropped beside Connor.

"Jeez!" he said as the wind hit his face. "I thought it was cold down there. This is murder!"

Connor pointed a glove to his front. "See that tree out there?"

"Where? Oh, you mean the one that's sticking out by itself? Yeah, I see it."

Connor cocked an eye up to the graying sky.

"It's getting dark pretty fast. When it gets so dark that you can't see the tree at all, it'll be time for us to move out. Now keep your eyes open."

"Sure, Sarge. Leave it to me."

Connor half slid, half scrambled to the bottom of the hollow. The men shifted to make room for him in the huddle.

"How long before we move, Sarge?" said Owen, rubbing gloved hands over black-stubbled cheeks to keep circulation going.

"'Bout a half hour," said Connor. "It'll be dark enough by then."

Black, the Kentuckian, tucked his hands under his armpits and rocked back and forth on his toes.

"It better be soon," he said. "If I stay here much longer, I'll freeze into a king-sized ice cube. At least I feel warmer when I'm moving—even if I ain't."

"You might feel too warm before the night's over," grunted Connor as he bent over to shield his match from the wind while lighting a cigarette. "How you doing, Kid?"

The Kid's face lacked the dark stubble of his companions' faces. It was round, almost childlike, with wide eyes that held a perpetual wonderment at the grim business in which he found himself. His helmet sat low on his head, and his ears were buried in the folds of the long woolen scarf wound around his neck and head. His nose was running.

"I'm O.K., Sarge. Just a little cold."

Connor hunched his shoulders higher as a sudden blast blew powdered snow down from the hollow's rim.

"I'd better go through this once more to make sure you all got it."

HE drew a long line in the snow with the edge of his glove, and poked a small dot a short distance from it.

"That line is H Company's position," he said, "and the dot is the outpost we passed a little while ago. The main road from Liège runs along our left there."

He indicated the road by another line drawn at right angles to the first. He continued it on in a straight line for a few inches, then made an abrupt turn to the right.

"The road runs out straight for about a mile and a half," he went on, "then turns right around Hill 820 just before it hits the river. That hill is where we're going tonight. It overlooks the road, and might be where the Krauts have the .88 position that has been knocking out our tanks."

"I got that when we were briefed before, Sarge," said Owen, "but I still ain't sure what we're gonna do once

Star

by JOHN L. NORMOYLE

Illustrated by BRENDAN LYNCH

we get there. We can't knock out no .88 battery with rifles."

"We're not going to knock out anything," said Connor. "All we've got to do is spot that battery for our artillery. We'll start out at about 18:30 and we should be on the hill by twenty hours. One of our tanks is going to run up the road at that time and slam a few shells into the hill. The .88's ought to throw a few back at the tank, and we'll be close enough to spot their position and radio it back to the artillery. That walkie-talkie working all right, Black?"

"Sure, Sarge. I was talking to Frangetti before you came down. He was beefing about the cold. I told him he ought to be glad he's in a nice warm foxhole instead of out here where we are. He got mad."

"Well, keep that thing off the air until we get ready to send that .88 position," said Connor. "I don't want static noises tipping the Krauts off as to where we are. Sounds carry far in this cold air."

"Speaking of Krauts, Sarge," said Owen. "What will they be doing while we're tramping all over their hill trying to find their .88's?"

"They'll be in their holes trying to keep warm, I hope," answered Connor. "If they ain't—well, you're not carrying that rifle on a rabbit-hunt."

"All the same," said Black, "I know of a million things I'd rather be doing on Christmas Eve, than this."

"Huh! Is this Christmas Eve?" said Connor, startled.

"Sure," said Black. "If the Krauts hadn't started this break-through when they did, we'd be back in France hanging up our socks for Sandy Claus."

"Aw, how can you tell what day it is?" scoffed Owen. "We've been out in this damned snow so long that nobody knows for sure just what day it is."

"The Kid told me it was Christmas Eve. He had a year of college before the Army got him. He's smart about things like that. Ask him."

"Hey, Kid," called Connor, "is that right?"

The Kid had wandered a few steps away from the group and was standing staring up at the almost dark sky. Connor had to call again before the Kid realized he had been spoken to.

"Is what right?" he asked.

"That it's Christmas Eve," said Connor.

"Oh, yes. It's Christmas Eve, all right," said the Kid. "I joined the company as a replacement on the 19th, and that was just a week ago."

"What were you looking for when I called you, just now?" asked Connor curiously.

The Kid looked sheepish.

"Just trying out something. When I was at the last reppo-deppo, an old Belgian told me of a local superstition. He said that on Christmas Eve, the Star of Bethlehem shines clear and bright over the hills of Belgium, and that it can be seen by those who are

pure in heart and who sincerely believe in its message of peace on earth and good will to men. I was just kind of trying it out."

"Do you really believe in the message of the Christmas Star, Kid?" asked Connor quietly.

"Yes, I really do," began the Kid, "I've always—"

Owen let out a hoarse whoop.

"Haw! Let me look for that star. There ain't anybody as pure of heart as I am. I'm so pure I can rise up and float around this hollow. Look at me, Kid. I'm seeing stars!"

The Kid flushed, and his jaw set stubbornly. He balled his fists and lunged at Owen.

"Make fun of me, will you?" he cried. "I'll float you around the hollow!"

"Hold it!"

Sergeant Connor's snapped command stopped both men.

"Lay off the Kid, Owen," he rasped. "If you guys want to fight, save it for the hill. You'll probably need it."

He turned to the Kid.

"Now, look, Kid," he said, not unkindly, "we haven't time for stargazing right now. We've got a big job to do, so keep your mind on it—"

"Hey, Sarge!"

It was Martin, calling from above.

"It's dark enough now," he said. "I haven't seen that tree for five minutes. Jeez, it's cold!"

"O.K." snapped Connor. "Grab your weapons and let's get moving. Owen, you have the compass. Move out on point. Keep checking that compass so we don't get off the track. Martin will take the right flank. Kid, you take the left. Black, stay close to me with that radio. There's no moon out, but you all look black against the snow, so we can spread out and still keep contact. Close in when we pass through woods and spread out in the open. Now move out!"

THE wind snapped briskly against Connor, penetrating his clothing in sharp little thrusts. He breathed in quick shudders through tight-clamped lips that chapped and burned. He could barely make out the rest of the squad as dark blotches against the snow.

His whole being seemed concentrated in his ears: listening, listening for the shell that might come in, for the rifle-bark that would herald their discovery, for the burp-gun burst that would rip them through.

His ears caught a faint whistle that grew in intensity, and he threw himself to the snow in quick reflex action. Out of the corners of his eyes, he saw the others go down fast.

The shell roared in and burst to the left. He lay there until he was sure no others would follow it; that it was a casual shell, and not the start of a barrage directed at the squad.

He rose stiffly and motioned the others up. Ahead, Owen took a few steps forward, looked behind him to the left, then stopped, pointing to the direction of the shellburst.

Connor ran swiftly toward the heap on the left.

"Kid! Are you all right?" he gasped as he dropped to one knee.

The Kid dropped his upward gaze.

"Oh, sure, Sarge. I'm all right."

"Then, what are you laying here for?"

"Oh, gosh, Sarge! Just before the shell hit, I thought I saw the Christmas Star. I'm sure it was the Star. I was trying to see it again, but I can't."

Connor cursed swiftly and bitterly.

"Listen, Kid," he growled, "If you foul up this patrol with your stargazing, I swear I'll shoot you myself! This is no game we're playing. We've got a job to do tonight that involves the lives of plenty of guys, and we may have to kill a few people to get it done. Keep your Star of Bethlehem and Peace on Earth and all the rest of that till after this war is over. Right now, get on the ball and stay on it! We're getting close to the hill, so look sharp!"

He trotted back to position and waved Owen forward. The hill loomed ahead behind a patch of woods. He pulled the group in as they slid among the first trees.

Connor paused abruptly and motioned the others to halt. The night air brought a distant sputtering to his ears. He listened intently.

"Hell!" he called softly to the patrol. "That's the tank. And we're not even on the hill yet. Move up fast!"

They moved forward at a slow trot. The trees thickened, then thinned again. They broke into a clearing and saw the hill sloping up above them.

Owen had halted at the edge of the clearing and the others closed in.

Connor spoke low, in swift commands.

"We can't go farther without being spotted. Owen, you and Martin move out to that point to the left. If anything comes, start shooting. Black, take the radio back deeper in the woods behind me. Get ready to send a message. Kid, you go out to the right. I'll stay in the center. Everyone watch the top of the hill. Our tank ought to let loose any minute now. See if you can spot the return fire."

Connor crouched behind a tree as the men left him. He peered up the slope and listened intently. The sound of the tank was closer now. Behind him a twig snapped, and he whirled, tommy-gun at the ready, but Black's whisper reassured him.

He sucked in his breath sharply as he faced back up the slope. A dozen dark figures were moving out of the far trees and down the long clearing. They were headed toward the point of woods that held Owen and Martin.

CONNOR had taken a dozen steps toward the point when he heard the cough of the tank's gun. A second later the shell howled overhead and burst high on the hill.

At almost the same instant, Owen and Martin opened up on the approaching patrol. Their rifles cracked echoes to the shellburst.

The German patrol fanned out rapidly. A machine gun ripped out its staccato bursts to cover a group that swung out to attack the point from its flank.

Connor glanced up at the top of the hill. It was silent and dark. No fire had replied to the tank.

The flanking party was closing in on the point. Owen and Martin were fighting off a frontal assault, and evidently didn't see the flankers.

Connor swept the flanking party with short, choppy bursts of the tommy-gun. Bullets ricocheted off trees and snarled past him as the burp-gun directed fire at him in reply.

Suddenly the hilltop shook as heavy guns opened up in belated answer to the tank's pop-gun.

"Good Lord!" Connor muttered. "Those aren't .88's. They're 155's, and rockets."

Hurling a burst to slow the oncoming Germans, Connor ducked back into the trees.

"Black!" he shouted. "Where the hell are you?"

OFF to the right, the Kid's rifle spoke, to be answered by the whang of Kraut rifles and the whoof of grenades.

"Black!" called Connor frantically.

He stumbled and dropped to his knees on something soft.

"Black!" Connor cried. "Get this out fast. Tell them—"

The warmth of the blood told him. No man could have spilled out that great puddle of blood and still be alive. Connor felt for the radio. He held it to his ear, but it was dead. Black had fallen on it and broken the antenna off close to its base.

"Connor! Sergeant Connor!"

It was the Kid, running fast and panting. Connor reached out and caught him, knocking down his rifle muzzle as it swept up.

"It's me, Kid," he said quietly.

"Couldn't hold them back," panted the Kid. "Too many."

"Quiet!" Connor snapped. He listened. The firing had stopped on

the left, but he heard bodies crashing through the woods, and a sharp command in guttural German.

"They got Owen and Martin," he breathed. "Come on."

"But Black—"

"He's dead. Let's go! Come on, I tell you!"

Connor pulled the Kid to the left rear, and they ran doubled over. They ducked from tree to tree until the sounds of pursuit had stopped. Connor halted.

"Listen, Kid," he whispered. "I couldn't get the information through. The radio broke. That message has got to get back—"

Swiftly he told the Kid the number of guns he had estimated, and their various sizes.

"Now remember that," he finished. "If I get hit, don't stop. Get that information back. Let's go!"

"Which way we going?" asked the Kid.

"Why—this way."

Connor took a few steps, then halted in indecision.

"Jeez, I'm all confused," he said. "We ducked around so much during that fight, I lost my sense of direction. Owen had the compass. I can't even see the hill any more to guide on."

"Connor! Look out!"

Connor was pushed to the ground as something exploded almost at his feet. He felt a blow on his shoulder as he rolled. Stopping himself on an elbow, he emptied the tommy's magazine at the two figures rushing him. The Krauts crumpled.

He kept his head low as he reloaded. There were no more shots. He climbed to his feet and hurried over to where the Kid lay moaning.

"Where'd they get you, Kid?"

He dropped to his knees and tried to raise the Kid, who was holding his head in his hands.

"My face hurts, Connor. My face hurts bad."

"Come on, get up."

Connor hauled the Kid to his feet, disregarding the pain in his own injured shoulder. Then he slid an arm about the younger man.

"Can you walk, Kid?" he asked anxiously.

"I—I guess so. It's just my face. It hurts, Connor."

"We'll get it fixed up, but we've got to get out of here before the rest of the Krauts come."

"But you don't know which way to go."

"We'll figure that out later. Right now, let's get moving."

He half-carried, half-dragged the Kid through the next bit of woods and out into another clearing. Suddenly, the Kid straightened.

"The Star, Connor! I see the Star!"

"Never mind the star, Kid. Come on!"

"But I see the Star, Connor. Now we know which way to go!"

Connor halted. The Kid tore himself free and was gazing upward. His face was a blur in the darkness.

"What do you mean, Kid?"

"The Star was to my back when I saw it before on our way out. If we keep it to our front now, we know which way to get back. All we have to do is follow the Star, Connor. Follow the Star!"

Connor peered up but saw nothing but the blackness.

"I can't see any star, Kid."

"But I can. We go back this way."

The Kid tried to move forward, but staggered. Connor caught him before he fell.

"Easy, Kid," he said. "I'll hold you up. You just tell me which way to go."

"Then you believe in my Star, Connor?"

"I dunno, but I might as well try it. I've got nothing else to go by."

"And that's how it was, sir," concluded Connor. "The Kid brought us right back to the company by guiding on his star."

The Captain finished his written report based on Connor's information and gave it to a messenger.

"You did a fine job, Sergeant," he said. "We had figured that a few .88's on that hill wouldn't stop the armored assault we had planned, but those big guns would have cut us to ribbons. You saved lives by your work tonight. I'll see that you and the boy are recommended for this. How is he?"

"I left him with the medics and hurried up here to report, sir," said Connor. "If you're through with me, I'll go check on him."

Connor started to rise. The door of the old farmhouse flew open, and Roddy, the company medic, entered in a flurry of snow.

"Add another one to the casualty report, Captain," he said. "The Kid died five minutes ago."

Connor sat back down limply. He lit a cigarette, then stared at it as if he had never seen one before.

"And after he guided Connor all the way back," said the Captain, shaking his head sadly.

Roddy looked puzzled.

"You mean Connor guided *him* back, don't you, sir?"

"No," replied the Captain, and quickly went over the story of the Kid and the Star.

"But that's impossible," stated Roddy emphatically. "The Kid's face was completely mangled by the grenade. He was blind from the moment it exploded!"

OUR OLD SAILOR HAS A HARSH NAME FOR THE SEA, BUT HE LOVES HER, AND THINKS THE LAND MORE DANGEROUS.

by BILL ADAMS

THIS thing of living ashore is too cussed dangerous. I don't, never did, like it. I can fell a straight tree just where I want it, but a few days ago I was felling a small crooked pine. It grew from the edge of the steep bank of a dry creek. (That "dry creek" always amused me. How can there be a creek if it's dry? Well, there are lots of 'em in the West.) The tree must have slid when a sapling, for it started in a curve; and after some feet was straight. When it fell, the end of a dead limb struck me bang-oh on my port sidelight, and I fell back on my bony stern. I think I can take about as much pain as the next man, even if I am stepping on seventy: but I don't want any more of that. Came mighty near losing my port sidelight: but now she's all-sir-Garney-oh.

When I look back, it seems amazing, what luck I've had. I've been scared stiff a number of times, ashore and afloat. The worst times were ashore. You can have the shore. I don't cuss much, or I'd say the damned shore. Once on a pitch-black night south of old Stiff, when the old barky was hove to under lower topsails, I was to leeward of her main hatch when she took a heavy roll down to leeward. The sea came flooding in over the bulwark, and in the inky darkness I felt the round wooden teak beading on top of her bulwark passing under me. I was overboard!

I had on heavy winter wool underwear, a heavy wool shirt, a heavy hand-knit fisherman's Guernsey, a wool jacket and trousers, oilskin jacket and trousers, and heavy leather sea-boots to my knees. How long could a fellow keep afloat in an icy sea with all that on him, water-soaked, of course? I am by no means the only sailor who had that experience, and also the luck to come back aboard the next time she dipped her bulwark under. Most of us, however, did not come back. Man, those were somewhat scary seconds! Which is a very great understatement indeed. I had also a long wool muffler wrapped several times round my throat, its ends tucked down under my Guernsey. Yes, siree, the deck sure was a sweet and lovely place when I felt it back where it belonged—beneath me. . . .

Once I was on the starboard fore lower topsail yardarm, away out over

Old Woman Wicked Sea

the sea; the yards square, the wind from aft. We were unbending the lower topsail, sending it down to be replaced with a lighter sail suitable for fine-weather latitudes. Below me on the starboard fore yardarm was a Dane named Pedersen; a good man, a genuine able seaman. He was casting off the clew of the sail; a heavy galvanized iron ring to which the topsail sheet (chain) was made fast with clip hooks. I sang out to him: "Hold onto the clew till I have the head earring let go." The head earring was also galvanized iron. I knew that, the wind being dead aft, if he let go the clew before I let go the head, the sail, a heavy storm sail, would be likely to balloon away up, over me, and come down bang-oh on me—the clew iron probably on my head.

Pedersen apparently did not hear me. He let go the clew iron. Up went the sail, ballooning, and down on my head, bang-oh, came the clew iron. Well, a sailor was trained to have some presence of mind, to keep a level head in a tight place. I knew I was going out. That iron was, actually, somewhat harder than my head, strange though it may seem. In two ticks I had rushed along the lower topsail footrope, and just as I went out, I put my legs and arms through the ratlines of the topmast rigging. It would not have saved me had not an able seaman named Davis seen me, and instantly grabbed hold of me. He and another hand got me into a running bowline, in which I was lowered to the deck, Davis sitting in the lower bight of the bowline to hold me in the upper bight. I came to just as we reached the deck, and feeling pretty good, returned to my job. A trifle such as a crack on the head with a heavy iron ring did not keep a respectable seafaring man from his job.

Up went the sail, and down on my head came the clew iron.

In the morning watch one day, when we were getting down toward old Cape Stiff, we were hoisting the fore royal, after a blowy night. I was pulling forehand on the halliards—straight down, with another apprentice. The rest of the watch were tailed out, pulling on the rope after it passed through a snatch-block hooked to a ringbolt on the deck. Usually we walked the royals up, to a walk-away chantey; but that morning we were all pretty well done in from a lot of hilly-hauling. Suddenly the tie parted. (The tie is a chain which goes up from the upper block of the halliards, through the mast, and makes fast to the bunt—middle—of the yard.) The upper block, with the weight of the watch on it, came down bang-oh on top of my head. I went out. I sometimes today smile, remembering of what I thought as I went out. It was not of God, my many sins, nor of hell. I well remember thinking: "I wonder what Ede will say when she hears." Ede was a very trim little clipper-built brunette of whom I was a bit fond. When I came to, they were carrying me aft to the saloon, with blood on my mug. I said, "Leave me alone; I'm all right," and struggled free, and managed to walk the rest of the way. I remember that Will Clegg, the second mate, said in a low and cheery voice:

"Ain't he the independent young so-and-so."

The Old Woman, the skipper's wife, dressed my wound; the scar is still there. I went below with the rest of

the watch as soon as she was through. When I turned out at twelve-thirty I was dizzy, very dizzy; so instead of going on deck when the bell struck, with the other apprentices, stayed in the halfdeck. I did not stay there long. Clegg looked in and said: "Hey, you independent young devil, get up to the poop and keep your eyes open." The Old Man had been up all night, so was taking a snooze in the chartroom. Clegg had things to see to on deck. So it was up to me to keep a lookout, in case of some other ship showing up, or a dirty look coming into the gloomy sky. I thought Clegg a bit hard on me. My head was swathed in bloody bandages. I was dizzy but kept a bright lookout for four hours. I reckon his motto was, "Catch 'em young, and treat 'em rough." I think it a mighty fine motto.

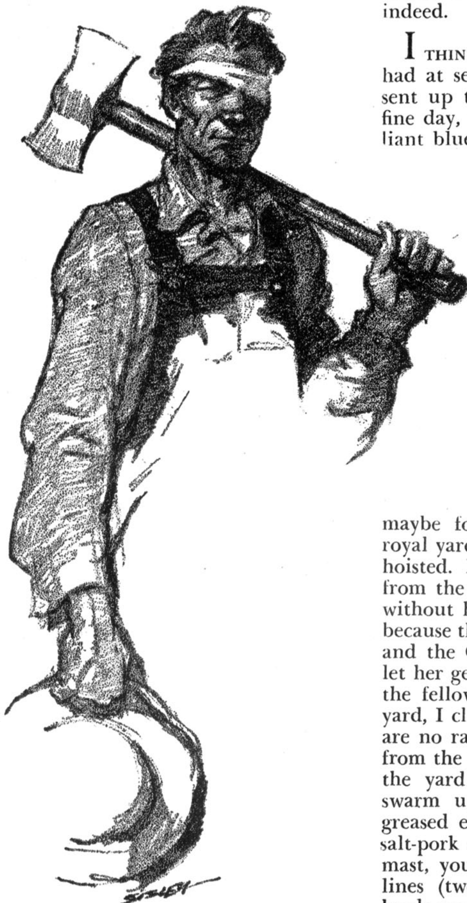
But the worst part of that little incident came later, when, just after dark, with a mournful moon rising from a moaning sea, the order came: *"Loose the crojick!"* The crojick is a very big heavy sail, the lowest on the mizzen mast; maybe sixty feet up over the sea. Its yardarms, with the yard square, are far from the ship's side and above the sea. The yards were square, and the old barky was rolling hard. I suppose I need not have gone aloft to loose the crojick. I don't know. I do know that I was not going to have Clegg step on me for not doing so. Up I went, my eyes swimming, and stepped from the rolling rigging onto the swaying footrope, upon which was a thin sheathing of ice. Out along the footrope I walked, with the ever-waiting old wicked woman sea sixty feet below me; and somehow I managed to loose the gaskets, and also to make 'em all up just as neat as neat could be. A gasket is a light line, which one passes round a sail and its yard; and secures firmly when furling sail. When one looses the sail they are, aboard a smart ship, made up exceedingly neatly into snug little coils and left fast to the jackstay—which is an iron rod on top of the yard, upon which the sail is set. I was glad to get down on deck again; which is a very great understatement indeed.

I THINK the most scary time ever I had at sea, though, was when I was sent up to loose the foreroyal, on a fine day, with a bright sun in a brilliant blue sky; the old barky making maybe four or five an hour. The royal yard is about 170 feet up, when hoisted. I loosed the sail, and stepped from the yard into the royal rigging without having made up the gaskets, because there was a ship on our beam, and the Old Man did not intend to let her get away from us. As soon as the fellows on deck had hoisted the yard, I climbed back to do it. There are no ratlines upon which to tread, from the head of the royal rigging to the yard when it is hoisted. You swarm up the mast, which is well greased each Saturday morning with salt-pork slush; your thighs round the mast, your hands on the royal clewlines (two light ropes each of which hauls up one corner, the clew, of the sail when it is to be furled). I was halfway out, along the starboard side of the yard when the tie parted. Down came the yard, with a terrific jolt, to rest at the head of the royal rigging. *And the starboard side of the yard snapped in the middle!*

I was on the footrope just out beyond where it snapped. I don't know just how I contrived to hang on, but I did. The yard had dropped some fifteen feet. I managed to get up onto the inner part of the yard, and was about to start down to the deck, very shaky, when I realized that the entire yard would have to be sent down for repair, and that it was up to me to stay aloft and get busy with the necessary preparations. And all the sympathy I got from my good pal Will Clegg was: "If you wasn't so blasted heavy, that damn' yard probably wouldn't have carried away!" In later days my chum was lost overboard from that same royal yard, and on a night yet later a young ordinary seaman fell from it to the sea when he was up there furling the sail. The boat was out looking for him, for three long dark hours; a grand swimmer who was quite possibly just beyond hearing when those in the boat shouted, on and on and on. That royal yard was hoodooed: but somehow I escaped.

As for being scared when everyone else aboard was scared, I had my share of that too. I saw thick fog lift once, to show the black fanged rocks of North Cornwall dead ahead, and not a half mile distant. We saved the old barky, by the thickness of her paint just about. On a later voyage dense fog lifted again, to show St. Anthony's point close under her bow. St. Anthony's is at the east entrance to Falmouth harbor, in South Cornwall. Upon an ink-black night when she was going like a stag with the hounds at heel, under topgallant sails a dim light showed in the darkness dead ahead. The Old Man said it was a steamer's masthead light, though steamers did not, save very rarely, round old Stiff. I ran like—well, I *ran*—to the forecastle head, because for some unknown reason I ever had a sort of sea sense which told me things. And at the moment I yelled that it was a shore light, the Old Man realized what it was. Again we saved her by a tick—so close in, that though it was pitchy dark, we saw quite plainly the grim whiteness of the savage breakers of cold Staten Land.

A few weeks later, after we had been trying to battle westward round old Stiff, she had the Hermite Rocks under her lee one inky roaring night. And not a thing that we could do to save her! I'm no churchman, but somehow it seems sometimes, when I



Illustrated by Raymond Sisley

I don't want any more of that. Came mighty near losing my port sidelight.

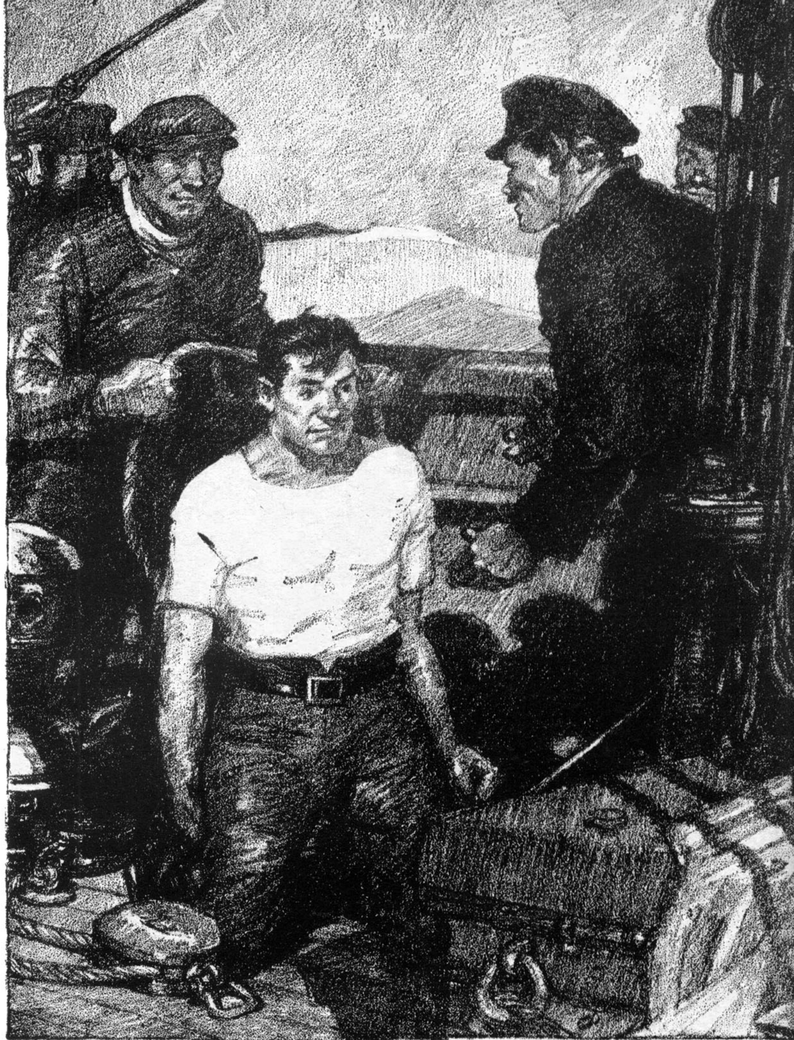
look back to that wild night, that God it must have been Who turned the trick and brought a sudden wind shift in the nick of time, and saw her safely through. Not long after that she had the barren coast of Chiloé under her lee for several days; and was being gradually driven down upon it. Hour after hour we watched that dismal shore draw closer—certain that when dark fell down upon the dreary sea, we should not see the dawn again. We did, though. Another miracle!

But you may have the land! My worst scares were upon your solid earth.

They used to say the first thing a sailor did when he came ashore was to go get a horse, and ride it. I was raised on a horse. A horse killed my old man, my father. My grandfather lost his life, due to a horse. Not long after I left old woman wicked sea, I worked on a ranch; drove a team all day from dawn till dusk. I had a big brown mare called Babe, and one a trifle bigger, Nell. Both were good workers. Each night at quitting-time, after unhitching them from the cultivator, I'd jump upon the back of one and ride her to the barn a quarter-mile or so away.

I had a wife, and a little kid of eighteen months. We lived in a dinky cabin, near to the corner of the road, on a small dusty lane. I passed that corner nightly, turning left. Our cabin was down to the right, a hundred yards or so. We had just sixteen dollars in the world, and owed the doctor thirty. A dollar and a half a day, from dawn to dusk; and no work on rainy days. Once every week the grocer's boy came by, and left us what we could afford. Too poor by far to think of taking any newspaper, we got all the world's news from Dave, the grocer's boy. When I came home from work upon the evening of his delivery day I always asked, first thing, before I kissed my wife or kid: "What did Dave say?" We heard of the Frisco earthquake five days after it happened.

It was on an evening of Dave's day that I turned Babe loose, and sprang upon Nell's broad back. Nell always had a somewhat peculiar eye. That day something had wakened the evil in her. I often had ridden her before, and loped to the barn. She always went home at the lope. There seemed to be no tiring her, whether with plow or cultivator at her big heels all day. That night, before my right leg was well over her, she bucked sky-high. I fell, down on my back on the hard road. Lucky for me, I was raised a sailor, and had quick instinct. That big brown she-devil deliberately turned, and lashed out with her iron-shod heels. In just the nick of time I had my head pressed just as close to the hard road as it would go. Her iron heels brushed my hair three times, at that! Three times she lashed her heels, while I lay prone and yelled at her; then off she went, at the run. I rose a trifle shaky—which is another heavy understatement; thinking of how my wife and kid, who often came to meet me walking homeward, might have found what poor brains I possessed spattered about the road. Sure, you can have the shore!



The upper block came down bang-oh, on my head. I went out.

I had a rattler strike me once; but he hooked his fangs in my denims, which bagged down above high boots. Once an old Jersey bull got me down; but sailor-raised, I just did manage to roll under the lower rail of the solid corral fence, and get away with nothing but a bruise or two. My dad was eighty-seven, when at the end of a long ride, upon a stormy day of heavy rain and gusty wind, his horse reared straight up because a dog sprang at its nose. You can't blame my old man for falling off. He was lighting his pipe and riding one of those dinky little English saddles, in which a rider holds mostly by his thighs. You can't blame my granddad for getting so mad with a groom for beating his favorite horse that his temper killed him. At ninety-six, one should have learned to keep one's temper, I suppose. Maybe I'd better go buy me a hoss, and see what a hoss can do to *me?* Would my luck, that which was mine upon the royal yard, and when I was overboard, and so forth, still hold? I bet it would! But then, I'm not quite seventy, and it's too soon to buy a hoss; and hay is round fifty a ton too!

A NAVAL OFFICER FOUND HIMSELF ASSIGNED TO A WEIRD AND HAZARDOUS JOB ON OKINAWA—KEEPING THE NATIVES AWAY FROM THE SOLDIERS, AND THE SOLDIERS AWAY FROM THE NATIVES.

Military

by AMASA B. WINDHAM

WE chased goats; we amputated arms and legs; we delivered babies; we fed thousands of people without drawing on Army rations; we created shelter out of nothing; we cleaned out villages and cleared roads; we harvested crops; we coaxed frightened and hysterical old crones out of caves; we brought sanitation into the lives of a people who hadn't practiced it in seven thousand years—and all the time we fought off snipers and infiltrators, dodged whining shells and ducked bombs.

Now it can be told. We had only one order. It was: "Keep those natives out of the way of the Army, even if you get killed doing it!"

And in the first four months of the American occupation of Okinawa, that was the underlying idea of military government. This certainly wasn't what they had trained us for at the Navy's military government school at Columbia University. There, we learned mainly the fine points of international law, the rules of land warfare, the study of anthropology, the geography and climate of the South Seas and a smattering of the Japanese language. The latter was useful on Okinawa—but for the most part, it was a case of roll up your sleeves and find some kind of answer to the thousand and one problems we had had no idea would face us.

In the first place, military government teams were not supposed to be up in the front lines. We had seventeen enlisted men and seven officers in our command. Seven-eighths of them, including the Old Man, had never shot a carbine, dug a foxhole or pitched a pup tent in their lives. We soon learned how.

Ours was a "combat unit"—a team attached to the 24th Army Corps; and it was our job to go down in the lines and dig the natives out of caves, round them up, give them first aid and send them back to other units which established and conducted civilian camps.

Not only did we keep the civilians out of the way of the Army, we had to keep the Army away from the civilians. The American soldier is the most rabid souvenir-hunter in the world, and we had to put all of the towns and villages "off limits" in order to protect the natives.

We went ashore on L-Day plus one and took over at Chatan, where the 96th Division ran into its first heavy opposition. Okinawans were streaming in by the hundreds—bombed, shot up, crippled, hungry, ragged and scared to death. Before we could throw up a wire stockade, there were 1,500 of these natives, mostly women and children—whimpering, begging, crying, badly in need of medical attention and shivering with cold. (It gets pretty cold on Okinawa in April).

Before nightfall, there were 3,300 natives in our hurriedly-built stockade and to add to their misery a cold,

Government Team

Illustrated by JOHN McDERMOTT

drizzling rain started to fall. We had to get them under shelter somehow and we had to get them something to eat.

By this time, we were simply ignoring the snipers, the air raids and the shells which plopped all around us. We pitched in and worked right on through the night—and the next night and the next. We didn't bathe, shave or even take off our clothes for four days. But we fed the natives, sheltered them and kept them out of the Army's way. How we succeeded in doing it, is still a mystery.

Our engineer, Navy Lieut. A. G. Finnie, of New York City, salvaged wood from ruined buildings—doors, panels, flooring, roofing, mats, broken furniture—and we built the best "Hooverville" you ever saw. Our supply officer, Navy Lieut. Merle V. Baker of Detroit, Mich., somehow and somewhere dug up five tons of rice, ten cases of dried fish and 100 bolts of cloth. Our doctors, Army Maj. H. Grant Taylor of Atlanta, Ga., and Navy Lieut. W. E. Mosher of Syracuse, N. Y., treated 102 patients, delivered two babies and buried 10 bodies in the first 24 hours.

The executive and intelligence officer of the unit, Lieut. Comdr. R. L. Eng of San Diego, Cal., suggested organizing the civilians into a community. With the aid of the interpreters he interviewed and appointed a "head man."

"His name is Seigan Hanashiro," Comdr. Eng reported later, "and he seems to have been the mayor of this town. If we can issue orders through him, we'll be all set."

Hanashiro agreed to coöperate—in fact, he loved the idea. Next morning he blossomed forth in a red hat with the word MAYOR on it, and wore an arm band reading BOSS.

"The natives haven't the faintest idea what it means," Comdr. Eng explained, "but they know it indicates authority. Just look at him order 'em around."

The scheme worked perfectly and later was adopted throughout the island by other military government units. We simply gave orders to the "head man"; he had them carried out.

These natives were not hostile. For the most part, they were simple country people, many of them very intelligent. For seventy years they had been under the Japanese heel, treated as second-rate citizens and taxed without mercy. Their able-bodied men had been drafted into labor battalions and their comeliest women had been placed in Japanese brothels. Two days after we took charge of them, they followed us about like grateful puppies, worked willingly and coöperated wonderfully. We even developed a sort of affection for them. We didn't know—or couldn't pronounce most of their names—so they became "Butch," "Brooklyn Joe," "Confucius," "the Professor," etc.

We trained four excellent girls to help us in the hospital and under the supervision of Hanashiro's wife, they soon became proficient nurses. We organized a group to cook and a sewing-circle group to make clothes for the ragged children. "Butch" headed a group to bring in firewood and "Confucius" took care of the pigs and chickens.

This was only the beginning, of course. Later on, our unit left the 96th Division and joined the 7th Division in its push down the island. As we struggled and coaxed our jeeps down roads three and four feet deep in mud, we saw dead Japs every ten yards. At Toyama, we again were right behind the battle lines.

THE worst of our troubles were the attacks by snipers and infiltrators which came almost every night. It was here on the lower part of the island that we encountered our first hostile natives—particularly among younger women who had attached themselves to the Japanese soldiers. Often we had to drag them out of caves, snarling and spitting and sometimes hiding a hand grenade.

Capt. O. J. Cejka of Milwaukee, Wis., our safety officer, directed the reconnaissance units in rounding up these hideouts. Cejka's system was to take four or five native Okinawans along and send them into the cave. They would come back out and indicate the number of civilians in the cave, also whether Japanese soldiers were present. The civilians would be coaxed out, then a surrender challenge sent in to the soldiers. Sometimes they gave up; sometimes they came out with grenades; at other times, we had to clean out the cave with satchel charges of dynamite. We found one cave near Toyama, the mouth of which was almost as big as Carlsbad Caverns. It was full of Jap soldiers and we cleaned it out with grenades and satchel charges.

Not the least of our worries were the rats, vermin and snakes. Okinawa rats were huge fellows who didn't hesitate a moment to get right up in bed with you. Only a tight mosquito net kept them off and made sleep possible. We saw several snakes, all of them as vicious as the Japs but they never became a major problem. Mosquitoes and flies, of course, were everywhere in great hordes.

The civilians would be coaxed out, then a surrender challenge sent in to the soldiers. Sometimes they gave up.

One day, General Buckner rode through Chatan in his jeep. He must have seen several goats in the abandoned houses by the side of the road, because the next day he issued us a direct order. There were too many goats on the roads and our military government team was to take immediate steps to corral them.

The Old Man cursed, muttered something about becoming a "goat cowboy" but he issued orders that every officer and enlisted man in the unit was to take ten natives and go out rounding up goats. Lieut. Finnie was told to build a goat corral and he sent his men for seven rolls of wire and fifty fence posts. Even Dr. Taylor joined the chase, taking Brooklyn Joe and Saru with him at the head of eight enthusiastic goat hearders.

"You can't tell," the doctor said. "Perhaps these goats carry some special kind of disease and we may learn something about it."

"Nuts!" said Lieut. Finnie. "The only thing goats carry are a smell and a dirty mind."

It was because of the goats that old Seisuan was shot. Despite his eighty years, he had taken a lively interest in our roundup and often assisted the younger natives in patching up holes in the corral fence.

One night, a restless kid had wormed his way through the wire and began to bleat noisily. Old Seisuan, whose house was near the corral at the village limits, got up and went out to investigate, forgetting entirely the trigger-happy and alert M.P.'s and the fact that he was out of bounds. He had restored the little goat to the corral and started back when an M. P. challenged him through the darkness.

The old man became panic-stricken and started to run. The M.P. shot him, of course—his orders were not to take any chances on infiltrators. The occurrence cast quite a pall over the camp next day. Hanashiro, the "head man," shook his head sadly and shrugged.

"It could not be helped, of course," he told one of the interpreters. "He was my father and if I may, I shall give him a decent burial."

"Certainly," the Old Man told him in a husky voice. He ordered a large grave dug in the Chatan cemetery and told the boys to "fix it up nice for Hanashiro."

The funeral ritual was a weird thing. The body was buried in a sitting position, according to the Buddhist rites. The name of the dead man was printed on a board and the board was then driven in the ground nearby while two members of the family kept a death watch, kneeling and offering up prayers.

It was a solemn occasion and was attended by all of Hanashiro's family as well as by Saru, Brooklyn Joe, Confucius and others. The interpreters and Lieut. Finnie stood by sympathetically.

None of us felt much like eating supper that night. The Old Man drank his coffee but hardly tasted the beef hash.

"It's a goddam shame," he said to no one in particular. "That poor old gook never harmed anybody in his life. He's been under the heel of the Japanese for seventy years and now, just when he gets a chance for a decent living, he's shot."

"You can't blame the M.P.," said Lieut. Finnie quietly. "He had his

orders—and besides, it could easily have been an infiltrator."

"I'm not blaming anybody," the Old Man said irritably. "I'm just bemoaning the fate of these poor devils. They're just poor farmers, caught in the jaws of a war. They don't know what war is—why, half of them never even heard of the United States."

Dr. Mosher said, "It's always the little people who get shoved around."

The effect of Seisuan's death on the village did not last long. After all, he was an old man and quite useless for doing the hard work of the village. Let Hanashiro bury him quietly —life would go on and there would be new members of the family to replace him.

Saru—which literally, in Japanese, means monkey—was so named by his own fellows. He was less than five feet tall, wiry as a mountain goat and as friendly as an organ-grinder's pet. He was continually in everybody's way. But without Saru, our village would have been a dull community.

One morning, Lieut. Baker looked up from his coffee and said: "You know what that little ape wants to do?"

"What ape—Saru?" asked Lieut. Finnie.

"That's him. Well, he asked me yesterday if he could open up a house of entertainment. He's got six geisha girls lined up already."

We all had to laugh.

"I'm for it," said Lieut. Finnie. "Put up neon lights and everything."

The Old man squashed the idea, of course. Military government could reopen the schools but not the geisha houses. Too many watchful Baptists back home. Tell Saru to attend to his goats and forget about women. That might have been the end of it but somebody forgot to tell Saru. He opened his house of entertainment, in a former schoolhouse, and was welcoming patrons when he was discovered.

"I see nothing wrong," said Saru—and he didn't. "We have always had geisha houses. The village needs one, so I opened one."

He was put out of business quickly and the Old Man moved him to a house nearer the goat corral.

Toshi Yogi was the mother of five children but she was by far the most attractive native Okinawa woman most of us had seen. The M.P.'s had forced her to come out of a cave on a hillside near Chatan with two of her children, where they had huddled for two weeks, half starved and frightened to death.

She was a "city" woman, we later learned, and had lived in Naha all of her life. She had been visiting in Chatan at the time of the pre-invasion bombardment and had gone into the cave for safety. She had wept wildly when she was brought into the village, fearing immediate death at the hands of the Americans. Quickly, however, she learned that we had no intention of harming her and she became one of the most coöperative persons in our village.

"I don't know where my other children are," she told the interpreters. "I left them in Naha. My husband was taken away to Japan last year in a labor battalion and I have no other family. Let me sew for you—I'm good with the needle."

This appealed to Captain Cejka. He had wondered for days what to do about the hundred bolts of cloth in the storehouse. The children in the village were all ragged and many of them almost naked. He went to the Old Man.

"How about having Finnie build a place for this woman?" he asked. "We can give her this cloth and let her organize a sewing circle. They can turn out enough warm clothes for every kid in the place."

The Old Man gave his okay and Lieut. Finnie had the carpenters'-mates build a small, closed-in house which Finnie immediately dubbed "The Cejka Home for Virgins." He was scornful about the whole thing.

"Why can't we give the cloth to Hanashiro's wife and let her make the clothes? Just because Cejka takes a

"I guess this is a tough way to get a ticket home," Tanabe murmured.

fancy to this babe, why do we have to build her a damn' beauty parlor? Nuts!"

But the idea of a sewing circle proved practical. Toshi Yogi got together three other expert seamstresses in the village and turned out scores of warm kimonos for the children.

It was the custom eventually for all the middle-aged women of the village to gather around the little sewing-house during the afternoon hours, and chat. At night, Toshi Yogi slept alone in the sewing-house.

THE interpreters had worked overtime that morning. They got up at four o'clock and went into the village, where several thousand natives went about the business of living under American supervision. The interpreters, privates in the U. S. Army, were Honolulu-born and spoke Japanese fluently. They were the only links between military government officers and the natives whose lives they directed.

The interpreters worked sixteen to twenty hours every day they were on the island, and they took their lives in their hands every time they went out. It is not too much to say that the work of the interpreters on Okinawa was a major factor in winning the island.

Pfc. Takashi Genishi was solemn, a hard worker, talked rarely. He never shirked a job and could be counted on to volunteer for any task, however unpleasant. Pfc. Katsuyuki Tanabe was voluble, laughed frequently and was a favorite among the other enlisted men in camp. He liked practical jokes and was on the receiving end of them as frequently as he originated them.

The Old Man returned to the camp shortly after noon from a bath at the spring—the first he had had in four days. Tanabe lay on the ground in front of his tent, blood oozing out of wounds in his chest and his left arm.

Lieut. Finnie told the story as the Old Man kneeled and took the interpreter's head in his lap.

"He got it on the outside of a big cave up there. They were scouting for food for the natives. Must have been a dozen or more Japs inside that cave."

"Did you go back and clean it out?" the Old Man asked grimly.

"With two hundred pounds of dynamite," said Capt. Cejka. "Not even a spider web left in that cave."

Tanabe opened his eyes and moved feebly.

"Hello, Commander," he muttered. "Guess I got shot."

"Yeah," said the Old Man. "Just take it easy, fellow. The doctor will have you patched up right away and we'll get you right back to the hospital."

"I guess this is a tough way to get a ticket home," Tanabe murmured.

"Yeah," agreed the Old Man softly. "I'll write your parents about it."

Tanabe grimaced and smiled weakly. "You can't write them," he said. "They're in a concentration camp in Oklahoma."

The Old Man gulped. "You have brothers?" he asked.

"Yes sir," said Tanabe. "Two of them—they're both with the American Fifth Army in Italy."

The Old Man's eyes met Lieut. Finnie's and Finnie cursed softly under his breath.

FLAK

THE Greeks poured oil on the sea and set it afire to destroy a Scythian fleet.

* * *

Bows and arrows were used in World War II—by Commandos who wanted their weapons to be noiseless in action.

* * *

Peak strength of the U. S. military forces during the Spanish-American War was 131,468.

* * *

In World War I, Rumania lost 44.76 percent of her total armed strength.

* * *

Peter the Great of Russia liked to beat his soldiers with a whip.

England has been invaded five times—by the Romans in 55 B.C., the Scots in Picts A.D. 350, the Angles and Saxons in A.D. 450, the Danes in A.D. 800 and the Normans in A.D. 1066.

* * *

Germany lost 6,400,000 men in World War II—three million killed and 3,400,000 permanently injured.

* * *

The fortress of Sacsahuaman in Peru, which still is standing after more than four hundred years, was built with stones, some weighing over two hundred tons, which were dragged from the quarry by human power.

—*by Harold Helfer*

Arms and the Woman

VIII

Madam Turchin—Regimental Commander

by FAIRFAX DOWNEY

"SHE wears the trousers," we say of a domineering wife who rules the household. Russian-born, Americanized Madam Turchin wore them neither figuratively or literally. She was undeniably feminine, and it was declared of her on Civil War battlefields that she "bloomed like a fair flower." But when it came to giving orders, she could issue them in an emergency not to one mere man but to hundreds. Furthermore, they were proper, efficient military directives, and they were loyally and instantly obeyed.

Born and brought up in an army, the daughter of a Russian colonel and the idol of his regiment, she married one of her father's subalterns, Ivan Vasilevitch Turchininoff. An able and efficient engineer officer, he served in the Hungarian and Crimean wars, was appointed to the Imperial Guard and General Staff and rose to the rank of colonel. His wife not only followed his career but took part in it, studying with him.

Democratic ideas, no more popular under the Czars than today with the Reds, banished the Turchininoffs to the United States. The Colonel translated his name into John Basil Turchin and got a job with the Illinois Central Railroad. At the outbreak of the Civil War, he volunteered to serve his adopted country. Officers of his experience were rare indeed. The bearded, bulky Turchin was commissioned colonel of the 19th Illinois, and turned it into one of the best-trained, hardest-marching outfits in the Union Army.

When the regiment entrained for the front, Madam Turchin went right along. . . .

A terrible railroad accident, not the enemy, took the first toll. Cars crashed through a trestle, killing and injuring 130 men. The Colonel's lady, unhurt, rushed into action. As regimental records report: "Ever-

Illustrated by Charles B. Falls

devoted Madam Turchin, our Colonel's beloved wife and constant companion, had soon torn her skirts into bandages and was caring for the casualties."

From then on she belonged. There were no murmurs about the C.O. rating an accompanying spouse while lower ranks could only write home and hope for leave. During the regiment's campaigns with the Army of the West, Madam Turchin continued to act as a nurse. Often under fire, she was utterly indifferent to it. If she looked up from treating the wounded, it was only to rally wavering troops. "With all the refinement of a lady, she has the energy and self-reliance of a man," the chaplain stated. "She feels able to take charge of herself, carries a nice little revolver and dagger in her belt, and has a dignity of manner and bearing that secures the respect of the roughest soldier."

The Civil War saw other brave angels of mercy, but in a crisis Madam Turchin rose to a rôle that none of them could have filled. On a march through Tennessee in 1862 the Colonel fell seriously ill. Dismay and indecision spread among his still-unexperienced staff. Madam Turchin had the sick man put into an ambulance and took over. Quietly, unhesitating, she dictated a string of commands to battalion commanders and adjutants "by order of Colonel Turchin." Without question they forwarded them to their units. When Colonel Turchin recovered, the regiment had fulfilled its mission, and everything was running like clockwork.

After Turchin was given a brigade, his wife carried on as its unofficial assistant commander and adjutant general. There would be trusted WAC officers at general headquarters in the Second World War, but nothing to match this joint-command in the field by a husband-and-wife team. It struck no snag until the so-called "Athens Affair." One of Turchin's regiments had captured that Alabama town after fierce house-to-house fighting, and charges were made that some of the men engaged in looting. At once General Buell, the corps commander, convened a court-martial to try "the Russian" or the "mad Cossack," as some jealous brother officers called him, for neglect of duty.

Colonel Turchin pleaded guilty to only one specification: that he had violated the regulation stating: "No woman, whether wives of officers or soldiers, shall be permitted to remain in camp or accompany the troops in the field." But the court convicted him of all charges and sentenced him to dismissal from the service.

Madam Turchin packed to go to Washington and fight against the approval of the sentence. Before she could leave, back came an order direct from the White House. Abe Lincoln, while he had been informed of the trial, was not going to lose a good fighting officer. He had promoted John B. Turchin to brigadier general, which automatically set aside the findings of the court. There was an ovation in Chicago when the homefolks heard the news.

Madam Turchin now had to obey regulations and go home. The brigade lost a second in command and a nurse. The General, missing her mightily, carried on and continued to distinguish himself in battle through the rest of the war. When he marched home, his helpmate, like any civilian wife, was waiting to welcome him.

Miracle Hands

He was old and cold, and they had the drop on him. And so—he told them a tale of old Ireland.

by L. L. Foreman

THERE was nobody at the ranch-house, and I put up my horse and went on in and built a fire. I was riding the grub-line—which is to say, I was broke and too proud to go home like that. It was winter, and don't think it doesn't get winter in New Mexico. Anyhow, in the high country north of Tucumcari it does. That's where I was. It was about forty below freezo, and a snowstorm coming up over the last several hours.

I lit a good pitchy piñon fire, but it was an hour before I shed my coat. By then snow was plastering the side window.

Two men came in. From the way they looked around, I guessed they didn't belong here either.

There was a picture tacked up by the fireplace, and I never saw any lady so beautiful. I could tell she was a stage lady from her dress, and the way she stood, and things like that. Sitting warm by the fire, I got to thinking about her, and how they said stage ladies carried on, and I wished I was in on that life too.

It was so thick outside I didn't hear anything till the door burst open. Two men came in and slammed it shut. From the way they looked around, I guessed they didn't belong here either.

The short one said to me: "Howdy, kid. My name's Winters."

After a bit of thinking the big one said: "Mine's Summers."

I figured they were lying.

"Mine's Shad," I said, and I told the truth. I didn't have a thing to hide but my underwear, which had gone long without washing.

The short one squatted by the fire, blowing cold. The big one went back out and put up their horses and came in again to the fire. They acted easy, but I spotted them for a prickly pair of pilgrims. I glimpsed a gun when the big one heaved off his canvas coat. I guessed the short one was heeled hot too, for he fixed something under his shirt as he squatted.

The short one asked me in a friendly way: "Say, is it so the boss here is buyin' land off the Montoya bunch?"

I told him I didn't know the boss here, never met him. "I aim to hit him for a job, though, when he shows up," I said. "I'd sweat it out for beans, if he'd give me a chance at a ridin' job, spring."

He nodded like he approved me. The big one said: "I guess we took the wrong road out from town."

The short one said: "If we didn't, we'd have come up on him, wouldn't we?"

"I guess that's right," the big one said. He seemed kind of dumb.

I thought about what they said, and after a while it came to me what they might be after. Those days, Mexicans—New Mexicans, I mean, and Montoya is a real old New Mexico name—wouldn't take anything but hard coin in a trade. They didn't trust what they couldn't count and know was good money. Far as that goes, most of the rest of us were the same. I know I was.

So if the boss here was buying land off New Mexicans, he'd be coming out from town with hard coin. These two knew it. I wished I hadn't stopped here.

They soon got their eyes on the picture of the stage lady, and spoke of it. I didn't like the way they talked. I liked thinking about her and me, but I sure didn't like them thinking like that, and making jokes about it. Hell, I never saw any lady so beautiful. I didn't listen to them any more. They griped me.

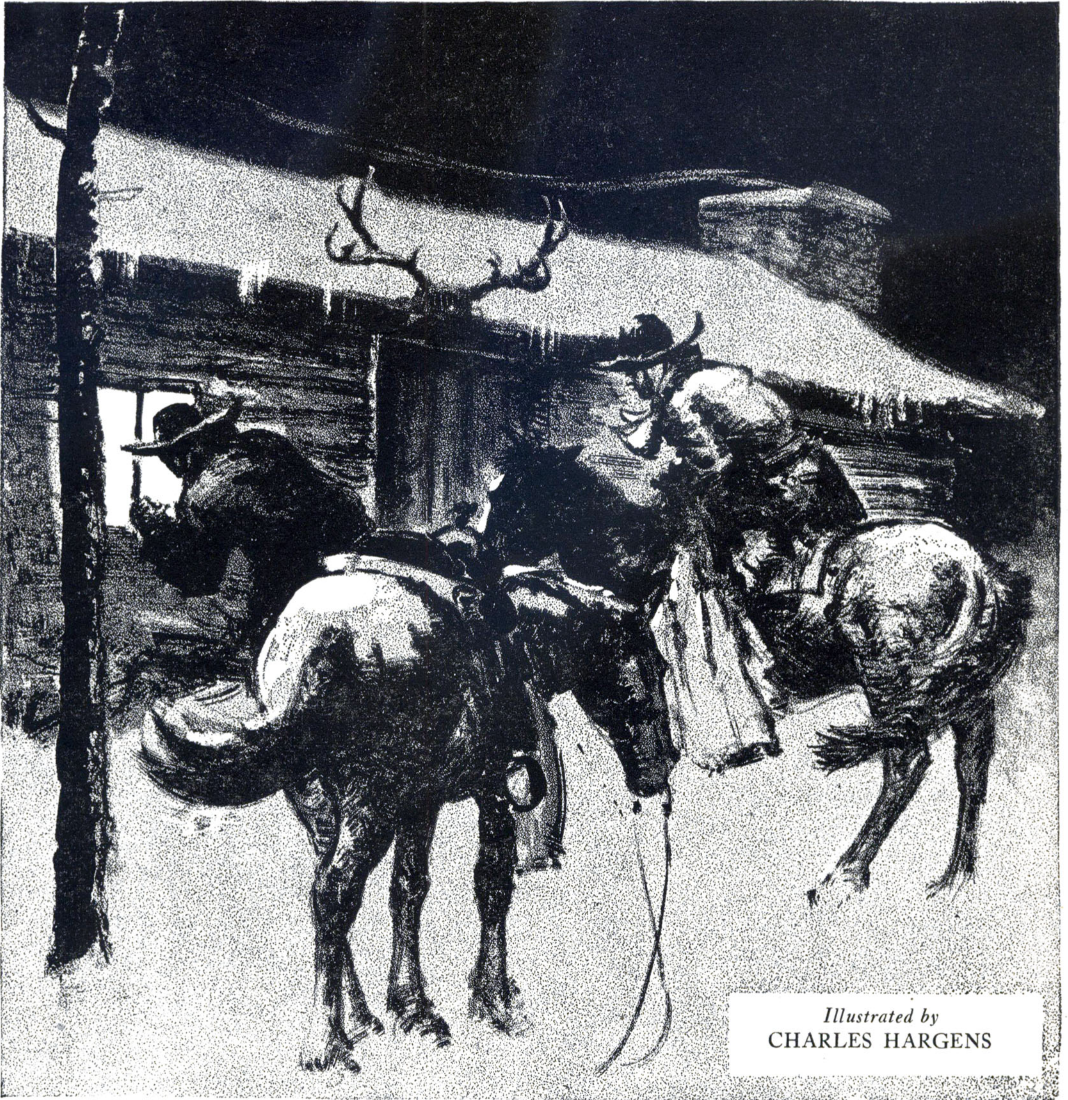
They were so tied up with her they didn't hear anything outside, I guess, like me: and the door pushed open, and in came an old man along with a blow of snow and sharp wind. He carried one of those leather bags the banks used to lend customers for the payroll, on the big outfits.

I SPOKE up because I was first there, and thought I ought to. "My name's Shad," I told him. "You the boss?"

He gave me a look. "Yeah, I'm him," he said, and bushed his white eyebrows at those two. He was carrying the leather bag in the crook of his left arm. It was heavy, you could tell. He set it on the table, and came on to the fire.

They didn't give him their names, and he didn't ask. The short one went to the window and scraped some inside ice off with his thumbnail, and after cupping his hands to peer out, he came back to the fire. He didn't squat again, and the big one got up and shoved his right hand under his vest, and they stood there eyeing him.

The boss was wearing goatskin gloves, the ordinary kind we wore for work. They were all right for riding and roping, not for much else. They



Illustrated by
CHARLES HARGENS

got hard and crinkly in cold weather. He began trying to get them off, and I thought those two would jump him right then. Seeing the trouble he was having, they eased down. He finally worked the gloves off with his teeth.

His hands came out the color of candles. The fingers were all bent crooked and knobby. He held them to the fire, not too close, and rubbed them clumsily together. It must have been a tough job, putting up his horse. He was pretty old, and those hands sure weren't much use to him.

He said to me: "You'll find a bottle of whisky if you dig in the flour bin in the kitchen, son. Get it and pass it round."

I did so.

He had to clamp it with both hands to drink. The two fellows were squatting again by the fire. It was a hell of a night out. The wind had come up and was hitting the house on all sides, seemed like. The door was tight, but powdery snow kept puffing up under it. I wished I was home. We had storm doors in Denver. And close neighbors. This place was miles from anywhere.

The two fellows helped themselves to another drink without asking. The short one looked up at the picture and passed a dirty remark, and the big one laughed and worked his pouty lips together.

The boss rubbed his crooked fingers carefully, the way old folks do in winter. He looked around and said sharply: "I doubt she's that kind. Not if she takes after her mother. I don't care for that talk."

I knew he was an Irishman then. He talked like one. We had a lot of them in Denver.

"The hell!" the short one said, looking hard at him.

You know, in a man's house you don't jump him as quick as you might when you meet him on the road, though you're there for nothing else. You work up to it. The short one was working up to it, and the big one was waiting to pitch in.

The snow puffed up under the door again. It came in a cloud, and nearly reached us by the fire. We all turned and watched it settle and melt on the floor.

The boss rubbed his stiff fingers. "I know she's not," he said. "She's from the old country—Ireland. From Donaghadee, like me. You never heard of it, any of you."

He was an old fool blown up with his bit of knowledge. The drink had gone to his head, and he was out to tell us young ones how fine the world was before we got in and spoiled it. Reminded me of my pa.

GRINNING, the two men passed the bottle between them like it was theirs and they owned the place.

He said: "It's on the coast. On the Irish Sea. You don't know what it's like there." His brogue thickened. He reached for the bottle, and they let him have it. He used both hands to gulp a drink from it. "A man crippled himself for her there," he said. "And her only a child. Crippled his hands. Think of it." He stared down at his hands.

I wanted to shout: "God's sake, you old fool, stop it." I didn't have a gun. If he had one, he couldn't use it with those hands. And the two grinning at him, and the heavy leather bag on the table. I wished I'd missed this place. They were bad.

He said: "It was her mother he did it for. Her young widow mother." He fetched a sigh, a big, "A-aagh," as the Irish do, and those two looked at his hands and at the leather bag and at me.

He said: "Her mother was a fine young woman. Widowed early. Her man went out with the others to the *Hepsibah* when she ran onto the shoal that time, you know. Boat foundered. He sank with the rest. A-aagh. Good men drowned. She was a widow."

The short one lifted his look again to the picture. I could have killed him, the quirk of his mouth was such an insult to the girl.

I thought: "You and your old-man memories! You'll get us both killed. They'll tie us, and we'll freeze when the fire dies."

How he'd managed to live so long and prosper in this country was more than I could think. For even then in the nineties, New Mexico was still a place where you had to take care of yourself. The law was all right. It was there, but it was spread out pretty thin and scattery.

"Ireland is different from here," he informed us, while they grinned at him. His eyes got that misty far-away look. His brogue grew thicker. "She"—he nodded gravely at the picture—"was a dreamy wee sprite. Full of oddness. Loved to run out in the wind, no matter how cold. And Lord

The boss was all worked up. He looked savage and helpless. It

knows there's plenty of that along the coast around old Donaghadee. It's a wild bit of natural contradiction there, come to think of it. The big black rocks stand glooming at the Irish Sea, while bright and thrifty, the wee green fields lie back of them."

HE was talking almost in a kind of poetry, like drunk Irishmen do sometimes when they get going. You can't help listening. They can get awful mouthy, rambling on and on, often about nothing; yet you listen because the words seem to have something in them.

"That odd one!" he said. "Her mother—the young widow, you know—she knew what it was to have to go flying out of the cottage to look for her. At night, even." He shook his head. "The scolding was wasted. She could do nothing against whatever it was that enticed the child out to race and prance in the wind again on the big rocks on the shore. The wind could be freezing, and still she went. That odd wee thing."

He motioned for the bottle. There wasn't much left in it, and they didn't pass it to him this time. He blinked sadly at it and said to me: "There's another pint back of the lard bucket. Get it for me, son."

When I came back in with the pint, he was talking about a fiddler.

"No accommodating fiddler was Eoghan," he was saying as if it was mighty important. "No, Eoghan was a man of hard manners, and he played to his own humor, even when playing for drinks in the pub. For a bit of a

wasn't hard to imagine he was a tough case when he was young.

living, he carved out those wee black bog-oak charms—pigs and shamrocks and crosses and the like that they sell up in Belfast. He had magic fingers."

I opened the fresh pint for him, and he clawed hold of it and drank.

"A-aagh," he said, setting it down fondly and working his mouth, and those two looked at it and finished what was left in the other bottle. The whisky was taking the frost off him, but it was doing something else to them. I could see their faces getting heavier and more sneering. They weren't drunk—just ugly playful. They were playing him along for the hell of it.

"Now, what were we talking of?" he asked.

"Pigs," said the short one. "Black ones."

"Crosses," said the big one. For no reason at all, he kicked my foot. Then he stared me in the face, likely hoping I'd say something about it, and give him an excuse to pile into me.

"Bog-oak," said the boss, nodding. "Eoghan made his fiddle from it—with a hint or two from the devil, some said, for he could get out of it any sound known and unknown." He chuckled. "Times they were too slow buying him a drink, he'd fetch from his fiddle the damnedest howl—and keep it up till somebody asked him what he'd have. He was that tough—a dark and savage-looking man. Aye, Eoghan stamped his heels where most men would tread light on tiptoe. You think you're tough? You should have known him then. There was only one thing he ever feared."

The big one took his stare off me and laid it on the boss. "Yeah, I think I'm tough," he said. "Are you tryin' to—"

"Shut up," the short one interrupted him. "What was it the guy was scared of?"

The boss didn't even look up from the fire. "The cold," he said, and shivered. "The cold and the wind. He hated the wind. In the warm pub, even, he'd mutter and swear at the sound of it outside. As for the cold—h'm! You couldn't get him out in it, those days. Not for anything could you. They said his blood was porter. It was Irish porter he drank always then. Later he turned to whisky. More heat in it."

He picked up the pint and took another drink, quickly.

"For the time he tried courting the young widow, Eoghan was sober. But he couldn't win her. The child stood in the way—Mary Durry. Her there on the wall! She's got a different name now she's a great dancer and all. She was just wee Mary Durry then, though, and with his dark presence alone Eoghan put a stop to her racing out in the wind at all hours. She could never leave the cottage but what she might run into him, for he haunted the place, and she had a wild horror of him and his black fiddle."

The big one reached across me and got the bottle. "Oughta busted the fiddle on her backside," he said.

"Shut up," the short one said.

THE boss sat staring into the fire, cuddling his hands. In a minute the short one spoke up again. "Well, what did he do?"

"Eh?" The boss raised his head. "H'm. Do? What could he do? He was as tough as they come, but there it was—an odd bit of a fanciful child in love with the wind, against him who hated the wind and loved her mother. She was like a kitten arching and spitting at a bloody big rough dog. No doubt she'd heard a word about him and it started that imagination of hers going. She was a white-faced thing with diamond eyes, with him around. Crouching in a corner, watching him and his ugly black wicked fiddle. What could he do? Her horror of him ran past all reason. Aye, past all reason."

He spoke angrily now. "What could he do? He'd have been good to her, give him the chance. Ah, well. The young widow, she saw how it was. She told him he shouldn't call again. She was not lonely without a man, she said. But she said it in a low voice, looking away from him, trying to hide that lie. What could he do?"

"Hell," the short one said.

The boss twitched a shoulder. He was all worked up. He looked savage

"Eoghan was a man of hard manners, and played to his own humor."

and helpless. It wasn't hard to imagine he was a tough case when he was young.

"Eoghan went back to the pub," he said curtly. "He worked less and drank more, and left his fiddle hanging on the nail. Still, that was to be expected with winter coming on. They say a landless man reaches early his sag of life, and a womanless one soon spends his pleasures. Work and love keep the day and the heart full, they say in the old country.

"With him rid of, off to the big rocks in the wind ran Mary," he went on. His talk got more and more like poetry. It wasn't like ordinary talk at all. I don't know how they do that. I don't know how they know what they're going to say next. Must be like chess, where five or ten moves planned ahead, I hear, is pie to a good player. I never played it myself.

"She scampered once too often and too long," he said, "and later the doctor told the young widow to keep her warm in bed. In her illness, wee Mary's fearful fancies were of the ugly black fiddle and the ugly dark face over it. It was that she screamed about, and her mother held her, crying. The doctor damned the wind and said it was more than a cold she had. It should have been freezing quiet that time of year. It was not good for a child, the cold wind. 'You know it now, Mrs. Durry,' said the doctor. A-aagh, doctors! So much they know after it's happened."

"That's right," the big one said. "That's damn' right—one dug a bullet out o' me one time, an' after fishin' all round for it, he had the cussed crust to tell me—"

"Shut up," the short one said. "Go on, Pop."

He went to the window again, the short one did, and scraped ice off and looked out. The wind didn't sound as fierce now, and no more snow was blowing under the door. In that New Mexico high country you can have a blizzard one hour and sunshine the next. Crazy country. Passing the table, coming back, he let his hand drag across the leather satchel, feeling and prodding it like my pa would test a chicken for killing.

It seemed to satisfy him. He worked an eyebrow up and down at the big one. But he left the bag on the table and came back to the fire. I guessed it was still snowing some, or he'd have picked it up and given the big one the nod. Maybe not, though. They were drinking the boss' whisky and listening to his fool story, and it was warm by the fire. A few minutes more sure couldn't make any difference one way or another.

"How's it out now?" the boss asked him.

"Slackening off," the short one answered.

The boss nodded. "It'll get colder soon." He hunched closer to the fire. "Like that night. Wee Mary woke and listened; and, 'Is it gone, the wind?' says she. Her mother told her thankfully it was, almost. Her mother felt winter. Felt it from the window, that quiet, searching cold, coming in the dark. Then what a time she had with the child. *Then* what a time. God!"

The fire was low and I built it up. I wanted it to last if we were left tied, for I didn't look for any help from him, so on went the biggest logs I could find in the woodbox. He didn't blink or move his eyes when I passed in front of him. He was way back in Ireland.

"You know," he said to the logs, "it was grown in her strange wee child's mind that only the wind could keep him away. She was sick and in fever. She was sinking in and out of the delirium. You see how it was. Full of the bad fancies. Fearsome bloody shapes snatching at her. And him the dark devil-man of them all, there because the wind was gone. She loved the wind and he hated it. There was all that could be different between them. Screaming in her mother's arms. Trying to hide. Not sleeping, not resting, till the weakness made her. And that was no sleep. Then up again, struggling, fighting to hide from him, till the next fainting. She was being hunted to death by him."

The logs were so thick they crushed the fire down. A fire can die so blamed quick when you don't want it to. A flame ran up some broken bark and flapped itself out, and then there was only smoke and red smolder. I felt cold already.

The big one muttered: "Let's go. The hell with this." He lifted a rope down from a nail on the well and looked at me like I was a calf.

"Wait a minute," the short one said. "Get to the end, Pop. We ain't got all night."

The boss didn't seem to hear. He frowned at the dying fire, hugging his hands under his coat.

"They talked about it next evening in the pub after the doctor came by. That child, crying and screaming for the wind that was nigh the death of her—and her mother like a ghost. Eoghan listened awhile, then took down his fiddle and walked out.

"The wind wailed and whooped that night for wee Mary, the gayest enticements, round and round the cottage. She never noticed how it left the snow unblown on the window. The wild despair ran out of her and she smiled a weak, wise smile. He wouldn't come out tonight, not in that wind, she whispered, and her mother whispered back, no, he

wouldn't come out tonight, not in that wind. She wanted to be out in it, racing over the rocks. There was no fear this night of that slouching Eoghan and his ugly black fiddle. The wind was back.

"It stopped only when she slept. When she woke, all her mother had to do—miracle mother—was slip out a minute, and up it would start again. A fine wind it was, singing in that cold, cold creep of winter. Guarding her even from the bad dreams. Till morning, when there were no bad dreams left at all, and the doctor told her mother she must rest. The child would be well. 'But God save us,' says he, 'I got a real sick one outside.' "

He stopped talking. It got quiet for a little while. The big one looked around at our faces. "Who?" he said. "Who got crippled?"

"You dumb duck," the short one said. "Him—the fiddler."

The boss nodded slowly. "Aye. Crippled his hands. The cold, you know. That long night, freezing out there, fetching the sounds from his fiddle that he put his foot through next morning as they took him away. No magic in his hands after that. But he had a brother out here, in the cattle business, who sent for him then. He wasn't much good to his brother, though. Too fond of the drink. And his hands, you know—"

The short one stepped to the table. The wind had quit. "How's your brother, Pop?" he asked.

"Died last winter," the boss said.

The short one dragged the leather satchel off the table. The big one came toward me with the rope. I got up and backed off, and he said: "Look, kid, I don't like you. Want me to smack you round some?"

The boss looked up.

"You fellows figure to go now?" he asked.

"Yeah," the short one said, holding the satchel. "Sit tight, Pop."

"Uh-huh," the boss said.

It was the quickest thing, the way he whipped that gun out from under his coat. It was a big old .44 single-action, and it was cocked. Mine, that I'd sold down in Roswell, was one of the new double-action .32 rim-fires, easy in the hand, but I couldn't do anything with it like he did with his. He fired twice. The big pistol rocked between shots and slewed around, for he had to thumb the hammer back and turn fast to get off the second one, but it was all done in one juggle. He didn't seem to hurry it. His fingers were as limber as mine, and considerably better managed.

The short one was pulling a gun from his shirt. He didn't finish that. He let go the satchel and grabbed his right shoulder, and came blamed near tripping over backward on his high heels. He looked as surprised as I was.

The big one's hat jumped off his head. He snatched up at it, and there he was with the rope in one hand and his punctured hat in the other. He sure looked dumb then.

The boss said: "Keep your hands right there, eh? That's nice." His eyes weren't droopy any more. They were wide open and hard. He was a tough old jigger, and I could see how it was he'd lived so long here and prospered. I could see now he was a big man. He didn't look big before.

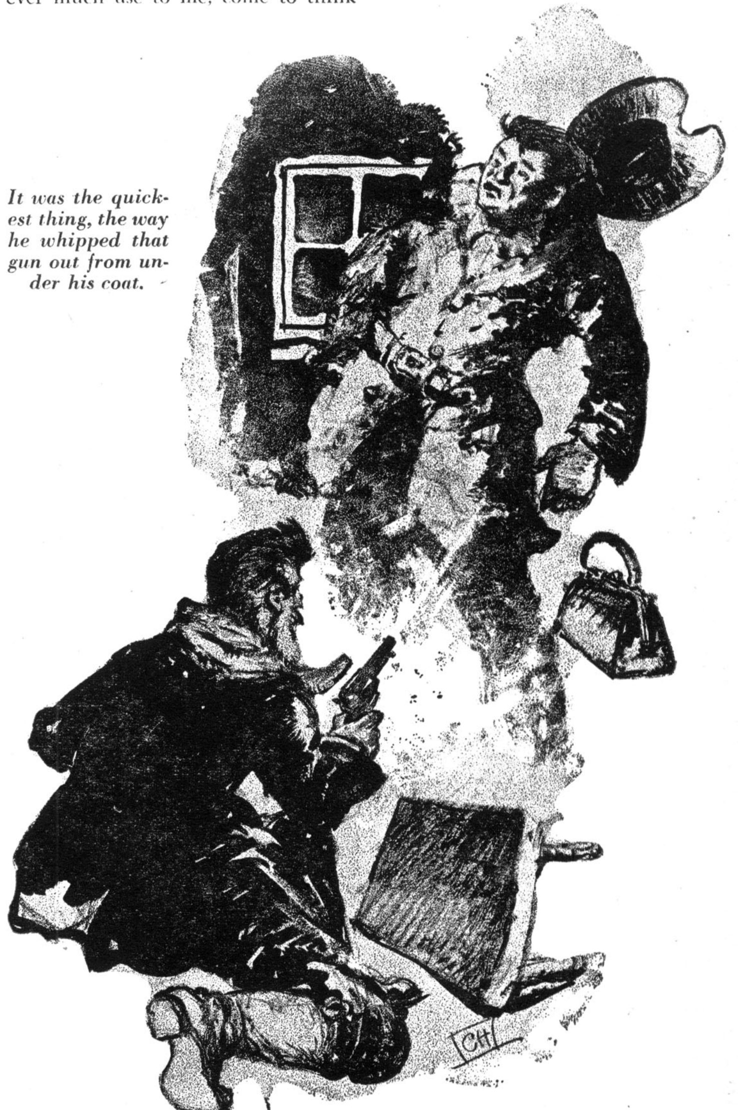
After we got those two roped down, I said: "That was a good story, Mister." I didn't know what else to say.

"Well," he said, "it gave me time to get my hands thawed out, anyhow. Only time my brother Eoghan was ever much use to me, come to think of it. See what you can do with that fire."

I couldn't find any paper to give it a start. He saw me poking around, and he walked over and flicked the picture off the wall. He bunched it in his big hands and stuck it under the smoking bottom log and put a match to it. It flared up and the log caught.

I watched it burn. For a minute I wished they'd jumped him soon as he came in. She was the most beautiful lady I ever did see.

He offered me a job next day. I didn't want it. I pulled out and got home in less than two weeks. The folks were glad to see me. I told my pa about it and he said: "Blame' liar, him or his brother. Those stage dancers are all Eyetalians."



It was the quickest thing, the way he whipped that gun out from under his coat.

Weary Feet on

Tales of Whippoorwill

OLD AGE stalks the woodland trails just as it stalks the trail of Man. Its frosty fingers touch the animals that walk the trails, and the birds that swing among the treetops. It brings problems into their lives just as it does into the lives of human beings. To show you what I mean, I shall tell the story of Lonesome and Rocky.

They were whelped in the same month of the same year. Lonesome was a foxhound, the only son of Singing Mary. She died at his birth, and the little fellow was left alone. We didn't know what to call him at first, but he always seemed mighty lonely, wandering around the yard by himself, so we started calling him Lonesome. The name stuck, and he was never known by anything else. It always seemed appropriate, too, especially when he got old enough to start trailing fox over the hills. When he gave tongue it was soft, long-drawn and sad, as if he were bugling for the long-lost Singing Mary to join him on the trail.

Rocky was a red fox, born under a mossy ledge overlooking the leaping waters of Rocky Creek. I surprised him one day when he was a tiny pup out for a bit of sunshine, and managed to take him in my hands. He was a fluffy little ball of red, and his white-tipped tail was the biggest thing about him. He struggled fiercely, and tried mighty hard to get his teeth into one of my fingers. While I held him, his mother circled within fifty yards of me, wailing her anguish in the weird manner peculiar to the red fox. I placed him back under the ledge. As I straightened up, I was conscious of the singing of Rocky Creek. It was then his name was born. I peeped back into the shadows of the ledge and said: "Good luck, Rocky."

I caught sight of him several times during the next few months, and watched him grow into a wonderful creature of strength and beauty. He was the first fox Lonesome ever ran. I carried Lonesome to the ledge one day when he and Rocky were about six months of age. I didn't see anything of Rocky when we arrived. Lonesome nosed around the den a while, then wandered off over the hill out of my sight. In a few minutes I heard him chasing something excitedly.

His quarry was making short circles through some sumac thickets. I figured it might be Rocky, so I walked toward them. Before I got there, I was sure it was Rocky, for I heard the sudden howling of the mother fox some distance up Rocky Creek. She had heard the voice of Lonesome, and some instinct had told her that Rocky was in danger. She came straight toward the dog, howling every few seconds. She passed within twenty-five yards of me, but seemed totally unaware of my presence.

I don't know how she managed it, but in a matter of minutes she had substituted herself for her son. Before Lonesome realized what had hap-

Trails Eternal

Valley—IV

by EWART A. AUTRY

pened he was chasing her instead of Rocky. She led him away over the hills, and it was five hours before the pup managed to get back home. Before they were out of hearing, I saw Rocky slip by me headed for the safety of the ledge.

THAT was the last time I ever saw his mother. A few nights after that, a party of hunters came out from town with a pack of experienced hounds. I heard them when they struck Rocky's trail. In a few minutes the inexperienced youngster was being hard pressed. He was fully half a mile from the ledge, and was circling desperately in an effort to get enough lead to make a run across some open ground which lay between him and it. It would be dangerous to make the run without a good lead. The hounds behind him were fast and eager. It seemed for a while that the career of Rocky would be ended before he could make a dash for home.

Then I heard the far-away howling of his mother. I listened as she rapidly covered the distance between herself and the racing pack. It was a daring thing to do. She had been perfectly safe far back across Rocky Creek. She was deliberately sacrificing that safety for the sake of Rocky. I silently applauded her as she approached the place where she would have to run for her life. I was sure the frightened Rocky had also heard her coming. He made a swing around in that direction as if to meet her.

As the pack approached, she seemed to howl a little louder. Suddenly she was silent, and so were the hounds for a moment. When they opened again, it was to head straight away in pursuit of the faithful mother. She had accomplished her purpose. Rocky was free to go home.

She made wide circles that night, never once going near the ledge. The hounds were driving her furiously, but I felt that she was well able to take care of herself by throwing them off or by reaching the safety of some hole. I was wrong that time. I listened until they drove her eastward out of my hearing. I learned next morning that they caught her seven miles away. They had managed somehow to drive her out into open country where there were few places of refuge. At sun-up they had pulled her down in a cotton patch. I saw her brush swinging from the saddle of one of the hunters, and remembered how deliberately she had cast herself away for the sake of Rocky.

So Lonesome and Rocky, both motherless pups, grew rapidly into maturity, and each by experience became well-educated in his own way of life. Many times they matched wits and speed on the woodland trails. I would awaken at night and hear the calling voice of Lonesome echoing over the hills, and know that ahead of him Rocky was swinging his white-tipped tail. Sometimes in daytime I would catch a glimpse of him as Lonesome drove him along. There was always about him a confident air, as if the chase were merely a game he enjoyed playing.

One day I watched him as he hopped on a log and preened himself as he listened to the voice of Lonesome drawing nearer. Two hundred yards back in the edge of an old field, I had watched him lay out a puzzling zigzag trail. I think he waited on the log to see if Lonesome could solve it.

Illustrated by Charles Chickering

When the hound swung quickly around it and came on, he hopped off of the log and continued on his way.

Rocky and Lonesome became famous, each in his own way. Lonesome became celebrated as one of the most outstanding hounds in this section of the country. Rocky became famous as a fox on which hunters could always depend to give a good chase. He could run for hours in front of the best packs the country produced. Hunters would come from miles around to hear their hounds chase Rocky. I would go with them many times and take Lonesome. He could always be heard at the front of any pack giving voice, so that sometimes I felt Singing Mary had come back from her grave to join the chase.

Many were the hunters who dangled fancy prices before me for the right to add Lonesome to their packs. Though I could have well used the money, I would never part with him. He was the last descendant of the faithful packs with which I had once hunted the hills. I could hear the voices of long-lost favorites like Wandering Rose, Flying Lady, and Wildwood Queen echoing in the cries of Lonesome. I could never sell him at any price.

The years slipped by, but Lonesome and Rocky continued to run the hills and valleys. I had a feeling sometimes that Rocky was inviting Lonesome out to chase him. Just above our house there is a high hill crowned with massive gray rocks. Some nights Rocky would howl from the top of that hill. Lonesome would hear him and give an answering howl. In a few minutes he would be right up there straddling Rocky's trail, and bugling as if he would surely catch his old adversary in a few minutes. Perhaps, after all, it was just a good game which those old ramblers of the hills loved to play. . . .

The years began to take their toll. I noticed that Rocky had shortened his circles, and didn't run very long without holing up; and I noticed that Lonesome was mighty stiff after each race. He would groan and take a lot of time coming out of his kennel to eat. He was no longer the stout young hound which could run ten hours, and then come frisking out to his feed trough. I didn't realize, though, how heavily the years were pressing upon him, until a friend brought his pack out from town. At the supper table he boasted a great deal about the speed of some of his young dogs. I thought nothing of it, because I was sure Lonesome could still run with the best of them. I had never known him to fall behind in a race. We had been out only a short while when Lonesome struck Rocky's trail. The other hounds fell in, and the race was on. In a few minutes Lonesome was trailing the pack. Rocky stayed out of the ground only a couple of hours, but never in that time was Lonesome able to catch up with the pack. I thought perhaps he wasn't feeling well, or had hurt himself in some way. The next morning, however, there wasn't anything wrong with him except that he was very tired and stiff.

A week later several hunters came with their packs. The same thing happened. Lonesome jumped Rocky, but was never able to stay up with the other hounds. It was pitiful to hear the old fellow struggling so hard to reach the head of the pack. One fellow in the crowd laughed about it. I resolved then and there that no one would ever again laugh at Lonesome. I would let him run by himself, but never again would I ask him to pit his failing strength against that of younger dogs. It was a shock to me to realize that he was too old to keep up. The race was for the young, and never again would I hear him crying at the head of the pack.

It became increasingly difficult for the packs of visiting hounds to strike the trail of Rocky. He too was old, and no longer able to run for long in front of a fast pack. I think that sometimes he must have just slept the time away beneath the ledge, living on whatever meager fare he had near at hand. At others, he must have fed down in the swamps, where it was

Rocky seemed like a tired old man resigned to his fate.

hard for dogs to trail him. I knew Lonesome could trail him, but I stuck to my resolution and refused to let him waste his remaining strength in competition with younger hounds. I stuck to my resolution—that is, until Rocky became a thief.

I heard a turmoil among the chickens at daybreak one morning, and rushed out to find one missing. Lonesome was howling in his kennel. I let him out and he struck a hot trail at once. I followed him, and he led me straight to Rocky's ledge. There were a few feathers at the entrance, proving beyond a doubt that Rocky had gone in carrying the chicken. Two mornings later the same thing happened. I was hurt that Rocky should live so long as a good citizen of the woods, and then suddenly become an outlaw. I couldn't understand it. It was after the sixth chicken had disappeared that I realized something had to be done about Rocky. I thought of setting traps at the entrance to the ledge, but decided that I couldn't bring such a gallant creature to such a cruel fate.

I finally decided that I would give him a chance to leave this world in a blaze of glory. I would invite all of the hunters for miles around to come on a certain night with their packs. If Rocky could be jumped that night, there was a good chance that they would catch him before he could reach a place of safety. I felt that he had rather go down running than to suffer in the cruel jaws of a trap.

I set the night and sent the word around. All of the hunters came. They brought sixty well-trained dogs ready for the race. Some of the men insisted that I carry Lonesome to make the strike, but I decided that we would first make the try without him. Somehow I had a feeling he wouldn't want to be in on the death of Rocky. I left word with my wife, however, to turn him out of the kennel if she heard me blowing the horn.

The eager hounds were cast for Rocky a little after dark. For an hour they ranged the woods without a single strike. Rocky was either under the ledge, or he was feeding at some place where they hadn't looked. Reluctantly I placed the horn to my lips. As its silvery echoes rolled over the hills, I heard Lonesome howling in his kennel. In a few minutes, he was at my side. He remained only long enough to touch my hand with his nose, then disappeared into the night. In twenty minutes we heard his opening cry in the swamps of Ferny Creek, a mile to the west.

One by one the other hounds joined him, until there was a solid roar of voices. For thirty minutes they circled in those swamps, driving hard, as if very near to Rocky's heels. I knew what was happening. The old fox was trying desperately to get enough lead to enable him to make the long run across the open hills to his mossy ledge above Rocky Creek. There were no places of refuge in the section where he now was, and very few between there and the ledge.

The other hunters were enjoying the race. They were huddled together listening and discussing the running qualities of their hounds. I was standing off alone feeling sorry for Rocky and Lonesome. I felt that the old fox was doomed, and blamed myself for it. Why should I begrudge him a few chickens in his failing days? I was repenting of my desire to have his life, but my repentance was coming too late. No horn made could call off that raging pack.... I could hear Lonesome running far behind. If I had been near enough, I would have caught him and led him away from such disgrace.

Suddenly the pack headed straight toward us. Their cries became louder, and their speed increased over the open ground. "He'll never make it," one man shouted exultantly. "They'll pick him up before he gets here." I felt that he was right. In his younger days, Rocky could have run for hours with such a pack at his heels, but those days were gone forever. The years were now dogging at his heels, and sapping his strength. I thought of how his old legs must be aching, and his breath coming in gasps. Surely, it must seem to him an eternal trail from the swamps to the ledge.

It looked for a time, though, as if he would make it. The dogs roared on to within a quarter-mile of us. My hopes were rising for Rocky. Suddenly the pack hushed, and my hopes sank. That hush meant one of two things: Either they had caught him, or he had managed to find a hole. "They got him," one of the hunters cried. I was silent, because I was listening to old Lonesome coming on behind. When he got to the place where the others had hushed, he was silent also. I knew that right there I would find the answer.

"I'll go and see what happened," I said, and started away.

"If they caught him, bring back his tail," one of the men shouted.

"If he's in a hole where we can punch him out, call us, and we'll come and see if he has any more run left in him," said another.

I WALKED rapidly toward the place where I had last heard Lonesome. When about halfway there, several dogs passed me, swinging in circles searching for a trail. That made me feel better, because it meant they had not caught Rocky, but had lost his trail. In five more minutes I found Lonesome lying at the base of a large rock. He was too tired even to get up and greet me. I knew that Rocky was somewhere very near at hand. I turned my flashlight on the face of the rock, and discovered a hole about five feet up. Six feet back in that hole I found Rocky. He was a pitiful sight. His fur was covered with mud, and he was panting for breath. As I looked into his mouth, I saw that

most of his teeth were gone. The remaining ones were badly worn. That explained why he had begun catching chickens. He was no longer able to catch and hold swift-running rabbits and other game.

He looked at me quietly when I flashed the light in his eyes. There was no shrinking and no snarling. He seemed like a tired old man resigned to his fate. He was at the end of the hole, and it would be easy for a young dog to go in and get him. But not a dog knew where he was except Lonesome. The others were still looking.

I hurried away from that rock. When about halfway back to the other hunters, I started blowing my horn furiously to call in the hounds. When the other hunters heard my horn, they started blowing also. By the time I reached them, the hounds were coming in. I offered no explanation about Rocky except to say that they had treed him in a rock. We gathered up the hounds and went several miles away to another hunting ground. Lonesome didn't come to the horns, but I knew he would go home when he had rested awhile. . . .

That about finishes the story of Lonesome and Rocky. Lonesome was home the next morning, but he never got over that race. Two mornings later, when I carried his feed to the kennel, he didn't come out. I went in and found him dead in his bed of straw. The straw was not disturbed . . . . he must have died while sleeping, perhaps with visions of his youth when he led the pack in full cry at the heels of a gallant young Rocky.

Rocky came back to his hilltop three nights later, and howled. For a moment I listened for the answering howl of Lonesome, then realized that he was asleep down in the pines by the side of Singing Mary. Rocky stayed on the hill for an hour, and then his howls died away into nothingness. I never saw or heard him again. Perhaps he crept back into the shadows of the ledge and lay down for the last long sleep, a sleep forever untroubled by the silvery echoes of the hunter's horn.

BATTLE ABOARD A JEEP CARRIER

One man's recollection of that extraordinary action off the central Philippines when our little carriers fought off a vastly superior Japanese force.

by WILLIAM CHARLES HOWARD, JR.

THE harsh sound of a clanging gong and shrill cry of the boatswain's pipe calling all hands to general quarters and flight quarters start the day of October 25, 1944, for the crew of the CVE 79, the U.S.S. *Ommaney Bay.*

The *Ommaney Bay* is an escort carrier of the Kaiser class, and is in a group with five other carriers, the *Natoma Bay, Manila Bay, Kadashan Bay, Marcus Island,* and *Savo Island,* under the command of Rear Admiral Felix B. Stump. This group, designated as Taffy Two, is steaming south on a north-south line parallel with the Philippine Islands.

To the north about thirty miles is Carrier Group One (Taffy One), composed of the Kaiser carriers *Midway, Gambier Bay, Kalinin Bay, Kitkun Bay, Fanshaw Bay,* and *White Plains.*

To our south, and steaming in the same direction, is Taffy Three, composed of the converted oilers *Sagamon, Suwanee,* and *Santee,* and the Kaiser-built carrier *Petroff Bay.*

These three carrier groups are gathered here to provide air coverage for the troops that went in on the initial invasion of the Philippines, the Island of Leyte.

Dawn is beginning to pale the sky as we come on deck to set up our gear for catapulting planes. There are seven of us in the catapult crew. Lt. Diekemper, ex-pilot, is our catapult officer. Chief-in-charge is Chick Foster, old Navy man and ex-lightweight champ of the battleship *New Mexico.*

Handling the firing of the catapult below decks is Smitty, ex-private pilot lately of Boston, the old man of the crew and the one who was accepted as the cooler prevailing head in any crisis.

Ray, whose position was on the signal lights on deck and who relayed the ready and fire signals to Smitty, was from Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

Hook, who had the job, along with me, of crawling under the spinning propellers and hooking up the cables to the planes, was from New York.

The only married man of the crew was George. He was from Rochester and he wished he had never left there. He worked on deck with Hook and me, retrieving cables after launching.

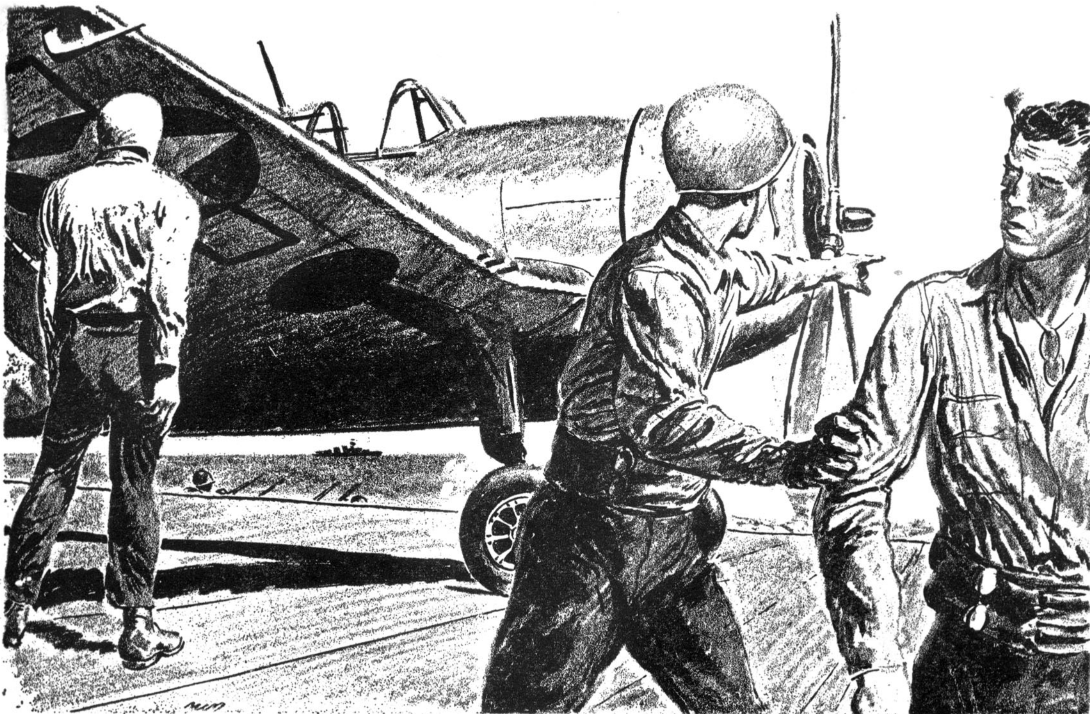
IT was 04:40, ten minutes after battle stations; and Hook, George, and I had just got up on deck and were setting up our gear in preparation for launching, when the air officer called over the bull-horn for all ordnance men to go below to the hangar deck and remove torpedoes from planes.

That startled us, for there were no reasons we could think of why the planes should have had torpedoes in them. In a few minutes the dope had circulated around to us that a large Japanese task force had been sighted headed our way down through the San Bernardino Straits.

The air officer, taking no chances, had had torpedoes loaded in four planes at 03:30 in the morning. Contact with the Jap force had been lost and it had been assumed they had turned away. That explained the reason for the air-officer's order.

We spotted a plane on the catapult in preparation for the early morning anti-submarine patrol and stood by to wait for launching-time. In a few minutes the ship turned into the wind and the order came over the bull-horn: "Stand by to launch aircraft!"

The pilots, in their planes for the last ten minutes, made their last-second checks. The catapult officer took



"Hey, Chick, look! The cans must have picked up a sub!"

his position on deck with one finger raised to the pilot. He kept his eyes on the signal bridge, and when the ship headed into the wind, he gave the pilot the signal to rev her up. Ray, on the ready lights, hit the button conveying the signal to Smitty below decks. The air officer boomed over the bull-horn: "Launch aircraft." The catapult officer raised two fingers to the pilot. The pilot laid his head back against the headrest, raised his arm off the throttle and dropped it.

The catapult officer dropped his arm; Ray pushed the fire button; and below decks Smitty pulled a lever, sending the waiting plane into the air at seventy miles per hour. At thirty-second intervals three more planes were spotted and sent off to take up their four-hour patrols.

George, Hook, and I had just started to remove our deck gear when the voice of the air officer resounded over the flight deck: "All ordnance men and gunner's mates lay down to the hangar deck and load torpedoes in the TBM's." Two more orders boomed: "Plane-handling crews get those planes with torpedoes in them on deck... Catapult crews stand by to launch aircraft."

The ship turned back into the wind, and the engines took on a deeper note as the flight deck sprang to life again. We laid out additional equipment with an eye toward the bridge waiting for the word.

Our skipper, Captain H. L. Young, stepped to the bull-horn, and the ship fell silent as he announced the Japanese fleet had come through the San Bernardino Straits and was less than forty miles behind us and closing in fast. He went on to say Taffy One was in striking range of the Jap forces, and at that moment were being shelled by Jap cruisers and battleships. He exhorted us to do our best in the coming battle and closed his message with the ship's motto: "Up-and-at-'em."

Now the torpedo-laden planes are on deck and the pilots are swarming into their cockpits. We have a plane spotted on deck and the catapult officer is winding it up as the flight signal is two-blocked; he drops his arm and one load of sudden death is on its way. The procedure is quickly repeated with the other planes.

The last bomber clears the deck and we snatch our launching gear into the catwalk as the fighters are deck-launched. Fourteen fighters, F4F's, take to the air, some to provide air cover for the bombers, and some to protect the ship.

By this time the rest of the TBM's have been loaded with bombs or torpedoes and rockets and they are hurriedly catapulted to the aid of Taffy One. The deck is readied for landing aircraft and we rest for a minute and wait for news. It is not long in coming.

The Captain again takes the bull-horn, and his words are none too reassuring. The carrier group most remote from the Jap fleet (Taffy Three), is under air attack and cannot send help to Taffy One. The Kaiser carrier *Midway* of Taffy One has been sunk; the number of survivors is undetermined. Taffy One has also been taken under air attack, and the *Kalinin Bay, Gambier Bay,* and *Kitkun Bay* have all been hit by Jap suicide planes.

The destroyer screen of Taffy One has been sent in on a torpedo-shelling run in a brave and desperate effort to turn, stop or slow down the battleships and cruisers of the Jap fleet and relieve the carriers from the merciless shelling. Taffy One has been unable to launch her protective aircraft, for to turn into the wind to launch planes would bring them into the midst of the Jap fleet.

The Japanese forces have now moved in to a range of six miles, and Taffy One is slowly being cut to pieces.

Calls for help have been sent out, but no help is coming. The old battle-

wagons of the U.S. fleet are in and around Leyte Gulf fighting Jap forces, and the famed Task Force 38 is far to the north. No help is coming.

We sit on deck and speculate as to how long it will be before we are brought into range of the Jap guns. Reports indicate the Jap force trailing us is closing in fast.

Our two destroyer plane guards suddenly cut right and left and pick up speed as two big plumes of water erupt behind them.

I yell at the Chief: "Hey, Chick, look! The cans must have picked up a sub—they are dropping depth charges."

Chick turns and looks just as two more plumes break the surface of the water—which turns a bright orange.

Chick yells back: "Those are Jap marker shells to get the range. It won't be long now."

The carrier is now changing course constantly to throw off the enemy.

The engines roar, and in a moment the sky above is filled with planes. The ship is swung into the wind to take them aboard, and in doing so cuts down the distance between us and the Jap. The planes are speedily brought aboard, fueled, loaded with bombs and rockets and sent out again. There are no more torpedoes, as the CVE's were sent to the Philippines primarily to bombard and strafe enemy land and shore installations. It was not intended they should fight cruisers and battleships unaided.

The Captain relays all information to us as it comes to him. The *Gambier Bay* has been sunk. Only two destroyers of Taffy One are left. The rest died in a futile attempt to stop the Jap fleet.

The shells that have been drawing closer to the *Ommaney Bay* have momentarily stopped falling. In the distance, about fourteen miles away, the Jap fleet is steadily closing in.

A plane roars overhead. It is the air-group commander returning. As he makes a pass over the ship, he opens his bomb-bay doors in a signal of successful completion of mission. As we prepare to take him aboard, the Captain announces, over the bullhorn:

"Commander Smith has sunk a Japanese heavy cruiser."

The Japanese forces tailing us have split and are turning away. For a brief moment the ship resounds with cheers, and then prepares to track down the remaining Japanese elements. The rest of the returning planes are hurriedly brought aboard and loaded, and take to the air in search of the retreating Jap force.

We are no longer the pursued but the pursuer, and we hurry the Jap along with bombs and rockets. His ships lie crippled and sinking while forty-odd planes from six little carriers attack again and again as the sun sets.

It is dark before the last of the planes comes aboard. There are strangers in the group, some from the *Gambier Bay* and the *Midway* and other carriers of Taffy One. Some of our planes have not returned. We hope they have landed on one of the other carriers of our group.

The long day is done. We tallied the score:

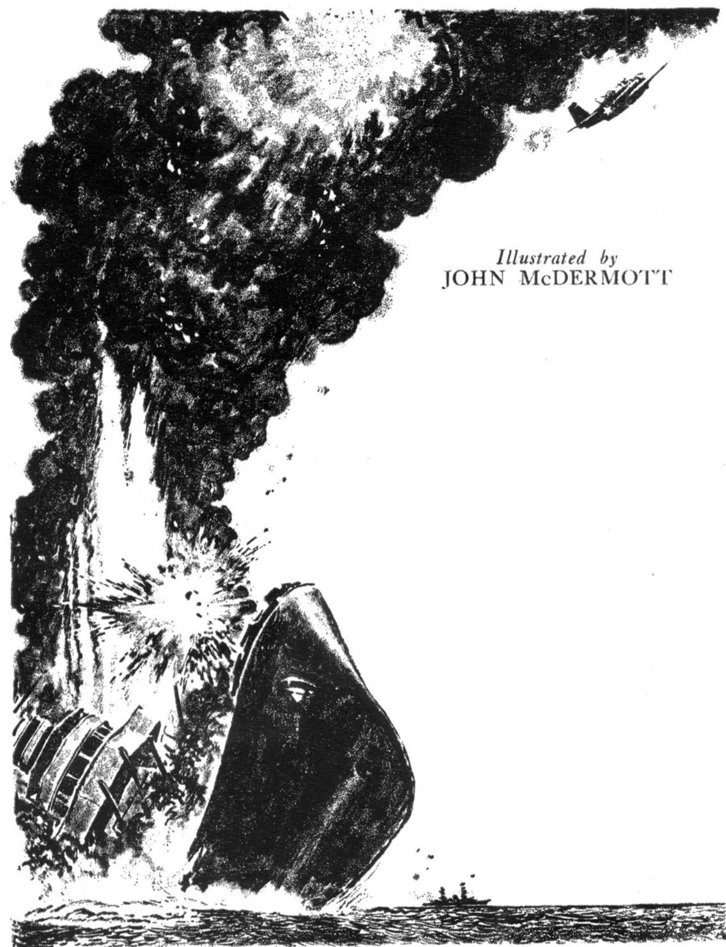
CVE 79, U.S.S. *Ommaney Bay,* in one day has deprived the Japs of one heavy cruiser, four Bettys (two-engined bombers), two "Vals" (single-engine scout planes), and also made direct hits on two battleships and one light cruiser. In addition one "probable"—a destroyer sunk.

The *Natoma Bay* had sunk one light cruiser, shot down one Betty, three Vals, and made direct hits on other cruisers, battleships and destroyers.

It was the first major naval engagement with the Japanese since Coral Sea. . . . Taffy Two, the *Natoma Bay, Manila Bay, Savo Island, Marcus Island, Kadashan Bay* and *Ommaney Bay,* under the command of Rear Admiral Felix B. Stump, stopped the Jap force, turned it away from the stricken ships of Taffy One as it tried to destroy them. Its own ships saved, the little band of small ships threw the Jap back, mauled his ships and defeated him.

There is no finer passage in naval history than this, written by a handful of pilots and ships on Wednesday, October 25, 1944, in the waters washing the shores of the Philippine Islands.

It was a long day.



Illustrated by
JOHN McDERMOTT

"Commander Smith has sunk a Japanese heavy cruiser!"

The Diesel Chuckled

HE FOUND THAT TO BULLDOZE LOGGING ROADS IN THE TALL TIMBER IS A MAN-SIZED JOB.

by VERNE ATHANAS

RUSS MORTON was mad. Even from where he stood, Johnny could see that. He could hear Swede Hanson's dry, positive voice sawing at Russ, and Russ wasn't liking it at all. Russ was heavier than Swede, taller and wider and heavier, and Swede had to look up a little to send his words at Russ. Swede was lean and dry and tough, like his voice, and if Russ had been a few years younger, you'd have thought of a lubberly pupil being laced down by his schoolmaster. Only Russ wasn't any school kid, and he wasn't lubberly. But still his wide shoulders worked under his gray-green cruiser coat, and the note of his voice as it came to Johnny Bradford, was almost sullen.

Russ said: "I laid it out myself, Swede—you know that. Johnny Bradford flubbed it, and graded the back cutting line, that's all."

Johnny walked around the bulldozer, hulking quiet and idle with the 'dozing blade down, and said: "Now, wait a minute."

Russ took the map from Swede and wheeled on Johnny. One big hand slapped the paper sharply.

"Cripes, Bradford, it's right here on the map. I laid it out myself. Where the back-line came into the grade-line here, you took the wrong fork. You've been grading a back-cutting line for a week. Good Lord, man, I thought you hired out as a blade man!"

Johnny said meagerly: "I followed your marks, Russ."

"Marked how, Johnny?" Swede Hanson interrupted.

Johnny stabbed at the map with a blunt forefinger. "Right here at the fork," he said. "Russ lopped off a sapling, so high." He marked off a chest-high section of air. "He split the top of the sapling, and stuck in a pointed grade-stick, just like a sign-post, and it pointed into this strip."

"Now look, Bradford," said Russ dangerously, and Johnny wheeled to face him. He had to tip his head

back to look up at Russ from his short and stocky height, but his square hands were out of his pockets and ready. Then Swede Hanson's dry voice cut in: "Where's the stick now?"

"Buried," replied Johnny shortly. "The sapling was no bigger than your wrist, and I had to make a fill there, so I dozed it under. I didn't suppose I'd have to produce the blasted thing in court."

Russ started to say something again, but Swede grunted sharply at him and bent again over the map. It showed the network of roads, some finished, some just blazed strips not yet graded. Dotted lines indicated the cutting lines, which divided up the standing timber into tracts convenient to the road over which the logs would be hauled. A gang of fallers, working up from any road, would cut to this line and stop, leaving all the timber beyond for crews working from the next road.

Russ Morton had been laying out the lines himself, blazing the lines with a hand axe. A buck is a buck, and Russ saved twenty dollars a day by not using a surveyor. Grade-sticks don't come for free, either, and so Russ used them sparingly.

So if Johnny had been following the wrong strip of blazes, he was a good quarter of a mile off the beam, and that was bad, for the slope was steep here. He'd known the grade was too steep, and he had eased it as much as he could, but his job was making grade, not disputing the boss' line.

So he repeated stubbornly: "I followed the marks."

Russ said roughly: "Damn it, Bradford, don't try to make a liar out of me. I had that stake lined right."

The first thought was to bunch it. Johnny wasn't used to taking that tone of voice from anybody. A good 'dozer man didn't have to. *Hang one on him,* was the thought. *Pull the pin, and walk the 'dozer out of here.*

But the 'dozer wasn't paid for. There was a rather frightening figure between a decimal point and a dollar-sign to pay off before the 'dozer was his. So Johnny swallowed it and said shortly: "What about it?"

He knew Russ, and he knew himself. If he threw it in Russ' teeth, he'd have to go the limit, the tail with the hide, and he couldn't quit just now. He made himself look away from Russ, up the grade, where Mike, his pit man, was filling up a rock hole with a shovel. "Okay," said Johnny again, "what about it?"

"You'll start over, and make it right," said Russ. That was enough, but Swede was there, and Russ had to put in a little more. "Seems like you could read grade-marks by now," he said, and wheeled away and tramped back to the pickup truck parked on the grade.

Swede Hanson said dryly: "That still doesn't square that other deal, Russ."

Russ said, with as much violence as he dared use on Swede: "I'll take care of it."

Swede said sharply: "I don't figure to wait all year for it. See that you do."

Johnny watched them go, his thick square hands rammed deep into his hip pockets, and then he walked over to the 'dozer and thrust the crank through the radiator guard screen.

He brought the crank handle across with a violent snap, and the little gasoline starting-motor snarled into vicious life. He clutched it into the Diesel motor, cut in compression and fuel. The still-warm Diesel caught, coughed, spat a ring of oily black smoke out of the stack, settled down to its steady chuckling grumble. The gasoline starting-motor snarled triumphantly as it automatically kicked free of the load, and Johnny shorted it out with the crank across the magneto. Then he climbed up to the seat, picked up the blade, spun the machine on one locked track and took it up the grade at a lurching roll.

His accustomed, almost automatic control of the machine took some of the heat out of him. That was part of the compensation of the job. Up behind the controls, he was as big as the next one, even if he did have an extra cushion behind him and the brake pedals extended to the last notch.

He came to the fork, after picking up his pit man, and swung into it. He set the corner of the blade into the slope, cracked the throttle, and crowded a swelling shoulder of earth out and away, and raised the blade to spill the bite where the shoulder of the road was to be.

This would be a truck road when he was done with it. His job was cutting and filling and floating smooth a road over which the truck and trailer rigs could haul logs. With the road finished and seasoned, the fallers and buckers would move in, to cut their earth-shaking swath through the standing timber, to limb and buck the trees into log lengths; and then the skidding and loading crews would come, to yard the logs out to the landings along the road and load them on the truck bunks.

He and Mike ate their lunch without much conversation. *A couple hundred gallons of Diesel oil down the drain,* Johnny thought. *A week's work. Mike's wages.* He tossed the lunch sack aside and tramped back up to the forks, driven by his restless irritation. Nothing to see, of course, but the certainty grew inside him that he'd been right.

He walked back and asked: "Mike, wasn't that grade-stick lined for the lower strip?"

Mike, whose full name was Mihail Mihailostronic, looked up and then frowned consideringly. "Doan' know, Johnny. I pick rock back there that day, remember?"

Johnny cuffed his go-to-hell hat back on his head. "That's right," he said tonelessly. He tramped over to the bulldozer and started it up.

It fit, like a glove. If it was a boner, Russ wouldn't hesitate to dump it on Johnny's back. If it hadn't been a mistake—well, it still fit. He had no illusions about Morton. Russ was a sharpshooter. A dollar was a big round important thing to Russ. Also, Russ Morton thought highly of Russ Morton. And to give the devil his due, Russ did all right.

Johnny came out of the Seabees a better bulldozer man than when he went in, and with back pay enough saved to pay down on a 'dozer. Russ came out of the ETO with silver bars on his collar and enough to set himself up with a 'dozer and carryall and three logging trucks; which was enough to wangle a two-way hauling and grading contract with Barton Logging Company. He'd let a sub-contract to Johnny and his 'dozer, which set up a chain of command with Swede Hanson, who was camp boss for Barton Logging, at the top, and Johnny Bradford at the bottom. This put Russ Morton in the middle, which is a fine place to play the ends against. Johnny sometimes had the feeling he was holding a gut-shot straight. And from the back you couldn't tell whether Hanson was an ace or a one-eyed jack.

Nor, Johnny conceded wryly, had he gone to any great pains to butter up Russ Morton. It wasn't his nature. Johnny Bradford had been the third of five boys, and the runt of the litter. At the age of ten, even his two younger brothers could thump him around, almost at will. He grew prodigiously between his fourteenth and fifteenth year, but never any taller thereafter. One by one, he whipped his taller brothers, though he was eighteen before he was able to take the oldest.

He got his first job in the woods that summer, and he worked up from pick-and-shovel, through grease-monkey, to cat-skinner and 'dozer man. He learned that a good little man had to be a little bit better than a good big man when it came to sewing up a job, and he never whispered when a shout would do. He was tough, and he was

cocky; but wherever he went, he made them remember his skill first and his size second.

All which made this situation intolerable. The word would be that Johnny Bradford had pulled a blooper. And a few of them who figured a little man ought to whisper more and shout less, would ride that word until it died.

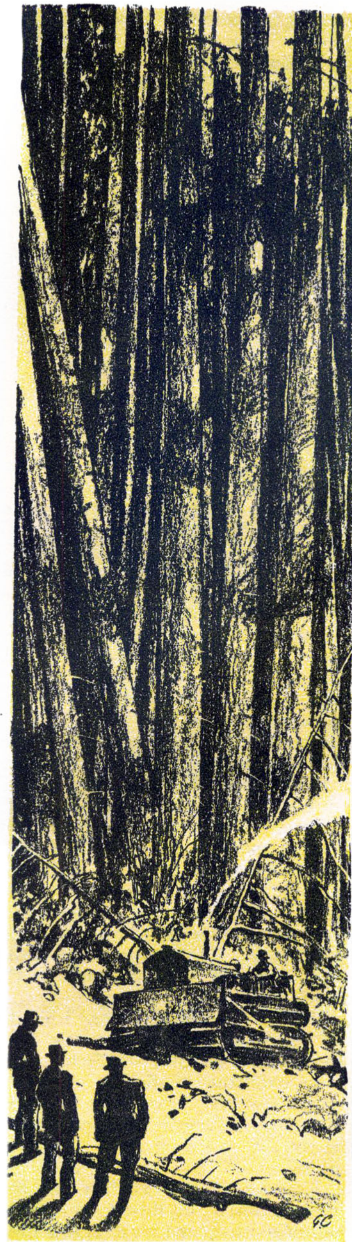
Johnny looked back over the day's completed grade now, a satisfactory stretch of clean-cut earth. His watch told him it was quiting-time, and he cracked the throttle about half back, climbed up onto the battered hood and stood over the blast of the exhaust stack, so that the powerful jet of the hot exhaust blew the dust out of his clothing, beating with his hat at the spots the blast didn't hit. Then he climbed down, killed the motor, and raised both hands, thumbs up, to Mike in the quitting-signal.

Mike nodded, carefully thrust his shovel upright into the loose dirt of the grade bank with the pick leaning against it, to discourage the porcupines from chewing up the handles for the salt his sweat had left on them, and they started hiking back up the grade to catch the crew truck to camp.

It was a perverse sort of thing, Johnny thought as he ate his supper. They ate ten to a table, in the long cookhouse mess-hall. They were all drivers or mechanics at this table, cat-skinners, truck-jockeys, grease-monkeys, cat-doctors. Generally a great deal of rough kidding went on here, for they were all top-notch professionals, almost jealously aware of their skills and prerogatives. Tonight they treated Johnny with a careful politeness that told him they had heard about the wrong-way road, and the politeness hurt more than the razzing he should be getting.

Their politeness told him that they believed it had been his mistake; and by a peculiar paradox of timberbeast ethics, that meant they could not mention it, because they were his friends. By the same paradox, if they had figured it to be an error of Russ Morton's, or of anyone else who had laid out the grade, Johnny would have been gleefully accused of the crime, and they would have ridden him to death.

The shop crew would have made and presented him with a pair of mammoth spectacle frames—the better for poor blind 'dozer-men to read grade-marks with—or they'd have hung a cowbell on his 'dozer so Mike could track him down when he became lost in the brush. Johnny could have laughed, or sworn, or both, and that would be it until some other hapless 'beast got into a bight and they transferred their attentions to him.



He grinned at their astonished eyes.

He realized the sharpness of the needle on which this delicate pointer of ethics balanced. Grousing would be considered alibi-ing, and his very acceptance of the situation had voided an alibi—was in itself very nearly an admission of guilt. Otherwise, the answer in their book was simple, straightforward and drastic. Bunch it. Pull the pin. Roll your bindle and drag your time, with or without busting the offender in the nose. Johnny chewed his food mechanically, and kept his gaze on the plate before him.

A chain of many links, this logging business, from the first bite of the blade that starts the road across the mountain's flank, to the end where the rough logs roll onto the mill carriage to meet the busy wicked saws that rend them into boards—each link a necessary unit, on whose strength the following links depend. Poor grade was costly grade, for it tied up trucks, demanded maintenance, slowed things up generally, to send the cost-sheet figures climbing.

Johnny knew these things, for they were part of being a topnotch 'dozer man; but that was only part of it to him. The job itself was challenge enough. Here was earth and brush and roots and rocks, obstacles to move and shape to use.

Up on the high wide seat, with the lurching, bellowing machine an extension of your hands, you are as big as any, and bigger than most, slicing the earth away in a clean cut, piling the bite yonder where the shoulder will be—and you come abruptly back to size when you look back, up the long slope, and see the tiny thread you've cut across the vast rolling shoulder of the timbered mountains.

It was just so many feet of completed grade, that cost so much a foot, to the man in a white shirt in the office; but to Johnny it was the job he'd done this day, a monument and a solid satisfaction.

Next day Johnny was experimenting with rhyming a wholly unprintable line that reflected on the ancestry and personal habits of Russ Morton when he hit the rock outcropping.

It ran angling across the line of grade, a tough backbone of live rock, pretty obviously bedded somewhere in the neighborhood of China. He cleaned up what loose stuff he could with the blade, but had to bypass it to get in the rest of the day. He saw Russ in camp that night and said: "Russ, I'll need a powder-monkey to shoot rock tomorrow."

Russ said carelessly: "Can't make it tomorrow. I've got another job for him right now." Johnny grunted and went on in to eat supper.

Two days later, he could see the end of the job, and the powder-monkey hadn't showed. He found Swede Hanson with Russ in the office, and heard Swede's dry, acid voice stop as he came in. Johnny said shortly: "Russ, I got to have that rock shot tomorrow. I'm finishing up, and I'll lose a couple hours moving, as it is."

Whatever Swede had been saying to Russ hadn't set well. Russ was showing a faint tinge of red underlying the weathered tan of his cheeks, and he

swung abruptly on Johnny now and demanded roughly: "Who the hell do you think you're throwing your voice at?"

"When I start throwing my voice," said Johnny, "you'll know it. But that rock has got to be shot."

It was pretty obvious that Russ was wishing Swede were not present. His eyes flicked from Johnny to Swede and back again, and a little muscle jumped at the corner of his heavy jaw. "I'll get him at it as soon as I can," he said. Johnny nodded stiffly and walked out.

He waited until the crew trucks were loaded, next morning, until he was sure that the powder-monkey was not going out on his truck. He saw the man board the woods-crew truck, going out to the logging side, and then he jumped down and called to Mike.

"We'll take my car this morning," he told his pit man, and Mike gathered up his lunch sack and water bag and followed him.

Johnny waited until the trucks were gone, and walked over to the timekeeper's shack. "I'll need half a dozen boxes of dynamite," he told the man. He made it casual and matter-of-fact, and the timekeeper made out the requisition without question.

Mike, a man of many practical talents, placed the shots. He sprung his holes with two-stick shots, cleaned them, and set his charges.

"Fire inna hole!" he shouted finally, and then a moment later three deep, grunting thuds shook them, and the rock ridge shuddered and yawned, and shook itself down into a rubble of loose chunks.

"Mike," said Johnny, "remind me to raise your wages when I get this 'dozer paid for."

"Is nawthing," said Mike modestly, but his bushy black mustache spread in a pleased grin.

BEFORE Johnny got it finished it was past quitting-time and he still had to make his move to start on a new road the next day. He left Mike to do the final handwork and walked the 'dozer cross-country, wallowing through the brush and young growth to another blazed strip. It was pleasant here, out of the heat and dust of grading.

The timber was tall and straight, virgin pine and fir. A man could almost believe that no foot had ever trod this forest, from the time of the Indians, except for the scar on the hillside, where an abandoned mine-shaft gaped black and mysterious, and a little mountain of tailings and rubble hulked, with weeds and small brush struggling for growth on the raw rock. The disgruntled miners had moved out bodily, apparently, for nothing but a few bleached timbers and rusty bits of broken metal fittings remained of the works.

He passed this, went on up the slope until he found the strip, made one pass with the blade to make a level parking place for the 'dozer, and hiked back to Mike and the car.

Swede Hanson and Russ stood at the corner of the timekeeper's shack. Swede sawed at Russ with his wry, cutting tone, and then Russ said in his rough, carrying voice: "All right. I'll have another 'dozer to take up the slack by next week."

"Where you going to get it?"

"That's my problem." Russ' voice showed as much annoyance as he dared use on Swede.

"See that it is, then. I don't like to truck on green grade."

Johnny heard this much, and went on by. Swede turned away and headed toward his own shack.

Russ sent his rough voice after Johnny. "Bradford!" he said.

"Yeah?"

Russ came striding to him, throwing his words ahead of him. "Who the hell told you to draw dynamite, Bradford?"

Johnny shrugged. "What's the difference? The job's done now. I couldn't tie up another day waiting for a powder-monkey."

Russ said angrily, "Look, Bradford, you'll clear requisitions through me from now on. Is that clear?"

"Clear enough," said Johnny. He stared steadily at Russ, trying to figure the big man's anger. He added quietly: "I figured it would be to the advantage of both of us to get that road built." He saw Russ' wide mouth twist as he started to say something, and in that instant something broke inside Johnny Bradford and let the words out.

"If you don't like the way I handle it," he said through his teeth, "you can take the job and—" He informed Russ Morton explicitly where he could put the job, the grade-sticks, and any old rusty steel cable that might be found handy. Then he waited.

Russ took it. Incredibly, impossibly, he took it. A sullen red surge of pure fury darkened his face, and there was just a glint of white locked teeth between his stretched lips. But something held him. Something held his hands down, and something kept speech from his lips. He stared at Johnny for a long hot instant; then he wheeled and tramped away, and Johnny watched him go.

It didn't make sense. Russ wasn't one to take one in the teeth and walk away from it. Johnny turned it over in his mind as he went to wash up for supper, but the answer did not come.

He got part of it Saturday, which was the end of the month and payday. There was no check for him at the timekeeper's office.

"Why not?" demanded Johnny.

The timekeeper was rushed and harried, with a checklist in one hand and pencil in the other, and a stack of company checks between his elbows; the counter space was jammed with the truckers and cat-skinners and choker-setters wanting their pay.

"I don't know," said the timekeeper irritably. "I just work here. See Russ Morton. Next!"

Russ turned away from the pine table in the shack that served him for office and bunkhouse.

"It's reasonable enough," he said. "I'm simply not paying for grade I didn't get."

"I've done my job," Johnny said. Something was wrong here. Russ wouldn't look directly at him, but neither was he on the defensive. "You haven't made your minimum," said Russ, and his voice wasn't right.

Russ used his voice like a club, because a rough arrogance was his nature, but now he spoke almost quietly, and he would not look at Johnny.

JOHNNY matched the tone as he said: "I didn't miss it far. That week's work I put in on the road you pulled me off of would more than make up the difference."

"It was your boner. I won't pay for it."

Johnny put his square-knuckled fists on the edge of the table and leaned forward. "I think there's been pussy-footing enough, Russ," he said. "Let's get this thing straightened out: I'm sick of playing your penny-ante games. The more I think of it, the more I don't believe it was a boner—by anybody. You're going to give me one hell of a good answer to why my check's held up, or my 'dozer walks off the job and out of this camp tomorrow."

That brought Morton's eyes up, and for just the slightest fraction of an instant they showed a little glow that might have been triumph.

"You move that machine without finishing the job," said Russ coldly, "and I'll slap an attachment on it and tie it up till snow flies."

"Then pay me." Johnny felt a little quiver of strain running up his arms from his clenched fists, and knew he wasn't going to be able to hold it much longer.

Russ picked up a pencil, and his thick finger turned it over and over. Then he said roughly: "Bradford, this is strictly business. You're no ring-tailed wonder on the job, and you haven't done much to help it with your attitude. You've gone around with a chip on your shoulder ever since you came here, and I've put up with a lot from you."

"You're breaking my heart," said Johnny through his teeth.

Russ went on doggedly: "I've leaned over backward for you, Bradford. Hanson wanted your hide, when you graded that back-line, but I kept you on, hoping you'd learned a lesson."

"You big-hearted thing!" said Johnny. He wheeled away from the table, and stopped just inside the door. "It will take me about three days to make up my minimum," he said. "Have my check made out, because that's the day I quit. And about that back-line—you can shove it right where you put the job."

"I think not," said Russ. There was no mistaking the spark of triumph in his eyes now. He turned something over in his mind for an instant, and then said: "Bradford, I'll make you a business proposition. I can use that 'dozer. Sign it over to me, and I'll waive the rest of the minimum and pay you off, plus your equity in the machine."

"That's a business proposition?" demanded Johnny witheringly. "You get my 'dozer for half of what it's worth? Who gets the business?"

Russ roared suddenly: "All right, you shrimp! The offer dies when you step out that door."

"Consider it done," said Johnny. He wheeled out, and tramped down the planked walkway.

Illustrated by GRATTAN CONDON

"All right, you shrimp! The offer dies when you step out the door."

HE got the rest of his answers the next day. The dust of his labors boiled up around the heat-shimmering hood of the bulldozer and settled on him, coating him with a ridiculous minstrel-man mask through which only his eyes and lips showed. He was in reverse, floating a strip with the blade riding free, when the car pulled up behind him and the city-dressed man got out and walked toward him, taking mincing steps in a vain effort to protect his brilliant shoe-shine.

Johnny throttled down and swung down over the treads.

"Mr. Bradford," said the man, "I represent the Acme Tractor Company. I'm sorry to have to bring bad news, but since you have become delinquent by one-fourth of your last monthly payment, the credit manager has required me to serve you this notice that both the amount in arrears and the current payment must be made by noon tomorrow, or we must repossess the machine. I'm sorry."

"Sure," said Johnny shortly. He took the paper. "Sure," he repeated, and watched the man walk self-consciously back to his car.

It all fell into place suddenly. "I'll have another 'dozer on it next week," Morton had told Swede Hanson. Russ was in trouble with Swede on the other grading show, then. He'd shoved the boner of the back-line grade off onto Johnny. He'd lined that stake onto the back-line, knowing it would put Johnny in the hole, and now he was springing the trap by undercutting him with the tractor company.

The tractor company would never foreclose right on the day, not if they'd have to move the machine out and look for another buyer. But with Russ offering them their money at once, and taking over the machine on the spot— Johnny swore luridly and jammed the notice in his pocket.

He tramped clear around the machine, hands rammed into his pockets, kicking at the little ridged treadmarks. Then he straightened suddenly. He sent a shrill whistle and a beckoning wave back to Mike. Then he swarmed up into the seat, dropped the shift lever into third gear and cracked the throttle.

Russ, me boy, he thought, *let's see who gets the business.*

IT was quite a delegation. Johnny sat on the running-board of his battered coupé and watched them come. Russ and the tractor-company man were in one pickup. Within the minute, Swede Hanson pulled up behind in a Barton Company pickup. Russ looked around sharply at the sound of that motor, then shrugged and came on. Johnny flicked the ash from his cigarette and scarcely looked up when the tractor man cleared his throat.

"I'm afraid," said the man, "that I'll have to carry out my orders, Mr. Bradford. That is, unless you have the money for the payment?"

"No," said Johnny, "I haven't got it."

"I've had all I can stand of you," Russ said, and knocked Johnny down with a straight left.

"Then, we'll have to demand the—"

"Help yourself," said Johnny. He got up, ground out the cigarette under his heel and opened the door of his coupé. He ignored Russ.

"Wait a minute," said the tractor man suddenly. "Where is the bulldozer?"

The grade ended here, dead into a thicket of brush, but there was no 'dozer in sight. "It's your baby," said Johnny. "You find it."

"Now see here," cried the tractor man, "you are responsible under—"

"Sue me," said Johnny. He turned his head to look at Russ Morton. "That's a nice routine you worked out, chum," he said. "I'm going to enjoy seeing you get in and scratch with the chickens. You see, your 'dozer man told me about that final drive gear going out in your 'dozer. You were behind on your work before, but now you're hung up good. Okay, chum, let's see you wiggle out."

Russ Morton's face darkened, and then he said in his rough, confident voice: "You didn't move that 'dozer without leaving tracks, and you didn't get very far. You're just making it hard on yourself, Bradford."

Johnny smiled sweetly, and said gently: "Temper, temper!" Russ growled, and wheeled away, to tramp along the grade.

He found the tracks. You can't move the tonnage of a bulldozer without leaving the marks of the endless treads. They Indian-filed into the brush, Russ and the tractor man, with Swede Hanson behind. Johnny grinned at their backs and followed.

There was no attempt at concealment. The tracks went straight across the slope for almost half a mile.

Then Johnny tipped back his head and shouted.

"O-k-a-a-ay!" he whooped, and the call rang clear and high through the timber. Russ stopped and wheeled, almost knocking the tractor man down, and then from up ahead came a dull *thoo-oomp!* that sent a tiny tremor into their bodies. Swede Hanson turned and sent a long look at Johnny. "That was dynamite," he announced.

"Mm-hmm," agreed Johnny.

Then Russ was wheeling back onto the tracks and crashing heedlessly ahead. They followed him into the old-mine clearing.

Only there wasn't any mine shaft any more. There was a fresh rock-slide where it had been, with rock dust and the wry-smelling fumes of exploded dynamite curling up. Uncounted hundreds of tons of earth and stone made up the slide, but the shaft mouth was gone. The 'dozer tracks led straight into the rubble. Johnny sighed sadly, sat down on a convenient rock and lighted a cigarette.

Russ Morton stalked on stiff legs to the very edge of the slide, then wheeled with an explosive curse and came back.

"What good do you think that did you?" he demanded savagely.

Johnny snapped his cigarette-butt away. "What good did it do you to put me in a jam? You cut my throat for a chance to make a quick buck, but I'm damned if you're going to make it off of me."

"You'll pay through the nose for this," said the tractor-company man. "You'll never buy so much as a cotter pin on the Coast again."

"Okay," said Johnny.

Swede Hanson said in his wry way: "Somebody's in a jam, any way you look at it. There'll be snow flying before that slide's dug out."

"Great God," roared Russ, "how do I make grade with one 'dozer broke down and another buried?"

Hanson shrugged. "That's your lookout."

"I can do it," said Johnny quietly.

Russ spun around on his heel. "I think I've had about all I can stand of you for one day," he said conversationally.

He took two stiff-legged strides and knocked Johnny down with a straight left.

Johnny came back to his hands and knees and cuffed at his dripping nose with the back of one hand. Then without shifting his feet he sent his stocky weight into Morton's middle in a driving block. Russ folded and went down, with Johnny atop, and Johnny's square fists chunked twice on Russ' face. Then Johnny sat up, and a two-pound shard of the blasted rock was in his fist.

"If you think," he said, a little out of breath, "that I'm going to let you up to beat my ears off, you're nuts. You just stay put."

Russ eyed the slab of rock and relaxed. Johnny said without taking his eyes off him: "Swede, if I put a 'dozer to work on Russ' grade within twenty-four hours, will you write a

check to cover me with this tractor-company bloodsucker?"

Swede moved around to where he could see Johnny's face. He considered it only an instant. "It'd be worth it," he said dryly, "to see you pull a rabbit that big out of the hat. It's a deal."

"You can't lose," said Johnny. "You can hold it out on Russ." Then to the tractor man: "Will that take you off my back?"

The tractor man swallowed, looked at Russ, at Johnny's dripping nose, back to Swede Hanson. The wheels went around in his head almost visibly. The Barton Logging account ran to a comfortable number of digits before you came to the decimal point, and Swede Hanson was Barton's camp boss. "If Mr. Hanson says so," he ventured finally.

"Okay," said Johnny. He poised the rock an inch higher and turned his face close to Morton's.

"Now," he said softly, "how was it that I graded that back-line?" Russ snarled and writhed tentatively against Johnny's weight. Johnny raised the rock another inch, and Russ winced and settled back.

The wheels were going around in his head too, and it was plain to see. Without any equipment, he would default his grading contract. His penalty payments could wipe him out. A dollar was an important thing to Russ Morton. And Johnny might just be able to pull a rabbit out of his hat. . . .

Russ said with a savage sullenness: "All right. The stick was set for the back-line. So what? A man's entitled to a mistake."

"Mistake?" Johnny demanded ominously. The rock shard quivered in his hand.

"All right," said Russ hoarsely. "All right. I lined it on purpose. I needed that 'dozer, and I had to stall you a week to get my licks in with the tractor company."

JOHNNY got up. He hefted the rock consideringly, then tossed it away. He cuffed at his nose and looked down at Russ, at the petulant mouth and the eyes that were carefully avoiding his. He felt an almost contemptuous pity come into his voice.

"That was a boner, right there," he said. "Now I'll show you another one you made."

He tramped away from them, over the towering pile of tailings to the side of the dynamited shaft, and almost instantly came the snarling *brr-a-a-aap!* of a gasoline starting-motor. The gasoline motor labored, and then a Diesel motor took up its chuckling grumble, and Johnny brought the 'dozer waddling around from behind the mountain of tailings, snapped it into a tight turn and throttled down.

He grinned as their astonished eyes swung from him and the machine to the undisturbed slide that covered the mine shaft, and back. He swung down over the treads.

"I didn't say it was in there," he said. "You took it for granted, and it was none of my affair to tell you different."

Hanson nodded in comprehension. "Walked it over there on planks, didn't you? No tracks."

"Yep," said Johnny. He looked at Russ, and quickly away. He had a queer little thought just then, about how little there was left to a man when you stripped him of his pride. Johnny knew. He'd had them looking at him this last week as if he were a trained ape that didn't know a grade-stick from a bull-bar.

THEN Hanson said: "Damned if this isn't the last time I try to judge whisky by the size of the jug." He wheeled away, ignoring Russ, heading back for his pickup. "You've got a job," said Swede to Johnny, "for as long as you want it. We'll talk contract later."

Behind Johnny, the Diesel motor chuckled hoarsely.

THE PERPETUAL PITCHER

WELL, sir, who would you say was the most wonderful pitcher of all time: Christy Mathewson? Grover Cleveland Alexander? Walter Johnson? Or maybe Lefty Grove? Or Bob Feller?

Well, you can have them all. I'll string along with a pitching-mound personage you probably never heard of—Charlie Radbourn.

Charlie pitched for the Providence Club back in 1884, when Providence was in the major leagues.

He was remarkable for two reasons: 1. He won nearly all the time. 2. He pitched nearly all the time. This combination, plus the fact that he was a terrific hitter and bat in the clean-up or third spot, made him an almost indestructible one-man team.

Just as a milkman or a postman goes out on his route every day, Charlie Radbourn went out on the mound every day—or practically every day.

According to the statistics published in the Providence *Journal* at the end of the 1884 season, Charlie pitched 85 of the 112 games Providence played, or something like three-fourths of all his team's contests!

No mention was made as to in just how many of these he came out on top. He won with such regularity that apparently it was taken for granted that it would be understood he won just about all of them.

Modern record-books credit Charlie with having pitched 72 games that season, winning 60 and losing 12. The discrepancy in the number of games between the *Journal* and today's record-books probably is due to the fact that the *Journal* listed exhibition games as well as regularly scheduled ones.

But any way you look at it, this Charlie Radbourn came just as close to being perpetual motion on the mound as any pitcher in baseball. During the month of September, for instance, he pitched all his team's games but two and won all but two of the contests. At one stretch he pitched 27 consecutive games, winning 26 of them. He also won 18 straight games.

It became such a routine occurrence for Charlie to take the mound and win that even the hometown paper seldom bothered to give the event more than a paragraph or two. When Detroit once did manage to nick Radbourn for a win, the Providence *Journal* chronicled matter-of-factly, "Detroit surprised everyone today by beating Providence."

When Providence met the New York Metropolitans in the Polo Grounds for the championship of the baseball world—it was a three-out-of-five series then—Charlie naturally pitched all three games for Providence and quite naturally won all of them. The scores were 6-to-0, 3-to-1, and 11-to-2.

THEY were typical Charlie Radbourn-pitched games. The opposition seldom scored more than a run or two off of him, very often didn't score anything, and generally struck out 9 or 10 times in a contest.

You won't find Charlie Radbourn in the record-books, except for 1884. Very probably he got bored with the monotony of it all and took up something that offered a little more excitement and suspense.

—By Harold Helfer

Operation Dial

Strange things can and do happen in Occupied Germany—as witness this unusual story by the author of "Camel Soldier."

IT'S nice to know you have a clear conscience whenever the Occupation Army's Counter-Intelligence Corps boys drop in. Invariably they have an air of suppressed menace; and this slim little man with the tight mouth and hooded eyes was no exception.

"Bernhardt, CIC," he said, flashing a blue-and-gold badge under my nose. "I am sorry to be of trouble, Captain, but I think you have lost a trench-coat a few days ago."

That's technique—drop a surprise fact in your subject's lap, and you put him on the defensive. I'd been doing a high boil about that trench-coat for three days, but I couldn't figure how this dapper little apple in the dark-green uniform knew it.

"Yeah, I lost a trench-coat," I told him. "Some wise Heinie yanked it right off my arm in the railroad station. Did you find it?"

Bernhardt looked at me with a sardonic gleam in his gray eyes. He was about thirty-five, give or take a couple of years, and those deep parentheses around his mouth could have been put there as a sign of a cruel nature or some high living. "Well, I will tell you about it, Captain." He spoke with a vague accent.

I tagged him as an average CIC agent, a Nazi persecutee who'd fled Germany around 1935 or so, and hooked up with the Army when war came.

"Your trench-coat," Bernhardt went on, "has been found, yes. But I do not think that you will want it any more. I do not think that perhaps even a Stateside dry-cleaning could fix it now. We found it this morning under a very bloody corpse in Hapsburger Allee. Since it had your name on a tape in the collar, along with a few odds and ends in the pockets, I thought I should come and talk with you about it."

I must have looked shocked, because Bernhardt laughed a dry little laugh, his mouth opening like a little bird's when it reaches for a worm. He opened the brief-case with his thin expressive hands and tossed out a couple of crumpled letters, a key-ring, half a railroad ticket, and a dirty handkerchief on my desk. "It is reasonable to assume you had nothing to do with the corpse, Captain Scott," he said, "but the circumstances surrounding this dead man—his name was Hans Zimmerman, a German civilian—are peculiar. I should like to ask you exactly how he may have obtained your trench-coat."

"Hell, he stole it! Or somebody stole it. It was snatched off my arm in the railroad station right here in Karlsruhe when I was coming back from Switzerland. I was going down that long tunnel that runs from the tracks into the main waiting-room, when some guy in a long leather coat and soft hat gives me a jolt from behind, grabs the coat off my arm, and gallops through the tunnel before I know what gives. I took off after him, but he got away in the crowd. I reported it to the Constabulary there, but stuff gets pilfered every day and I couldn't give a decent description of the guy. Coat was a present from my wife, too. What's she going to say when I tell her I lost it like that? That I shouldn't be let out alone, probably."

Bernhardt laughed again, his sharp face crinkling but his eyes still leveling a stiff gaze at me. He shrugged and sat down in the chair, spreading his hands. "Well, Captain Scott, the coat is now covered with much blood. Maybe you will care to salvage it—I don't know. You said you were coming back from Switzerland. Were you there on the Army tour?" Bernhardt lit a cigarette and offered me one. I took it.

"YEAH, I took the tour. How else can an Army officer get into Switzerland? You civilians are lucky. Go in on a passport, stay as long as you like, change all the dough you want to. All an Army file can do is go for a week, spend fifty-five bucks, and come back. My wife had some stuff she wanted to do in Basle, and I had to leave her there. Couldn't even get an extension to stay the extra time with her."

"Where did you go?"

"St. Moritz. My wife's a skiing fan—so'm I, for that matter; so we went up there. Left from Karlsruhe on the 11th on that pot-boiler of a train and I came back on the 18th. My wife gets back today."

Bernhardt looked carefully at the end of his cigarette and pursed his mouth. A little piece of cigarette-paper was stuck to his lower lip. "Now consider this carefully for a moment, Captain—it is quite important: Did you at some time during your trip, very likely toward the end of it, perhaps in Zurich on the night stopover you have there, see or meet any civilian who may have seemed to have made a special effort to talk to you? I know it is an odd question, but it is important to know this."

I WIPED a hand along my chin. "H'm! That could apply to any one of a dozen people or more. Two old ladies in the Chesa Veglia in St. Moritz told us to try the *zabaglione.* Zeller—he's the manager of the Hotel Monopol—talked to me almost every day about bob-sledding. He even arranged to take me down the run on a two-man bob. There was our guide, nice guy named Al Brugger. We went to the Corso in Zurich and talked to Buddy Halleck, the American MC there, one night. Those come to mind right away, but I know there were others." The Swiss are a chummy bunch, anyway, and they seem to like Americans. I could have mentioned a few more—watch-dealers, shoe-salesmen, and so on, but I was a little fed up with all this verbal fencing when I didn't know the angle.

"Look, Bernhardt, what's the deal? You come in here, wave your badge, hoist up your cloak and show me your dagger, tell me there's a stiff named Zimmerman found with my trench-coat, and then start to grill me about my Swiss tour. How come?"

Bernhardt ground out his cigarette in the ashtray. He looked thoughtful for a minute. "This much I can tell you," he said. "Zimmerman, the German we found dead in Hapsburger Allee today, was a member of the *I.G. Farbenindustrie.* That is to say, he was not one of their top scientists, but he was high enough up in the factory over there at Ludwigshafen to

by FRANKLIN M. DAVIS, JR.

Illustrated by Ray Houlihan

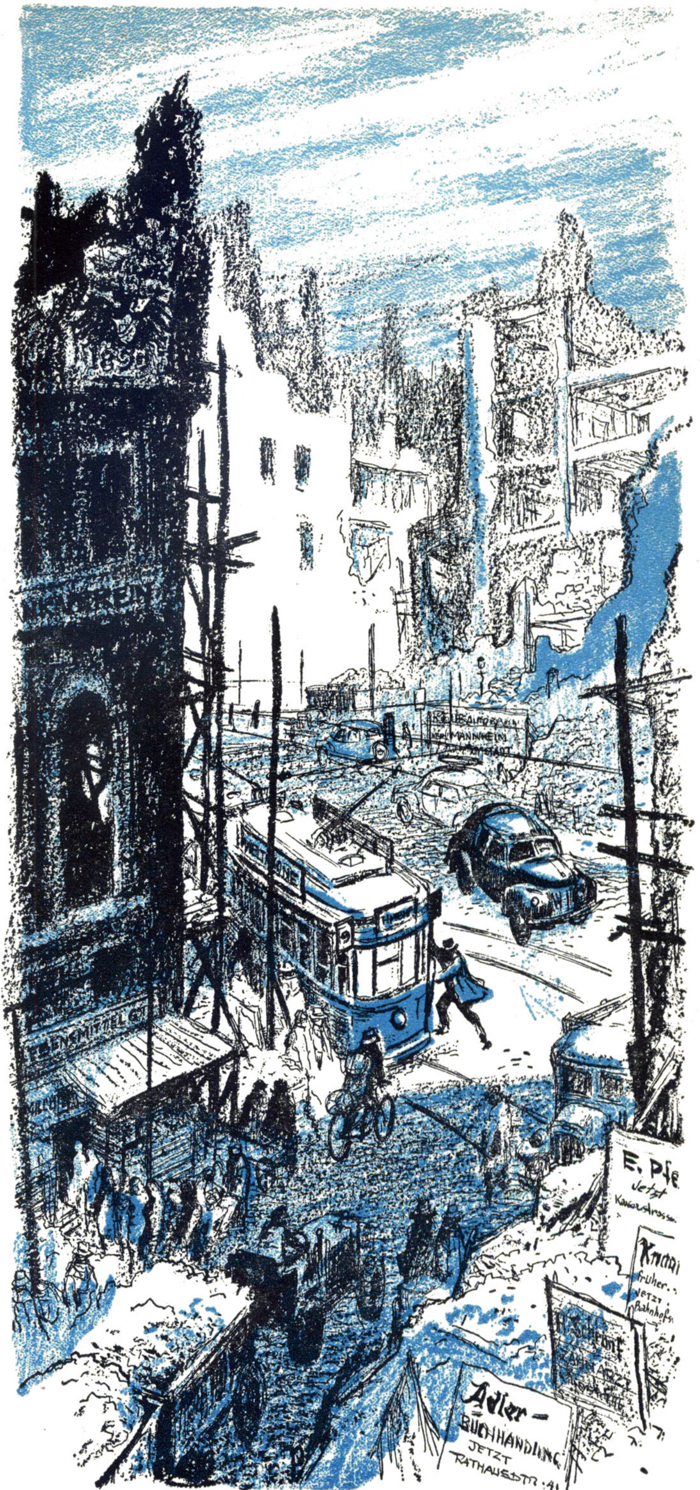
have considerable responsibilities, and to know thoroughly the workings of the plant there. We have had many reports that an important secret industrial process the Germans developed was stolen by someone there at *I. G.* in Ludwigshafen right at the close of the war, perhaps even after the Americans got in here. We think the secret was spirited out of Germany, to Switzerland undoubtedly, and that Zimmerman was involved in a plan to get it back into Germany, where he could bargain with various Allied governments for its sale. It is sufficiently important a secret so that any government would be interested in it, very interested indeed."

"What is it—atomic stuff?"

"I am afraid I cannot tell you that. Since Zimmerman was murdered, however, we think he had the secret. We think, but are not sure, that you may have been the courier who carried the secret back to him from Switzerland. There can be no other explanation for the theft of your trench-coat. What easier way to send a document back than to give it to an Army officer who gets through Customs without so much as having his bag opened?"

I got mad. "Now look, Bernhardt. First off, I wouldn't carry any kind of unauthorized communication back from Switzerland. I know the laws and Army Regulations as well as you do—or better! Furthermore, there are nineteen thousand ways to smuggle stuff out of Switzerland into Germany without using an Army officer to do the carrying, especially on such a long-shot deal as this. And why me? Why not some soldier who might be glad to carry it through for the chance to make a few bucks? Courier, hell!"

Bernhardt waved a bony hand. "Please, Captain, do not misunderstand me. I have not made everything clear. *If* you carried the process, it was because you were selected. I think it was slipped into your coat pocket. Look at your unit and your job here—do you have any idea how many Germans here in Karlsruhe know you by sight and by name? You'd be very easy for any one of a number of people to see in a crowd, like in the railroad station."



I swung the car over toward him but he hopped aboard a passing streetcar. I could feel little cold fingers play along my spine.

Sure enough, there was Brunner with a bulging brief-case, moving rather warily.

He had a point there. I was working for TRIAD—that's Army for Technical Research, Industrial and Documentary. We were a pretty fair-sized outfit, responsible for the location, evaluation, recording and shipment to the U.S. and her Allies of German technical and industrial data. I never thought much about the TRIAD big picture, though, because I was the administrative officer. I hired and fired the Germans who worked for us—we had eight hundred—and I guess I got a little notoriety when I'd had personal charge of evicting some twenty-one hundred Germans from their homes to make room for us when we'd moved to Karlsruhe from Frankfurt some six months earlier.

"Yeah, Bernhardt," I agreed, "that may be. There's probably a lot of Krauts know who I am, but what does that prove? I never heard anyone around TRIAD say anything about missing secrets especially—there's plenty of stuff, high-powered stuff, the Germans hid here and there. If it's not in Switzerland, it's maybe in Portugal or Spain or even Argentina. There's a lot tucked away right here in Germany. We're always finding another salt-mine some place that's loaded with crates of documents. Why try to pin one poop-sheet down to me?"

Bernhardt shrugged. "The point is, Captain, we are not sure of course that you were selected as the messenger. It was just that your coat was found on the dead Zimmerman, a man deeply involved in this missing process. You had just returned from Switzerland; your coat was stolen by a German who obviously could have no use for a piece of Army uniform. Perhaps that occurred to you?"

"I dunno, Bernhardt. There's plenty of ex-PW's walking around in pieces of U.S. uniform that have been dyed. I thought it was a little odd, but I figured whoever stole the coat would cut it up, or dye it, or remodel it or something. It's a nice warm coat, and you know what the clothing situation is over here."

Bernhardt stood up. "Yes, you are right of course, Captain. I had hoped you might provide us with a lead. We must check all possibilities. Well, I will not take any more of your time. Thank you very much." He bowed slightly. "We will send your coat back to you as soon as the routine investigation and report of the death of Zimmerman are completed."

After he'd gone, I pondered a few minutes over the tale he'd spun. Still, I'd been working for TRIAD long enough to know nothing that happens in Occupied Germany is strange.

Just then Andy Johnson, deputy chief and my immediate boss, came in. I told him about getting my coat back, or at least that it'd been found. He was interested in the missing-process angle. I asked him if we had any records on it, and he said: "No, but that doesn't mean a great deal. We're leaving most of the *I. G. Farben* stuff to the I. G. Control Commission people, anyway. There's probably a lot of material like that they're looking for. What do you say about some lunch? Can I give you a ride?"

"Oh, no—thanks, Andy. I've got to go down and pick up Jean in a few minutes, anyway."

"That's right—she's coming back today, isn't she? Do you know if she got Ellen's watch?"

"She'd planned to, I know, Andy. She figured on using the time in Basle just for shopping, so she probably picked it up. If she didn't, I'll put her on K. P.—I told her you wanted it for Ellen's birthday."

"I'm sure she got it all right. I'll get it from you later on."

Andy went out, and I picked up my hat, told Gisela, my German secretary, I was going to be gone for a while, and went out to the parking lot. As I

climbed into my car, I noticed a crummy-looking German gawking at the automobile but I didn't think much about it. American cars are such an improvement over German makes that even a '46 Chevvy sedan like mine looks pretty good to most of the Germans.

WHILE I was driving down to the station to get Jean, I was thinking about Bernhardt's crack about all the Germans who knew me. I did feel pretty lousy about that housing deal, because we booted so many people out, and it was wintertime too; but it was either them or us.

Jean's train got in eventually, and I saw Jean in the crowd, her slim figure almost lost in a welter of boxes, bundles, packages and bags. After I'd got hold of a porter, I tucked my hand under her elbow and steered her toward the main gate. "Next time," I said, "you better not stay off and shop. I need protection."

She slanted a glance at me across her turned-up nose. "What do you mean? Protection for your old billfold? I didn't buy so much. And I got a beautiful watch for Andy to give to Ellen. I did very well."

Getting the bundles and then Jean installed in the car, I told her about the coat getting stolen, and then about Bernhardt and the fact the coat had been found. "It's the darnedest thing," I said, as we eased through the traffic and headed toward our place in Durlach. "This guy shows up in my office and practically accuses me of bringing this big secret back from Switzerland. Said he thought somebody slipped it into my coat-pocket."

"For goodness' sake! Isn't that the creepiest thing you ever heard of?" Then she gasped, and dived into her handbag; and lipstick, keys, wallet, passport, compact and ticket stubs sprayed over the front seat.

"What are you looking for?" I said, as I pulled the car into our driveway. "Lose something? Come on, let's go in and see what Olga's got for lunch. I'll eat anything that doesn't bite me first."

"Just a minute. I knew it! Here it is. See—I took this out of your coat pocket on the train to Basle so I could keep the canasta score when I was

playing with that Mrs. What's-her-name. Come to think of it, I don't ever remember seeing you use this, but your pockets are always so full of old papers and stuff I never thought anything about it at the time. But now that you tell me about the coat, I just—"

"Gimme." I grabbed. "I haven't used one like this for years." What I'd grabbed was a small black notebook. Something like an electric shock went up my arm. I held the thing as if it were hot. *I knew I'd never seen it before.*

I turned to Jean, who was trying to scoop her things back into her bag while she was staring at the notebook. "You're sure you got this out of my coat pocket?"

"Of course I'm sure. I never noticed anything in it, just some blank pages in front. What—"

I whistled. "Bernhardt was right. I must have been rooked into being a messenger!"

Jean squealed. "Ooh, Bill! What do you suppose it can be? Let's look at it. Come on, let's see what's in it."

"Not out here. Come on." We ducked into the house and went into the dining-room. I pushed the dishes aside and put the notebook down. It was a looseleaf notebook with imitation covers, pocket-sized, and filled with ruled white paper. The first few pages were blank, and one sheet had on it the canasta score.

Jean gave me a push. "For heaven's sake, turn the pages. Let's see what this is."

The notebook was a disappointment. All we could see that might have been of value was about a dozen pages covered with notes, written in German or at any rate a foreign language. There were about seven equations scattered through the notes, but all I could dope out were the lines, and equal signs. Numerators, denominators, factors and multipliers looked like so many hen-tracks. The last page was a diagram with several corners sketched around the edge of what I supposed was a flow chart. "I'll be damned," I said. "Somebody slipped that book in my pocket, figuring I wouldn't be wearing the coat. Seems to me I carried it over my arm most of the way back, anyway. What a patsy, what a patsy!"

"Show it to Olga," Jean said as we finished lunch. "She can probably translate it."

"No," I told her. "This might be too important, and she probably can't figure out these formulas anyway. I'll turn it over to Bernhardt after I let some TRIAD joker look it through. So long. I'll be home about six."

When I got back to the office, I took the notebook upstairs to Documents Section, where all TRIAD's technical translating is done. None of the American personnel was around, so I took the notebook to Herr Doktor Brunner. Brunner looks like a malevolent turkey buzzard, but he's won two Hartmann prizes, speaks four languages, and is a highly-valued TRIAD German employee. "Do me a favor, Herr Doktor? Just look this little book over and let me have the gist of what it says, will you?"

"Certainly, Captain. With pleasure." He bowed stiffly from the waist, and what I suppose he thought was a smile rippled up from his wattles. I went back downstairs, wondering what it was all about.

In my office I looked up the CIC Detachment phone number and dialed. After an extra long wait, a voice answered:

"CIC, Erickson speaking."

"Let me speak to Agent Bernhardt."

"Bernhardt, did you say?"

"Yeah, B-E-R-N-H-A-R-D-T—Bernhardt."

"Sorry, nobody here by that name. You sure you wanted CIC, not CID?"

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I must have given the guy a sharp gnaw, because there was another silence; then a voice: "This is Chief Agent Ryan speaking. Who is this and whom did you want to speak to, please?"

"Look, Mr. Ryan, this is Captain Scott over at TRIAD; and this morning a CIC agent came into my office, waved his badge at me, and said his name was Bernhardt. Now your man says there's nobody by that name. This guy this morning was average height, sharp face, gray eyes, with a slight shade of a foreign accent."

"Hmm," Ryan mused at the other end of the wire. "Well, he may have been from the 986th headquarters in Stuttgart. What was the case?"

"The case? This guy Zimmerman you found in Hapsburger Allee this morning. A German civilian. Murdered."

"Murdered? A German civilian?" Ryan's voice went up. "We don't handle that stuff; neither does CID. That's strictly for the German *Polizei*. We don't know anything about a German murder—wouldn't handle it if we did."

I thanked Ryan and hung up the phone. This was beginning to look stranger by the minute. There was something way out of line. Was Bernhardt a phony? What about the notebook? The notebook! I trotted upstairs to see how Brunner was doing.

Crump, the fat and sloppy American exec in Documents section, was sitting behind his desk reading the paper when I went through the door. "Where's Brunner?" I looked around and couldn't see him. "Hey, where is that guy?"

Crump looked up. "Simmer down, Flash, simmer down. He just went out for a minute. Said he had to go to the market, so I gave him a little time off. Why?"

"He was going to translate a notebook for me. Where is it? Come on, this is important!"

Annoyance squeezed Crump's face as he slapped his paper down. "Look on his desk if you want to, but you know as well as I do you're supposed to pass that stuff through us before it gets to the Germans."

"Oh, knock it off," I told him. "You know at least half the people in TRIAD take the stuff direct to the Germans all the time."

"Okay, okay," Crump waved his hand. "There's his desk. Go to it. It's all yours."

I moved to Brunner's desk. Only one drawer was open; the others were locked. There was nothing on top of it at all or in the open drawer.

I thought for a minute. Was I getting excited for nothing? Still, I

wanted that notebook, and I wanted it right now. I decided to find Brunner. I ran down the stairs and asked the man on the front door if he had seen Brunner. *"Haben Sie Herr Doktor Brunner gesehen?"*

"Ja, ja, Herr Kapitan!" And he launched into a torrent of German, from which I gathered that Brunner had gone across the street to the German employees' billets about ten minutes before.

I shot across the street, up the narrow stairs to the billeting office, and finally made the wrinkled custodian understand I was looking for Brunner. *"Oben,"* he said, *"oben."* He plucked some keys from a nail on the wall. We toiled up three flights, the ancient old gaffer limping up ahead of me. *"Nummer vier and funfzig,"* he said, stopping in front of room 54. I knocked; knocked again. No answer. The door was locked. I turned away. Then on a hunch, I turned back.

"Aufmachen," I said.

The custodian selected a key, fitted it into the lock, and opened the door. The room was a small one; only high-ranking employees like Brunner had single rooms, we were that crowded for space. The two Army blankets were folded neatly on the bed, and the room had the scrubbed austerity of a monk's cell. There was no sign of Brunner—no toilet articles, no clothes, no nothing. A tin can on the sill under the partly-opened window caught my eye. It had some charred papers in it, and they smelled sharp and felt warm. I couldn't tell if the black scraps were part of the notebook or not.

I tried to ask the custodian if he had seen Brunner go out. The old man looked at me with wide-staring blue eyes. *"Nein, nein.* No, no!"

THINGS were moving too fast for me to follow, but I was convinced now that Brunner had fled—taken one look at the notebook, then beat it. Still, that didn't quite figure. He saw hundreds of industrial secrets and processes a week—why take off so fast with one? *Unless it was something special.*

I grilled the custodian again. Brunner had spent the previous night in the billet; indeed, the old man had seen him that morning. But he hadn't seen him come in or go out that afternoon.

I knew that if Brunner had taken off, if he had decided the notebook was worth enough to throw up his job and go underground as a thief, he couldn't have got very far. Of course, he was probably hoping for a little more time. He couldn't have known I'd be on his tail quite so fast.

I zipped back to my office, stuck my head in the door long enough to call Gisela, and took her out to my car. "Gisela," I asked her as we were getting in, "if a German wanted to get out of town fast, what would be the best way for him to go?"

She seemed mildly surprised by the question, but had a ready answer. "Oh, Captain, it is impossible for a German to get very far in an automobile in these times. Any car moving is checked by your MPs, your Constabulary, and the German police too. I think by train is the only way. There are not so many check-points, and it is much easier."

As I backed the car around, the same man who had been looking the Chev over that noon was still there. Something made me start to quiz him—he looked a little out of place, being around so long. I swung the car over toward him but he walked off at a quick pace and hopped aboard a passing streetcar. I could feel little cold fingers play along my spine, and I wondered if I should chase the guy. Still, I thought maybe I was a little jumpy, so I headed the car for the *Hauptbahnhof*, the railroad station. If Brunner was leaving town, he'd be leaving by rail—unless the old crock was going to be real cagey and hole up in town—close to the flagpole, as it were.

At the station we checked the long lines at the ticket windows, went through the tunnel where I'd lost my coat and looked over the crowded train huffing gently on the track. No Brunner—no Brunner anywhere.

I briefed the MPs on Brunner's description, wondering if he'd left town by car, or if he'd left at all. Gisela, of course, didn't know why I was looking so hard for Brunner, so on the way back to the office I told her. "Look," I added, "I'm sure this joker has beat it out of Karlsruhe, but how would he go? Somebody in that station should have remembered him; he's not a very common type."

Gisela thought a moment. "Herrenalb," she announced.

"Herrenalb? You mean—of course! That electric line that runs out there. Wow!" I turned the car on a dime and sailed south. Herrenalb is a sort of resort town about five miles below Karlsruhe, and there's a local electric train runs out there from the city about every thirty minutes. Herrenalb is on the very edge of the French Occupied Zone, and it would be a cinch for Brunner to get down there, well away from the American Zone and American pursuit.

At the Herrenalb station a long shed ran out from a nondescript depot smelling of unwashed humanity, though the only humanity present at the moment was a dried-up old trainman who sat on a bench in the sun, shuffling his feet in the dust. Gisela spattered some German at him, and he gargled back.

"No one who looked like Herr Doktor Brunner was on the last train. The next train arrives in ten minutes."

"It was a long ten minutes," I said, when we'd waited twenty-five minutes before an elderly electric locomotive, looking a lot like a Toonerville Trolley, squeaked to a halt. A crowd of poorly-dressed Germans squeezed through the narrow turnstiles and burst into the rubble-filled street beyond. I was lounging to one side of the turnstiles where I could keep an eye on who came and went. Sure enough, struggling along at the rear of the crowd was Brunner. He was carrying in one hand the bulging brief-case that's part of every German these days, and in the other hand he had a rolled-up ivory-handled umbrella. He was traveling somewhere, all right, and he was moving, I thought, rather warily.

I let him get into the street, then moved in. I reached out a hand and clamped it on his spiky shoulder. "Doctor Brunner."

BRUNNER stopped, wheeled, and all I got was a glimpse of that one fierce eye as he swung his umbrella up and that handle clobbered me alongside the left ear. I went down like a poled ox, kayoed. Then I was conscious of an awful lot of noise and thudding feet, and Gisela, or someone, screaming.

Things cleared in a minute and I sat up. I was perched on the very dirty cobblestones outside the Herrenalb station. There was no sign of Brunner. Gisela, shock, disbelief and concern mingled on her pleasant features, stood bending over me.

"Oh, Captain, are you all right? Oh, what a terrible thing! No, I didn't see where he went. Are you all right? We must tell the police!"

I scowled at the few Germans standing around gawking at me, dusted myself off, shook my wits back in line, and then started toward the car.

"Never mind the police, Gisela. Damn, I wish I'd nabbed that big freak, that's all. Well, enough of this Frank Merriwell stuff. We'll have to get a little help."

I drove back to the office. I was crossing the wide lobby to my office when the chief telephone operator came out of the switchboard cubbyhole. She was a squat little German girl, her mousy hair disarranged by the headset. "Oh, Captain Scott. Mr. Ryan at CIC wants you to come over there as soon as you can. There has been nobody in your office to take the call, and he says it is quite urgent."

"Okay. Thanks a lot." On the way to Ryan's office I reviewed the

whole situation. I decided to get out a zone-wide MP alarm for Brunner, and let Ryan carry the ball.

Ryan was a rangy jasper, with heavy black brows meeting over a long nose. Efficiency crackled in every move of his spare body.

He waved me into a seat across from his tidy desk and said: "Let me get this call into the 986th at Stuttgart. I've got something to tell you."

AFTER he placed the call, he leaned toward me and balanced his big hands on the edge of the desk. "I checked with the Karlsruhe *Polizei Praesidium* after your call to me," he said. "The German police found a dead man, obviously murdered, and as yet *unidentified,* in South Hildapromenade about noon today. What do you think of that?"

"Did they find my trench-coat too?"

"Nothing was said about that. But this body is unidentified, remember—no *Arbeitsbuch,* no *Kennkarte,* nothing. This alleged agent told you of a man named Zimmerman in Hapsburger Allee, and I gather he was talking to you at a time when the German police hadn't even known of the murder!"

"Yeah," I said, "but did they look in Hapsburger Allee? Maybe there's another dead man around."

"They checked that," Ryan said. "Nobody there. Listen, do you know the incidence of murder in this town? Well, I'll tell you—population is presently 250,000. This is the second murder case since the war ended. Germans don't murder like Americans. They wait until they get an excuse and do it on a large scale—war. Individual murder doesn't appeal to them. Not enough bodies, I guess." He grinned briefly.

The phone rang, and it was the 986th at Stuttgart. After he got an extension, Ryan said: "Hello, Charley? This is Jim Ryan over at Karlsruhe. Have we got an agent Bernhardt anywhere? . . . Oh, I see . . . Well, thank you. . . . . Yeah, that's what I thought. Yeah, we'll take care of it. . . . Thanks a lot." He hung up and looked at me.

"Captain," he said, "there's no agent Bernhardt working for CIC anywhere in the theater. Your boy's a phony." He flipped a ruled pad from a drawer and took a pencil from his pocket. "Give me a detailed description, and we'll get the alarm out." He finished taking the notes, then looked up. "Funny deal, huh? But we'll get him. If he checks in with you again, hold onto him. But he's probably taken off."

"While you're at it," I said, "put out the alarm for this guy Brunner too, will you?" I gave him the details, and they went down on the pad in quick strokes of the pencil.

Leaving Ryan's office, I noticed by the big clock on top of the *Rathaus* that it was too late to go back to the office, so I went on home. That night, long after Jean was asleep, I tossed and turned. This business was complicated. It started with a bang, then left me nowhere. I felt a little crawly when I thought about that joker who hopped the streetcar, but that might have been my nerves. Brunner's connection was hard to figure. Maybe he was tied in with Bernhardt, but it didn't seem likely. But who was Bernhardt, anyway? And what was there about the notebook that could make Brunner walk out of his job, a job that kept him fed and housed in a Germany where food and shelter were scarce? Brunner had not only stolen some kind of industrial secret, but he slugged an American officer in the process. What made it worse, the American officer was me. . . .

The next day I went up to Andy Johnson's office as soon as I got into the building. I gave him the story. He was highly amused by my encounter with Brunner. "No Purple Hearts for umbrella casualties. They're in a class with splinter wounds from desk chairs. Check with Ryan when you get a chance. I'll be very curious to find out what's in that notebook."

Saying amen to that, I clattered down the marble stairs and went into the switchboard room next to my office to see if the *Deutsches Reichspost* telephone workers had tied in our new trunk lines. Communications is my regular racket in the Army anyway, and we'd added four trunk lines to the big switchboard that served the TRIAD headquarters. Feuerbrand, the bald-headed foreman, had his crew making connections back of one position while the operators were servicing calls winking on the board. We could dial local calls, but our long-distance calls had to be handled by an operator. That's why we were adding the extra trunks. I'd lost track of the work in the excitement of the day before, and decided I'd better give some attention to some of the routine connected with my job. Feuerbrand was showing me the work they had left when the operator said: "Call for you, Captain Scott. Want to take it here?"

I picked up the supervisor's phone. "Captain Scott."

"This is Ryan, Captain. Brunner has been located. The French picked him up trying to sneak around a check-point in Baden-Baden. I can't get hold of anybody to go down and get him right now, though. The MP patrols are all off at some big accident on the *Autobahn,* but we ought to have him in custody by tomorrow."

"I'll go get him, Ryan."

"Well, okay. That'll help."

I hung up and dialed Andy Johnson. When I told him I wanted to take off for Baden-Baden, he said: "It'll have to wait a while, Bill. Those civilian personnel experts from Heidelberg are here, and the old man wants you to sit in on the meeting."

That took the greater part of the morning, but eventually it was over and I headed for Baden-Baden. It took the bulk of the afternoon to go through all the red-tape with the French. Because I wasn't an MP, they insisted on telephoning Karlsruhe for clearance, but eventually they turned Brunner over. It must have been five o'clock before we were heading back through the early dusk for Karlsruhe, Brunner sitting stiffly beside me.

"Well, Foxy Grandpa," I said, "what's the big deal?"

Brunner was stiff, all right. "May I ask why you are detaining me?"

My jaw dropped. "Detaining you? Hell, you stole my notebook! Where is it, dammit?"

"On your desk."

"On my desk? What are you talking about?" I started to say I hadn't seen the notebook, but come to think of it, I hadn't been at my desk since early the previous day. "On my desk, huh? Well, if somebody else has grabbed it, I'll put you away for twenty years. We'll go take a look. Why did you put it on my desk? And if you did, why are you running away, then?"

THE car hummed through the darkness a moment before Brunner answered. When he did, his voice sounded tight. "I put it under the telephone on your desk. There was nobody in your office at the moment. To be sure, I did not wish to see you, and stepped in when you were going up the stairs. But am I not a free agent, Captain Scott? I do not have any contract with the Americans. Cannot I leave my job if I wish?"

"Not with one of our processes, you can't, and you know it!" I turned the car into Karlstrasse and headed toward our office.

Brunner shrugged. "I stole nothing from TRIAD. Certainly you have no legal grounds for detaining me."

"You slugged me with an umbrella, didn't you?"

"You put your hands on me first. I was merely protecting myself from assault."

"Oh, you were, huh? That still doesn't explain why you took off like a scalded cat. It had something to do with the process, didn't it? There's enough there to make you peddle your job and your professional integrity for profit, isn't there? I thought you scientists had a little more sense of ethics."

That got him. Brunner drew a long sigh. "Captain, I will tell you. That notebook is a fabulous thing. You will try to understand why I acted as I did when I tell you that with it compares the treasure of Monte Cristo, believe me. Consider a man like myself, now. A scientist, yes, I have known small success, but now I must grovel and scrape for existence. What is there for an old man like me in Germany now, I ask you? To translate papers and watch Germany bleed to death, her secrets scattered across the world?"

I turned the car into the driveway and pulled up in the parking lot. "What do you mean, bleed to death? TRIAD doesn't take any original papers. The originals stay with the owners."

"So you say. But you know the patent laws have been suspended for the years 1939 until 1945."

"Sure. That's part of the Potsdam agreement. Nobody knows where Germany got a lot of this stuff. But how does that make it right for you to swipe a process? Answer me that." I switched off the engine and looked up at the building. The four floors were dark. The lobby night light was a feeble glow through the murky glass of the lower window. I fished for my key. I wanted to see that notebook—know I had it in my hands!

"It doesn't make it right, Captain, that's true. I admit I have committed this to memory. But do you see, it is liberation. Had I been successful, I should have been rich for life. I could eat good food, wear fine clothes, provide for my family. I knew that the instant I read the notebook. Still, to sacrifice honor, confidence, my name—well," he sighed, "it is difficult today in Germany for old men. Put it down to that. Come, I show you where I have put the notebook."

I opened the big door, and we went inside. The broad marble floor of the lobby gleamed dully under the single overhead night lamp. Our heels clicked on the tiles as we moved toward the office. Passing the little door to the switchboard room, I said: "Brunner, I hope you're giving me a straight story."

Brunner bobbed his head. "Oh yes, Captain, the notebook is here."

"That is excellent."

Just then the switchboard room door opened and Bernhardt stepped out, a pistol in his hand.

I stopped short. "Bernhardt! You damned phony—"

He gestured with the pistol. "Quiet. Put your hands in the air. Into your office—at once! I have come this far, and I would be only too happy to add another American swine to our list. Step into your office. You too, Brunner."

I took a chance. I tackled him—rammed him up against the desk.

My heart was in my throat. I was scared, don't think I wasn't Frank Merriwell, the Boy Detective! I'd had to be smart and play alone. Brother, I didn't have the guts to do anything but go into the office when Bernhardt opened the door, the pistol aimed at my belly. I kept my hands in the air as high as I could get them.

Through the door, we were in the narrow outer office that Gisela used. The thin light from behind speared the bulky shadows of her desk and typewriter. I went on into my own office. Brunner followed me. Bernhardt stopped in my doorway. "Turn on your desk light. Scott. Stay where you are, Brunner."

I fumbled for my desk lamp, got it on. It didn't make enough light for anyone to see through the windows, even if they had been looking. I kept my hands down.

From the doorway Bernhardt said: "Give me your car keys, Scott. And don't throw them at me. I can shoot faster than you can hit me with them.... Ah, thank you. Now, Brunner—where is the notebook?"

Brunner stood trembling in the middle of the carpet, his one eye blinking. "Under the telephone."

Bernhardt moved the pistol. "Scott, pick up the telephone and toss me the notebook. Don't entertain any ideas about throwing the phone."

I moved slowly around the front of the desk to the phone. My breath was coming fast and my chest was pounding. I wanted to get out of this. How?

Gingerly I picked up the heavy telephone. There was the notebook. I took it, the covers cool to my touch. I wondered if I could try to throw the phone. But the damn' thing was heavy and fastened to the junction box with a thick cord. Bernhardt was a good twenty feet away. What could I do for a distraction?

"Toss me the notebook; don't stand there."

I tossed it, trying to make it go far enough away from Bernhardt so he'd have to reach for it and maybe miss it. He fooled me, though. He let it fall.

"Brunner, pick it up and look at it. Tell me if everything is there."

As Brunner stooped heavily to retrieve the notebook, I moved slightly so my right hand was screened from Bernhardt's view and my body blocked the telephone.

Brunner's hands were shaking visibly as he carefully turned each page of the notebook.

I TOOK a chance. I eased the receiver of the telephone up off the hook-switch just enough to clear the button. I was balancing the receiver on my thumb. I kept my eyes on Bernhardt's face all the time. He was watching Brunner, but that damned pistol was aimed right at me. The room was so quiet you could hear the rustle of the pages as Brunner turned them.

With my free fingers, I pressed the telephone button once, then paused. Counting to myself, I pressed the button ten more times. Then I eased the receiver off my thumb back onto the hook switch again. Brunner turned the last page of the notebook.

B-r-r-r-ing. The phone started to jangle. *B-r-r-r-ing.* It split the quiet of the room like a cleaver. *B-r-r-r-ing, b-r-r-r-ing!*

Bernhardt jumped as I stepped away from the phone. "Don't answer it!" he barked.

"Might be for you."

B-r-r-r-ing, b-r-r-r-ing.

Bernhardt was rattled. "Who is it?" The pistol swung back and forth and he stared at the telephone. Then he moved closer to me.

B-r-r-r-ing, b-r-r-r-ing!

With a quick movement, he reached for the receiver and knocked it off the phone. I tackled him. I rammed him right up against the desk. The force of my rush bent him over, the pistol extended over the desk. I grabbed for the gun, knocked it across the room. He was wriggling and kicking, but he was sideways to me, and I had him pressed against the desk. I rabbit-punched him once, then grabbed the telephone receiver and splintered it on his skull. He sagged, then rolled off the desk to the floor with a moan. I looped telephone cord in a square knot around his ankles, and used my belt to truss his hands in a hammerlock behind him.

Then I looked at Brunner; he was standing in the middle of the floor, gasping. "It's okay, Brunner," I said, my breath coming fast, "We've got him." I took the notebook from his shaking hands, thrust it in my pocket. Then I picked up Bernhardt's pistol. Looking him over, I saw he was still out, a fine sweat on his forehead, and a big fat red welt on his head.

NEXT day Ryan, Andy Johnson and I sat around some coffee in Andy's office. "We sweated him," Ryan was saying, "and what he says bears out the inferences we made from your expert's appraisal of that notebook. Bernhardt worked with this murdered man—it was Zimmerman, all right; we got an identification from some I. G. people at Ludwigshafen. Zimmerman's brother in Switzerland has been holding the notebook ever since Zimmerman got it to him just before V-E Day. Zimmerman was afraid to keep the secret in Germany, see, while the war was ending and everything was in a turmoil; but now that things have simmered down some, Zimmerman's been trying to get the secret back. He couldn't get to Switzerland very well, and he's the only one who could put it to work."

"Our man says it takes a superior knowledge of chemistry to work out," Andy Johnson put in.

"Bernhardt picked you to be the messenger, Captain," Ryan went on, "and he got word to the brother to load you with the notebook when you were coming back through Zurich, see?"

"Yeah," I said, "I knew I was the patsy, all right. Sharp, wasn't I?"

"Sharp enough," Andy said. "You cooled the guy off."

"Bernhardt was going to get the notebook from you," Ryan said, "and he and Zimmerman were going to make the gadgets. Zimmerman tried to double-cross him, because after all, it was his process, and Bernhardt had merely provided the push, so to speak. Bernhardt had spent a long time tracking that down. He's been a lot of things in his day, and it was no trouble for him to ape a CIC agent."

"I see. Then Bernhardt was actually the one who was going to pick up my trench-coat, is that it?"

"Something like that," Ryan said. "But Zimmerman just grabbed it away from you. It wasn't part of their original plan to steal the coat from you; that was too risky. But as I said, Zimmerman jumped the gun and took off on his own. Bernhardt killed him when he caught up with him; he even cut your coat to pieces, thinking Zimmerman had hidden the notebook in it somehow. Then he bird-dogged you—and had you followed by one of his deck-hands he hired here in town—until you produced the notebook."

"He damn' near got it," I said.

"Look," Andy asked, "how did you work that phone business?"

"Trick," I said. "A dial-line test. Watch." I reached for his phone, lifted the receiver, and dialed 1-0. Then I put the receiver back. In a moment the phone started to ring. I let it go a time or two, then handed the receiver to Andy.

"Nobody there," he said.

"That's right. It's just a test. You can do it on any dial phone, and it'll ring back. I didn't turn the dial when I did it because I was afraid Bernhardt would hear it click. I just flicked the little button there once for the 1, then ten times for the zero. If you do that at one-second intervals, you can get the same effect. Any dial-phone system clicks at one second intervals. I just counted 'Mississippi One, Mississippi Two' and so on to get my seconds right. And it panned out well enough to let me at him."

"H'm," Andy said. "That's quite a wrinkle."

"I guess so. I'm glad I knew it, anyway. But I'm not straight on that notebook yet. What was it?"

"I can see why old Brunner took off," Andy said. "He wasn't kidding when he said it was a Monte Carlo treasure. It had all the plans, instructions and formula so a hotshot chemist could make synthetic emeralds—emeralds so damn' beautiful, dazzling, and what's more, so accurate as to cell structure, that even an expert couldn't tell them from the real stones under a microscope!"

"I thought that aluminum-oxide process wouldn't produce anything that could duplicate real stones except in casual appearance, though," I interjected.

"THESE were a complete departure from the ordinary synthetic stones, Bill. These could be made in a solution, in any carat weight. Bernhardt's angle, of course, was to ease them a few a week into the market, passing them off as real. Hell, we've found out that that's the way some of Hitler's bigwigs got one hundred thousand dollars worth of foreign credit a week during the war!"

All I could do was whistle.

Jean says she hopes I can get enough of them to make her some earrings. Maybe you'll be buying them at Macy's after a while. The whole works has just gone to Washington.

The Fish-diviner

Just as some people seem to have the gift of finding underground water by the tilt of a hazel wand, this girl's fish-pole would tilt toward an invisible school of fish.

by WYATT BLASSINGAME

"WOMEN AND FISHING," said George Higgins, "stand poles apart, and I don't mean that as a pun. They should never be mixed."

Tom Newal said: "I like 'em. Mixed or unmixed."

"Fishing is a balm," George said. "It heals a man's troubles, physical and mental. It brings health, tranquillity, and peace of mind. But if it is woman that man is after instead of tarpon, what does he get? Physical destruction," George said, "financial ruin, and mental collapse."

"And half the time they ain't worth it," Tom Newal said. "But then again—"

Behind them their fishing boats rocked gently beside the dock. The sun rode the bay's rim. The water was sleek and brilliant as if oil had been spilled on it, and low over the water pelicans and ducks passed in military processions. Most of the guide boats were already gone, but Captain Higgins and Newal still waited for their clients.

"Probably," George said, "there will be females in my party today. Otherwise, why are they late?"

"Who've you got?"

"Somebody named David Van Dale. Must have money: he sent a chauffeur down to make the date."

Tom whistled. "There'll be females, all right. From what I read in the papers there'll be a whole chorus line."

"You mean?"

"Look," Tom said.

A car had stopped at the foot of the dock. A man and a woman got out and advanced through the level gold-tinted sunshine. The man was tall and young and rather handsome, but his face looked pale. The girl—George looked at her and put a hand to his throat to loosen the collar of his collarless skivy shirt.

Beside the man she looked small. Her hair was short, dark and glossy. Her skin was brown on the surface from sunshine, pink underneath from health. Her eyes were dark and wide-set. Her mouth had the proper curve, the lower lip full and soft-looking. The nose was pert, the jaw firm. The figure, as well as George could estimate (handicapped somewhat by a starched white dress), was firm also.

The girl and the man came up to them, and the girl smiled. "Can you tell me which is Captain Higgins' boat?"

With some effort George found his voice. "I'm Captain Higgins."

"This is Mr. Van Dale," the girl said. Mr. Van Dale stood gazing past them into space. "We have chartered your boat for the day."

"Yes ma'am," George said. He had control of himself now. He told himself sternly that he'd had females aboard before, and today was just another day.

So he helped her on deck and she turned and held up her hand, and Mr. Van Dale took it; George took his opposite elbow and Van Dale allowed himself to be helped aboard. He lowered himself into the canvas deck-chair the girl held for him. "I'll never believe fish are awake at this hour of the morning," he said. "Why should they be?"

The girl patted him on the shoulder. "You'll enjoy it," she said. "Look at those colors on the water."

"Looks like a pousse-café," Mr. Van Dale said. "I could never stand the things. Give me straight Scotch. Or brandy."

"If you're going to take that girl out with you, marry her!"

George went forward and started the engines. When he was under way, he turned and looked back at the young man in the deck chair and the girl hovering around him. You could tell the way she patted him here, put a pillow there, what she was up to, George thought: getting ready to put the gaff in a hooked millionaire. She didn't look like that kind of girl, but George knew better than to trust looks. Cynthia had not looked like a faithless, money-minded jilt either, but the memory of what she had done was still an unhealed sore in George's bosom.

The boat raced down the bay; the bow wave curved high and broke into fragments and the fragments fell and bounced on the slick surface of the water like marbles thrown on a glass table. The girl came forward and stood beside George. The wind rippled her hair and held the white dress smoothly against her. George looked down at her, then stared ahead at the bay and the morning.

She said: "It's beautiful, isn't it?"

George said nothing.

She said: "I hope you can stay where the water's calm. I don't want Mr. Van Dale to get seasick."

"What's wrong with him?" George asked.

"He's ill."

George looked back at the man, thinking that if Mr. Van Dale was ill, then fishing was what he needed. Fishing was a balm that healed a man physically and mentally; it brought him health, tranquillity and peace of mind.

"How is he sick?" George asked.

"It really isn't a secret, if you read the papers. He's an alcoholic, or almost, anyway."

George had known a brief period of bottle-browsing himself. It was after he came home from the Navy and found that Cynthia Mahoney had not waited as she had so often and intensely promised, but had married Montgomery Jones, whose father owned half of Jones County. George then had followed the classic pattern of the veteran who returns to such circumstances, and had attempted to bury his bitterness in alcohol. But his hangovers had been too violent to warrant the Lethean spells between them, and he'd had to give it up. For a while then he had wandered about the country, wondering whether he should go back in the Navy or go to Alaska to prospect for gold. It was the discovery of fishing that abated his misery. In the Navy he had been in P.T. boats. He liked boats. He found that he liked fishing. From his service pay he still had enough to buy a boat and tackle, and before long he was in the guiding business, a passionate believer in the therapeutic benefits of fishing, and happy—except when there were women aboard.

Now he regarded David Van Dale with new interest. "If drinking is his trouble," he said, "fishing is the thing for him."

"I hope so," the girl said. "He's really rather sweet when he's feeling well."

When the bay lay green and blue over the sand flats, George cut the engines and went aft. He was on the eve of one of the greatest discoveries in the ancient history of fishing and there was nothing to warn him of it. Under the circumstances it would have been logical to expect lightning to cleave the sky, thunder to roll, and the waves to part. Yet there was nothing but spring sunlight and the flat water of the bay with birds passing.

"Have you done much fishing?" George asked. He always asked, because a guide had to know what he was getting into.

"Very little," Mr. Van Dale said, "but that was too much."

The girl—George knew now that her name was Mary Fay—said: "I've never had a fishing pole in my hands. I've never even been on the water before."

George sighed and broke out his cheapest tackle. He showed them how to use it, and while he was putting a pinfish on one hook the girl picked up the other rod. When George looked around, the rod which Mary held, instead of being straight as it had been a minute before, was curved toward the left.

"Hey!" George said. "What happened to that?"

"I don't know. It—it's pulling."

"It can't be pulling," George said. "Your line isn't even in the water."

He took the rod from her. For an instant, just as he touched it, there did seem to be tension; then the tension was gone and the rod as straight as it had ever been. "I'll be damned," George said. He shook it. There appeared to be nothing wrong with it, so he put it down to bait the hook.

"Look!" the girl said.

She was holding the rod again and the tip was bent toward the right as though pulled in that direction. As they watched it moved farther and farther until the girl had to turn to follow it. "There must be fish over that way," she said.

"Must what?" George said.

"Fish. There must be—"

He saw the school of tarpon about a hundred yards astern: a mercury-gray fin curved into sight and out again; a tail splashed water. The fish were moving toward the right and as they went the tip of the rod followed them.

"Why," Mary Fay said, "I must be a fish-diviner!"

George strangled. "A—what?"

"A fish-diviner. My father was a water-diviner in New Mexico. People paid him to locate wells. I guess I inherited it from him."

"That's impossible," George said.

"I don't know," she said. "My family's always had the power." She picked up the rod again. The tip trembled ever so slightly, twitching about in a circle. She said: "There must be a lot of little fish—" Slowly the rod began to bend in a tight arc, the tip pointing toward the bow.

Two hundred yards away in that direction a school of porpoise broke the surface.

After that things were a little blurred for George. He was a long time believing the evidence of his eyes. He climbed on top the cabin to watch for tarpon which fed along the edge of the grass flats—but each time the girl's rod-tip would point them out before he had seen them. And when she hooked one she fought it with a zest and natural skill that was a joy to watch. Mr. Van Dale hooked one, dropped his rod, and it would have gone overboard if Mary hadn't caught it. Then she fought the tarpon and brought it alongside, her face flushed and shining with excitement. Watching her, George felt like a man drowning in a sea of molasses:

the molasses was sweet but the drowning was unpleasant anyway.

Even when the day was over and they were back at the dock again, George had not fully recovered. Usually he had a speech for the occasion, intended to butter-up the client for another day's fishing. But now he stood dumb. He felt a touch of panic as though he was about to lose something, and wasn't sure what.

Mary Fay said: "Good-by, Captain. We had a wonderful time."

"I didn't," Mr. Van Dale said.

George didn't hear him. "I never saw anything like it," he said hoarsely. "You could tell where they were. Even in deep water."

"Let's go," Mr. Van Dale said. "I want my daily ration of Scotch."

She looked up at George. "Good-by," she said.

George looked down at her. The wind had tousled her hair but it was just as pretty as it had been in the morning. Her eyes were wide and her mouth soft. "Good-by," George said. He worked the muscles of his throat with his hand. "You've got the making of a real fisherman," he said.

"Thank you, Captain."

"And you could fish," George said. "You could find the fish when nobody else could. If people knew that a guide could always—"

Mr. Van Dale took Mary by the arm.

"Let's go," he said.

They left with George gazing numbly after them, not knowing in his own heart whether he pondered on the sweet liquification of her clothes as viewed from this angle or on the amazing way her rod-tip would bend and point out the location of unseen fish.

Captain Tom Newal found him standing there in the gathering gloom. "How'd the party go?" Tom asked.

George was not listening. He turned away, stepped down to the deck of his boat. He picked up the rod that Mary had used. It was straight and pliant in his hands. "When she held it, it would curve and—" He stopped.

"What are you talking about?"

George felt that it was a thing too intimate to explain. And Tom Newal wouldn't believe anyway. Nobody would believe unless they saw it.

George lived alone on his boat, and during the following evenings he would sit in the canvas deck chair, his feet on the gunwale, his pipe going, and argue with himself. *If she were fishing with me,* George would say to George, *I'd be the most popular guide in Florida.*

It would be a mess. Women and fishing don't mix. You know that.

I know it, George admitted. *But Mary is different. She's a natural fisherman. She doesn't talk too much. She— She's good-looking. That's the whole answer. It's biological. You've been through it once, and where did it get you? Soaking your head in rum at night and having it split wide open in the daytime. Besides—*

Wait a minute! George said, anticipating himself. *You can't talk like that about her. It's not true. Besides, if she was just working for me,* he said, *I would guarantee fish, have a party every day at my own price. I'd get rich.*

Now look who's talking! I thought you were the guy didn't want to get rich. You were making enough, getting along, happy. And now you've got this itch. Look at it straight, chum. It's just trouble you're after.

So George discussed this matter with George, and grew short-tempered and angry. He strode up and down the deck of his boat, cursed himself, knocked the glowing tobacco from his pipe to fall hissing in the water. *Look!* George told himself one night. *What's the argument about? She must be gone by now, She and that money-logged liquorhead are in New York now. Or Chicago. Or somewhere.*

I could go up to the hotel, George said. *I could see if she's gone.*

He sneered at himself: *All right, go on. Make a fool of yourself. She won't know who you are.*

George was stubborn. *I can go see.* He went into his cabin and looked at himself in a mirror to make sure his hair was combed. He put on his cap, adjusting the angle of it with more care than he had done in a long while; then he cut off the light, went out and climbed onto the dock.

The girl was standing there. "Captain Higgins," she said, "I was just coming to see you."

"You were?" George said. "I mean I—" He took his cap off and held it in both hands, wrinkling it. "Come aboard," George said.

"But you were leaving."

"I wasn't going anywhere," George said. "Just up to get a beer. Now I remember I have some in the icebox."

They sat in deck chairs with the glasses cold in their fingers. The boat rocked faintly beneath them. The dock lights made pools of brightness upon the water and in one pool needlefish were jumping.

Mary Fay said, "I've been thinking, Captain, that because I'm a fish-diviner I would be of value to a guide in locating fish."

"That's right," George said.

"How about it, Captain? You need an assistant?"

George felt the beer go dry in his throat. When he got it down he said, "What about Mr. Van Dale? Guiding doesn't pay like millionairing."

"I'm not working for Mr. Van Dale any more."

"Probably," George said, "there will be females in my party today. Otherwise, why are they late?"

Crane Senior had a fish on. It exploded the water like a depth charge.

"Oh—" George said.

"That's it," Mary agreed. "As Mr. Van Dale's strength improved, he wanted additional services from his nurse. So I quit."

I ought to go up and bust that guy one, George thought. And then he told himself to keep out of this thing. Completely out. "You could get another job nursing," he said.

"Yes. But it's late in the tourist season, and things are slow at the hospital. But this is the top of the tarpon season." She smiled at him. "You see, I've been reading the fishing columns in the papers. I enjoyed that day."

George made one last effort. "You couldn't start right away. I don't have a party tomorrow."

"Oh, that's fine!" Mary said. "We can go alone and you can show me about the boat and the tackle and the things I'll need to know to help you more." . . .

The next day the bay was calm and the sun was hot. Mary wore shorts and a shirt open at the throat. George showed her how to steer the boat. He showed her how to cast. To do this he had to put his arms around her to show how to grip the rod and how to thumb the reel. He found that it took him a long time to teach her, and that he didn't care how long it took. There wasn't much time left for catching fish; but then the point of the thing, as George told George, was not to catch fish today, but to show Mary the basic principles of fishing.

That night he sat on the deck of his boat and a great uneasiness was upon him. Usually after a day on the water he was tired and content. Tonight he was restless. He kept remembering how Mary moved in his arms as he taught her to cast, and remembering it he could not relax.

Tom Newal came down the dock and joined him. "Got a beer?" Tom asked.

"In the icebox."

Tom opened the bottle and sat down and put his feet on the gunwale. "I saw you had a babe out today. By herself."

"Yes," George said. He took a long breath. "She's going to work with me. She's a fish-diviner."

"A what?"

George told him.

"I heard rumors," Tom said in an awed voice. "I had out a party, friends of this Van Dale; they were talking about it. I thought they were just drunk."

"It's true."

"I never heard of such a thing," Tom said. "People will come from all over the country just to look at her."

"Yes," George said. The idea of many people looking at Mary made him unhappy.

Tom said, "What about this theory of yours that women and fishing don't mix?"

"Mary's different."

"Ha!" Tom said.

"Well, she is."

Tom said: " 'Fishing is a balm that heals a man's troubles, physical and mental. But if it's woman he's after—' Remember?"

"Nobody is after this woman. She just points the way to the fish."

"Ha! Ha!" Tom said. He got up and took his empty bottle into the cabin. "If things don't work out with you, George, I'm willing to give her a chance on my boat. I get along with women better than you do."

"You go to hell," George said.

GEORGE's party consisted of a Mr. Paul Crane, Senior, age about fifty-five, and Mr. Paul Crane, Junior. Mr. Crane, Senior, came to stand at the wheel and watch George, while Mr. Crane, Junior, took a chair in the stern and watched Mary. She was casting off the bowline and George could understand Junior's interest in her, but he didn't like it. He put the engine in reverse, and there was a crash, and he heard Tom Newal shouting: "Look out!"

George shoved the gear forward. He looked back and saw Newal shouting at him. "You crazy this morning? Watch what you're doing!"

"All right," George said. He looked forward at Mary, standing on the bow. She was even prettier today than yesterday. She was bareheaded and the wind blew her hair about her face. She— He saw the other boat just in time to turn the wheel hard over and miss it.

Mr. Crane, Senior, said: "You seem somewhat absent-minded today, Captain."

"I didn't sleep well," George said. "I'll be all right."

"I hope so. I want to land a tarpon, just one tarpon." His voice had a wistful sound. "You know, Captain, I should have gone north a week ago. It's costing me a hundred dollars a day to stay here, besides the time I'm losing from business. But I want to land a tarpon, and I've been fishing every day this week without a strike."

"You'll get yours today."

"I hope so."

George was watching Mary and didn't realize what he was saying until too late. "I'll guarantee a fish. If you don't get one you won't have to pay for the trip."

"By God! That's sporting. To make it square, I'll give you a hundred extra if I get one."

George was not by nature a gambler. "I meant—"

JUNIOR, who had come forward, interrupted him. "Does your wife always go with you on trips, Captain?"

"She's not my wife. She's a fish-diviner."

"Oh—" Junior said. He moved away to help Mary rig the tackle while Crane Senior asked about fish-divining.

Off the grassflats George stopped the engines and went aft. The tackle was all rigged, the hooks baited and waiting, the pinfish swimming in the baitwell. Mary and Junior were talking and she said, "I'll show you now how it works," and she picked up one of the rods.

The rod trembled and bent gently toward the south. "They'll be that way," Mary said. "George will find them in a few minutes."

George went back and started the engines again, then realized that in watching Mary he'd forgot to watch the rod she held and he had to call her forward to direct him. But they found the fish and almost immediately Junior hooked into a fifty-pounder.

Finally it was alongside. Crane Senior's face was shining. "That's

it!" he said, hoarsely. "That's what I want! Just one!"

"You'll get him," George said.

There were fish all around them in the clear blue-green water. Wherever George looked he could see them rolling—but they wouldn't strike. After that first strike there was nothing. George changed from pinfish to crab to artificial plugs. Sometimes his casts would bounce off the back of a rolling tarpon, and the tarpon would splash at it with his tail, and keep going.

Crane Senior's face became strained with agony. "What are we going to do, Captain?"

"Wait."

There were other guide boats around them now, but nobody had a fish on. Tom Newal passed, trolling, a red-faced man standing in the stern. The man's lips were moving and George could tell he was cursing the fish.

Crane Junior didn't seem to mind the inaction. He was laughing, telling Mary about other fishing trips. Lying, George thought. And there was no need for Mary to listen to him as if she thought he was the greatest fisherman who ever lived. Junior handed her his rod to see how it would act with all these fish around them. He put his arms around Mary so he could hold the rod at the same time she did and feel the tension on it.

George told himself that his resentment was completely impersonal. It was just that playing around they might get in Mr. Crane's way. George didn't know he was going to leave the wheel until he was already in the stern.

"If Mr. Crane was to hook a fish—"

After that it all happened together. Mary turned to look toward him—and cried: "Look out!" At the same time, even as he spun around, he was aware of Tom Newal shouting and he saw that Newal's customer had jumped a fish: the tarpon was out of the water, shining like a geyser in the sunlight: and his own boat, with nobody at the wheel had swerved left and was cutting between the stern of Newal's boat and the fish. In another five seconds it would strike the fishing line and break it.

He leaped for the wheel, whirled it far over. Behind him Crane Senior was shouting, yelling without words and when George saw he was going to miss Newal's line he looked back to see that Crane Senior had a fish on. He saw it jump. It exploded the water like a depth charge; it thrust up into the air looking big as the Washington Monument. It jumped again. And this time George saw it was right alongside Newal's fish. Both tarpon went out of the water together like dancers; they touched in midair and came down, one going in one direction, one in the other. And in the boats the fishermen stood, holding empty rods.

Crane Senior turned like a man in a daze. "What—"

"The lines got crossed," George said.

"It was your fault. You shouldn't have had your boat alongside that other."

"I know," George said.

Crane Senior put down his rod. He staggered to a chair and sat down. "Take me home."

"You'll get another," Mary said.

"You—"

Mr. Crane put his face in his hands. "Take me back to the dock."

An hour later George steered carefully into his berth and made fast. Crane Senior got wearily out of his chair. "I don't owe you for the trip, Captain?"

"No," George said.

"Very well." He and Junior climbed on the dock and he stood there, looking down at George. "I'm an old man," he said. "A lot older than I was two hours ago. Let me give you some advice, Captain. If you are going to take that girl out with you, marry her. Then your customers will take less interest in her and you can take more interest in fishing." He turned away with Crane Junior trailing after him.

George and Mary were left alone. After a while Mary said, "It wasn't a successful trip, was it?"

"No," George said.

"Well?"

"It won't work," George said. "Women and fishing. They won't mix."

"Well—" She looked carefully around, but didn't seem to find what it was she was looking for. "Good-by, George."

"Good-by, Mary."

She moved past him and prepared to climb on the dock. Captain Tom Newal stood there, beaming down at them and holding out his hands to help Mary.

She'll go to work for him, George said to George.

He gets along with women better than you do. He calls them babes. He'll call Mary that.

George assured himself that this was nothing to him.

As she reached up toward the dock Mary said: "Anyway, we had a good time yesterday when there were just the two of us."

"Yes," George said.

"Well," Mary said again, "good-by, George."

"Good-by," George said. "Good-by, Ma—" But he couldn't finish. Things had begun to spin round and round in his head. He felt dizzy. Voices were roaring inside his skull. *—A good time, a wonderful time, just the two of us! —You're crazy! You're nuts! —We could commercial-fish, just the two of us. —Don't say it, George! Look out!*

"Mary," George said.

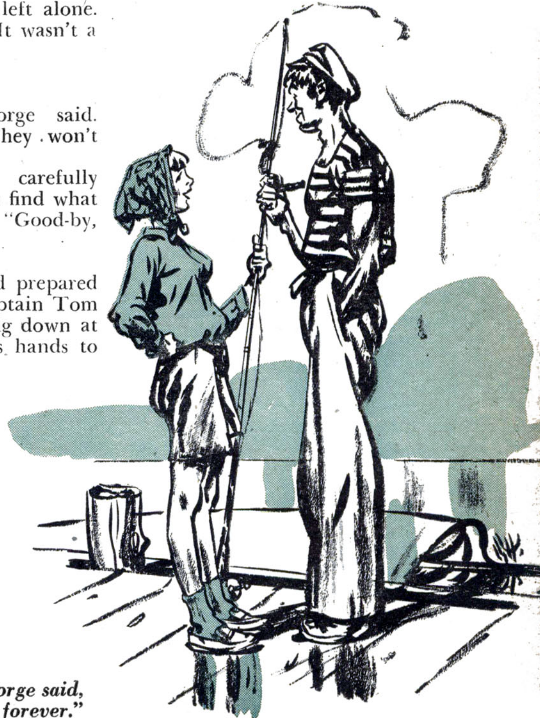
"Yes, George?"

"Mr. Crane said if we were going to fish together, if we were married—"

"I heard what he said, George."

George took a long breath. He swayed like a tall pine before the woodsman's axe, crashing down to its destiny to be fashioned into baby buggies and bassinettes. "That way," George said, "we could fish together forever."

Illustrated by Stuart Hay



"If we were married," George said, "we could fish together forever."

The British Government had an Experiment Station in Africa for years, trying to domesticate them, but gave it up. Convict Bates (all circus zebra-handlers are nicknamed "Convict") explains it thus: "They ain't got a thought or an impulse that ain't mean. They're born ornery, an' they stay ornery; no man can change 'em. And they look so gentle!"

ZEBRA

CONVICT BATES emerged from the cookhouse as the clocks were striking ten—that is, if there had been any clocks on a circus lot; which there aren't. He stood for a moment leaning against a shrouded parade wagon, lighting up an after-breakfast cigarette. He was, temporarily, at peace with the world—which didn't happen very often, on his job!

Men and women drifted past him, out of the long narrow tent with its clouds of steam and appetizing odors. Roustabouts, executives, performers—the latter with riding-boots or spangled finery visible beneath their street clothing. For this was in 1924, in the days of the "Grand Free Street Parade," and all American circuses still paraded in glittering procession through the streets each morning as soon as they had set up and eaten. And though rigid Big Top etiquette, then as now, forbade the wearing of "costumes" in the dining tent, the troupers, who'd have to be in the saddle or on wagon-tops almost immediately afterward, put on as much of their parade regalia as possible, then pulled coats or dresses back on, over it. The effect might be a little odd, but it saved time.

Most of these people smiled and nodded to "Convict" Bates, as they passed, and he grinned back. He was not at all ostracized, despite the sinister sound of his nickname. Nor, indeed, was Convict, whose real name was George, a criminal in any sense. He was a perfectly honest, hard-working young man, in his early thirties; one of the best-thought-of in the entire menagerie crew. He'd never been in prison. And yet he'd carry that cognomen until the day he died. Nor was he alone in this. There was, indeed, at least one "Convict" on every major American tent show in those days; and there still are a few, for that matter. None of them have ever worn stripes, but their charges do; and thus, by the peculiarities of circus humor, they are forever labeled.

Bates continued to lounge there, puffing the cigarette. Presently he spied his two assistants coming out, amid a miscellaneous lot of keepers, elephant-tenders and grooms; and he hailed them loudly. "Hey, you guys!" he demanded. "What's the idea of takin' your time, eatin'? You know we ain't got all day; we got work to do!"

"Aw, what's the rush, Con?" Louie Gomez, his chief helper, drawled lazily as he came up. He was a small, swarthy man with a twisted leg, and his cap reversed on his head, chewing a toothpick. "You're always hurryin' us," he complained. "We got plenty o' time. First parade bugle ain't even blown yet. It'll be at least half an hour afore they're all hooked up an' ready to roll. Them long hoss teams take a long time to hitch."

"Not as long as our team does!" Bates reminded him grimly. "Have you forgot only last week, when old Wall-eye was on one of his rampages, an' it took the three of us an hour even to get his collar on him? No-

TEAM

by ROBERT BARBOUR JOHNSON

sirree, I'm takin' no chances. Only safe way's for us to start ahead of everybody else. Then mebbe we'll finish at the same time!"

"Jeez, mebbe you're right, at that!" Fats Lowery, his second assistant, scratched his head vacantly. He was a huge, pimply youth, no more than twenty, with an enormous stomach and a vacuous expression. "Ol' Wall-eye's liable to act up again today! He was awful ornery, all the way to the lot, this mornin'. Much's I could do to hold him in line, with the rest o' the led stock."

"There! You see? Come on; I'm taking no chances!" Bates hurried off across the lot, the others following.

They headed toward the great menagerie tent, flapping whitely in the morning breeze. It was a huge six-pole affair, almost as long as the big top beyond it. Characteristic jungle odors were already emanating from its depths; and beneath its half-hung sidewalls could be glimpsed the swaying gray legs of elephants, and the gilded wheels of cage wagons. A swarm of "towners" hung about it, staring with fascinated curiosity.

The three closed in simultaneously. The zebra tried to lash out, surged back and forth; but he was helpless.

"You shoulda rid ol' Wall-eye, this mornin'," Gomez told Fats, as they elbowed through. "Your weight'd take some o' the fight out'n him!"

The young man turned pale. "Me ride a zebra?" he gasped. "My Gawd, they ain't hosses; they're wild animals! They'd kill ya!"

"Just the same, they been rode," Gomez assured him. "I seen zebra men on circuses ride their stock, lots o' times. I'd do it myself, if they hadn't busted up my leg fer me. It tires the critters out, some; an' that's a help. Only way you kin handle a danged convict is to keep him wore down. If he's fresh, no man alive kin do a thing with him!"

"That's the reason we got you in this crew," he went on, "'cause of your weight! You ain't no experienced animal man, like us. You're just a punk; you don't know nothin'! But that two hundred an' forty pounds you're draggin' around sure comes in handy, at holdin' 'em down!"

"Two hundred an' forty-five!" The youth patted his stomach complacently. "I put on a little more, lately."

"Well, you keep right on puttin' it on! If you ever start reducin', you're gonna find yourself right back in the canvas gang. Ain't that so, Con?"

"Come on; you talk too much!" Their leader was a serious-minded individual, with a mind now wholly concentrated on the task ahead.

They were inside the tent now, moving between the gilded cages and

the elephant pickets, crossing to the central section reserved for led stock. A row of camels, Bactrians and Arabians, kneeling at tethers, swung ugly triangular heads on gooselike necks to snap and bubble angrily as they walked by. A pair of spotted llamas danced about, and spat. A water buffalo rumbled, and a hairy yak swung his great horns. But the men ignored them all, knowing all were harmless, domesticated animals, strange only in appearance. Only to a big American bison, chained between two stakes, did they give a wide berth. *He* was really vicious!

Beyond him was a picket-line, stretched with block-and-tackle, similar to those to which Army mules are tethered, only stronger. To it a row of zebras were fastened, and champing hay, stiff-maned necks thrusting over the heavy cable. There were some ten of them; "Chapmans" and "Grants," all handsome specimens. At first sight they did not look nearly as dangerous as the bison. They were small, hardly larger than Shetland ponies; their peculiar stripes giving them an almost frail appearance. Their movements were pixie-ish—flicking of long ears and paintbrush tails, stamping of tiny hoofs, almost too quick for eye to follow. Two were young colts, only half-grown, and one of the mares was obviously in foal. They made a charming, almost an idyllic picture—until you noticed the evil glare in their big lustrous eyes, the sinister baring of long yellow teeth, and the way they continually snapped and kicked at each other as they ate, even the young ones. And once, when a passing workman strayed too near, there was a flash of striped legs, and a wild yell. The roustabout leaped to safety just in time; but sharp hoofs tore inch-deep gashes in a nearby tentpole!

Convict Jones was surveying it all, hands on hips. "Did you see that?" he snapped. "Still just as wild as when they were in the jungle! Even those little colts, born in captivity, are gettin' as mean as the rest. Louie, do you realize that you and I have been handling zebras all our lives, and we've never been able to make friends with a single one of 'em?"

Gomez shook his head, sadly. "Ain't no man ever made friends with a dern' convict, that I ever heard tell of!" he declared. "I give up tryin', long ago. They don't even like each other. Way I figger it, they're a kinda practical joke o' Nature's. She wanted to see if she could make a critter that'd look perty on the outside, an' be pure pizen inside. And she sure succeeded, with the zebray! "They ain't got a thought or an impulse that ain't mean. They're born ornery, an' they stay ornery; no man can change 'em. And they look so gentle! Every little girl or old lady thet comes into the menagerie wants to pet 'em. I have a hell of a time stoppin' em from doin' it. I oughta let 'em, oncet—if they got a hand bit off, they might change their minds about how sweet they air! And that dern' management, that wants 'em druv in a team in the pee-rade! They'd sing a different tune ef they had to drive 'em themselves, an' hitch 'em up every day!"

Bates shrugged. "Oh, well," he said, "that's our job, so it's no use griping! Might as well get started. You two go fetch the wagon—it's just outside the tent. Take the cover off it first, and stick the banners on the top. I'll have the harness laid out, by the time you get back."

He turned, and began to haul out red-lacquered trappings from a nearby box. Gomez started off, but Fats Lowery hung back.

"Why do we have to haul thet wagon in here every day?" he protested. "Why can't we hitch the varmints up an' then drive 'em out to it? Thet's the way the other drivers do, with their teams. Why can't we?"

Bates scowled at him. " 'Cause our team's different, that's why," he rapped. "*They* ain't horses, or ponies. They're wild! If we tried to drive 'em out, ten to one they'd take off and run a mile, before we could hook 'em to the wagon! We couldn't hold 'em, with just reins. No-sirree! We hook up inside, where we got 'em penned in. What're you squawkin' about, anyway? That calliope don't weigh hardly anything. I wish to God it did! I wish it was as heavy as the big band-wagon! Get it in here! And hurry!" he added, as a faint, musical call floated over the lot. "There goes the first bugle. Damn! I knew we should have started earlier!"

The two men disappeared under the sidewall. Bates went on laying out six harness piles behind the zebras, taking care to avoid their heels. By the time he'd finished, the pair came back in, trundling a most curious little vehicle, Gomez guiding it by its tiny tongue, while Fats pushed behind, like the elephant he rather resembled! They worried it across the sawdust behind the zebra line, and halted it. It was no more than six feet long, mounted on tiny gilded wheels and painted a brilliant scarlet. Huge circular openings had been cut in its sides, so that it was little more than top, ends and floor, with a little carving and scrollwork. Through the openings could be glimpsed a small upright instrument like a miniature pipe organ, with shiny brass tubes of graduated sizes, and a small gasoline motor and blower. That was all, save for a second pole and extra sets of doubletrees and singletrees, which the men hauled out and rigged in front. These were reinforced with iron bolts, and wrapped with wire.

"We got to git a new set of these made, soon," Gomez complained. "They ain't gonna last the season. The critters hev kicked 'em to pieces until there's more repair-work than there is sound wood!"

Bates sighed. "It's no worse'n the harness," he said glumly. "It's all patchwork—looks like the devil. However, long's it holds together, that's all that matters."

Then he picked up a collar and traces. "O.K.," he snapped. "Let's get started hitchin'. You two grab Tiger and hold him; I'll start puttin' this stuff on. Watch his heels, for Pete's sake. Ready? Go!"

The three closed in simultaneously on the first zebra. He saw them coming—squealed and reared, and tried to lash out. But they clamped on him, Gomez and Fats like football tacklers, squeezing him between them, holding him down. The little beast struggled, surged back and forth; but he was helpless, while Bates, working like a beaver, slipped the collar over his striped shoulders, slid on a belly-band, and hames over his bucking withers, and a bridle over his vicious head. The technique was similar to that of saddling a bronco, only more lively.

"Ride 'em, cowboy!" Gomez panted to Fats, as they gripped. "Git your body on his withers, weigh him down. You ain't supplyin' brains; least you kin do is supply tonnage. Git thet stomach on top of him! Watch out, now—when Con slips the crupper under his tail, thet's the bad minute. . . . Hi-yi! Lookit him kick! Boy, them heels jest missed us! O.K., now snap the buckles. It's all right; he'll stand now. Funny how they always quiet down, when they feel the harness on."

Amazingly, the zebra had stopped struggling. Seeming to realize he was hopelessly encased, he stood almost as quietly as a pony, let them lead him over, and fasten him to the wagon tongue—all with a minimum of resistance. But he still looked wild; a strange parody on a draft animal, the glare in his eyes undiminished!

Then the men stood back, resting and mopping foreheads. "Well," Gomez breathed. "There's one of 'em, anyway. An' nobody hurt yit. My Gawd, wouldn't it be wonderful ef we got 'em all hooked up, without gettin' kicked or bit? Sure don't happen often!"

They plunged in again. Four times more, the struggle was repeated, with

variations. The attitudes of the little beasts varied from mere stubbornness and head-tossing, to a tigerish ferocity; but all were united in a determination not to be harnessed. Yet the men, by sheer skill and efficiency (plus Fats' deadweight) won every time. There were grunts and groans and curses, and several backward falls into the sawdust. One animal contrived to break loose and buck off the harness before it could be fastened, squealing and kicking wildly. But gradually the team built up: two powerful young stallions on the pole, a pair of mares as "body team" and a particularly lively Grant, wearing a leather muzzle, as off-leader.

"NEED any help, boys?" a voice drawled from beyond the ropes, as they were attaching this fifth one. A man was standing there, hands in pockets, watching their efforts, and grinning broadly. He was good-looking and square-shouldered, with an air of authority. He wore the plain green and white uniform of the First Men's Mounted Section, who rode the sorrel Liberty horses on parade. But something in his bearing seemed to hint that he was accustomed to more elaborate uniforms.

The three beamed at sight of him. "Mornin', Cap'n Peterson," Bates called, cheerily. "No sir, I reckon we don't need any help today; not even from the lion-trainer. We're doin' fine—got 'em almost harnessed, already.

"If you're lookin' for Miss Alberta, sir," he went on, "she ain't showed up, yet. Reckon she's still in the dressin' tent, primpin' up. She ought to be here any minute, though—"

The Captain ignored this. He stepped over the rope and strolled nearer, staring at the team. "You know," he said, "I always get a kick out of watching you boys hook these devils up! To my mind, it's a more remarkable act than anything we do in the steel arena. Indeed, it's almost like hooking up six of my lions to a wagon, and driving them!"

Bates scratched his head. "Well sir, I guess it is, if you come right down to it! But we're so used to it, it's just routine to us."

Peterson nodded. "Yes, I suppose so. It's been done for a long time on circuses. Ducrow the clown had trained zebras in Astley's Amphitheater, the first circus. Ricketts had one, in Washington's time. And there've been plenty since. Trained to ring acts, driven in harness—to us, they're just led stock, tame animals. And yet, do you know, the British Government had an official Experiment Station in Africa for years, trying to domesticate them; and gave up? Reported that it was impossible!"

Gomez guffawed. "Reckon them Limeys wasn't willin' to take the beatin' we take," he said, "or run the risks we run. Sure, you cain't exactly tame the danged critters. But you kin handle 'em, just the same, the way we do it—by main force. It's jest like handlin' mules, only tougher."

"Sure," Bates agreed. "They're not so very much worse than 'Missouris.' I grew up on a mule farm; my old man raised 'em. It's the same principle. Most of the best circus zebra men are ex-mule-skinners."

"Yeah," Gomez nodded sagely. "A mule is a mule, stripes or no stripes!"

"I suppose so," the trainer agreed. "Anyhow, you seem to get away with it. Lord knows how many teams of 'em there've been, in circus parades. There are at least half a dozen on shows this season; and there must have been scores in the past. Ringling Brothers had a famous hitch of twenty, years ago. Five spans, four abreast! I remember seeing it when I was a kid."

Convict Bates whistled. "Twenty! Good Lord! What a sight that must have been! And us thinkin' *we* got troubles, with only six. You mean to say one guy actually drove that many, at one time?"

"Oh, they used outriders, of course," Peterson admitted. "Men on horseback, and walking alongside. The public never noticed; it never does. Which reminds me," he added; "have you ever thought of using an outrider with this team of yours?"

Bates shook his head. "Well, no sir. We never have. We just make out, best we can. Louie and me, we ride the box, with Fats on back for ballast. They get off an' lead 'em, if they start actin' up. If they try to run, we all three grab the reins, and hang on. It's worked up to now. An outrider would be a help, 'course—"

They all spun. A young woman was standing beside the wagon, hands on hips. She was blonde, and very tiny, wearing a plumed hat and blue velvet dress, trimmed with sequins. She would have been beautiful had it not been for the little frown between her hazel eyes, one of which seemed slightly discolored.

ride high-jumping horses, and hang by my teeth from a cable, over the ring. Did it ever occur to you that I might be in some slight danger in my ordinary work? And be able to take care of myself?"

Peterson looked flustered. "Oh, I didn't mean—" he stammered. "No reflection on your courage, I assure you. It's just that—"

"Well, please don't bother about us," she cut him short. "I'm sure the boys will manage, as they usually do. And by the way, hadn't you better be getting out to your group? They're

"And who," a clear voice said suddenly, behind them, "is worrying about my danger?"

already mounted, outside the tent; they're liable to ride off without you. The second bugle will blow any time, now."

"Oh, very well. If that's the way you feel!" the Captain said stiffly. He stalked off down the tent, kicking the sawdust with polished boots.

The zebra men regarded her in horror. "Gosh, Miss Alberta, ma'am!" Bates remonstrated. "You hadn't ought to talk to the Cap'n like that!"

"Jeez, no!" Fats echoed.

"Why, he's the most eligible bachelor on the show," Gomez pointed out. "Every single gal in the troupe has her cap set for him. An' he's crazy about you, anyone kin see that—"

"Certainly it would. You really need one, for emergencies. I'd be willing to do it myself, if you'd like. I'm just ahead of you, in my Mounted Group. All I'd have to do would be drop back and ride beside you. It'd be much safer, especially for Alberta —er—Miss Clayton. It's really not right, exposing her to danger—"

"And who," a clear voice said suddenly, behind them, "is worrying about my danger?"

"Morning, Miss Alberta, ma'am!" Convict Bates said, hastily. "The Cap'n, here, was just offerin' to be outrider for us, with the team. He thinks it'd be less risky, for you—"

"That's very kind of the Captain." Miss Clayton's tone was icy. "But," she went on, addressing him directly, "I don't think we need put you out. There's no reason to worry about me, I assure you. Of course, I don't work in the big cage, as you do. But I do

Miss Clayton laughed gayly. "Now, now, you lugs," she said, "don't try to play Cupid. Only one of you has the figure for it!" She stabbed a finger deep into Lowery's stomach, and grinned at his squeak of pain. Then: "Oh, I suppose I shouldn't. But he makes me so darn' mad!"

She swung lightly into the little wagon, started up the motor and ran her fingers over the keyboard. The instrument awoke, producing a series of low, gobbling sounds that surged into a tune. Air calliopes are softer and much more musical than their shrill-shrieking steam cousins. Indeed, they have survived the street parade, to become an integral part of modern Big Top band; but in those days their musicians were not bandsmen but usually young girls, chosen for piano-playing ability. Anyone who has had piano lessons can play an air calliope, for the keyboards are very similar. Only the big steamer requires special skill. . . .

"How's the eye today, ma'am?" Bates asked, above the strains of "Darktown Strutters' Ball."

The music ceased. "Oh, it's improving," she said. "The black's almost gone out of it. Now it just gives me an attractively dissipated look. But try to keep us from turning over today, will you? I can't take it. Rugged; that's what a gal has to be on this job!" She played a bar or two of Chopin's Funeral March, brooding darkly.

"Oh, I don't mind the eye," she went on. "People think my boy friend beats me. No such luck! They don't know he's yellow as a banana!"

Convict Bates gasped. "Why, how you talk, Miss Alberta! Cap'n Peterson's the bravest man in the world. He works seventeen male lions in one cage!"

"Oh, yes? You should see him on a park bench! I've done everything I know to encourage him, but he won't even make a pass! The only thing that guy's not afraid of is lions!" She ran off a few bars of "Can You Tame Wild Women?"

Then she thrust her golden head out through the opening. "Well, well," she said, surveying the team. "Are we using a five-zebra hitch today? That'd be a novelty, all right."

The men stared at each other, stricken. "Oh, my Gawd!" Gomez gasped. "We ain't got Wall-eye in yet! We was gabbin', an'— Let's git goin', quick! The pee-rade'll start any minute. Jeez! This's awful—"

Hastily they snatched up harness, bore down on the lone stallion at the end of the line. He was a particularly

fine Chapman, the brown shadow-stripes very marked, the patriarch of the herd—elderly, but still full of fire. His real name was Selim Ben Ahmed; but the nickname, obviously suggested by his wildly roving eye, was more appropriate. On one flank was an enormous scar, the stripes not quite coming together, which indicated a combat with a lion in his native Africa before being captured—from which he had presumably emerged victorious, since he was still alive. A formidable opponent for mere humans!

He saw the men coming, and reared, snorting and baring enormous yellow teeth. But Gomez and Fats pounced on him, with their efficient double-grip; and Bates, first slipping a muzzle over the vicious black jaws, began the usually interminable task of putting on the harness. But to their amazement, the little brute today put up only a token resistance. His lunges and head-tossings were half-hearted; his kicks lacked force. Long before the second bugle sounded outside the tent, the job was completed; and he was being fastened into his place in the team.

"Well, what do you know?" Gomez panted. "He wasn't so tough today! Mebbe he's slowin' down, at last."

But Bates only shook his head gloomily. "It's a bad sign!" he grated. "When that critter's easy to hook up, it means he's meditatin' some other kind of devilment. Ten to one he tries to start somethin' on the line, today. You better lead 'em for a while, Louie, just in case."

Bands were now blaring outside, the steam calliope tooting. Hastily the men donned their gaudy parade uniform jackets and caps. Bates, carrying a coiled blacksnake whip, mounted to the driver's box, gathered up reins, and loosened the brake-wheel. Gomez took position beside the leaders. "Want me to help lead?" Fats asked.

"I do not!" Convict grunted. "You get up on back, like you always do. I want your weight, to hold the wagon down. I only wish we had some pigs of lead, to put inside it. I seen that done; it helps. But you're the next best thing! You get on back!"

"O.K.," Lowery sighed. He went around to the rear, and began to hoist himself up, wheezing and grunting. A white hand emerged from inside and pinched his ample posterior, and he swarmed up with a yelp, amid the guffaws of the others. "Always glad to help," said Miss Alberta sweetly, without interrupting her calliope-playing.

"Well, guess we're ready. Let's go! Hup, there!" Bates cracked the long whip, shook the reins. Instantly six striped necks shot up, six striped bodies lunged—in six different directions! They surged sidewise against traces, kicked at double trees, reared, and fought each other. They did everything but pull. It was complete chaos, the zebras squealing and "barking" (they sound almost exactly like dogs, when excited), Convict standing up on the box, sawing his reins, slashing with the whip, Gomez tugging a bridle with each hand, with all his might. Even Fats shouted, and waved.

Illustrated by
MAURICE BOWER

Inch by inch, the Captain gained, until he was racing alongside the leaders. Then he rose in his stirrups and dived off onto the striped necks.

Then, suddenly, the team shot forward. Leaping, bucking and kicking, they headed out across the menagerie, Louis trotting along beside them, the little wagon bumping and jolting in their wake, while Bates tried frantically to steer them. They headed toward an opening in the far sidewall. Animal cages, with four-horse teams, plumed and decorated, halted to give them the right of way. Led stock scattered. Even the elephant line, clumping across the tent in pairs and blanketed with advertising signs, came to an abrupt stop! They rolled unchallenged through the aperture, and out onto the lot.

HERE was even greater massing of glittering units: Band-wagons, with eight-horse teams and tableau wagons with sixes; mounted groups in gaudy costumes; floats and pony vehicles, carts and chariots; all the indescribable medley of an old-time circus parade, forming up. But the team sliced through them like a knife through butter, and everything got out of the way, for nobody wanted to tangle with zebras! Townspeople, watching from the lot's edge, stared in amazement.

"Keep right on going," Bates yelled to Gomez. "Take 'em clear on to the street. Don't try to hold 'em; let 'em cut up much's they want. More they tire themselves out now, less trouble they'll be in the line! Let 'em rip!"

Sure enough, by the time they rolled out onto the highway, the pace had slowed to a mere trot, the kicking and bucking subsided. When they finally halted, half a block down, most of them were walking. They stood snorting and blowing, waiting for the rest of the parade to catch up. Gomez occupied himself with minor repairs to harness and doubletrees; Fats puffed a cigarette; Convict readjusted his reins, and tested the brake. "You all right down there, Miss Alberta?" he called.

"Of course. Why not? We go through that every day," she replied. Then she calmly resumed her playing, interrupted by the jolting. The gobbling strains of "Circus Day" rose above the excited voices of the crowd lining the sidewalks, the vendors hawking balloons, popcorn and peanuts.

Soon she was drowned out by the first band-wagon, rumbling past behind solemn white Percherons with red cockades. It was followed by lion and tiger cages, their occupants pacing happily in the morning sunlight, by the "United States" tableau with its allegorical group, and the first mounted section of girls in spangled velvet, on spotted horses. Then another blaring band-wagon, more tableaux, a couple of tiny "Mother Goose" floats, with Shetland teams, and more cages. The zebra men paid no attention to any of them, continuing to occupy themselves with their tasks. Only when the green riders on sorrel horses appeared, did they bestir themselves.

"Well, here's our place," Bates announced. "Let 'em get about twenty feet ahead, and then fall in behind 'em. We'll need plenty of room, with our outfit, to keep from foulin' the rest. . . . Okay, that's far enough. Let's go. Giddap!"

He cracked the whip again, shook the reins. The zebras responded—but with a difference. Winded now, and with their first exuberance worked off, they moved almost like a real team. They swung across the road and into the line, at a jogging trot to keep up with the big Percherons; craning stiff-maned necks in gooselike fashion, little legs mincing in their curiously stiff-legged gait. They went along quietly enough, safe for an occasional irrepressible leap or kick, as some strange jungle thought passed through a striped head! They made little trouble. Louie, after walking with them for a block or so, came back and climbed onto the wagon.

"They're goin' along all right," he announced. "Guess I'll ride fer a while, an' work the brake for you." He straddled the little iron wheel, and gripped it expertly.

The team was attracting tremendous attention, along the line. It was the focus of all eyes, the source of excited comment among the crowd that lined the sidewalks. Small boys scampered ahead of it, shouting: "Lookit! Zebras, pullin' a waggin!" And their elders goggled at it, just as amazed, though occasionally some wiseacre in the crowd would declare: "Aw, those aren't real zebras. They can't be. Can't fool me. They're just mules, painted up!"

Gomez caught the comment, and nudged Convict. "Hear that?" he grinned. "Now, ain't that somep'n! Painted mules! I swear, towners is the ignorantest people there are!"

"Yeah," Bates grunted. "They always say that; I dunno why. Who the dickens would bother to paint up a mule? It still wouldn't look like a zebra; the shape's different. I wish they were! It'd make it easier for us. . . . Hi! G'long, there. Quit that fighting—straighten out, damn it!" The zebras were getting their second wind, and they were livelier, now. Bates breathed mule-skinner language at them, under cover of the air calliope's tooting.

The parade rolled on. Soon it came to the first turn, the long horse-teams swinging around it with sedate dignity. The zebra hitch's turning was more colorful. Gomez twisted his brake-wheel frantically. Bates stood up on the box, yanking and hauling on the ribbons with his whole weight. The incredibly hard-mouthed little brutes hardly felt the bits; he had to haul them around by main force. Ears flicking, tails waving, kicking and rearing, the striped line arced around the corner, then straightened out. Captain Peterson, riding in the rear of his group, was watching over his shoulder alertly. But Miss Alberta, in the wagon, was ignoring him completely, continuing to serenade the crowd with popular airs.

They rumbled on, the team gradually quieting. Gomez relaxed the brake. But Convict kept jerking the reins, muttering under his breath.

"It's that derned Wall-eye," he growled. "He's got his bit in his teeth. I could feel it, through the lines. He's up to somethin', the old devil—I can tell by the way his ears are set. He's fixin' to make trouble, sure as shootin'."

"Want me to git down, an' lead him some more?" Gomez offered.

"No use! He's goin' along all right. All we can do is watch him. If he starts anything, clamp that brake on, quick! I'm worried, I admit it. I got a hunch he's gonna pull somethin' really bad, today—"

But nothing happened. The procession continued, block after block. The team jogged along peacefully enough—for zebras! There was no apparent reason for vigilance. Gradually Bates' reins relaxed; after all, no man can keep his muscles tensed indefinitely. Gomez lolled on his wheel. Fats Lowery, lolling behind them, drummed his heels on the wagon-back, in time to the music, and grinned vacantly at the crowd. They were getting downtown, now. Buildings were larger, the crowd thickening, and traffic multiplying.

AND then suddenly it happened, without warning! They were just passing a small sidestreet, almost empty of traffic, the crowd stretched across it. All at once, a child popped a balloon, in the crowd. The sound and flash were hardly audible to the men. But the zebras were startled; they snorted and tossed heads wildly. The team was temporarily out of control. And instantly, old Wall-eye took advantage of it. He reared, screaming and waving his forelegs, then whirled and dashed into the sidestreet, the crowd scattering before him. The others followed, in a panic wave, dragging the little vehicle after them at breakneck speed. A runaway!

Frantically, Bates sawed his reins and yanked. Gomez twisted the brake-wheel with all his strength. But too late—they were already moving too fast. The brake would not hold on the screeching iron tires; only

the smell of burning friction resulted. So he let go, and seized the reins with Bates. Lowery, rising to his knees on the wagon-top, seized the trailing ends behind them—and the three of them pulling in practiced unison, visibly slowed the team. But Fats made the mistake of trying to stand up, in order to put his full enormous weight into play. A lurch of the vehicle threw him off balance, and he fell off backward, with a wild yell. The last they saw of him, he was sitting on the asphalt staring after them.

Left alone, Convict and Gomez redoubled their efforts; they managed to hold the team. All but Wall-eye, who was running freely; and the reason was soon apparent. "He's busted his line!" Bates gasped, holding up a dangling rein. "That's what he was tryin' to do, durn him! No chance of stoppin' him now. All we can do is try to hold the rest of the team in line behind him; let him run himself out. He ain't iron; he's got to tire sometime. But it's gonna be a wild ride!"

They tore on, rocking like an old-time stagecoach, down the street. Fortunately, there was no traffic to get in their way. The few pedestrians, after staring at the strange sight of an apparent herd of wild zebras racing along a city street, quickly dived for cover. A traffic policeman blew his whistle wildly, then followed them. The few automobiles they encountered swerved wildly to avoid them; a truck ran into a telegraph pole. They had the street entirely to themselves.

And they needed it! For they were careening from one side of it to the other, with one team-leader entirely out of control. Once they ran on the sidewalk briefly, smashing store windows. "There goes a hundred dollars of the show's money!" Gomez wailed. "But let the legal adjusters worry about that. Our problem's keepin' this wagon on its wheels! Remember, we got Miss Alberta with us. Miss Alberta! You okay?" he called over the side.

"I g-guess so," her voice came back faintly. "I was thrown off the seat when we started. But I'm all right. What's our chances of stopping this thing? Want me to help you pull on the reins?" A golden head protruded through a side opening, spangled arms reached up.

"No, no! Miss Alberta!" Bates scolded. "You stay down, it's too dangerous. No use tryin' to pull 'em down, anyway. The leader's line's busted!"

"Then we are in a pickle!" she sighed. "Oh, well, I suppose they'll gallop themselves out eventually. All we have to do is just ride it out, don't we?"

"Sure, sure; of course," Bates assured her. "That's all. Don't you worry."

But: "Fat chance!" he muttered to Gomez. "The harness and riggin' won't hold that long; it's all weakened. If anything let's go, we pile up sure—mebbe all of us get killed."

"Yeah," Gomez agreed. "I can't figger what's helt us together so long. But it can't last, the way they're kickin' an' plungin—" Again he twisted the useless brake. "Why ain't somebody chasin' us, do you suppose? They musta seen us run off."

"They'd figger we'd stop 'em by ourselves. We always have, before. They don't know about that broken rein. Time they realize somethin's seriously wrong, it'll be all over—" Then he looked over his shoulder, and gasped. "Hey, somebody is chasin' us! A guy on a sorrel horse!"

Gomez swung. "Why, it's Cap Peterson! He musta been followin' us, all the time. He's catchin' up, like a house afire!" He waved an arm. "Come on, Cap'n! Come on!"

The green and white rider was overhauling them; his mount stretching out like a racehorse, thundering over the asphalt. Peterson was crouched low on his neck, urging him on. No living horse could possibly catch a wild zebra, running. But these were handicapped by harness, and tugging a wagon. And the Captain's sorrel was the best on the show, a thoroughbred. Inch by inch he gained, until he was racing alongside the wagon, then the team; and with a final burst of speed, the leaders. Then the Captain rose in his stirrups and dived off onto the striped necks. He flung an arm about each, seized a bridle with each hand, and rode them down, forcing them toward the curb. Old Wall-eye fought viciously, but his muzzle handicapped him. He was borne irresistibly around, blocking the others. In a moment the whole team had halted, was standing panting and blowing, with hanging heads.

"Whew!" Convict Bates let the reins sag, relaxing his cramped muscles. He mopped his forehead. "Gee, thanks a lot, Cap'n! You sure saved us all, that time. No tellin' what woulda happened, but for you—"

"Gawd, yes!" Gomez agreed, as he slid off the wagon. "Where on earth'd you learn that trick, Cap? I never seen nothin' like it in my life—'cept in the movies!"

The Captain chuckled. He caught his horse, which had halted nearby, and led him forward. "Oh, nothing to it!" he said easily. "Where'd you think I learned to ride? I wasn't always an animal-trainer. I got my start in show business in a Wild West show, bulldogging steers!" He chuckled again. "Wild West, and lion-taming—it seems to make almost as good a combination for zebra-handling, as a mule-skinner!" Then: "Well, how about it, boys? Am I your outrider from now on, or not?"

"You sure are!" Bates told him fervently. "We won't never feel safe, any more, without you around!"

"And as for you—" the Captain approached Miss Alberta, whose blonde head was still peering out of the wagon-side, staring at him with awe and admiration. "If you think you have anything to say about it—" He reached up, seized her, and kissed her violently.

"Boy, oh, boy!" Convict Bates muttered, from above. "I thought you said that guy was timid!"

"There seems," Miss Clayton said, out of the corner of her mouth, "to have been a slight error somewhere!"

The Captain let her go, and stepped back. "There have been a number of errors," he declared. "But I believe they can all be straightened out. I think I'll ride back inside the wagon, boys," he went on. "Do you mind? I'll tie the horse on behind. You won't need my help with the team, will you?"

"Lord, no sir," Bates assured him. "We're all right, now. Louie's got old Wall-eye's rein spliced already. We'll drive back slow, pick up Fats, and join the parade on its way back to the lot. You go right ahead, sir; don't give us a thought."

"Right!" The Captain grinned; he waved a hand, and vanished inside.

"All set, Louie?" Bates gathered up his reins, picked up the bull-whip. "Get aboard, then. We got a long drive back." He cracked the lash fiercely. "Giddap, you onery jugheads!"

The team swung around, too weary even for a single kick, and headed back the way they'd come, ambling with drooping heads and flicking tails, as docile as so many burros.

Gomez, crouched over his brake-wheel, jerked his head back toward the wagon. "You s'pose he's proposin', in there?" he murmured.

"What do you think?" Bates grunted. For out of the vehicle had come a sudden burst of calliope music; quickly choked off, but recognizable. It was: "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight!"

"Gosh, ain't love beautiful?" Gomez sighed.

"Keep your mind on your wagon-brake!" Bates told him, grimly. "We don't want no more trouble!" He shook his head. "That sure was tough today! Zebras are the durnedest critters!"

"Yeah," Gomez agreed. "They sure run off bad today!" He paused. "A lot worse'n they done yestiddy!"

Everything's Been Done

IT MAY BE THAT ELSEWHERE IN THIS VAST UNIVERSE ATOMIC WARFARE HAS BEEN DREADED—AND FOUGHT

Everything's been done before,
You fall in love 'neath stars above—
It's been done since Adam and Eve.
But when I'm with you, I just want to do,
What's been done before.

I WAS singing that song one blue-and-gold California spring morning not so long ago. I was singing the song and thinking about Evelyn. She's blue and gold too, just like the morning, and the feeling of young tremulousness that she inspires in my heart should embarrass a hardened newspaper man like myself to admit. I sang the song, and thought about our marriage, which was to take place as soon as I got a raise and we found the right apartment.

Then I met Dr. Hayes and talked with him.

I haven't sung that song since. Don't think I ever will again. . . .

Dr. Arthur J. Hayes is a tall man, strongly built, but still slender. His hair is brown; his bushy eyebrows are quite white; and his eyes are a bright and youthful blue. He's considered the country's leading astro-physicist. I've known him pretty well since I did a Sunday-feature article on him a couple of years ago.

I met him on the boulevard, and he looked right at me without knowing I was there. I could see that his face was new-lined with care and his blue eyes clouded; so instead of feeling hurt, I spoke quickly and loudly enough to break into his abstraction.

"Good morning, Doctor Hayes. Fine morning, isn't it?"

He started, looked at me again, and seemed pleased.

"Good morning, Ralph. Haven't seen you for some time. How's newshounding these days? And how is Evelyn?"

"Getting as impatient as I am, I hope. We can't get married until I get a raise. The only way I can get a raise in that sweatshop where *I* work is to get a scoop on a good story. Come on, Doc! How about some people on Mars or some more authentic flying-saucer dope? Must be something hot somewhere."

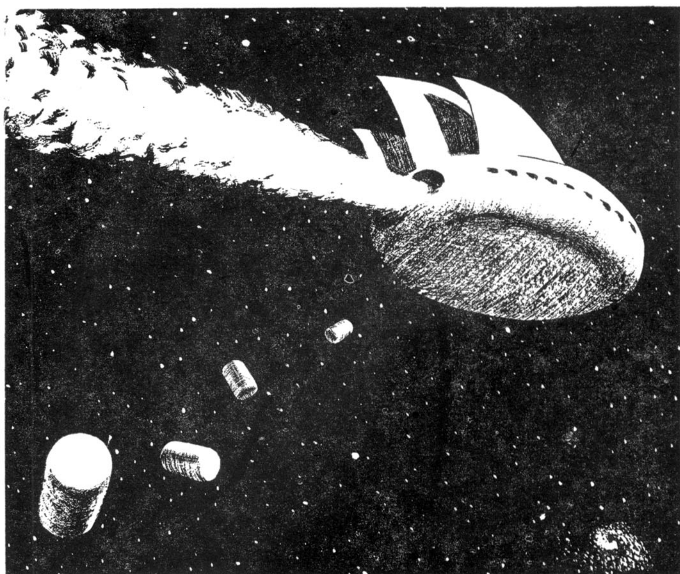
His quick smile faded, and the intense and preoccupied expression returned to his face.

"Something hot. Something hot." He said it sadly, it seemed to me. "Perhaps I *have* got something hot. You won't print it, though. Come over here, Ralph. *I'll* give you your something hot!"

"The Indians were scared stiff . . . the night that the Evil Spirit played on the hillside."

Before

by J. H. CLAGETT



Illustrated by Brendan Lynch

Eagerness appeared in his manner as he led the way to a secluded bench in the nearby park. I felt like a prospector who's stumbled on a gold nugget in a child's sandbox. Hot damn! The old Cameron luck!

"I've been out of town for a few weeks," the Doctor began. "It was a routine bit of work. As you know, I've done a great deal of work with meteors, as the layman calls them. There's a group of craters back in the foothills; they're not very big ones, but they are quite unusual in their uniformity of size and in the manner in which they struck the earth so close together. Obviously a group of meteorites of approximately the same size.

They must have struck not too long before one of the first of the early Spanish explorers came through, because the Indians were scared stiff of the locality, and it was their stories of the night that the Evil Spirit played on the hillside that made the Spaniard investigate the place. He described it very well. Four smallish craters on the hillside, each fifteen or twenty yards across, and on the crumbling rock pinnacle above the hill slope, a scarred and rust-splashed area where something metallic had crashed at high speed. It must have been a noisy and fiery time when those five meteorites hit. We needed a moderate-sized meteor to cross-section for the museum, so we took equipment and started to dig one of this group out."

He told me a little of the methods they have evolved for this business; the calculations that can be made from an accurate survey of the crater that reveal the angle at which the stranger dug into the earth, the probable depth at which it rests, and the estimated mass.

"We have modern earth-moving equipment for the job. In a couple of days the scoop of the steam shovel grated on metal. A crane lifted the astrolite from its bed, and deposited it at our feet."

The workmen boredly commenced gathering up the equipment, not noticing that the scientist and his assistant were gaping in stunned surprise at the fused, misshapen mass of metal, about the size of a bushel basket.

"Ralph," said Doctor Hayes, "a meteorite such as this one had never been seen upon earth before. Battered and scarred as it was, the evidences of machine-work were plain!" The excitement that had gripped him then recommunicated itself to him now, and I saw his hands shake.

Tensely, and without saying anything to the workmen, they had the meteorite loaded onto a waiting truck and carried away to the laboratory at the University. As they wanted, for the time being, to keep the discovery quiet, they left the other three craters undisturbed, planning to return after they had made a full investigation of the first find. Experts assembled to assist in the examination. When the accumulation of earth was washed away, the metal was revealed, unrusted, beneath. Its mass was so markedly less than was normal for its volume of steel, as it turned out to be, that they could only conclude that it was hollow! They placed it on a big turning lathe, and found that by using the hardest of cutting tools and abrasive wheels patiently and carefully, they could cut into the metal. It took a week and wore out a laboratory of tools.

"I spent the whole week in the shop," admitted the Doctor. "I had a cot brought in, and I had sandwiches and milk and coffee. But mostly I didn't even know what I was eating or drinking. I was asleep when the tool cut through. The machinist shook my shoulder and said, I believe: 'The damn' thing's through, Doc. What do I do now? You can believe I was awake in a hurry! We put clamps on it to hold it together, and craned it out of the lathe holders. Jack Baker, my assistant, had turned up, and we took off the clamps. The meteorite fell in two pieces on the floor, and its contents were exposed."

There was a mass of white, fibrous material resembling asbestos. Within this insulation was a gleaming metal cylinder some ten inches in diameter and six inches high. It was joined in the middle with what appeared to be an ordinary screw thread, and Doctor Hayes' strong hands were able to turn it. It must have taken a self-control of incredible strength, but he decided not to open it until the assembled scientists could witness the act.

"You can imagine my feelings, Ralph!" he continued. Even now his brow showed gleaming beads of perspiration at the remembrance of his emotions. "Here was surely a message from space! I never thought of a hoax. The thing was exactly where the calculations said it would be, and the crater itself was at least hundreds of years old. The inner container weighed about ten pounds, and I carried it myself to the laboratory, while Baker made hurried phone calls. You can believe that it didn't take them long to arrive. We had a full house within an hour."

They used their scientific technique as a doctor uses sterile technique, and for the same reason. The medical doctor strives to shut out the deadly germs of disease; the scientist strives to shut out the deadly germs of error.

They weighed, measured and photographed the object while tension and impatience mounted in the big room like thunderheads over a sultry August sky. At last the moment arrived. Doctor Hayes and Baker grasped the cylinder at each end and began to turn.

Doctor Hayes continued:

"When we'd made one full turn a sharp hissing noise commenced. We stopped, and into my mind at least rushed the notion that perhaps it was about to explode. The hissing stopped, but not before we recognized it as the hiss of air rushing into the object. Whatever it was, it had been sealed in at least a partial vacuum. Our colleagues were rapidly forgetting scientific decorum, and crowded closely around us.

"The container came open on the laboratory table, and inside, enclosed in more of the insulation, we found—"

HE paused, to grin sardonically at me.

"For the love of Pete!" I cried. "What?"

"A roll of film!" he replied, with the grin gone.

"Then it *was* a fake!" I exclaimed disappointedly.

"I wish it were, Ralph. I wish it were."

He went on with the story.

They examined the roll of film carefully. It appeared to be movie film, but quite different from any they had ever seen. It was larger than the standard thirty-five millimeter, and it had no rows of ratchet-holes on either side. It was in bright color. After copies had been made, its tensile strength was found to be so great that two strong men could have played tug-of-war with a length of it without causing it to break.

"We decided that the quickest way to view the contents of this film was to make a copy, in color, on standard movie film. Our photographic laboratory was able to do the job, and we gathered once more the next day to view the results. So far, the entire affair had been kept very quiet, though there was a general knowledge around that something was up."

They gathered in a projection-room in the morning; there was a short delay after the room was darkened. There was little talk, each man seemed fearful and humble. A little of the cold darkness of space seemed to have crept into the place. I myself, hearing the quaver in the Doctor's voice, wondered if I'd be able to read the shorthand notes I was making.

"The screen lighted," said Doctor Hayes. "There was no sound—the film was silent. *They* were intelligent beings, at least—they realized that we wouldn't understand their language."

Then color blazed on the white screen—a dark immensity with many points of light. The scene shifted, and a greenish globe swam onto the screen. It was a great planet, turning in space. It moved toward the viewers, filled the screen and vanished. There came quick glimpses of oceans and plains and mountains, of cities, graceful and gleaming in many colors. The film shifted then to something like a Disney cartoon, showing one of the cities devastated by explosions, seemingly caused by black circling dots in the sky above.

"They had war, too, then!" someone murmured in awe in the cold silence of the room.

The picture shifted to the inside of what appeared to be an instrument-filled laboratory, or workshop. Slender, manlike figures in long robes worked at unknown tasks. The screen turned gray; upon it danced several round single black spots, well separated.

"Hydrogen nuclei!" someone muttered into the darkness.

Several sets of dots, each group containing two white and one black dot moved onto the screen. (These were diagrammatic representations of tritium nuclei, the Doctor told me, aside, from this story.)

The groups danced; a red light flashed; they joined into a number of groups, each consisting of two white and two black dots.

"Then I spoke up!" confessed the Doctor. "I couldn't hold it in, though I knew they all knew. I said '*helium.*' My voice sounded loud in the stillness. Then the entire screen blazed in lurid light, the dots vanished, and we saw a city crash into the dark sky in a flaming explosion!"

"The hydrogen bomb!" the Doctor said to me, there in that sunlit, quiet park where squirrels dashed with pumped-up courage after peanuts, and pigeons made graceful circles coming down from a smiling sky.

A DIAGRAM of a planetary system appeared on the screen. There was a sun. Around it circled a single mighty planet, the same that had been shown before. About this single planet there traveled a score of moons of various sizes. Again the planet moved closer to the viewers. There was a cartooned picture of a spherical ship taking off from the planet, and disappearing into the sky. Again the planetary system was shown.

"By this time we were all filled with a suspense and a tension that were hard to bear," continued Doctor Hayes. "I myself felt an almost uncontrollable impulse to stop the film and get out under a sky and sun that I knew, on a world that I knew. But I didn't."

As they watched the large planet, in its system, a point of fire broke out on one side. In an instant it grew until an unknowable mass of flame slashed across the system from the expanding, exploding planet! The explosion was on one side; like a rocket blast, it moved the planet off into space, followed by those of its moons that had not been utterly destroyed. The scene shifted, following the sphere of fire and fury across the blackness of space. The planet was now a star. The scene settled and cleared. Then the watchers saw a familiar system circling on the screen.

"A central sun, formerly the great planet, circled by nine spinning globes," whispered the Doctor.

"Ralph, it was our solar system!"

I looked up at the sun. For a moment I imagined that its grateful warmth felt too hot. Then I shivered—hot and cold flashes.

"THERE was one scene more," continued Doctor Hayes wearily. "It too was a drawing. It showed the spaceship, lonely and cold in the infinite blackness of space. We saw inside the ship, and saw the silent crew casting out through an air-lock a number of cylindrical metal objects. Among them must have been the 'meteorite' we had discovered, as well as the three others still waiting in their craters on the hillside. They were trying to show to future worlds the fate that had befallen theirs. It was a brave gesture." He sat silent for a moment.

"They looked terribly lonely up there, Ralph," he said; and his voice was old and tired. "They were alone and forgotten, and black space didn't care. The string of metal cylinders drifting away from their sides made them seem all the more lost and undone, like the row of periods that a writer places after an unfinished sentence."

He rose and picked up his hat, from the bench beside him.

"There's your hot story, Ralph. Now print it!" He smiled at me and went away.

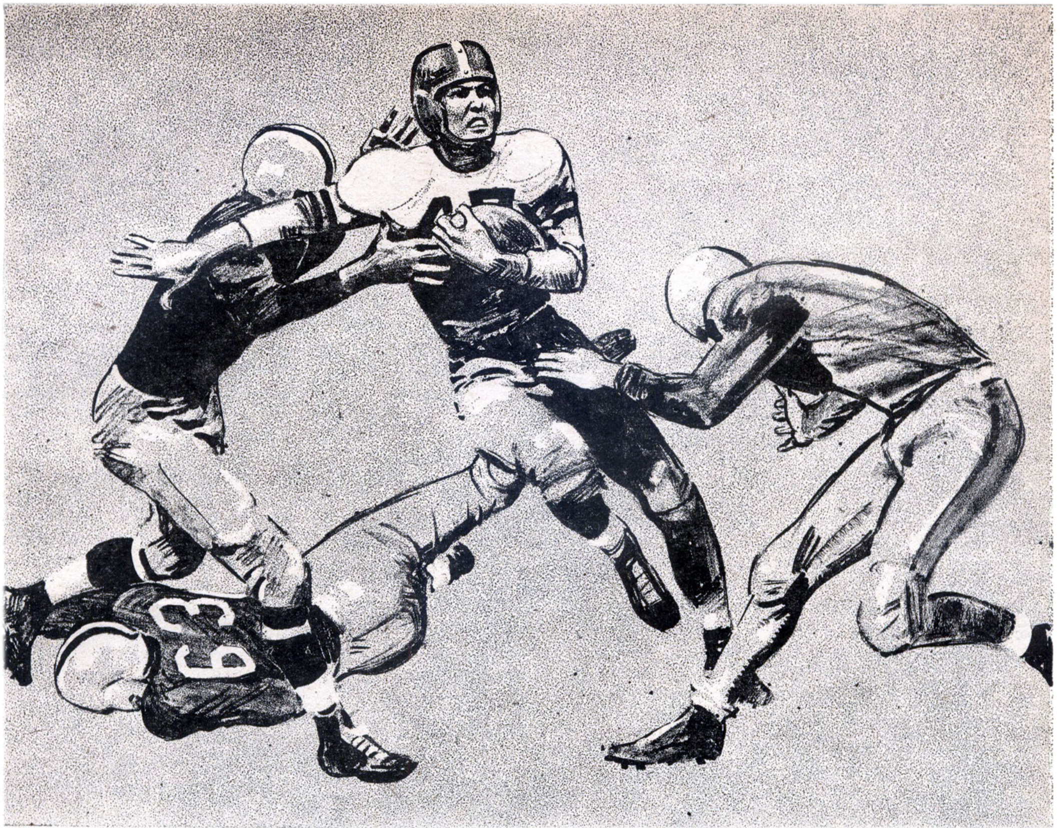
I got up and went off down the street. I didn't look at the sun. As I walked, I cursed.

"I never thought it of the Doc! Pulling my leg like that. I thought it was on the level all the time. Damn him, a joke like that isn't human. It must be a joke. It has to be!"

I don't know why I was so vehement about its being a joke. Trying to convince myself, I suppose. All I know is, as I walked down the street I started to sing my song again.

"Everything's been done before—"

But when I got that far, I suddenly found that I didn't feel like singing any more.



It's a Fast New World

TECHNIQUES AND STANDARDS HAVE CHANGED, BOTH IN BUSINESS AND IN FOOTBALL

by NELSON BOND

"WITH an original order for eighty-five thousand units," said Craig, and looked at him expectantly. "Well?" he asked.

With an effort, Charles Mallory transferred his attention from the landscape gliding past the club-car windows to his companion. This was the measure of their added years, he thought. This was the measure of all-changing time: that going down on the train to watch his grown son play his first football game for Midland, he should talk business to the man who had once been his own best comrade in gridiron wars.

"Well?" he echoed.

Warren Craig complained: "Confound it, Chuck—you haven't heard a word I've been saying!"

"Of course I have. Every word."

A small red-roofed structure slipped by, its swift passage marked by the close, then far, *tang-tang* of a grade-crossing bell. Prentice Corners, thought Mallory. Only five minutes more to College Station. Time to be getting his bags from the Pullman coach.

"Well, then?" prodded Craig.

"The contract, you mean."

"The contract, of course. Isn't that what we've been talking about?" Craig added earnestly, confidently: "I think we can both make a good thing of it, Chuck."

There was no longer any denying him the answer he demanded and deserved. Mallory cleared his mind of its preoccupation with the increasingly familiar scenes outside, and said:

"It's a tempting offer, Warren, and a fair one. I appreciate your making it. But I'm afraid the answer is no."

"No! But why not, Chuck? I've explained—"

"I know you have. And very clearly, too. But it's not just a question of increased business. It's simply that I don't want to lose control of my factory, that's all."

"Good Lord, Chuck, I'm not trying to take over your business! All I want to do is put Mallory and Company into full production—and incidentally, put you back in the chips. I can absolutely guarantee you enough work to double your last year's output."

"I realize that. And things haven't been too good for a long time now. But"—Mallory frowned, seeking words to express the inexpressible—"but I'm a designer and creator of fine furnitures, Warren—not a maker of piece goods. If I sign this contract, I'll make more money; true. But I'll lose something that's pretty important to me. The pride of craftsmanship that comes of taking on a project, working it through from beginning to end. Mallory and Company will become a captive industry. And I don't want that."

Craig said patiently: "You're not a captive, Chuck, when you're contributing a vital process to a finished whole. I don't want your whole factory. I want just one thing from you. A special technique you've perfected to a unique degree—your fluid-pressure molding process. I need it, just as you need my superior sales and distributional facilities.

"Look to the future, man! Wouldn't you rather work with me than plod along in the same old-fashioned way for another few years until taxes and labor costs and competition succeed in eating you up as they've been threatening to do for the past ten?"

"They won't eat me up," growled Mallory defiantly. "I'll get by—somehow. My father weathered worse storms than this. And his father before him."

"You're kidding yourself, Chuck. Today's problems aren't the same sort they faced and licked. At worst, they bucked the hazards of a sound economy. Things are different nowadays. This is an era of speed, high pressure, cutthroat competition. The only way to meet it is my specialization. I'm offering you a chance to keep your business alive—"

"By making it a cog in a mass-production machine," finished Mallory. "Warren, I don't want to abandon the furniture business. I don't want to cancel out seventy years of honest effort, end up making radio cabinets for someone else."

"Not just radio cabinets. Breakfronts, church pews, kitchen chairs—anything that can be made faster and better with your molding process. You've never utilized it to its fullest extent, Chuck. You use it only for certain trimming effects. I want to use it as a basic operation. That's how it should be used. It's the fastest,

Like quicksilver, thought Mallory. Talking to Upton was like trying to capture a ball of mercury between thumb and forefinger

cheapest, most efficient process of its kind ever to be invented."

Craig stared at him for a moment. Then, hesitantly: "Chuck, if this weren't the best thing for you, I would never have suggested it. I think you know that."

The conductor swayed down the aisle before them. College Station, he intoned. Mallory rose.

"I do know it, Warren. And I appreciate it. But I can't decide now. Will you give me a little time?"

Craig rose also. "Of course. I don't want to rush you. But I must have an answer by Monday. I'm knee deep in orders, and I've got to get into production. If not with you, then with someone else. The Apex Corporation—"

"Apex can't touch my process."

"I know it. That's another reason I'd like to sign with you." Warren touched his breast pocket. "I brought the papers with me. If you can decide over the week-end—"

"I'll think it over," promised Mallory. "I'll let you know one way or the other. But as of now—I don't like it."

The train sighed steamy protest, bucked to a stop. Craig nodded understanding.

"O.K. I won't bother you again this week-end. You didn't come down here to talk shop. So we'll forget Mallory and Company for a while." He smiled, and suddenly there was youth upon his lips. "Well—here we are. Right back where we started from twenty years ago. Welcome to Midland, teammate!"

"Thanks," said Charles Mallory, business executive. Then: "It's good. By God, it's good to be back," said Chuck Mallory, All-America 1930.

SURPRISINGLY, Bud met him at the station. Mallory had not really expected to find him there, what with the big game tomorrow, the lateness of the afternoon hour, the stern regimen of football training. But he was standing four cars up the track, eagerly scrutinizing each passenger descending from the forward coaches as Mallory climbed down from his own.

As he reached the station platform, Bud saw him and came jogging down the soot-grimed span of concrete—a tall, broad-shouldered youngster, big-boned and sturdy, astonishing end-product of that knobby-kneed, grubby-faced kid who, so short a time ago, used to gallop down the street to welcome his old man home each workday evening.

In those days the way of his greeting had been a catlike leap into Mallory's outstretched arms. Now it was a wide grin, a clasp of hands, an arm swiftly thrown around the shoulders, quickly crushing and withdrawn. But it was good, and warming.

He said: "Hi, Dad! Have a nice trip? You're looking swell. Give me that bag. The crate's over here." Then, as he led the way toward a regrettably disreputable convertible: "Your train was a little late. We'll have to hurry, or we'll miss chow."

"We?"

"Mmm-hmm. You're dining at training table tonight—didn't I tell you? The team wants to meet the Midland legend in the flesh."

Mallory chuckled ruefully. "There's more flesh than legend nowadays, I'm afraid. But how come you got away to meet me? Finish practice early?"

BUD glanced at him in mild wonderment. "Practice? We rested this afternoon. Upton believes in letting us loaf off the fine edge just before a game."

"Oh?" said Mallory. Then swiftly, and in another tone: "Oh, I see." It would not do, he reminded himself, to let Bud—or any of the boys—sense his personal distrust of Upton, and of Upton's training methods. Players should have confidence in their coach. And perhaps it was unfair of him to be critical of so minor a detail. For Upton's record *was* impressive—or had been at the small college from which this year he had been lured to Midland. Whether or not he could duplicate his small-time success in top-drawer competition, whether he could fill the boots of such coaching greats as Doc Slattery and Fran Hoskins, or old Pop Walker, under whom Mallory had played, remained to be seen.

"Hold your hat!" warned Bud. With a puff, a snort and a roar, the hot-rod took off. There was no use in trying to talk over its din. Mallory subsided into sober contemplation of his own thoughts and emotions.

A part of his trouble, he recognized, was his reluctance to see Bud under the tutelage of anyone other than himself. That this was to a very great extent selfishness he both realized and granted—but it was how he felt, nevertheless. For until last year, Bud's football activities had always been under the watchful eye of his proud and capable dad.

It was inevitable that a son of Chuck Mallory would grow up with a football in his hands. A toy one, at first: a flimsy scrap of leather just large enough to fit the hands of a five-year-old. But this had been followed by larger models—one with which eight-year-old hands could be taught to hurl passes, one with which ten-year-old feet could be trained in the kicking of punts. And finally there was a regulation-size football, just as there were cleated boots, hip-guards, pads, a helmet. Then team play on the sandlot teams of Centerville. The midget league when Bud was twelve years old, the pony league before he entered high school.

The three-year adventure of high school was—for Chuck Mallory—a bright reliving of a part of his own life. It was to be expected that the son of an All-America father should go out for the high-school team. It was to be expected that his famous dad should take an interest in his son's progress, and that of the team. It was also to be expected that the high-school coach—himself a boyhood admirer of the great Chuck Mallory—should welcome Mallory's aid in coaching and training the team. To the extent that before either man realized what was happening, it was Mallory who was actually acting as unpaid coach of the Centerville High eleven, Chambers who was serving as assistant.

This situation caused no ill feelings anywhere. Why should it? Centerville won the city title when Bud was but a sophomore, repeated when he was a junior. C.H.S. took both the city *and* State titles in Bud's final year, when as team-captain and star halfback, he set a new conference scoring record.

His father kept a scrapbook of those years—a fat, expensive volume, and a proud one. It started with that first brief, modest mention: *"Making his initial appearance in the C.H.S. backfield will be the son of Centerville's own Chuck Mallory, gridiron great in the halcyon days of 1927-30."* It included such tributes as that which acclaimed: *"A hero's son today seized the hero's rôle as Centerville High rolled on to its sixth consecutive win in conference play,"* and such headlines as: "ALL-AMERICA'S SON WINS ALL-SCHOLASTIC HONORS."

And of course it was to be expected that the final clipping in this book—to date—should be the notice that, "Midland's hopes for a return to football heights got a shot in the arm today when it was learned that Francis (Bud) Mallory, son of the famous Chuck Mallory, had enrolled at the school where his father won football fame and glory—"

So there was some excuse for Mallory's concern as to Frank Upton's capabilities. It was not merely that Upton was young and comparatively untried. There was also the fact that he did not know Bud's playing traits, his strengths and weaknesses, as well as did the father who had coached his son for so many years.

WERE Upton on the ball, Mallory thought, he'd leap at the opportunity to get some advice from an older and more experienced man. Come to think of it, perhaps that's why he had been invited to dine at the training table! Maybe Upton *was* hoping for

some such offer of assistance? In which case, decided Mallory, there was no reason why he couldn't plan to stay over for a week or so, till the fledgling season got well under way. Mallory was willing—indeed eager—to help. He would let young Upton know this. . . .

"Here's how I feel about it," he said. "If there's anything at all I can do—"

"I appreciate that, Mr. Mallory," said Upton. "And I think you *are* helping just by being here today. They got a big bang out of meeting you." His nod encompassed the table at the head of which he sat with his guest. "And they'll play the better for it tomorrow. Confidence is a great stimulator. The mere realization that Midland had great stars and great teams in the past is an incentive to duplicating that greatness."

Like quicksilver, thought Mallory fretfully. Talking to Upton was like trying to capture a ball of mercury between thumb and forefinger. The cool, clear-eyed young man was irreproachably gracious and polite. It was impossible to say he rejected your ideas, or even that he failed to grasp your meaning. Yet somehow he managed to elude you, and your thoughts never quite sounded the same when he repeated them.

"That's not exactly what I meant," Mallory frowned. "What I meant is —well, now, take Bud, for instance: Ever since he's been old enough to toddle, I've been his coach. So if there's ever anything you'd like to know about him—"

"I think not," said Upton cheerfully. "Don't worry about your son, Mr. Mallory. He's a swell boy and a great competitor. He'll make a fine quarterback."

"Quarterback! Bud? But he's a halfback! He's always been a halfback, ever since he—"

"I know. But we shifted him this season. For many reasons. No need going into them now. But I think you'll be pleased when you see how it works out." Upton changed the subject abruptly. "By the way, have you seen the way they've redecorated Athletic Hall? You should. Why don't you and Bud run over and have a look at it?"

And there it was again. That fluid smoothness, that quicksilver evasion. Almost before he realized what had happened, Chuck Mallory was obeying Upton's will and not his own. He found himself being led across the campus by his son.

In his day it had simply been "the Gym." Now there was a new gymnasium, a huge, elaborate structure, and the old building was called Athletic Hall. But other than in its change of name, it showed surprisingly little difference. Its weathered red brick walls still bore the smears of paint, souvenirs of ancient insults splashed thereon by raiders from—most generally—State U. The floors were scuffed and scarred by the passage of generations of cleated and spiked boots; the building still exuded, as of yore, its unforgettable odor of leather and liniment, sweat and steamy baths. Mallory inhaled the good familiar smell deeply, drawing with it into his lungs a memory of the past.

The change was in the purpose of the building. It had been a place where games were played; now it was a museum of victories earned and gently tucked away in hallowed silence. The walls were hung with rows of plaques and pictures—pennants, trophies of sports wars. A series of glass cases lined the walls.

"This one should interest you," grinned Bud, stopping before a case that contained a red-and-gray jersey bearing the number 23. There was a helmet in the case, too—and a football and photograph. "Anything here look familiar to you?"

The helmet was worn and its chinstrap had been torn and neatly mended. The past came flooding back as yesterday, and Mallory recalled the occasion of its tearing. Lon Hodges of Notre Dame had ripped it from his head in a futile attempt to bar him from the goal-line on that gray November afternoon of 1929. But he had scored. Rare then, and rare today, were men who bucked the center of the Irish line for a fifteen-yard gain—especially after playing fifty-five minutes without relief.

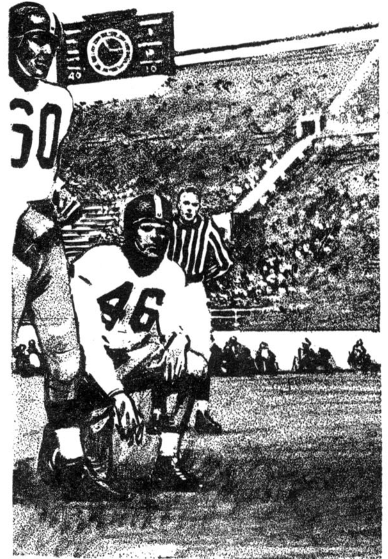
And the football. That was a conference trophy—the one they had wrested from Michigan when the teams had clashed, undefeated and untied, in the final battle of the year. It had been given him as captain of the team. He had sent it here some years ago when Midland had written, asking permission to display it with his jersey after retiring that famous "23" forever from the list of players' numbers available to later generations.

The picture: Mallory's eyes scanned it, identifying himself, recognizing each of the boys seated on either side of him, standing behind him, as if it were twenty minutes, rather than so many years, that had passed since he had seen them.

Martin and Barlow, Igorski, Downey, Abramson, Evans, Kephardt and Darby, Wilmer and Jacobi. Sam Jacobi was dead now, Mallory recalled with a pang of swift regret. So were Cavanaugh and Lafferty. But there was Johnny Foster, who was very much alive these days, whose speech before the United Nations Security Council had made headlines just last week. And Noland, who had served as chairman of the President's fact-finding board during the recently-settled strike. And Yates, and Preston, and Warren Craig. . . .

Illustrated by

O. F. SCHMIDT



Onto the field from both

Strange how little Warren Craig had changed, he thought. Oh, he was older; yes. They were all older. But the boy in the picture was very much the same Craig he had talked to on the train today. Then, as now, Craig had run interference for him. Then, as now, Warren had called the signals in crucial moments. Over the years he heard the echo of Craig's voice, quiet but forceful in the huddle. "I think this is our best bet—" he would say. Much as he had said this afternoon.

Their faces in the faded photograph were beginning to sepia and blur. But in his heart they were forever clear, forever fresh, alive and young, and loved. Looking at them, a sudden mist touched Mallory's eyes; the well-remembered faces danced before him. He turned away.

"We'd better go now, son," he said to Bud. "It's getting late. And you've got a tough day tomorrow."

sides there was swarming a horde of replacements. Not one or two men, but solid teams of them!

A jostling crowd clogged the entrance gates of Midland's stadium. With Warren at his side, Chuck let himself be borne by that flood through the archway of their section, up the ramp, into the aisle which fed to their midstripe seats.

It was impossible to talk above the tumult of the throng, the blaring of the band on the field below. That was just as well, for Mallory didn't feel like talking. Not just now. In his mind's eye he was seeing other crowds, the crowds of an earlier day, the crowds that had filled this same stadium a score of years before to see the great Chuck Mallory spearhead his team to triumph after triumph.

"Warm," commented Warren.

The afternoon was clear and—for October—warm. A bit too warm, in fact. A fine day for spectators, a rough one for players. It was, thought Mallory, bad scheduling to open the season against one of Midland's oldest and toughest rivals—the Kaydets of Southern Tech. That was another Upton boner. If he had any sense, he would have started the season with a breather or two. To throw a green team against one equally strong—

Mallory caught himself worrying about Bud's ability to stand up under the combined problems presented by the heat, the importance of the game, a bone-hard turf, and a scoreboard clock whose hands must make a complete circuit of the dial. Bud was young and strong, but even in his high-school days he had shown some difficulty in going the full distance. And the high-school teams played twelve-minute quarters. To this extent, at least, Bud was not a chip off the old block. Sixty minutes had meant nothing to Chuck Mallory—the iron man, the workhorse, old dependable.

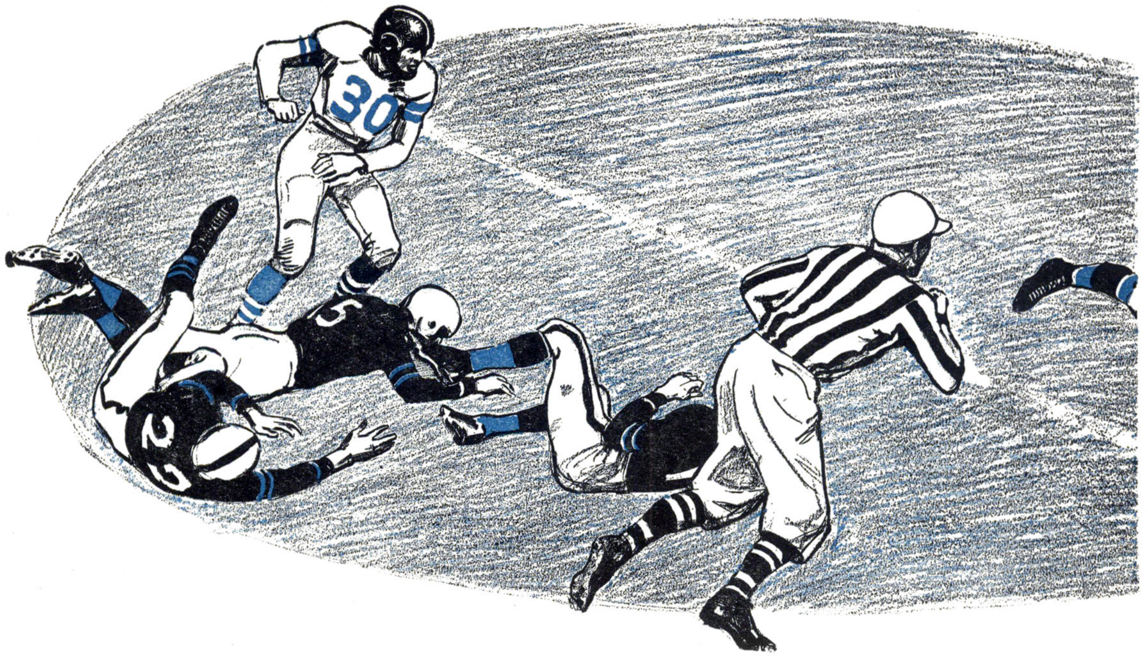
"Nervous?" asked Craig.

"Hell, no!" snapped Mallory. Then, more honestly: "A little," he confessed. And even that was an understatement. For in the moments that preceded the kickoff, he felt something he had not experienced for more than twenty years. That oddly tingling twist, deep in the pit of the stomach, that athletes call the gut-grip.

It was with him as the captains of the two elevens met in the center of the field to call the tossed coin, with him as the field cleared for action and the band stopped playing to leave an aching silence for the kickoff.

Then the long red line of Midland rolled unevenly forward down the field; the green-clad Kaydet warriors tensed to meet them; the booter's foot met the ball, the silence exploded in a roar. Leather soared high in a long, end-over-end kick—and Mallory's gut-grip left him as the game began.

Tech's fullback made only a seven-yard return before he was deluged under a flood of crimson jerseys. From their seventeen, the Kaydets tried an end sweep and a center rush, then fell back into punt formation and kicked. The boot was a good one, riding with the wind sixty yards to the Midland thirty, where Bud was under it. Mallory noted with approval that the kid had not forgotten the lessons he had learned in Centerville. He did not grab the ball and surge blindly forward. He took his time, selected his direction, waited for a wall of interference to form before him before he took off for the enemy goal. He made a fine run-back of twenty yards, toting the pigskin all the way to the Tech forty before he was toppled by a brace of green-clads.



"Nice going!" grunted Mallory. "Now, go get 'em!" He turned to Craig. "Kid's O.K., eh? Now let's see how he does as quarterback. I'm still not convinced—"

He paused abruptly, startled. For out onto the field from both sidelines, was swarming a horde of replacements. Not one or two men, but solid teams of them! Eleven men from the Midland side, eleven from Tech's benches. And as they took the field, twenty-two men who had been in the game for less than three minutes jerked off their helmets and, obedient as so many trained sheep, trotted to the sidelines.

"The two-platoon system!" exploded Mallory. "Upton uses the two-platoon system?"

"That's right," said Craig. "You didn't know?"

"I didn't know," growled Mallory, "and I don't like it! It's not football. In our day—"

Craig shrugged whimsically. "'The old order changeth—'" he quoted. And Mallory had a brief vision of a younger Craig, a younger himself, drowsing through English Literature 103 under the somnolent guidance of old Doc Winterby. "They do things differently nowadays, Chuck."

"Differently," agreed Mallory with some bitterness. "But not better. The two-platoon system! And Bud on the defensive eleven!"

But even in his disappointed outrage he had to confess to a grudging respect for the offensive eleven Upton put on the field. They were a fast, keen, well-trained bunch of boys. Their drive carried them five yards into Tech territory—then another five for a first down—then twelve more for a second first down on the Kaydet eighteen.

There, as Tech stiffened and held, the ball was finally lost on downs on the Southerners' sixteen-yard line. And once more the gridiron was dotted with replacements as the red defensive eleven came in.

For seconds only. Because Tech elected to quick-kick. The Midland safety man grounded the ball. And hardly had it touched the turf when again the offensive squad came racing from the sidelines.

"Hardly time to crease their pants on the bench!" grumbled Mallory. "You call this football? It's more like a track meet!"

This time the offensive team went into the air with its attack. A long pass brought the Midland partisans roaring to their feet, and when striped arms untangled a pile-up, the ball rested on Tech's fourteen. Two power plays and a shovel pass earned Midland a first down on the three-yard line. And from there, as the Midland drums boomed in hollow cadence, as the crowd howled demands for a touchdown—Midland obliged.

The entire center of the line formed one determined spearhead plunging into the Kaydets' vitals. A red-jerseyed dart flashed up the shaft of this spear. And the score was Midland 6, Southern Tech 0.

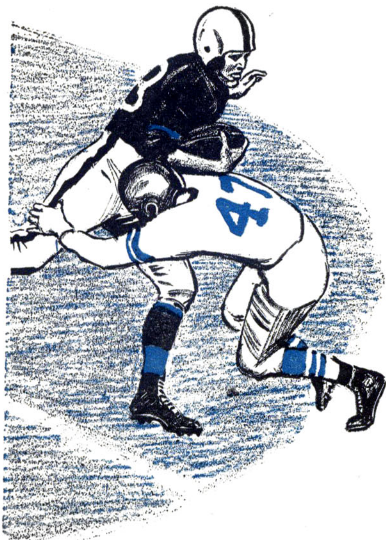
A few moments later a perfect boot soared neatly between the uprights, and the score was 7-0. It was 7-0 as the first quarter ended. And 7-0 still at the end of the first half.

In the third quarter Tech came from its rest period filled with determination and fight. Which attributes were not, in themselves, enough to pay off. But luck was also with the Southerners.

With Midland in possession of the ball, once more in Kaydet territory, the quarterback decided to try a long pass. The idea was good; the pass was not. The man who gathered it in wore not Midland red but the green jersey of Tech. Before the gasping crowd could catch its breath, he had evaded three Midland tacklers, sidestepped the safety man, and romped the full length of the field to tally a six-pointer for his team.

So in raced the defensive squad. And where the offensive eleven, caught off guard, had been unable to halt the Tech sixty-yard scoring play, Bud Mallory's defensive unit held off the tie-creating tally. The point after touchdown caromed off the chest of one of the defenders, and the score remained at 7-6.

It was a slim edge, but one that loomed increasingly important as the minutes piled end on end. The third quarter ended; the big red hand of the scoreboard clock pressed steadily toward the hour. Play had settled down to a dogged exchange of punts, of skirmishes and thwarted scoring



Out of the confusion rose a figure Chuck knew—his boy.

tries; the ball passed back and forth from red jerseys to green with neither side penetrating the other's territory far enough to make a dangerous threat.

And finally there were but three minutes of playing time remaining. And then it was that Tech got the hoped-for break. A Midland fumble, a scramble for possession, a breathless ten seconds of suspense as the pile was peeled off man by man—and then the man in the striped shirt pointed in the direction of Midland's goal-line, only fifteen yards away! The Kaydet rooters raised a scream of hope. Once again the gridiron was a kaleidoscope of jumbled bits of red and green as the Tech offensive platoon raced in from one side, the Midland defenders came in from the other.

Mallory's jaw was tight as he leaned forward in his seat. His eyes saw all the action on the field before him, but were focused on one crouching figure: that of his son. Chuck Mallory's boy was pacing restlessly up and down behind a seven-man line of defense. His lips were moving, and though his voice could not be heard above the incessant roar that filled the Midland bowl, Mallory knew that he was pleading with his teammates, urging them to hold against this Kaydet threat. Bud slapped the seat of a crouching linesman's pants, shifted a few feet to take a central post behind the line, tensed as the opposition crisped signals, then catapulted forward as the ball spun into play.

Three times the Southerners strove to pierce the Midland line; three times the Midland line bent like a bow, then sprang back, fending off its assailants. And now it was the fourth down, the final down, the showdown. The hands of the scoreboard clock hovered on the verge of the zero that meant the end of the game. On this last play hung victory—or defeat.

And yet there was, it seemed to Mallory, something more than the winning or losing of a single game riding on this moment. The question was, he felt, not just immediate, but ultimate. Symbolic. Eternal. From a season to a single game—from an hour of play to a final minute, the testing-point of Upton's whole system had retracted. Somehow Mallory felt that the last sixty seconds was the testing of everything in which Upton believed—and he did not: the two-platoon system, Upton's appraisal of Bud's proper place on the team, their two diverse philosophies of football.

The Tech signal-caller's numbers were drowned in a sea of sound. The ball snapped back. The Kaydet quarterback faded one step—two—three—then whirled and shoveled a pass directly over the line of scrimmage into the hands of a waiting end who had cut back sharply. A moan rose from the Midland stands as the receiver spun in midair, took one flying step toward the goal-line scant feet away.

Then out of the confusion of red and green rose a figure Chuck Mallory knew. The solid, blocking body of his boy. Red struck green and merged; both fell. And the Midland moans turned abruptly to screams of joy as the crowd realized, even before the referee's hands—without leaping skyward—took the ball and handed it to the Midland captain, that the game was over—that Tech had failed to score, and that Midland had won its first victory of the season by the score of 7-6.

On the way down to the dressing-room, Warren Craig said happily: "Off to a good start! A great game, eh, Chuck? Just like in the old days."

Chuck said slowly: "A great game—yes. But not like the old days." He took a deep breath and said what he had been thinking these past five minutes as they sifted their way through the jostling, ebullient crowd. "Time's run out on us, Warren. Our teams were good—for their day. But that era is gone. We couldn't have done what Bud's gang did there in that last few minutes of play."

"What? Oh, I don't know about that, Chuck—"

"I do. I remember times when we flopped because we were exhausted, whipped to a frazzle. Like that game with Northwestern. Remember?"

"We won games," defended Warren stoutly. "You won plenty of games by yourself. There wasn't a man on that field today who could have touched you at your peak.

"You and me," he added proudly. "With you carrying the ball, and me running interference—"

"They'd have murdered us," said Mallory. "The day of iron men is over, Warren. Oh, we'd score against a 1950 team in the first quarter; maybe in the second. But eventually they'd smash us to our knees. We would wear out—as we *did* wear out. Then they'd run circles around us. You said it yourself a little while ago. 'The old order changeth—' We were good. But we didn't have what those kids showed out there today. Not any more than my diehard, old-fashioned manufacturing methods have what it takes to compete in the fast new streamlined world of 1950.

"It's a new world," said Mallory, "In football and in business. Do you still have the contract in your pocket?"

Craig stared at him. "You mean you *will*—"

"A running back," said Mallory. "That's me. I've got a trick play that will score touchdowns in the furniture world. My fluid-pressure molding process! I'll play on your offensive squad, Warren—if you'll run interference for me."

"If!" echoed his friend and teammate. "If! Pal—here's where we start making records together again!"

They reached the dressing-room doorway. A student assistant barred their entrance. He said: "Sorry. No admittance." He said it mechanically and out of long habit, not really seeing them.

Then he *did* look at them, and his eyes lighted in recognition.

"Oh, *you*, sir!" he said. "That's different."

Mallory smiled. It was good to know that after all these years your face, your name, your reputation, still won certain privileges. A score of years—two score—what did they matter? Midland's dressing-room would always be open to the man who was Midland's legend.

The assistant opened the door for them, nodded to a second guardian inside.

"It's all right," he said. "These two can come in. One of them is Bud Mallory's dad."

It was then that Chuck Mallory laughed, feeling for the first time in his life the warmth and comfort of his middle years descend and settle on him with a sense that things were right.

And the legend that *was* stepped forward to greet a legend in the making.

The Adventure of the Wild Swan

A complete book-length novel

by J. L. FRANCINE

There's a place where I'd like to be
There's where the Wild Swan glides to the sea.
Down where the Saguenay flows
Down where the Saguenay flows
There's where the ice worms tickle your toes
Down where the Saguenay flows.
(Old Swan River Club song)

PROLOGUE

DOWN WHERE THE SAGUENAY FLOWS INTO THE twenty-five-mile-broad Saint Lawrence is roughly a hundred and forty miles below the venerable city of Quebec—as a stub-masted *goélette* steers her stolid course, nosing into every forgotten quai along the North Shore to discharge provisions and take on cords of pulpwood from the backcountry farms.

The Saguenay flows a mile wide out of a deep black gorge to mingle its brackish waters with the salt of the shimmering Saint Lawrence at the site of what was once the oldest trading post in the land—Tadoussac. This rockbound gorge, through which drains the heartland of the Province, is the ancient abode of every spirit that was ever conjured in a Montagnais Indian hunter's mind—the wendigo, the *loup-garou*, the manitou; and today, when gales storm the Precambrian ramparts of the Saguenay, their voices can curdle a man's blood as do the names of the river's salient features embolden his imagination—Cape Eternity, Cape Trinity, the Grand Décharge, Porte au Diable.

Today the Saguenay is no longer the fur route to the wilderness that lies beyond Lake Saint John, whence it flows, a wilderness stretching north to Hudson Bay and Ungava; now ocean-scarred freighters from many lands unload their mountainous cargoes of reddish bauxite at the head of the gorge. Man has harnessed the thundering might of the Grand Décharge, once a witch's caldron of violence and destruction to any Montagnais in his frail birchbark who ventured within its reach.

Nearby, cutting a wide swath through the forest, the Wild Swan River—*Rivière aux Cygnes Sauvages*—pours down from the Height of Land into the Saguenay, denying its upper reaches to the spawning salmon with one last foaming cataract that matches in color the white plumage of the handsome birds after which it is named.

Far up the Wild Swan, some eighty miles beyond the last wood road, lies a sportsman's paradise, unspoiled these many years by virtue of its inaccessibility. It is fortunate indeed for the Wild Swan that most sportsmen affluent enough to penetrate into this wilderness by private and chartered float-plane, appreciate their good fortune to the extent of abiding by the fish- and game-laws of the Province. Unfortunately, there are other laws which occasionally do not meet with the same respect; and the wilderness is no assurance that they will not be broken.

The Province of Quebec entrusts the enforcement of her laws and the well-being of her natural resources to the men who range the forests with a weather-eye cocked for a tell-tale wisp of smoke, a cleverly concealed snare on a game trail, or the revealing floats of a gill-net. These are the Quebec Rangers. Occasionally their official duties are not strictly according to the book.

This is the account of the adventure that recently befell one of them in the remote wilderness of the Wild Swan, and for this once it was not the wanton killing of fish and game with which he was concerned, but rather the death of the sportsmen themselves.

Chapter One

The Devil's Elbow

THE RADIO TRANSMITTER WAS DEAD. A TRAIL-hardened Ranger swore softly to himself as he switched it off and strode to the door of the two-room cabin that served as his living-quarters and office. He was a well-built man of medium height who looked lighter than his hundred and eighty pounds.

Winter winds, the driving snows and the burning summer sun had aged him beyond his thirty-five years, leaving their mark deeply etched in fine lines that radiated

from the corners of his gray eyes that now gazed moodily at the leaden surface of Lake Manicouagen.

The Ranger leaned against the door-jamb and stared out at the lake and the rain-drenched spruce that crowd down Manicouagen's far shore in serried ranks. A half-mile inland, scarred granite cliffs rise to a high plateau that was now blanketed with low scudding clouds.

The Quebec bush was in a sullen mood. The days of endless rain were getting on Ranger Johnson's nerves, and he longed for the sun to break through the solid overcast. It seemed to him that he had almost forgotten how this land looked under a cloudless sky, its big lakes and rivers sparkling in the northern sunshine and the distant mountain ranges beckoning with the promise of uncharted forests beyond.

Ranger Johnson knew the Swan River wilderness as well as he did his father's Ontario farm—knew it even better, for the intervening years since he had struck out on his own had dimmed his youthful memories. First the University, followed by the Park Service and then long years of war. The beauty of the Swan River country was a welcome change from the war-gutted lands over which he had fought, and he had grown to love this north country. He knew its every mood and season.

He knew the waters that spawn brook trout of giant size, hooked-jawed brutes that stretch the scales at eight pounds and more. He found the secluded valleys of the woodland caribou, and the marshy backwaters where the big moose feed on the wild hay along the muddy shore. He saw the bears on the burnt ridges—a half-dozen at a time, gorging themselves on blueberries until they could barely drag one paw after another; he had watched the gaunt timber wolves prowling the lonely beaches, uttering low plaintive cries that sound like the whimperings of a lost child. He had heard their deep-throated chorus at night, a sound that never failed to set his blood to racing.

"Damn' weather doesn't seem to be lifting a bit," he growled to the big broad-shouldered woodsman studying the map on the cabin wall behind him. The other merely grunted in response; Tim MacLeod's thoughts were elsewhere for the moment.

But Ranger Johnson was more concerned with the weather than with the fact that the radio transmitter was temporarily out of order. Until the weather broke, no planes would be landing on Lake Manicouagen, and except for the planes, there was no way of getting into this country other than to travel nearly a hundred and fifty miles by canoe.

HARLEY JOHNSON smiled to himself; if the radio was inoperative, maybe the disgruntled members of the Swan River Club would stop pestering him for weather reports, especially Mr. Leland Travers, of New York, who had asked him half a dozen times the day before if the weather was flyable to the south. It had surprised him a bit that Mr. Travers appeared so anxious to get out of the bush; usually the wealthy American sportsman was the last person in camp to let rain and poor fishing disturb his blustering good humor. Tim MacLeod, the Club's genial head guide, had commented on it too.

Ordinarily, when the big ones weren't biting or the weather was bad, Travers occupied himself with one of his various construction projects around the camp, supervising in authoritative tones whatever guides and Indians he could corral, and generally shattering the peace and quiet of an otherwise tranquil rainy day. But yesterday, Harley Johnson remembered, Travers hadn't invaded the guides' bunkhouse in search of a labor battalion, but had spent the day studying and fretting over the weather, and plaguing the Ranger for radio forecasts. When Johnson had finally told him that flying would probably be out of the question for another two or three days unless the wind shifted clockwise into the northwest, Travers had been strangely annoyed.

"If you're that anxious, Mr. Travers," the Ranger had said, "you can get down to Chicoutimi by canoe and outboard in two days. However, if I were you, I'd wait two

or three days and fly out in forty-five minutes in that amphibian of yours."

Travers had glared at the Ranger and stalked off, muttering to himself. Harley Johnson hadn't seen him after that.

His thoughts returned to the gray landscape that he had been contemplating from the doorway of his cabin. His eyes strayed to the two planes moored on the lake in front of the camp and he wondered idly if either of their transmitters was powerful enough to raise Chicoutimi across a hundred miles of forest. He was in no hurry to find out.

With a critical eye he began to study the log buildings on the cleared bluff that comprised the main camp of the Swan River Club. There was always work to be done on one or another of them, or a new trail to be cleared to one of the innumerable small trout lakes nestled on the wooded escarpment that rises nearly a thousand feet behind the camp. A rainy day was a good time to catch up on such work, despite the natural antipathy the guides had toward such labor. He mentally checked off the various units that made this one of the most comfortable fishing and hunting camps in northern Canada:

There was a sizable dock for planes to unload passengers and freight. Close by was a building constructed of upright logs that easily accommodated a dozen canoes. Every spring the big dock and the canoe-shed were battered by the grinding ice during the break-up and had to be repaired at considerable expense. Harley Johnson agreed with most of the Club's members that the canoe-shed should be moved piecemeal to higher ground, but Leland Travers had objected. The New Yorker felt that a canoe-shed should be near the water and that's where it stayed. (Leland Travers was chairman of the board of directors of the Swan River Club.) Whenever projects that he advocated were voted down because of the expense involved, he would foot the bill, and because cost was no object with Leland Travers, the Swan River Club had gradually become a one-man organization. Only the superlative fishing and hunting kept most of the others from resigning.

From examining the canoe-shed, the Ranger's critical gaze centered on the Lodge, a sportsman's dream in varnished peeled spruce logs. The living-room alone was sixty feet long by thirty feet wide and the peak of its shadowy ceiling was twenty-five feet above the hand-hewn floor. Heavy wrought-iron lamps were suspended from the eight log beams by iron chains. At the far end of the room was the fireplace with its eight-foot hearth. A replica of the Club's insigne, a giant iron silhouette of a trumpeter swan, was bolted to the face of the stone chimney. A long table, its polished top made from the halves of four, large unpeeled birch logs, stood near the far side of the room, where a swinging door opened into a spacious kitchen. A low-ceilinged corridor led off from the same side of the living-room to the living-quarters. Heads and skins of animals and mounted trout adorned the varnished log walls.

There were a number of other log buildings on the bluff—a pump-house, a small cabin harboring a lighting plant, a tool-shed with its assortment of ropes, axes, shovels, pulleys and fire-fighting equipment. A large storehouse nearby was kept locked to discourage thieving Indians; it contained supplies and canned goods of all descriptions. Most important to the comfort of the fortunate sportsmen who visited the Club in the private and chartered planes was the big icehouse and cold storage locker that held, besides the game fish caught by the members and their guests, quantities of fresh vegetables, meat, milk, butter and eggs, and the various wines that helped to counteract the effects of the inclement weather and to complement the fish and meat courses.

Set back in the spruce behind the main camp was the guides' bunkhouse and their cook shack. A recent windfall had partly demolished a small windowless structure that stood nearby—the smokehouse where fish and game were occasionally smoked to enrich some distant buffet table.

Several hundred yards up the shore of Lake Manicouagen and apart from the main camp was the Ranger's cabin. In the woods behind it were two others, one occupied by the Club's French-Canadian guardian, Teegee Bouchard, and his wife, who resided there the year around to keep the Club buildings from being plundered by the Montagnais Indians who trap the region. The other cabin was being temporarily occupied by Teegee Bouchard's stepdaughter, Thérèse, who worked in the kitchen under the supervision of her mother, Madame Bouchard.

On a wooded point jutting out into the lake some distance beyond the Ranger's cabin a log camp, more impressive in its small luxurious way than the Lodge, completed the settlement known as the Swan River Club. This last belonged to Mr. and Mrs. Leland Travers of New York.

Johnson was on the point of discussing the repair of the smokehouse with Tim MacLeod, the head guide, when his thoughts were interruped by the appearance of a young woman picking her way carefully along the rock-strewn shore. She seemed oblivious to the rain as she moved toward the camp on the wooded point, absorbed in retaining her balance on the slippery footing. She wore an expensive pair of leather boots and the smartly tailored whipcord breeches and jacket showed her supple figure to advantage. A narrow-brim fishing hat clung to her light blonde hair. He watched her with conflicting emotions of admiration and distaste, for he suspected that not a little of the unrest in the guides' bunkhouse was due to the young wife of the Club's wealthiest and most influential member. Her calculating, green eyes had a way of raising a man's blood-pressure.

"Now I wonder what she's been shootin' in this weather?" said MacLeod, who had followed him to the door. "That was a huntin' rifle Big T's wife was carryin'—unless my eyes was deceivin' me." Harley Johnson shrugged, a little ashamed that he had failed to notice that Joan Travers had a gun cradled in her right arm.

"Bear season's open, Tim," he reminded the head guide, and then he added with a touch of malice: "Maybe she's going to shoot her husband so she can have clear sailing with one of your boys."

Tim MacLeod's weathered countenance crinkled in amusement. "I don't think she has to, from what I seen last night down by the dock—she an' that business partner of her husband's, Bert Steele. Bert's a nice feller. I'd hate to see Big T catch up with him."

Harley Johnson preferred to drop the subject.

The tall, sandy-haired young man to whom MacLeod had referred was at that moment on the dock fitting a canvas cover over an outboard motor. Evidently Bert Steele and Joan Travers had got off to an early start, hoping to surprise a bear along the shores of the Swan River.

The Ranger watched Leland Travers' likable young partner pick up his gear and start up the slope toward the lodge. He was struck as he always was by the broker's youthful appearance—more in keeping with a college tennis court, than with the board-room of an important investment firm. Yet despite the man's easygoing manner and lazy smile, the Ranger knew that a mind like a steel trap lay behind the guileless smiling eyes.

The Ranger had come to know Bert Steele fairly well during their trips together in the wilderness that lies to the east and north of Lake Manicouagen. The New York businessman was a pleasant and able trail com-

panion and the Ranger had often taken him along on patrol. . . .

The two men left the cabin door and turned their attention to the map on the wall. Tim MacLeod proceeded to outline the whereabouts of the Swan River Club's personnel and equipment to the Ranger with all the precision of an Air Force operations officer at a predawn briefing. Once the latter interrupted to ask: "Tim, where was that prospector heading—the fellow who came through here yesterday? I've bumped into him before in the bush somewhere—name of Claveau."

The head guide thought a moment before answering: "Up to the Tokenkutuk lookin' for tin, I think he said."

"And a Government subsidy if he finds it," the Ranger chuckled. "That's rough country in there—burnt-over muskeg swamps. I guess not many of us have seen it—just you and Teegee Bouchard maybe. Bert Steele and I were there once. Never again! Too damned rough; and the flies!" He paused while he located the Tokenkutuk River on the map, thirty miles north of Manicouagen. "I've heard that there're brook trout up there that'll go seventy pounds to the dozen."

"Better than that," retorted the big guide, "from what an Injun told me he caught in his net—'fore the *loup-garou* or somethin' scared him so bad he lit out of that country an' never went back!" They laughed.

The Ranger's eyes swept up the map past the Tokenkutuk to Lac Manouan with its myriad inlets and islands, north to Plétipi, a sprawling inland sea whose far shore is a dark streak on the horizon—an empty, forbidding land in whose wide uncharted reaches the Swan River Club's two hundred square miles could have been swallowed up twenty times over. Only the head guide and the Indian hunters knew it better than the Ranger. MacLeod had roamed it from one end to the other in years gone by as a trapper, fur-trader and finally as a prospector, before he had been hired as head guide at the Club.

THE two were absorbed in silent contemplation of the map when a far-away shout out on the lake attracted their attention. It was repeated, and they hurried to the door to see a man driving his canoe toward the camp with short, fast strokes of his paddle. Occasionally he paused long enough to cup one hand to his mouth and shout something unintelligible through the rain.

"It's Teegee Bouchard!" MacLeod exclaimed. "Acts as if the *loup-garou* is after him!"

"I thought he was guiding Doctor Shepard down on the river today," the Ranger remarked, referring to Leland Travers' physician and close friend.

"Maybe the Doc's hurt!"

"If he is, Teegee would have him in the canoe, but as far as I can make out, he's alone," the other answered.

Others from the camp had been attracted by the shouting, and soon a small knot of curious people were grouped on the dock listening to an excited French-Canadian guide gasp out a story that, after a moment's stunned silence, brought questions flying thick and fast. The Ranger, grim-faced and trying hard not to believe what he heard, interrogated the little guide.

"Teegee, are you sure? You might have made a mistake—a log or something."

"By gar—I swear to you, Harley, I tell you de trut'! Two men in de rivaire b'low de beeg devil *rapide*—bot' drown." The small man waved his arms and rolled frightened eyes as he talked. His thin mustache jerked spasmodically. "I can tell you a man from a log, Harley. . . . No, I couldn't make out who they were. B'lieve me, I come as fas' I can."

"Where's Doc Shepard?" MacLeod asked suddenly. "You was guidin' him this mornin'. Why ain't he with you?"

Harley had watched the gaunt timber wolves prowling.

Bouchard gasped an answer. "I lef' de Doctor fisheng half-mile above de *rapide,* an' I go back wid de canoe to de portage. I go back an' look for ett, an' jus' whan I get to de end of de portage—*voilà!* I see deese beeg trout jump een de rivaire—p'haps two, t'ree hunner feet from me, near de chute. I go dere to watch for heem, an' den I see deese men een de water!" Teegee paused a moment to catch his breath. "I come as fas' I can. I don't see de Doctor whan I pass on de rivaire comin' back here."

WHAT they had all secretly dreaded had finally come to pass.

The one dangerous stretch of white water in the Club's territory is the mile of the Swan River known as the Devil's Elbow. Here the river narrows to a hundred yards, and roars and fights its way over great boulders torn from the high confining banks. Not even a twenty-two-foot freight canoe can ride out that mile of wildly tossing river and hurtle the twenty-foot chute at the end without breaking its back. The men who guided for the Club had strict orders to beach their canoes well above the Devil's Elbow, and portage around it to get to the good fishing pools below; the Club had even extended the portage another two hundred yards above the old trail in order to play safe and avoid the more dangerous currents.

Some of the more adventuresome members who had toyed with the idea of trying to shoot the Devil's Elbow as a lark had been discouraged by the experienced canoemen—and by the weathered wooden cross that stands on the high bank overlooking the rapids, erected the year before in memory of two Papinachois Indians who decided, with the aid of some home brew—*"palette"*—that they were capable of mastering the Devil's Elbow.

Harley Johnson turned to the head guide.

"Tim, load a sixteen-foot canoe into that freighter." He indicated the big craft with a toss of his head. "Teegee, you and Brulé,"—a husky young guide stepped forward—"get some rope, blankets, axes. We're shoving off for the Devil's Elbow." He glanced at his watch—just past noon. His gray eyes swept the worried faces of the people standing around. "The rest of you better stick around camp for the time being." Then he turned and started at a run for his cabin, to pick up his own trail equipment.

Someone called his name, and he paused to see Bert Steele hurrying after him.

"Harley, have you got room for me? Those men might have washed down the river some distance by now—I might be able to help you find them."

The Ranger hesitated; he didn't want the members mixed up with this grisly business if he could help it.

"Teegee is the Club's guardian. He doubles as a guide during the summer and fall."

"Thanks, Bert—better stay here. We're pretty well loaded as it is." It was a lame excuse, since the big canoe had a capacity of three thousand pounds and could have taken a dozen people easily. Steele was not to be put off so easily.

"Has it occurred to you that Big T Travers and his guide aren't in camp?" he asked significantly. The reference to Steele's business partner put the matter in a different light and the Ranger nodded reluctantly.

"Guess maybe you've got something there, Bert," he answered slowly. "God, I hope you're wrong! Okay, help Tim with the canoe, and check and see that we've got enough gas in the kicker."

Within fifteen minutes the big outboard exploded into life and then settled down to a steady drone as Tim MacLeod pushed the throttle wide open; the others leaned against the bottom of the small canoe that rested lengthwise across the thwarts, inside the larger craft. Teegee Bouchard's foxlike mongrel, Pitou, had hopped in at the last moment, and was now curled up in the bow, a wet, furry ball.

The men ducked their heads against the driving rain, while from the cabin on the point a pair of jade-green eyes watched their progress down the lake until they disappeared around a rocky headland. A mile farther down, from a small battered canoe in a secluded cove, another pair of eyes, dark and smoldering, watched their passing with more than casual interest. A well-used rifle lay on the bottom of the small canoe. . . . If anyone in the freighter noticed the dusky Indian in the motionless canoe that blended into the shoreline, they made no comment.

It was a cold wet ride; and a half-hour and six miles later, the five men were thoroughly soaked.

They had reached the fiord-like gorge where Lake Manicouagen narrows between bald-faced ridges whose eight-hundred-foot summits were obscured by the low overcast. A few hardy birches clung to the crevasses far above them. Here the depth of the water is well over a hundred feet, but there is a slight current in the gorge, as if Manicouagen after thirty-five miles of comparative immobility, gathers itself like some great beast of prey to charge headlong through the forest, foaming and tearing its way through metamorphic rock until it flows exhausted into the Saguenay, a hundred and fifty twisting miles away.

As the canoe entered the Swan River, Tim MacLeod throttled the motor, watching for shoals. The first rips were deep, where the river swirls around jutting ledges; the freighter rode them easily and then cleaved through the swirling water toward Padré Point, a mile farther down.

Here is a spot for big trout, in the smooth current just above the shallow rips, and the Ranger scanned the wooded shore and gravel points for Doctor Shepard. It wasn't long before Teegee Bouchard nudged his arm and motioned toward a damp figure seated on a log. MacLeod cut the motor, and the men dug their paddles into the stony bottom to hold the canoe against the current. The Doctor waded out, clutching his fly rod, and climbed into the canoe, water pouring from his waders and canvas jacket. Little rivulets dribbled from his fly-festooned fishing hat into the bowl of the pipe clenched firmly between his teeth. He grinned pleasantly.

"What's up?" he asked curiously when he noticed the grim faces of the others. Before anyone could answer, he caught sight of Teegee Bouchard, and a frown crossed his lean features. "Where in the hell have you been, Bouchard!" he exclaimed. "I've been waiting nearly three hours for you in this damn' wilderness . . . ."

The little Frenchman began to splutter and wave his arms, "M'sieur, I pass here—I don't see you. B'lieve me, I tell you de trut'—" but the Ranger cut him short.

"Haven't time to explain, Doctor. I'll tell you about it when we hit the portage." MacLeod pulled the starter cord, and Johnson's voice was drowned by the sudden whine of the outboard.

With a wide-open throttle and the force of a strong current behind them, the remaining distance to the portage was covered in a few minutes. A quarter of a mile ahead, the Swan River seemed to leap upward and then drop from sight. The thunder of the Devil's Elbow could be heard above the sound of the motor. It required deft strokes of the paddles to hold the canoe against the strong pull of the current when MacLeod cut the ignition at the last moment.

The freighter was unloaded in a matter of seconds, and the six men dragged it well up on shore without bothering to remove the motor from the transom; it moved easily on its keel and four bottom runners. The young guide, Brulé, picked up the smaller canoe, swung it to his shoulders with effortless ease and started down the trail at a dog-trot, with Teegee's little mongrel at his heels. The others gathered up the gear and hurried after him. Doctor Shepard kept bumping into the Ranger in an effort to get close enough to hear his explanation above the muffled roar of the river off to their right.

"According to Teegee Bouchard, there're two men drowned at the foot of the rapids!" Harley explained briefly. "That's all we know right now!"

The remainder of the crossing was made in silence, each man breathing hard from the fast pace and absorbed in his own thoughts, dreading what he would find at the foot of the Devil's Elbow.

Chapter Two

The River's Secret

BERT STEELE'S FEARS WERE WELL-FOUNDED; THE victims of the tragedy were Leland Travers and his guide, Luke Lemoine. It was impossible to tell exactly what had happened, but the most logical explanation seemed to be that Travers had been fishing the smooth water above the rapids; either the canoe had been accidentally tipped over, which appeared unlikely with a canoeman of Luke Lemoine's ability in the stern, or the guide's paddle had snapped, throwing him off balance. In any event, the canoe with its luckless passengers had been swept into the maelstrom.

It was a stunned group of men who returned to the Swan River Club with their grim cargo, two still forms lying wrapped in wet blankets on the floorboards of the freighter. There was very little conversation on the way back.

It was incredible to think that a man as important as Leland Travers could have been killed in an accident at a Canadian fishing camp. Men like "Big T" Travers didn't die like that; they lived on and on, amassing more and more of the world's goods until they became old and cadaverous and began giving away portions of their wealth to perpetuate themselves, so that later, one hardly knew when the living had stopped and a legend began. The "Big T" Travers legend would begin and end with a wooden cross beside the other one on the high bank overlooking the Devil's Elbow.

Harley Johnson would not admit it to himself, much less to anyone else, but he was more shocked by the manner in which the two men had died than in the fact that they were dead; he hadn't got along too well with the wealthy American with the glad hand and the patronizing manner; nor had he had much use for Luke Lemoine, the halfbreed guide—a potential trouble-maker and a constant headache to the Ranger. Johnson could never prove it, but he was reasonably certain that the halfbreed was responsible for the whisky that the Indians managed to get hold of from time to time, and for the periodic disappearance of equipment and supplies from the Club. If anyone was indirectly responsible for the other cross on the river, Luke Lemoine was that person. It was ironical that he would now have one of his own at the same spot. . . .

After the first intense excitement following the macabre discovery in the river the Club had taken on the aspect of a morgue, which in a sense it was. Rain beat down steadily all during the long gray afternoon. Dinner that night was a dreary affair.

Harley Johnson sat down at the polished birchwood table at the Lodge, and glanced around at the members and guests who were going through the half-hearted motions of eating Madame Bouchard's excellently prepared food.

The armchair at the head of the table was vacant, of course. And several other places were empty. He noted without surprise that Mrs. Travers was not present—evidently in seclusion at her camp with Muriel Shepard, the wife of her late husband's physician, he who had sat impatiently on a log in the rain waiting for Teegee Bouchard to show up. Harley hardly expected Muriel Shepard to be present either, for she was Leland Travers' niece. Amusing, Harley thought to himself, Joan Travers having a niece older than herself.

At the other end of the long table sat Brigadier General Zachary A. Fahnestock, U.S.A. Retired, lean and tanned, his hawklike features as craggy as his native Maine coast, shaggy white brows all but obscuring the deep-set frosty blue eyes that were the terror of the French-Canadian and Indian guides, who secretly considered the General in league with the devil. In truth, it wasn't the devil that he called upon in moments of stress, but rather, the Son of the Deity.

General Fahnestock was an inveterate fisherman and he planned his daily fishing excursions with all the strategy and zeal of a commander contemplating an assault on an enemy stronghold, and was the admitted champion when it came to manipulating a fluff of feathers on a number 8 hook. It was a strenuous honor to be invited to accompany the old soldier. Heaven help the luckless Indian who lagged on the portage or the careless guide who knocked his pipe against the gunwale of the General's canoe. The camp had a lot of laughs over the old soldier's idiosyncrasies—but his methods paid off. In the rows of birchbark cutouts of enormous brook trout tacked on the log wall behind the long table, nearly all the largest had been taken by General Zachary A. Fahnestock.

The General's love for fishing was only equaled by his distaste for the presence of women at the Swan River Club—and possibly his resentment of Leland Travers. Now that the latter was gone, he reigned supreme at the long table once again.

The Ranger mentally counted the people present at dinner and checked them off against the twelve sportsmen—or rather the eleven, now in camp.

Besides the General, who had come up alone for his usual extended stay, there were two other club members present, Earl F. Rand, head of a trucking company in Jersey City, and John Winters, a manufacturer from a Midwestern city. Rand was the pilot-owner of the Grumman Widgeon, one of the two amphibians now moored on the lake. Usually he and Monk Winters brought their wives along, but this time it had been a spur-of-the-moment decision to grab a few days of fishing between labor-relations meetings.

The remaining eight sportsmen in camp were in Leland Travers' party.

LIKE Joan Travers and Muriel Shepard, Bert Steele hadn't come to dinner. Harley imagined that the tragedy had robbed the broker of his appetite, but he felt that it had hardly had the same effect on Big T's widow.

Halfway down the table, Big T's personal pilot, Jim Schingler, attempted a half-hearted conversation with Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Wayland, New York friends of the Traverses, in a vain effort to get his mind off the tragic cargo he would be flying back to the States as soon as the weather cleared.

Young Schingler was a likable fellow, and Harley slightly envied him his job of flying Travers' big twin-

engined Grumman Mallard to various corners of the Western Hemisphere at the whim of his employer; he envied him even more for the attention he was getting from the Waylands' charming daughter Ruth, sitting opposite him.

The Ranger glanced at her striking Titian hair, the long sweep of her chin, her saucy nose and the laughing eyes that he found disconcertingly steady at times. He sighed despite himself. A few years before, he had forsaken his beloved North for such a girl; but their tastes were so far apart that they had begun squabbling like hungry bears and finally had called it quits.

The few times since that someone had aroused past emotions and vague yearnings for a more settled existence he had quickly crawled into his shell. As often as Ruth Wayland had attempted a friendly overture so often had the embittered Ranger brushed her brusquely aside, to the point of being rude. The last time, when he had cut her short and turned on his heel, she had looked at him like a bewildered puppy and he had hated himself for it, but Harley could no more understand what made a woman tick than he could understand what caused the aurora borealis to flicker across the Northern sky.

He was interrupted in his reverie by Thérèse Bouchard pressing her full young body against him as she set another platter of lamb on the table. Here was a seductive Juno who would willingly fit into his life in the North, one who had known the forest since the day she was born. He jabbed her with his elbow, and her dark eyes gleamed mischievously; she tossed him a roguish smile as she disappeared into the kitchen. What a fool he had been that first night she had come unbidden to his cabin! Harley Johnson glowered, then turned to address the tall thin-faced Doctor seated opposite him.

"Drop over to my cabin after dinner, Doctor; General Fahnestock will be there, and we'd like to have your report on Mr. Travers and Luke Lemoine. I'll repair the transmitter and notify the authorities at Quebec through Chicoutimi." Doctor Shepard nodded briefly and they finished their dinner in silence.

OVER in the guides' quarters, Tim MacLeod washed down the fried pork and potatoes with scalding black tea, wolfed down a large chunk of johnny-cake awash with maple syrup, then hurried to the Ranger's cabin. It was not every day that a man of Leland Travers' importance was drowned in the North, and Tim MacLeod had no intention of missing the reaction from Chicoutimi when Harley contacted them for the evening weather report.

Part of Tim MacLeod's stock in trade and his value to the Ranger, besides his knowledge of the country, was the incredible amount of information that he had at his finger tips concerning anything that might have the slightest bearing on the welfare of the Club—from the cost of a spark-plug or a Coleman mantle, to the state of the stock exchange and the number of times one of his men had visited a certain Montagnais Indian tent, pitched with others on the far shore of Lake Manicouagen. Tim knew which member had put the hole in the new Peterborough canoe, the *canot de chasse* that he'd had his eye on for the early fall trapping; he knew which member baited his flies with fish eyes, and how many times Joan Travers had met Bert Steele on the dock while Big T played canasta after dinner at his camp with Jim Schingler, the Doctor and Mrs. Shepard, while Ruth Wayland kibitzed for the young pilot.

Tim MacLeod had personally listened a number of times to General Fahnestock's tirade against "that damn' Wall Street fourflusher" while he and the General drifted slowly over a favorite pool known only to a chosen few. He would barely manage to suppress a grin when the General would suddenly jerk his *Parmachini Belle* away from the jaws of a *salvelinus fontenalis,* worthy of an honored place on the walls of the Lodge, and twist around in the canoe to waggle a gnarled forefinger at the head guide. "If you ever show that bastard Travers this spot, MacLeod—I'll shoot you down like a dog!" And he meant it, at the time.

THE fog had lifted a bit; the night air was sharp with the tang of dried spruce needles underfoot and woodsmoke from the big chimney at the Lodge as Tim MacLeod started for the Ranger's cabin. In the nearby forest pools, the peepers were in full chorus, and a bullfrog added his bass viol accompaniment from underneath the canoe dock, safe from the stalking night herons. Night hawks darted erratically across the bay and swooped close to its still surface, their wings emitting the lowest note in the forest orchestration. From back in the somber woods sounded the sad song of a white-throated sparrow—high and clear; it was repeated once, then was silent. The rain had stopped, and a breath of wind stirred the aspen leaves by the water's edge.

Tim MacLeod pushed open the door and entered the small cabin. A birchwood fire burned on the small hearth, and cast a warm glow over the bear and wolf skins on the rough-hewn floor and the red homespun draperies drawn across the windows. The firelight was reflected on the varnished log walls of the cabin and the panel of a radio transmitter-receiver in one corner of the room. The Ranger was adjusting the dials with a perplexed frown on his rugged features. General Fahnestock sat in the most comfortable armchair, his hands clasped over his paunch and his teeth clamped on an old briar. Doctor Shepard was speaking in his clipped accent:

"Death by drowning, gentlemen. Both men were rather badly mauled in the rapids. . . . I fear they had a harrowing experience up to the final moment."

The Doctor shook his head sadly as though to rid himself of the picture of the two men fighting for their lives as they tossed like corks in the boiling torrent. He smoked in silence and sipped a brandy while Harley busied himself with the transmitter. Tim MacLeod sat down on the edge of a chair, removing his battered felt hat as he did so. He waited awkwardly for someone to acknowledge his presence. Harley finally indicated a bottle on the side table with a nod of his head.

"Help yourself to a spot, Tim. As a matter of fact, you might drink to Big T—it was his liquor. Sent it over yesterday after pestering me all day for weather reports."

The men raised their glasses, only to put them down suddenly at an exclamation from the Ranger. "What the hell!" They looked at him expectantly. "Someone's taken the crystal out of this set—no wonder the damn' thing doesn't work!" He looked significantly at the other three.

"Maybe it dropped out," Doctor Shepard said lamely.

"They don't drop out," Harley stated shortly. "You've got to pull 'em out. Tim, call Teegee Bouchard; he's the only other man around here who's been operating this thing." MacLeod hurried out of the cabin with a gleam in his gray eyes. He was going to enjoy the dressing-down that appeared to be in store for the Club's guardian.

As Harley rummaged through cartons of spare radio parts, he answered Doctor Shepard's questioning glance.

"Teegee Bouchard is the Club's guardian—guess you call it caretaker, down in the States. He doubles as a guide during the summer and fall—stays here all winter in one of the cabins behind this one. Madame Bouchard, his wife, cooks for the Club; she stays with him, and sometimes her daughter Thérèse, the girl who waits on

the table. This transmitter's just like a party-line to them. When I'm not around, they gab over it morning and night with the other short-wave stations scattered from the North Shore of the Saint Lawrence to Hudson Bay—or rather James Bay. Half the time it's out of whack, what with Teegee monkeying around with its innards. I'm going to read the riot act to him once and for all."

Doctor Shepard stirred uneasily, reluctant to witness the little guardian's impending disaster. He motioned to a small bundle he had placed on the table. "There are the personal belongings I removed from their pockets," he said to Harley, "money, cigarette lighters, pocket knives, fly dope and so forth. As long as you're handling the details of this affair, I guess you might as well turn the stuff over to their next of kin."

As he moved to leave, the Doctor pulled his tobacco pouch out of his jacket, and some soggy crumpled papers dropped to the floor. He stooped quickly and picked them up, stuffing them back in his pocket with a preoccupied air. Darting a quick glance at the other two, Doctor Shepard bid them an abrupt good night and stepped out into the darkness.

For a few minutes after Leland Travers' physician had left, Harley Johnson and General Fahnestock discussed the tragedy. The General shook his head in bewilderment, and his tired eyes searched the Ranger's face as though hoping to find there an answer to the problem that was troubling the camp.

"For the life of me, Harley, for the life of me, I can't understand how such a thing could have happened. Luke Lemoine knew better than to get too close to those damn' rapids, and yet it appears that he deliberately disobeyed instructions and took his canoe into dangerous waters—probably against his better judgment, under orders from Big T Travers."

He got to his feet wearily and emptied his pipe into the fire. "Well, if you can answer that one for me, I shall be eternally grateful to you. I fear this thing will go badly for the Club." He placed his hand for a moment on the younger man's shoulder. "Good night, m'boy."

Harley Johnson slumped into a chair, alone with his thoughts for the first time that day. He was sorry that he had made an issue of the missing crystal. The matter could have waited until morning; besides, he had found the spare. In a few minutes he would contact Chicoutimi and make his report; first he would finish his brandy and think.

In a few minutes the news of Leland Travers' death at his fishing camp would be crackling over the northern air waves, to be picked up and relayed in time to make the morning headlines throughout the land. Johnson squirmed in his chair at the thought and tossed down the remainder of his brandy in a single gulp.

As though to put off the inevitable moment, his eyes strayed to the broken paddle shaft in the corner that had been salvaged from the Swan River below the Devil's Elbow. It was the top two feet of the shaft; it had snapped near the blade, as he had suspected might have happened.

In his mind's eye he could see Luke clutching at the gunwale of the canoe to save himself, and Big T Travers losing his balance as he grabbed wildly for the other paddle. Harley heaved himself out of the chair and picked up the broken shaft. He turned it over in his hands, examining the break. Something about the way the birch had splintered caused him to take it over to the light. A large section of wood on one side of the shaft was missing. Strange—the occasional paddle that he had seen snap had splintered lengthwise along the front and back of the shaft. He bent for a closer scrutiny. A faint dark streak transversed the broken and frayed end of the shaft, the same streak as that left by a soft-nosed bullet in penetrating a board.

Illustrated by
BENTON CLARK

"Eet's not true—nobody see me!"

He caught his breath with the sudden realization. Of course, that was it! The bullet would have entered one side of the paddle's shaft cleanly, and blown a large section out of the opposite side as it emerged and the lead expanded from the impact. He could see the lead traces clearly now; and suddenly, with a tightening sensation in his chest, he knew that this had not been an accident; it was murder!

Chapter Three

A Visitor

Harley Johnson's whirling thoughts were interrupted by the return of Tim MacLeod with Teegee Bouchard. The little French Canadian looked worried and nervous as he followed the head guide into the cabin. On the age-old theory that offense is the best defense, Bouchard drove straight to the point, his dark visage a picture of injured innocence. "Harlee, what dis I hear 'bout de crys'l een dat transmitter? I tell you—" Before he could continue, Harley cut him short.

"Hold it. Sit down, both of you." Teegee's mouth hung open, and both men looked at the Ranger curiously, completely taken aback by the severity of his tone. They sat down on the edge of their chairs and waited as his hard eyes swept from one to the other. He held up the splintered shaft. "Who found this paddle?" he demanded. There was a moment's silence, then Teegee spoke slowly as though wondering what to expect next.

"I fine dat b'low de *rapide*. My leetle dog, Pitou, she fine dat an' breeng dat to me een hees mout'. Why you as' dat, Harley?"

"I'll tell you why, Teegee; this paddle was cut in half by a rifle bullet. I think you can guess what that means."

There was a moment of stunned silence while both men stared at him in astonishment; then they jumped to their feet to examine the broken paddle.

"By God, you're right, Harley!" Tim MacLeod exclaimed grimly as his calloused forefinger traced the passage of the lead bullet through the wood. Teegee's incredulous expression would have been comical under other circumstances. It changed from disbelief to frightened certainty. He licked his lips and nodded vigorously.

"But who—who want to keel Luc Lemoine?" he asked helplessly. "I don' like heem myse'f; he all de tam fool round Thérèse—but I nevaire keel heem, for sure."

"You forget, Teegee," Harley reminded him, "that Mr. Travers was also in that canoe. I think we'll find our marksman was after bigger game than Luke Lemoine—that is, if we find him." His eyes narrowed. "What a diabolical scheme to get rid of a man and make it look like an accident. If this paddle hadn't been found, it would have worked!"

"Yeh, and our friend don't mind knockin' off two birds to get the right one!" MacLeod added, shaking his head savagely and reaching unbidden for the brandy bottle.

"Got any idea as to where the bullet came from, Tim?" Obviously there were only a few hundred yards of the river where the momentary loss of a paddle would make the end inevitable, but the Ranger wanted to hear his theory confirmed.

"Well, first of all, it was a rifle—had to be for accuracy; an' at that, the guy was a good shot—or damn' lucky, one or the other."

"Not necessarily, Tim; the canoe may have been fairly close to the shore. A .300-caliber or .303 has a flat enough trajectory to split a target as big as this shaft at a hundred yards." The others nodded in agreement, and the head guide continued:

"He stood on the bank—probably a bit back in the bush, out of sight, with a good rest for the rifle. I figure it was just below the start of the new portage, maybe a hundred feet or so, not more—"

MacLeod was interrupted by a knock on the cabin door, and Doctor Shepard stepped into the room, smiling apologetically. "Sorry to bother you, Johnson, but it occurred to me that this map might be of some interest to you—a map and a letter of some sort; I found them in Mr. Travers' and the guide's pockets." He placed the crumpled paper on the table, the same wad that the Ranger had seen him retrieve from the floor earlier in the evening. Harley glanced at him keenly.

"Doctor, where were you when Teegee, here, came back up the river after discovering the bodies at the foot of the rapids? He told us that he'd left you about a half-mile above the rapids but didn't see you on the way back."

The Doctor looked puzzled. "H-m-m, let's see—I was probably cutting across a point through the woods; water too deep to wade. Why do you ask?" His level gaze held the other's without a flicker.

"This!" Harley extended the broken paddle. "This paddle indicates that the so-called accident was murder!" In a few concise words, he pointed out to Doctor Shepard how the conclusion had been reached. Shepard listened to the diagnosis of the break in professional silence, helping himself the while to brandy. When the Ranger had finished, he cleared his throat and looked up.

"Aren't you rather jumping at conclusions, Johnson? It seems a questionable bit of evidence to hang a murder charge on. After all, there were no indications of violence on either of the bodies. It's a dangerous thing to throw the camp into an uproar with a charge like this, especially with such inconclusive evidence." He waved a deprecating hand at the broken shaft. Harley suppressed a sharp retort.

"We'll find more evidence in the morning—a bullet hole in the stern of that canoe, probably—and I'll find it if I have to comb the river from the Devil's Elbow to the Saguenay!" Harley paused. "As far as I'm concerned, everyone who was away from camp this morning is under suspicion, and as long as you're here, I'd like to ask you a question or two—that is, if you're willing to answer." His eyes challenged the Doctor's, who replied as though humoring one of his wealthy patients.

"Why, of course, Johnson, if it'll give you any satisfaction."

Harley ignored the sarcasm. "Did you or Teegee see Mr. Travers' canoe on the river this morning?" When the two men shook their heads, he turned back to the Doctor. "Why did you send Teegee back to the portage?" He held up a warning hand as the guardian opened his mouth to speak. "I've already heard your version, Teegee; now I want to hear Doctor Shepard's."

"As Bouchard has probably told you," the tall, thin man explained patiently, "I got the early morning fishing—six-thirty, I should say—a mile below the Devil's Elbow, where a good-sized stream flows in from the north." That would be the outlet from Lac Betshibi, a good fishing spot, Harley thought to himself. He quickly calculated the time it took to get there from camp—an hour and a half, at least, counting the one-mile portage around the rapids.

"You must have left the camp around five o'clock this morning," he remarked.

"Yes, that's about right. Arrived down there and fished until eight o'clock; then Bouchard built a fire, and we had some breakfast before starting back up the river. I intended to fish Padré Point before lunch, a couple of miles above the Devil's Elbow, as you know." Doctor Shepard paused for a sip of brandy, and the Ranger waited for him to continue.

"We'd crossed the portage and about a mile or so above the rapids when I searched for my pipe and couldn't find it. Thinking I'd dropped it on the portage, I sent Bouchard back with the canoe to look for it, while I did some fishing."

Harley nodded slowly. "And yet, when we picked you up, you had your pipe in your mouth." He made no attempt to veil the implication of his statement.

An angry flush crept across Doctor Shepard's lean cheeks. He dropped his suave manner.

"Look here, Johnson, what are you getting at? It so happens I found my pipe in my waders, where I dropped it. If you're implying that I—"

"I'm implying nothing, Doctor," the Ranger snapped. "I just want straight answers." Doctor Shepard was thoroughly angry. He banged his brandy glass sharply on the table and started for the door, pausing as an idea came to him. His voice had a biting edge.

"What makes you so damn' sure that the paddle belonged to the dead guide in the first place?"

For answer, Harley handed the shaft to MacLeod.

"What makes you think so, Tim?" he asked, without taking his eyes off the Doctor. MacLeod held it up and indicated three notches cut in the handle.

"All the men choose their paddles an' mark 'em so's they get the same one each time—same length, weight, balance—just like a rod. Wouldn't think of takin' another man's paddle, no more'n you'd think of takin' another man's rod. These here notches is Luke's mark."

"Oui, m'sieur," dat ees right." Teegee Bouchard put in.

A slight smile played on the Ranger's lips. Doctor Shepard slammed the cabin door as he went out.

Tim MacLeod was the first to break the silence.

" 'Pears as if you got the Doctor hot under the collar, Harley," he chuckled. "Do you think he might be our man?"

The Ranger shook his head thoughtfully.

"No—I don't; but I think he might have seen Big T and Luke on the river, or he might have seen someone else he doesn't wish to implicate." He glanced at his watch. "It's getting late." He turned to Teegee. "Tell your good wife that we'll be wanting an early breakfast. I want to examine both sides of the river above the rapids tomorrow morning. We've got to locate the rest of that canoe!"

"Who you takin'?" the head guide asked at the door.

"Same bunch as this morning," Harley answered, then added with a grin: "Maybe the Doctor might not care to come along. Better line up a couple of your men as well —Indians, preferably; they're the best trackers."

For a long time, Harley Johnson sat mulling over the events of the day, the radio forgotten, his eyes gazing into the waning fire. He was not entirely satisfied that the Doctor had told the whole truth, and there were still a number of questions he would like answered. For instance, why had Leland Travers' physician been so anxious to play down the murder theory? How could a man lose his pipe in his waders? If he hadn't lost it, why, then, had he sent Teegee back across the portage?

It occurred to the Ranger that the distances and times involved were disproportionate; it's six miles down the lake through the gorge to the river, two more miles past Padré Point to the portage around the Devil's Elbow, a mile across the portage and still another mile to the Rivière Betshibi, where Doctor Shepard had started his early morning fishing—a total of ten miles. When Harley had said an hour and a half he was subconsciously thinking in terms of an outboard motor, but there had been no kicker on Teegee's canoe when he arrived at camp with the news. You couldn't paddle ten miles in an hour and a half with a one-mile portage in the way, even if it were downriver. He made a mental note to question the little guardian further in the morning.

Something else was bothering him: He racked his brain to think of what it might be when he caught sight of the damp papers still lying on the table where Doctor Shepard had tossed them. That was it! He started to reach for them when a light knock sounded on the door. In a troubled mood he rose and opened it.

The light revealed Joan Travers, her green eyes mocking as usual. She had a way of looking at him in an amused fashion as though she guessed his innermost thoughts. There was a moment's startled silence on Harley's part.

"Aren't you going to invite me in, Ranger Johnson?" she asked in her husky voice. Harley stepped aside automatically, and she swept by him, trailing a subtle perfume. Leaning back against the table, she smiled at him, the slow one-sided smile that he found so inviting.

Joan Travers was nearly as tall as the stocky Ranger. In her short, close-fitting skirt and jacket, her blonde hair swept back to her broad shoulders, she made a picture not easily forgotten. There was no air of tragedy about her; she didn't look like a woman who had just lost her husband.

"Don't you think it's a bit late to be paying me a visit, Mrs. Travers?" he asked, adopting her bantering tone.

"I planned to drop by earlier to speak to you about my husband's death, but you were busy," Joan Travers answered casually, tapping a cigarette on a well-manicured nail. She glanced up at him as he held a light. He noticed that his hand trembled slightly; she always affected his nerves with her nearness and it angered him to realize that she knew it. She exhaled the smoke in his unsmiling face. "Aren't you going to offer a poor widow a drink?" she asked innocently.

Harley Johnson looked at her in astonishment.

"Look here, Joan, it's none of my business what you feel for your husband, but—damn it, out of common decency you don't start flirting with another man the same day your husband's killed."

Guides had strict orders to beach their canoes.

She ignored the outburst and settled herself comfortably in a chair by the fire, crossing her well-molded legs and studying the soft moosehide moccasins on her feet. She looked at him, her green eyes contracting slightly.

"Stop playing *Dick Merriwell.* Do I get it, or don't I?"

Without a word, Johnson turned on his heel and stalked through the back door to a leanto shed at the rear of the cabin. He returned in a few minutes with a bottle of Scotch, soda and ice. He mixed two drinks in silence and handed her one. Joan Travers looked around her in the dimly lit cabin with its comfortable furnishings.

"Nice place you have here, Harley," she said. "You should have invited me over sooner." He sat down on a low, babiche-webbed canoe-seat, and chuckled mirthlessly as he fingered his glass.

"Don't recall having invited you," he remarked dryly. "I would have, though, but you've been so busy in the evenings."

"Don't tell me you believe the silly stories that bull-of-the-woods has been telling you," she snorted. "Tell MacLeod to take off that filthy black-and-white plaid shirt he's been wearing for the past two years if he wants to prowl unobserved in the dark."

Harley chuckled despite himself at the reference to Tim MacLeod's ubiquitous plaid shirt and his eavesdropping. Mrs. Travers continued in the same caustic vein:

"If he thinks Bert and I have been keeping company with the mosquitoes just to neck like high-school kids down by the dock, he's got a hole in his head. He's hated me ever since I caught him leering at me like a lascivious beaver last summer, and I told him to wash his mind out with soap."

"You must have a guilty conscience, spouting off like this," Harley remarked. "I'm just an underpaid Quebec Ranger—remember?"

"Oh, I know what you and the rest think about Bert and me, but you're wrong; Bert and I are good friends—which is more than I can say about my recently departed husband." She took a long pull on her drink.

She didn't look like a woman who had just lost her husband.

"I was a dumb kid—fresh out of Sacred Heart; Lee married me for my social position and youth—and Dad's influence on the Street. He had no more feeling about me, or any other woman, for that matter, than a five-pound brook trout. Just something to play up his ego." Joan gave a short, bitter laugh. "I knew it on my wedding night. I grew to hate him. Always making me practice golf, fly-casting, shooting and God knows what else—just so he could show me off in front of his friends." She drained her glass and held it out unsteadily for a refill. "At least I was faithful to him—while he lived."

The things one found out about a man after he was dead! Harley avoided the speculative look she gave him as he mixed her another and poured one for himself. He didn't approve of drinking in his position, but tonight he felt that his nerves and conflicting emotions could stand a sedative. It was on his tongue to make a flippant remark, but he thought better of it. He said: "You didn't come here to make a confession; what's really on your mind?"

She hesitated for a moment. "I came to ask you to give up any ideas you might have of tracking down my husband's murderer," she answered.

Harley nearly choked on his drink. He put down his glass. "How did *you* know about it?" he asked quietly, staring at her suspiciously.

"I happened by when you and Tom Shepard were having a set-to. Really, you should learn to modulate your voice when you're angry, Harley. I shouldn't be surprised if the whole camp heard you two snarling at each other!" Then she added: "I must say, what I heard was quite a shock; there's a half-empty bottle of Scotch at my camp to prove it."

"So I'd imagined," he remarked with a grim smile. "By the way, what caliber is that rifle of yours—the one you were carrying this morning?"

"It's a Savage .300." Joan Travers laughed sarcastically. "Really, Harley, you surprise me; I hope you don't think I shot Lee and then calmly walked through camp carrying the murder weapon! What makes you so sure it was murder?"

For answer, Harley reached up to the table for the broken paddle. "Would you like to see the evidence?"

"Not particularly. I heard enough to know that you and MacLeod seem to know what you're talking about." He handed her the broken shaft, and she set it aside after a cursory glance. She leaned toward him and spoke earnestly. "Harley, please understand me; nothing good can come out of your proposed investigation. Lee's dead, and that's that. Whoever killed him—if anyone did—probably had good and sufficient reasons. Believe me, Harley, a lot of people wanted my husband out of the way." Her eyes and voice pleaded with him. "Proving murder won't benefit either one of us, and it'll certainly mean the end of the Club. Why not forget your suspicions?" She moved closer to him. "I'm independently wealthy now, and the Club can go on as it has in the past. I'll set up a fund to provide permanent working capital for the Club—something you've all been talking about. You can resign from your Government job, and I'll specify that you be made Club manager at—shall we say six thousand a year? Lee's death was a regrettable accident, and that's bad enough."

"Regrettable as far as you and Bert Steele are concerned," he answered with a derisive laugh. "One, his dissatisfied wife, and the other, his very junior partner. In my book, it's murder!"

Joan Travers slapped him hard across the face, her eyes blazing. "Keep Bert out of this; he had nothing to do with it!"

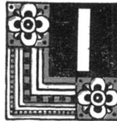
Harley sprang to his feet, upsetting his glass on the floor beside him. He glared down at her, his cheek burning from the blow.

"Why you—" he gritted through clenched teeth, groping for an expletive to match the contempt he felt. "Coming here and trying to buy me off with your husband's money!"

The anger had died in Joan Travers as quickly as it had flared. She rose and came close to him, placing her hands on his chest. "I'm sorry, Harley," she said contritely. Her arms crept around his neck.

Chapter Four

The Unknown Assailant



IT WAS ANOTHER OVERCAST DAY WITH THE weather showing little promise of clearing. A damp wind had shifted into the southeast.

Harley Johnson's head felt as though it had been through a rock-crusher, and his muscles had ached less after a ten-mile portage. Brandy and whisky was a combination to be avoided in the future, especially when coupled with late hours and a tempestuous female, he decided as he attempted to clear the cobwebs from his brain in a basin of icy spring water.

He was wheezing and blowing like a seal when General Fahnestock came upon him out in the shed. The camp had long been astir and Harley grinned shamefacedly at his visitor as he noticed the hour—seven-thirty. One glance at the General's set face was a reminder of yesterday's catastrophe.

"What's this I hear about murder, Harley?" Gone was the old soldier's weary and puzzled expression of the previous evening; the icy blue eyes under the military Stetson held no spark of warmth as he addressed the Ranger. "Teegee Bouchard was telling me about a paddle—"

Harley could have gladly wrung the little French-Canadian's neck. He led the way into his cabin, hoping that General Fahnestock would become too engrossed in examining the broken shaft to notice while he surreptitiously removed the telltale evidences of the late evening.

"Hm-m-m, it was a bullet all right, no question about it," the hawkbeaked General remarked. "I don't like this, Harley. Better notify the Provincial Police at once —Colonel Tremblay in Quebec—if you haven't already

done so." He indicated the transmitter. "Does this thing work now?"

Harley nodded, hesitated, and then turned it on.

"I don't like to report it as murder unless you feel that we have conclusive evidence; this'll probably finish the Club, you know."

The General raised bushy eyebrows.

"I should say that this evidence is pretty conclusive, as long as you've established ownership of the paddle."

"I was thinking about the canoe, General; the break in the paddle is so close to the water-line that I feel certain that if we examine the wreckage, we'll find a bullet-hole in it. Then we'll know without question. In the meantime, I'd rather report it as an accident."

"And if you don't find it?"

THE Ranger shrugged, "You win, General; I just wanted to make sure that you feel the same way I do about it. There are others who don't agree with us."

"Who, for instance?" General Fahnestock growled, glancing keenly at the younger man.

"Doctor Shepard, for one."

"When did he find out about it? He left here last night before I did."

"Yes, but he came back. Forgot to leave some papers he found in the men's pockets." Harley walked over to the table and spread them out. General Fahnestock peered over his shoulder, reaching into his pocket for his pince-nez. There was a sealed letter and a map, water-stained and barely legible.

"I'm afraid you won't get much out of it," the older man remarked. "Wait a minute." He adjusted the glasses on the bridge of his aquiline beak and scrutinized the map closely. "Here's a word—see if you can make it out; my eyes aren't what they used to be." With his forefinger he indicated a spot on the crumpled paper. The Ranger slowly spelled it aloud:

"T-O-K-E-N-K—Tokenkutuk!"

They exchanged inquiring glances.

"That's the name of a river north of here, isn't it?" the General inquired.

"Yes, Travers spoke of trying the fishing up there last week, and spent some time studying that map." He indicated the chart on the cabin wall, "But I believe he and Luke went to Betshibi instead for a couple of days—at least, he said that the big trout he brought back came from Betshibi."

The mention of Travers' big catch, the largest of the season, caused the General to shove the pince-nez violently into the breast pocket of his tweed jacket.

"Hrmff!" he snorted through his nose. "That trout didn't come from Betshibi any more than you did. That short, thick, red-bellied squaretail came from muskeg country. Travers found himself a good spot somewhere, and is keeping it to himself; damned unsporting of him, if you ask me!" Suddenly he realized the tense he had used and paused. "Sorry—for a moment I'd forgotten the poor devil's dead, and Luke with him. I guess we'll never know where that trout really came from. Well, let's get on with the radio report."

Without further ado, Harley Johnson placed the headphones over his ears and started calling Chicoutimi.

"VF 6 Y—VF 6 Y—VF 6 Y, this is XLH 24, Swan River; this is XLH 24, Swan River. Do you receive? Go ahead, Chicoutimi. Over to you."

The General watched intently, and in a few minutes he was rewarded by the Ranger's expression indicating that contact had been made. Harley switched the conversation onto the loud-speaker and Chicoutimi came booming into the cabin:

"Wind west south-west ten miles; ceiling four hundred feet; visibility two miles; barometric pressure 29.6 steady. How's the weather up there, Swan River? Go ahead."

"Just about the same, Mike. What's your forecast?" Harley asked while General Fahnestock paced nervously.

"We expect the front to pass sometime tomorrow afternoon and we'll get a plane up to you as soon as it does, with supplies and mail. There're two parties standing by for the weather to clear—five people altogether; they'll be on the Norseman. Over to you, Harley."

"Stand by, Mike."

Harley turned to the General. "What do you think, sir? Think we ought to let those people come up before the police have had a chance to investigate?" The older man turned it over in his mind for a moment and came to an abrupt decision.

"Certainly. Certainly, let them come; at least they're not suspects, and it'll keep the guides busy. We must do everything possible to overcome this tragedy, Harley. The Club must go on as before."

Harley Johnson felt very close to the snowy-haired old soldier to whom the Swan River Club meant so much. He spoke into the transmitter: *"Mike, this is Johnson again; now listen carefully and relay this message to Colonel Tremblay, Chief of the Quebec Provincial Police."* He proceeded to give a brief résumé of the accident, and hinted that foul play was suspected. *"Ask him to contact me at nine p.m. this evening for further details."*

Tim MacLeod, who entered the cabin at that moment, was not to be denied the satisfaction, after all, of listening to the astonished exclamations that the news evoked, not only from an incredulous Chicoutimi radio operator, but also from two short-wave Ranger stations in the bush north of Lake Saint John that picked up the conversation and kept interrupting with excited questions.

Within a comparatively few minutes, the news would spread down from the North with the rapidity of a crown fire driven by a great wind. Harley Johnson could visualize the shiny black police car hurtling down Grande Alleé in Quebec City toward the seaplane anchorage at L'anse-au-Foulon, where a fish-bellied Fairchild Husky sat on the river awaiting her next assignment, the Quebec Provincial Police insignia on her silver fuselage. Colonel Tremblay would personally take charge of this investigation.

"One more thing, Mike," Harley added as an afterthought. *"Check on a prospector named Claveau. I particularly want you to check on his license and permit; find out where he's prospecting. He came through here two days ago, heading north. Probably left Chicoutimi within the week. That's all for now. Swan River out."*

GENERAL FAHNESTOCK nodded his approval when the Ranger told him about the man who had passed through the Club's territory. "Good. Good, m'boy; we can't be too careful. Check on everybody."

Harley turned off the transmitter. He picked up the crumpled water-stained envelope from the table and looked at it speculatively. The address was written in pencil, and either the letter had been unstamped or the stamp had washed off. There was no postmark.

"I can't quite make out who it's addressed to," he remarked as he slit open the flap with a small sheath knife. He whistled tunelessly through pursed lips while he read its contents, then handed it to General Fahnestock. "It's a letter from Thérèse Bouchard to her kid brother André, in Saint Anne, a little town down on the Saguenay, just across the river from Chicoutimi," he explained. "Probably found in Luke's pocket."

The General peered at the penciled note and produced his pince-nez. He read for a moment.

"Doesn't seem to be anything of importance—just a sisterly letter to a brother, I should say, asking him to send up some of her personal effects by the next Saguenay Air Service plane." He replaced the crumpled paper in

the soiled envelope and returned it to the Ranger, who slipped it into his pocket. Tim MacLeod spoke up:

"We're all set to go, Harley—ready to push off as soon as you've had some breakfast." He addressed the General. "Are you comin' with us, sir? We're checkin' the banks of the river above the Devil's Elbow, an' then we're goin' to find the rest of that canoe."

General Fahnestock shook his head.

"No, gentlemen, I'd better stay here in camp. There's just a chance that Colonel Tremblay might try to push through despite the weather, and I want to be here if he does; it's only an hour-and-a-half flight from Quebec."

"Not much chance of that, General," replied the head guide. "The hills run up to thirty-four hundred feet to the south of us. I don't think his pilot'll chance it with only a four-hundred-foot ceiling at Chicoutimi. Well, I'll be waitin' for you down at the dock, Harley. The Doc ain't showed up yet," he added significantly. "Neither has Mr. Steele." The head guide left them and the other two walked over to the Lodge.

More low scud had blown in from the southwest and raced across an overcast sky. The wind was damp and cold. A brace of black duck went winging overhead on the wind, out of gunshot range; both men watched in silence until they disappeared over the spruce.

Harley decided that a cup of strong black coffee would go a long ways toward repairing the evening's damage to his system. The two men entered the Lodge and sat down at one end of the long table. The General rang the hand bell sharply. In a few minutes Thérèse brought a large platter of eggs and Canadian bacon, and placed it on the table in preoccupied silence. She barely acknowledged their morning's greetings and quickly withdrew into the kitchen. Bert Steele came in to breakfast, followed by the pilot, Jim Schingler, who nodded and sat down.

"It doesn't look as though we'll be getting off today either," he remarked to no one in particular. General Fahnestock looked up quickly from his grapefruit.

"I'm afraid nobody is getting off today, son—not until the Provincial Police get here at any rate. They may wish to hold us all for questioning." The young pilot and Bert Steele looked at him curiously, but the General refrained from further comment. Steele spoke to the Ranger.

"MacLeod told me that you want me to go down to the river with you this morning. What's up?"

"Just want to locate the rest of the wreckage. Thought you might like to help." Harley followed the General's lead and made no mention of their suspicions.

Ruth Wayland arrived, looking fresh and lovely, and greeted them cheerfully. Her presence dispelled the general feeling of gloom that had begun to settle over the breakfast table. Jim Schingler's face glowed with pleasure as he rose and pulled out a chair for her. Obviously, she too was unaware of the sinister turn of events. In a few minutes, Johnson and Steele excused themselves and started for the dock.

When they had stepped out on the open veranda, the Ranger said: "Hold it a second, Bert—I'll be right back," and disappeared around the corner of the building toward the kitchen. He called to Thérèse, who came slowly to the screen door and looked questioningly at him with her dark eyes. He held up the letter. "Is this yours?" he asked. She nodded, her black curls dancing around her white throat. She brushed them back with one arm.

"Oui, m'sieur, dat's belong' to me. Geeve eet to me, please." She opened the screen door and held out her hand, but Harley was not ready to relinquish the letter just yet.

"What was it doing in Luke's pocket?"

She stamped her foot. "Dat ees my affaire. *Donnemoi ça!"* she demanded irritably.

"Not until you tell me how Luke happened to have it on him when he was drowned."

She pouted like a spoiled child. Harley waited for her answer and put the letter back in his pocket, grinning at her as he did so. *"Bête!"* she spat at him. "I geeve eet to heem to post for me een Chicoutimi. Now geeve eet to me." He looked at her curiously.

"Why didn't you put it in the mail-box in the front room? Luke wasn't going to Chicoutimi."

"Henh, henh, m'sieur know-eet-all," she taunted him, "you don' know everytheeng. Luc an' M'sieur Travers leeve night b'fore las' for Chicoutimi wid de canoe, goin' on de rivaire. M'sieur Travers, he get tired wait all tam for de weathaire she clear. Luc tell me dat b'fore hees leaveeng; dat's whan I geeve heem my letter to André."

"Who knew they were leaving besides yourself?" he demanded, suddenly deadly serious. She laughed coquettishly and shrugged her pretty shoulders.

"How I know dat? Geeve me my letter."

Slowly, Harley turned and walked away, his thoughts in a turmoil. This was startling news. Back on the kitchen steps, Thérèse called him every name in her book until her mother came out and boxed her ears.

Bert Steele looked at the Ranger curiously as he rejoined him. Although he could scarcely have helped hearing Thérèse's tirade, the broker refrained from commenting on it.

"Quite a group," he remarked as they approached the others waiting on the dock by the freighter.

Besides the head guide, there were Teegee Bouchard, Brulé, the young guide, and two Montagnais Indian hunters from the encampment across the lake, thin, swarthy men with filthy shirts and sweat-stained caps. Their narrow faces were expressionless, and they merely grunted in answer to Harley's Indian greeting, "Quai—quai." He was careful to stay upwind of them as they got into the big canoe. Tim MacLeod angled a stream of tobacco juice at an unsuspecting dragonfly on the dock and explained:

"I'm not takin' a light canoe, Harley, seein' as how we left the sixteen-footer down there yesterday."

"Seen the Doctor?"

"Hell, we've got enough. We don't need him." The big man grinned at the recollection of Doctor Shepard's annoyance of the previous evening. He yanked the starter cord on the outboard, and once again the freighter was surging down Lake Manicouagen toward the Devil's Elbow.

Harley, sitting on the port gunwale, tried to analyze the significance of the information that he'd got from Thérèse Bouchard. Other than the severed shaft and the water-stained map, it was the only clue he had to this riddle. Its contents were unimportant. It was the fact that Luke was intending to mail that letter in Chicoutimi that was significant, that and Big T's sudden decision to go down the river by canoe instead of waiting for the weather to clear to fly out in his plane. Harley wondered if Jim Schingler, the pilot, knew of his employer's plans. What was so important that Travers couldn't wait until the weather cleared, and why had he kept his departure a secret, starting off after dinner, presumably for the evening's fishing?

The Ranger hadn't realized that Leland Travers had not returned that evening to his camp, and he was quite certain that Tim MacLeod hadn't known it; otherwise the head guide would have mentioned it the following morning. It surprised him a bit too, for ordinarily Tim MacLeod knew of just about everything that went on around camp. Did the big bluff man who was now in the stern of the freighter know more about this affair

than he had let on? He wondered why Joan Travers had said nothing about her husband's absence when she was at his cabin last night.

He shifted his position and glanced back over the lake. A small canoe with an outboard, judging by its bow wave, was following them, perhaps a mile astern.

SOON they were in the river again, the water higher than ever from the runoff of dozens of streams emptying out of chains of small lakes swollen from days of rain. They reached the portage with the rumble of the rapids beating in their ears and the current tugging at the big canoe. MacLeod shouted to be heard.

"Suppose you an' me an' Mr. Steele take this side, Harley. The rest can cross the river for a look-see along the other banks."

The Ranger sized up the group for a moment. "No, you and Matoush and Tibish,"—he indicated the silent Indians—"take the canoe and comb the bank on the other side." Tim MacLeod looked disappointed; obviously he considered searching the opposite side a waste of time. "Teegee and Mr. Steele will take this side with me. Brulé,"—he turned to the remaining member of the group—"you start down the portage and see if you can locate the wreckage below the rapids; I want to find the stern. Keep your eyes peeled along the edge of the rapids on the way down. We'll be down to help you as soon as we've had a look around here."

Brulé touched his cap with a respectful, *"Entendu, m'sieur,"* and set off down the portage.

Tim MacLeod and the two Indians shoved the canoe out into the stream for the opposite shore while the remaining three men split up and began to study the ground. Harley had first taken a moment to explain what they were looking for to Leland Travers' young partner. Bert's stunned look of surprise and one exclamation, "Good God, I can't believe it, Harley!" amply expressed his feelings upon learning the real cause of Travers' death.

It was a difficult job to search for sign in the spruce and alder thickets that grow in profusion to the rocky shore. The Ranger could barely hear Steele and Teegee Bouchard floundering through the bush above him, and soon the noise they made was quickly covered by the unfettered rush of the river. Gradually the Ranger worked his way back into the forest; the underbrush was heavy, and windfalls were everywhere. Frequently, he found himself floundering to his waist after breaking through the matted roots and moss. There was no sign that a human being had ever set foot in this forest, or animal either. Black flies attacked him savagely and he was obliged to stop and apply a generous quantity of fly dope to his face, neck and hands.

He found himself on a jutting ledge that was covered with a thick matting of moss, overlooking the Swan River. It was very close to the spot where the portage formerly ended, before it had been extended some two hundred yards further up the river to avoid the strong currents. The wisdom of the extension was obvious in the ominous swirl of the water that now swept past at incredible speed. Not more than a hundred and fifty feet below this point the first angry waves of the rapids were striking against submerged boulders the size of small cabins. The new trail passed directly below the rocky knoll on which he stood. If there was any spot where a murderer could lie in wait unobserved and still command the approach by river to the former landing place, this was it.

The Ranger's gray eyes narrowed as an idea came to him; an expert canoeman in a hurry would use this lower landing to save time and avoid the additional two-hundred-yard carry. Had Luke Lemoine, with Travers in the bow, run the river down to this point? He decided that he would have done just that if they were anxious to cross the portage before dark. Whoever knew of their plans would have banked on their using the lower landing, and even if that person had guessed wrong, there would still have been a clear shot at both men on the trail below the ledge.

The Ranger felt that he was right, except for one important detail: The two men had been traveling light, in a seventeen-foot square-stern canoe with an outboard motor, as the battered remains of a kicker and a five-gallon gasoline drum at the foot of the rapids testified; how, then, could somebody have reached this spot first and ambushed them? True, the killer might have started earlier, but it hardly seemed probable in view of the secrecy of their plans. Suddenly, Harley realized that he was assuming that Big T and his guide had been waylaid the same evening that they had left camp; suppose they had camped for the night above the Devil's Elbow and the ambush had occurred early in the morning instead of during the waning daylight of the previous evening?

The Ranger tried to visualize himself as the killer. He'd want a good rest for his rifle; the first shot had to render Luke's paddle useless if it were to look like an accident. He wouldn't have much to fear from the inexperienced canoeman in the bow; Leland Travers would never be able to hold the canoe against the current singlehanded. If he missed with the first shot, then he'd have to shoot to kill. Harley snapped his fingers. That was it, of course: the killer would have automatically pumped another cartridge into the rifle chamber after his first shot in case he had been obliged to shoot again.

He visualized the scene. He could see the rifle barrel following the movements of Luke's paddle as he came around the bend, the knife-blade front sight trained on the thickest part of the shaft, waiting for that moment when the guide would pause, preparatory to swinging the bow into the current and up against the river bank. He could almost see the surprised and then terrified expression on Luke's face as the blade snapped off short in his hands.

The killer would have jumped to his feet; in the excitement of the moment would he have thought of the ejected shell? Very likely, he had hurried down the portage just to make certain that the Devil's Elbow had done its grim work well. What would he do next? Probably return to camp as quickly as possible.

The broken paddle would be the important thing, not the cartridge. Harley wondered why the killer had overlooked the paddle in the first place; maybe he had searched for it and couldn't find it; maybe night had caught him before he had had a chance to find it. He must ask Teegee exactly where his little dog had picked it up the previous morning.

A Canada jay teetered on a spruce branch and looked at the Ranger inquisitively, cocking its head first on one side and then on the other. Harley spoke to it aloud. "That's it; that shell's around here some place, I'll bet."

CAREFULLY, inch by inch, he examined the moss on the right side of the knoll; and there, lying in plain sight, was the empty shell. He knew before he even picked it up with his handkerchief that it was a .300 Savage. The mark of the firing pin could easily be checked with Joan Travers' rifle, and any other .300-caliber in camp. He wrapped it carefully in the handkerchief and placed it in his shirt pocket along with Thérèse's letter. If there were fingerprints on the jacket, the police would find them.

He thought of shouting to Teegee and Bert, then realized that they would be unable to hear him above the sound of the rapids.

As he started to return to the river a furtive movement back in the forest caught his eye—a bird perhaps. His

gaze rested on a weathered axe-mark high up on the trunk of an ancient fir. Looking beyond it, he could dimly make out another. He was on an old trail, long since swallowed up by the forest through disuse. From the distance of the blazes above the ground it became evident that he was standing on a winter trail used years before by Indian hunters on snowshoes. He surmised from the direction of the blazes that the trail went straight as a wild goose flies to Lake Manicouagen, cutting out the wide bend of the Swan River above the rapids, and keeping to high ground where the timber is more open.

Bending down, he examined the moss, but it was damp and retained no imprint. Nevertheless, he thought he could barely discern the suspicion of a track. There was another movement in the forest, closer this time, but the Ranger was intent on his discovery. Here, then, was a way that the killer could have arrived at the portage before Big T Travers and Luke. Harley wondered who knew about this old trail. He went on for a few feet, stopping to search for footprints, and finally found one, a woman's footprint clearly imprinted in the black earth at the foot of a giant spruce. He got down on hands and knees, and was so absorbed in studying the print that the movement behind him was not telegraphed to his brain until a fraction of a second before a heavy blow fell on his head.

Chapter Five

A Sudden Dearth of Clues

HARLEY JOHNSON GRADUALLY BECAME CONscious of the worried faces of Teegee Bouchard and Bert Steele bending over him. He could hear Bert talking. "I think he's coming around now; that was a nasty crack he got. Get some water from the river, Teegee, and we'll wash the blood away. Don't want to move him just yet."

Harley opened his eyes and winced from the pain.

"Judas priest, what happened?" he muttered through clenched teeth.

"Take it easy, Harley. Teegee's gone to get some water. Better rest a few minutes."

"What happened? Who hit me?"

Bert Steele shook his head. "Damned if I know! Teegee found you here a few minutes ago and got hold of me. Thought you were dead at first. The poor guy's one jump ahead of a fit—tired of finding dead bodies around the woods, I guess. Here, let me help you—" Bert supported the Ranger as he struggled shakily to his feet. Harley clung to the big spruce, fighting off nausea. Gradually it passed, and by the time the guardian had returned with water in a makeshift birchbark container, he was feeling more himself.

"Voilà, Harley, *mon vieux,* you drink deese, an' you feel better."

They helped him down to the river and made him as comfortable as possible against a ledge.

"Pour some fly dope in that cut, Bert," Harley muttered.

"You want to get blood poisoning?"

"I don't care what I get; get rid of these damn' flies! Get some spruce gum. Teegee, what happened?"

The French Canadian's worried eyes were as round as saucers. "Only theeng I know, I fine deese *chemin de bois,* deese portage een de wood, an' pass 'long eet for p'haps fifty *arpents,* an' *voilà,* I see you! Firs' theeng, I theenk you are dead. You don' move—"

The Ranger was feeling in the pocket of his shirt, and suddenly cut him short with an exclamation.

"I lef de Doctor fishing half-mile above de rapids."

"Damnation! Just as I thought—gone!"

"What's gone?" Bert Steele exclaimed.

"The empty cartridge I found, and Thérèse's letter. Whoever slugged me got both."

"Thérèse!" Teegee's black brows shot up, but Harley hurried on; he was in no mood to explain the letter to her stepfather or anybody else right then.

"It's nothing. Just a letter I had to mail for Thérèse. But the cartridge was the one that cut the paddle in two!" Quickly he explained where he had found it, and how he had come across the old trail, and finally, the woman's footprint. Bert Steele remarked:

"I'm afraid you won't find any prints up there now—with the three of us walking all over them—unless there're some farther along the trail. I'll go look." He got to his feet, but Harley motioned him to sit down.

"We don't want any more cracked skulls around here, Bert. Sit down, I want to ask you and Teegee a few questions about the paddle we found yesterday." He held his head a moment, trying to ease the dull ache.

"Teegee, you told me that your dog found that paddle; where, exactly?" The guardian thought back a moment and explained:

"I walk 'long de shore yesterday wid Pitou b'low de *rapide* after we fine Luc an' M'sieur Travers. I look for de res' of de canoe or somettheeng, but I don' fine eet. Pitou, she's all de tam run round look for partridge—rabbit—een de bush. All of sudden I see Pitou run een de bush, an' *voilà*—heese comin' out wid deese paddle een heese mout'. He get plenty troub' wid dat theeng, Harley; she's long an' get catched een de *bois de savanne.* I

don' know what heese fin', so I go help heem an' I see heem wid deese paddle." Teegee indicated with an open gesture of his hands that his connection with the paddle ended there.

The Ranger lit a cigarette and smoked in silence for a moment. Finally he spoke, more to himself than to the others. "Well, I guess our killer found it after all and heaved it back in the woods. His mistake was that he didn't throw it far enough."

Steele looked thoughtful. A worried expression came into his eyes. He was on the point of saying something when Tim MacLeod and the Indians beached the canoe and hailed them. The head guide, breathing heavily, climbed to where they sat. His plaid shirt was soaked with sweat.

"No luck, Harley. We searched every square foot of the other side for a quarter-mile up, an' about the same distance back. Those boys didn't miss a bent twig." He waved his arm toward the two Indians, who were making a small fire down by the water to boil the noonday tea. For the first time he noticed the Ranger's pallor and the clotted blood on his scalp. His voice held a startled note. "What happened to you?"

To save Harley effort, Steele explained the circumstances of the injury, and MacLeod looked apprehensively off into the woods. Teegee's black eyes followed his glance, and his hand went to the wicked-looking knife protruding from the sash around his waist, as though he half-expected the *loup-garou* to spring out of the nearest thicket.

By the time the tea came to a boil the guide, Brulé, had returned up the portage, carrying some three feet of the wrecked canoe completely stripped of its canvas by the force of the water, and looking like the skeleton of a dead moose with its ribs bared to the elements. They could see that it was the stern by the motor block that held the gunwales together. A few of the ribs were cracked and missing; but there, through the port gunwale, was the small water-swollen hole made by the bullet.

Little was said as the men ate their bread and cheese and a few slices of ham sluiced down with steaming black tea that could have tanned a wolf pelt. Bert Steele, unaccustomed to its boiled strength, momentarily expected his teeth to dissolve, but he manfully downed his mugful, and hurriedly bit into a chocolate bar to rid his mouth of the bitter taste.

Harley Johnson leaned back against the ledge with his eyes closed and no desire for food; the roar of the rapids throbbed through his aching head. In a few minutes the remnants of the lunch were packed away in the freighter and the men climbed aboard. The Ranger placed himself in the bow, as far away as possible from the noise of the big outboard. The wind had freshened and the gray choppy waves of Manicouagen made the last six miles of the return to camp a wet uncomfortable ride.

Arriving in the middle of the afternoon, they found General Fahnestock waiting impatiently on the dock and Joan Travers and Muriel Shepard just pushing off with one of the guides for the late-afternoon fishing. The young pilot, Jim Schingler, sat moodily on the edge of the bluff staring out at the moored Mallard as though wishing he were at its controls on his way out of the Canadian bush. His shirt was ripped where it had caught on a branch, and he looked tired. There was no sign of Doctor Shepard.

Joan waved from her canoe, and it was obvious that the General heartily disapproved of such cheerfulness on the part of Leland Travers' widow. He interrupted his glowering at her to question the Ranger on the success of the mission. Harley laughed ruefully.

"Got more than I bargained for, General," he said, indicating his head around which a soiled handkerchief had been tied. He explained briefly what had happened, and the General took charge immediately.

"Here, let's get that washed out right away!" He grasped the Ranger firmly by the arm and steered him toward his cabin, instructing Bert Steele over his shoulder to bring the medicine cabinet out of the Lodge. "And have Madame Bouchard send over hot water and towels right away," he added.

The General turned his attention to the injured man. "You may have got a slight concussion, Harley. Now take it easy—just sit tight, son, until Colonel Tremblay gets here. He'll get to the bottom of this thing. Good man, the Colonel."

It wasn't long before Steele and MacLeod arrived with the medicine cabinet, and Thérèse with the towels and hot water. Then each tried to outdo the other in caring for the patient. Harley had a splitting headache, and he was only too thankful when the General finally lost his patience after someone dropped the bottle of alcohol and shooed them all out. The two men left willingly enough to seek their own quarters but Thérèse spat like a mother cat being deprived of her young as she was forcibly pushed out of the door by a very red-faced General Fahnestock. If his head hadn't hurt so, Harley Johnson would have laughed.

"Infernal women!" stormed the old soldier as he latched the screen door. "Always butting into a man's business. I tell you, Harley, there shouldn't be a damn' woman allowed north of the Saguenay!"

He busied himself placing a dressing on the injured scalp, and when it was done, he stepped back to survey his handiwork with pride. "Guess that'll hold you for a while, m'boy." He sat down and lit his briar. "Managed to pick up a bit of medical training at Camp Gordon during the winter of 1917-'18," he said in a reminiscent mood. "If you think it gets cold up here in the wintertime, Harley, you should have been in Atlanta that winter; no coal—pipes froze up, and on top of that, it seemed that every time I turned around, I'd be ticked for O.D."

General Fahnestock got to his feet. "I'll have Madame Bouchard bring you some supper later on; then we'll contact Colonel Tremblay on the radio. I don't like the way that killer went after you. I think that only the immediate presence of Steele and Bouchard saved you from worse than a broken head. There's a madman loose around here, and I strongly recommend that you lock this door and keep a pistol handy."

If General Fahnestock expected the Ranger to follow his advice he would have been shocked a few minutes later to see him step furtively out of his cabin, taking care to keep it between himself and the camp, and hurry quickly into the woods.

By a circuitous route that avoided the trail he arrived at the wooded point on which the Travers cabin stood. He listened for a few moments to make certain that he had not been followed, then slipped through the back door.

Passing through a small kitchenette and bar used for late evening snacks and later breakfasts, he entered the living-room. Its luxurious furnishings had been flown up at considerable expense, along with a strange bewildered individual who was introduced as the interior decorator. Harley remembered the trouble they'd had installing the plumbing because of the distance from the main camp and the glacier-scarred rock on which the cabin rested. Big T had finally installed his own water and heating system, complete with Prestone-filled electric radiators.

There was a great deal of closet space and many built-in drawers and cupboards. He wondered how Joan

Travers managed without a personal maid, but right then Harley was glad that she did. He had no wish to be surprised in his search for the rifle he knew must be there among the paraphernalia that filled the camp.

He finally found it in one corner of the living-room near the fireplace, half-hidden behind several leather and aluminum rod-cases, a sleek blue-black hunting rifle with a polished walnut stock. The make and caliber—Savage .300—were clearly stamped on the barrel. He smelled the muzzle and noticed that it had been recently cleaned; the oil had collected little dust. Opening the breech, he examined the firing pin, realizing that without the empty cartridge to use as a comparison, there was little chance of proving this the murder weapon. The imprint of the firing pin on the cartridge which Harley had found on the knoll overlooking the Swan River had been a little off-center and he noticed with interest that, as nearly as he could judge without a magnifying glass, the pin of the rifle he was holding was also slightly off-center.

He was contemplating this fact when the faint sound of approaching footsteps froze his blood for a fleeting second. Thankful that the failing light of a gray afternoon cast the interior of the cabin into semi-gloom, he hurriedly replaced the gun, and had just time to secrete himself in a closet in the rear bedroom when the French doors opened and someone entered the living-room.

The Ranger found himself smothered among female garments heady with perfume, and cursed himself for a fool. This was a fine spot for Joan Travers to find a Quebec Ranger! He should have gone out the way he had come, through the kitchen, or at worst, stayed and bluffed his way out of his predicament, instead of being trapped like a squirrel in a woman's wardrobe!

The closet door was ajar, and debating his next move, Harley peered through the open door of the bedroom and was immediately relieved that he had chosen this place in which to hide. The person who had entered was not Joan Travers, but Bert Steele.

Leland Travers' partner glanced around the living-room, evidently seeking something, and the Ranger heard his exclamation of relief when he saw the rifle in the corner. The broker walked over quickly and picked it up. He looked at the sofas and then at the peaked split-log ceiling and the large cross-beams running the width of the room. Pulling up a straight-backed chair, he reached up and placed the rifle on top of one of the beams, but after inspecting this hiding-place from a distance, he took it down again.

Steele was obviously nervous as he stood there in the center of the room undecided what to do with the rifle in his hands. He bit his lower lip in perplexity and suddenly turned and left the cabin, still carrying the gun. The Ranger bounded from his place of concealment and watched him through a window. Reaching the lake shore on the side of the point away from the main camp, Steele took the rifle by the barrel with both hands, and with a mighty heave, swung it out into the lake as far as he could throw it. There was a heavy splash and the Savage .300 disappeared into Lake Manicouagen.

Chapter Six

A Word of Warning

For a long moment Harley Johnson debated whether or not to rush after Steele and demand an explanation. He finally decided against it. There would be time enough later to accuse him of murder or of being an accessory after the fact.

The broker had deliberately attempted to get rid of evidence, either to protect himself or to protect someone else, possibly both. The proof was there in the lake but Steele could just as easily accuse Harley of having thrown away the rifle, and Joan Travers would probably perjure herself as a witness against him if it suited her purpose. No, he would wait awhile yet; maybe Colonel Tremblay, the Chief of the Provincial Police, could figure out an answer when he arrived.

It was dusk. Joan Travers should be returning any moment from fishing. The Ranger quickly left the camp on the point and made his way back through the woods, taking care not to be observed.

He switched on the reading lamp in his cabin and sat down for a cigarette and a few minutes of meditation before dinner. The accumulation of facts and events during the day would require a good deal of thinking over if he were to make some sort of sense out of them.

He did not agree with the General that his life had been in danger that morning, not as long as he hadn't seen his assailant. Harley felt certain that this unknown assailant had accomplished just what he had intended to do, and that was to gain possession of Thérèse's letter and the empty cartridge case without resorting to murder to achieve this end—though doubtless he had been prepared to kill again if the situation had required it. The Ranger had a feeling that if he had so much as caught a glimpse of the person who had slugged him, Teegee Bouchard would have had a third corpse to report. The next time he went sleuthing he would take the General's advice and carry a pistol.

It was about time for Madame Bouchard to bring him his supper. He decided to go over to the Lodge for his meal and save her the trouble. Suddenly he began to laugh out loud, staring at an empty corner of the cabin and laughing as though he saw something amusing.

Actually, he saw nothing. The broken paddle shaft was gone; the stern of the canoe with the bullet-hole was gone; and he knew without looking that the water-stained map was missing as well. While he had been prowling in the Travers cabin, someone had been doing the same thing in his, had probably watched him leave. Now he had nothing left to indicate that a murder had taken place except a throbbing head. It struck him as being ironically funny, and he was still chuckling as he walked over to the main Lodge a few minutes later.

It was almost dark, and ominous-looking clouds swirled across a thin sliver of a moon that hung over the distant ridge. The creaking and rattling of the branches could be heard in the woods behind the camp as the wind swept fitfully off the lake. The two silver amphibians, rocked by unseen waves at their moorings beyond the end of the dock, appeared like disembodied ghosts in the darkness.

He was relieved to step into the cheerful atmosphere of the big room where a birch fire burned brightly on the immense hearth at the far end. Candles flickered on the long table, at which most of the members and their guests were already seated. Harley slipped into a vacant chair and pretended not to notice the General's censorious scrutiny at having disregarded the suggestion to remain quietly in his cabin. Joan Travers' sardonic green eyes examined him curiously. He wondered if she had discovered the loss in her cabin.

It was difficult to imagine that one of these people with whom he was breaking bread could have been his assailant—or was guilty of a double murder. They were all very solicitous concerning his injury, and plied him with worried questions regarding his recent harrowing experience. Finally they let him eat in peace, and he had a chance to mull things over in his mind.

After the rifle episode, he had every reason to suspect Bert Steele, who was eating his dinner in morose silence. On the other hand, what about the pipe that Doctor Shepard, Leland Travers' physician and friend, was sup-

posed to have lost on the portage, and where had he really been when Teegee had come back up the river to report the finding of the bodies? Why had he been so anxious to play down the murder angle, and why had he delayed in turning over the map and Thérèse's letter that he had taken from the dead men's pockets? The Ranger had a feeling that if they had not inadvertently fallen out of the Doctor's pocket, the physician would not have reported them. Where had Doctor Shepard been all day? Wherever it was, it seemed to have given him a good appetite and to have put him in a cheerful mood.

If Harley had reservations concerning the Doctor, he surely had cause to have a few concerning Joan Travers. Was it a coincidence that she had been carrying her rifle that fateful morning, or was it a clever move on her part to dispel suspicion? Had Big T's insistence that his wife be a good shot paid off in ironical fashion? Was it Joan Travers who had ejected that empty cartridge and left her footprints on that long-forgotten trail? What had prompted her to try to bribe him from making further investigations? The questions concerning this unpredictable woman were so numerous that he turned his attention to General Fahnestock, a man who had throughly disliked, even hated, Leland Travers for several reasons, and who had never made any bones about his feelings. Could it have been the General who had fired that shot? Harley Johnson sincerely hoped not.

What about the small canoe he had seen following them that morning? Had it contained merely an Indian hunter looking for a bear or a loon, or had it contained the person who had struck him down in the woods?

From pondering this subject he began to wonder what Jim Schingler, Leland Travers' pilot, had been doing during the morning to get his shirt ripped and to tire himself out as he appeared to be when they had returned from the portage. Where did Muriel Shepard, Leland Travers' niece, fit into the picture?

Or was it Tim MacLeod who sent two helpless men to their death in the rapids and who later waylaid him? It could hardly have been MacLeod who had attacked him. The head guide was on the other side of the river at the time—or was he? What connection did a prospector named Claveau have with the case?

THE guttural name Tokenkutuk constantly recurred in his thoughts as though it was fated to play a major rôle in this tragedy. Harley had seen enough of the water-stained map to realize that it was too detailed to have been used merely for a two-day fishing trip. Of all the vanished clues the Ranger felt that this one was the most significant; and he mentally kicked himself for not having attached more importance to it before its disappearance from his cabin that afternoon. What secret did the wild and remote Tokenkutuk hold that would spell murder? He added it to his rapidly growing list of unanswered questions as he became aware of Thérèse Bouchard refilling his coffee cup.

Harley wondered if the footprints on the ancient trail had been left by this impetuous minx of the North with her explosive mixture of French and Irish and, he suspected, a drop or two of aborigine. She and Luke Lemoine had been as thick as otters in the spring these past two months—that, he knew without her stepfather's collaboration. Had Luke run afoul of her venomous temper, and had Big T Travers just the misfortune to have been in the canoe at the time?

He knew of one murder case in the Provincial Police files where twenty-two people had had the misfortune to be on the same doomed plane as the intended victim. There was a chance that the same situation had existed here. He decided to have a talk with Thérèse even if it meant dodging a butcher knife or whatever else came handy to Teegee's hot-blooded stepdaughter.

It was nearly eight-thirty when he rose to leave the table. He would wait until after the radio contact with Chicoutimi before tangling with Thérèse. Her work in the kitchen would be finished by then, and now that Luke was no longer around, he would probably find her alone in her small cabin, which was located in the woods behind his own.

General Fahnestock caught his eye on the way out, and Harley answered the other's look of inquiry. "In about twenty minutes, if there's not too much static." The General nodded, and Harley left the room.

SEVERAL people were talking in the darkness outside as he stepped out onto the veranda, standing at the foot of the steps. He recognized Doctor Shepard's lean face by the flare of a match that the Doctor held to his pipe. The faces of Jim Schingler, Tim MacLeod and Teegee Bouchard appeared in the momentary circle of light. There may have been others with them, but he wasn't sure before the match was extinguished by a gust of wind. He stood in the darkness for a moment, debating whether or not to join the group; then Bert Steele stepped hurriedly out of the big room and pulled the front door closed behind him. The broker nearly bumped into him in the dark. He appeared to be under considerable tension as he spoke.

"Harley—it's you! I was just coming to look for you. I've got to talk to you about that broken paddle." There was an urgent note in his voice. "I've been thinking about it a good deal since you remarked this morning that the killer probably found it and threw it back in the woods."

"At least he didn't throw it into the lake," the Ranger remarked with a dry laugh, but the insinuation was either ignored or unnoticed.

Steele continued as though there had been no interruption. He appeared very agitated.

"Well, after we got the men out of the water yesterday morning several of us started down along the shore looking for any of their equipment we could salvage—remember?" Harley was thinking back and remained silent. After a short pause, Steele went on. "I don't want to throw suspicion on anyone unfairly or make any accusations—you understand that, Harley; but—well, damn it, I *did* see someone pick up what I thought was a stick of driftwood at the time and throw it back in the bushes. I wasn't paying too much attention, but in view of what's happened and all that—well, I got to thinking that under the circumstances you should know about it."

Was Steele deliberately trying to cast suspicion on a certain individual or was he speaking the truth? Harley was undecided, but his pulse beat a little faster as he asked in a steady voice, "Who was it?"

Steele opened his mouth to answer, when he suddenly became conscious of the silent group of men standing at the foot of the steps. It was evident that they were listening intently, and there was no movement among them as they waited for the name that he was on the point of uttering.

Bert hesitated and looked helplessly at the Ranger as though undecided whether or not to go on. Muriel Shepard picked that crucial moment to come out of the Lodge, and as the light from the opening door flooded the scene Bert Steele took a deep breath and said: "On second thought, Harley, I'm sorry I brought it up." He made an attempt to make his voice sound as matter-of-fact as possible. He gave a nervous little laugh. "It may have been a product of my imagination. Just forget I said anything about it."

The Ranger looked him in the eye for a long moment before speaking. "If you change your mind, drop by my cabin." He started down the steps, then stopped and turned. "Think it over, Bert. That's pretty dangerous

information you've got there; want to change your mind?" The other shook his head. "Okay. I'll be free in about an hour. Better drop by." He continued on to his cabin, where General Fahnestock joined him in a few minutes.

ONCE again they were in front of the radio transmitter. No one else had been encouraged to be present, and the two men were alone in the cabin. Outside, the wind whistled a doleful tune around the eaves. The waves lapped with increasing violence against the rocky shore. The General had taken the precaution of bolting both the front and rear doors of the cabin to ensure privacy. Harley made no comment. Without voicing it, they had arrived at the same decision: From now on, their investigation would be carried on with the maximum of secrecy. Harley drew the heavy curtains across the windows.

They hadn't long to wait. Sharp at nine o'clock Chicoutimi was calling Swan River. The atmosphere was full of static and the reception was poor. Harley handed General Fahnestock a set of earphones. "We'll have to use these if we're going to hear anything," he remarked, switching off the loud-speaker. The two men pressed the phones to their ears and concentrated on catching the words of the operator at Chicoutimi. His voice surged and receded. The Ranger kept adjusting the volume control.

Colonel Tremblay had not arrived at Chicoutimi. The front which at that moment was passing over Manicouagen, stretched south, down across the Saguenay and the rugged Laurentian hills and on up the Saint Lawrence River almost to Quebec.

The Chief of Police had phoned repeatedly from Quebec for weather reports from the Chicoutimi-Saguenay District, and finally he had been obliged to start north over the Talbot Boulevard, through the Laurentian Park in a police car with two inspectors. He was expected momentarily. The police plane had orders to follow in the morning as soon as the weather permitted, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police were standing by in case Indians were involved and the matter came under Federal jurisdiction.

Harley acknowledged this information, and General Fahnestock cursed under his breath. "Damn' weather!" He removed his earphones and spoke into the Ranger's ear, "Ask him if Colonel Tremblay sent any instructions. Shall we have Schingler fly the bodies out in the morning if the weather clears or wait until he gets here?"

"*The only instructions,*" came the operator's voice through the static, "*are to sit tight. He said nobody was to leave camp. It's your baby until he shows up, Harley. And by the way, that man Claveau you spoke about: We checked on him for you. He's a prospector, left Chicoutimi around the end of June, six weeks ago. Presumably headed north for the season. His travel permit for the bush from the Department of Lands and Forests states that he's prospecting on the Tokenkutuk River near Lac à la Fraye. I'll repeat it—Tokenkutuk River near Lac à la Fraye. We understand he's after cobalt or tin, but here's something interesting. The pilot that flew him in as far as Lac Michigamau reports that Claveau had a Geiger counter with him so it might be uranium he's after. One more thing, Harley: Evidently he's got a partner who went north by canoe before he did. Haven't been able to find anybody who knows his name but we'll continue to check for you. That's all for now, Swan River. Did you receive all this or do you want a repeat? Go ahead, Swan.*"

"*Hello, Mike. Hello, Mike. Yes, we got it. Thanks. Never mind the partner; it's just Claveau I was interested in.*" The Ranger started to sign off when an idea came to him. "*Hello, Mike. Tell Colonel Tremblay when he gets there that I've got a hunch. Think I'll run up to the Tokenkutuk tomorrow morning and have a chat with this man, Claveau. It's about thirty miles north of here. If I leave early in the morning I should be back here tomorrow evening. That's all for now. Okay, Chicoutimi, good night. Swan River out.*"

The radio was switched off and both men removed their earphones. The General scowled. "I don't approve of this trip you're contemplating to the Tokenkutuk, Harley, especially alone. I think under the circumstances it's foolhardy—you know what happened to you this morning."

Harley grinned. "This morning, everyone knew where I was going, General, but as far as tomorrow's trip is concerned—you're the only one in camp who knows about it. Nobody could have heard our conversation with Chicoutimi through these cabin walls and double windows. Nobody else will know unless you tell them."

"Of course I won't tell them," the General protested, "but I think you're going contrary to Colonel Tremblay's instructions—that no one is to leave camp."

"Well, we can't very well coop everybody up in the Lodge until he arrives," the Ranger protested. "If the wind shifts and we get more weather, he might be a week getting here. In the meantime, I don't intend to sit around and twiddle my thumbs. As long as I'm in charge, I feel that I should proceed with my investigation; and as far as I can see, the next step is the Tokenkutuk."

General Fahnestock shrugged his shoulders. "All right, m'boy, if that's the way you feel about it—go ahead. I only wish that I were a bit younger so I could go with you; but I'm not, so the next best thing I can do is to offer you my advice. Promise me, Harley, you'll take a rifle with you, or least a pistol. And for heaven's sake don't lean over to examine any more footprints! There's a killer out there, just waiting for one of us to go off alone. This time, there won't be anybody to help you."

Harley Johnson would remember the old man's prophetic words.

Chapter Seven

Death with a Knife

AFTER GENERAL FAHNESTOCK HAD DISAPPEARED down the darkened trail with his revolver reposing handily in the wide pocket of his tweed jacket, Harley debated whether or not to wait for Bert Steele to show up. The more he thought about it, the more convinced he became that Steele had been telling the truth. He hoped with all his heart that the broker would change his mind and unburden himself of the "dynamite" he was carrying. Maybe he should go look for him.

Harley glanced at his watch and saw that it was nearly ten o'clock. He decided not to wait any longer for Bert Steele. He would call on Thérèse Bouchard instead to see if she could shed any light on the woman's footprints that he had seen on the old trail.

He locked the rear door of his cabin and put the key in his pocket. Noticing that his flashlight was weak, he rummaged on a shelf, only to find the carton of fresh batteries he kept there empty. He cursed under his breath as he shoved a .38 Smith & Wesson revolver into his belt and buttoned the short leather jacket against the cold night wind.

A dark form appeared to melt into the nearby spruce thicket as he shut the front door. He swept the area with the feeble rays of the light; the beam was practically useless, and he could see nothing. He listened for a moment, but the wind in the trees and the wild crashing

of the waves on the shore close at hand made such a tumult of sound that a startled caribou could have bounded by undetected. He put it down to his imagination and took the trail that led back into the woods, away from the lake.

Keeping a watchful eye, he skirted the guardian's cabin, sheltered by a thick grove of spruce and fir against the icy blasts that sweep off Manicouagen in winter. The cabin was in total darkness. Evidently Teegee and Madame Bouchard had turned in for the night. He hoped that the little mongrel Pitou wouldn't start yapping, and he held his breath until he felt his way to the path that led to the second cabin, several hundred feet beyond.

There was a light on in Thérèse's cabin and the shades were drawn. He knocked on the door, hoping that no one had seen him—or how was he to explain this late visit to Teegee's stepdaughter?

Thérèse greeted him eagerly after the first timid opening of the door. She watched him like a hungry cat as he stepped quickly into the small room and closed the door behind him. To her childlike passionate nature, the mystery of this unexpected visit by the man whose indifference often puzzled her was solved when the Ranger bolted the door. She immediately assumed a rôle of unsuspecting innocence.

The cabin reeked of cheap perfume. A colored rotogravure of the Virgin and Christ-child was tacked over the bed with a withered bit of palm leaf fastened with a tack above it. A single shaded lamp illuminated the room.

She had been on the point of getting into bed when his knock came, and had quickly thrown a light flannel robe over her nightgown. Now she stood in her bare feet, with her back half modestly turned, and clasped the robe tight around her waist with both hands, accentuating her full breasts. The black curls danced around her white throat as she tilted her chin toward him and kept her dark eyes demurely averted. She was the picture of maidenly modesty as she coyly asked: *"Et quoi desire le m'sieur?"* He waited a moment before answering, enjoying her act and regretting the scene that was certain to follow.

"Not what you think, sweetheart," he chuckled, and waited for the explosion. It wasn't long in coming. There was a moment's silence, and then she turned on him viciously, hands on hips, the rôle of modesty dropping away as quickly as the robe from her heaving breasts. "Why you come here? *Fiche-moi la paix!"* She pointed to the cabin door. "Get out—b'fore I call Papa!"

His laughing eyes infuriated her, and she sprang at him in an attempt to vent her fury by gouging him with her nails. He pinned her flailing arms and forced her back against the edge of the bed.

"Now hold everything, spitfire; I just want to have a talk with you," he soothed as she continued to struggle.

Suddenly she relaxed; and Harley, caught off balance, fell heavily upon her on the bed. She giggled. "You are so strong—" she purred.

Harley swore, and scrambled to a sitting position, his face very red. "Damn it, Thérèse, behave yourself and listen to me!" He glared at her and searched distractedly in his pocket for a cigarette as she leaned on her elbows laughing at him, making no attempt to cover her revealing nightgown, deranged during the struggle.

He reached over quickly and picked up the dressing-robe that had fallen from her shoulders and threw it over her.

Her eyes were hot and stormy. "What you want?" she demanded wrathfully.

"Just this, Thérèse: I want to know what you were doing on the old winter trail down by the river—the night Luke and Mr. Travers were murdered!"

"I don' understan'," she snapped.

"But who—who wants to keel Luc Lemoine?" he asked.

"Yes, you do understand," he growled. He tried a shot in the dark. "Your mother knows you left the kitchen right after dinner and didn't come back to help her clean up. She told me so. Besides," he lied, "Tim MacLeod saw you leave the camp in a canoe, and an Indian saw you on the trail."

"Eet's not true—*nobody* see me!" Thérèse realized her mistake too late, and cast about wildly for an excuse to cover up the impetuous slip of her tongue. "I no feel so good, so I go for *promenade* een de canoe—" she explained lamely.

"All right, if you won't tell me the truth, the police will get it out of you when they get here tomorrow." The Ranger picked up his cap and started for the door.

"Non, Harley, pas la police, je t'en prie!" The girl caught his arm and pleaded. "I beg you, not de police—I tell you everytheeng." She began to sob quietly and Harley waited for her to compose herself. He lit a cigarette and sat down in the only chair. Thérèse sank back onto the bed in complete submission and began to talk haltingly.

The Ranger was still not convinced that what he was about to hear would be the truth. He glanced quickly at the small bedside table, searching for a Bible which to place her under oath. Not finding one, his eyes went to her bare throat and back to the table.

"Where's your crucifix?" he demanded.

Her hand went quickly to her throat. She looked distressed and shrugged her shoulders. *"Je ne sais pas.* I don' know—I lose eet somewheres." After a pause she collected her thoughts. She began to speak of the night in question. "Whan Luc, hees comin' ask me for sometheeng to eat for two person for two day, I theenk dat ver' funny. I say, 'Why you not as' dat to MacLeod or M'sieur Harley; dey arrange everytheeng lak dat?' He answer: 'Eet ees for special voyage wid M'sieur Travers to Chicoutimi by canoe, an' nobody mus' know dat!'"

Harley interrupted.

"What time was this? Where were you?"

"Night b'fore las', 'bout six o'clock. I am all alone een de kitchen an' I geeve heem de provisions an' my letter to take to André. Luc, he promise to breeng me sometheeng nice from Chicoutimi eef I don' tell nobody."

Harley nodded his head slowly as he digested this information.

"Why did you go to the old trail right after dinner?"

For answer, Thérèse got up and opened a drawer of the chiffonier. She pulled out a light woolen sweater which Harley had seen her knitting occasionally during the past few weeks.

"I knit eet for André. Luc, he say he wait for me while I'm comin' here to fine dat but whan I go back, heese leaving wid M'sieur Travers. I theenk I catch dem at de portage eef I pass on de ole trail. By de tam I get dere, she's most dark. I don' see heem, *et bien,* I come back. *Voilà,* dat's all I know, Harley. Ees de trut'!"

She began to cry again softly and murmur over and over again: "Ees de trut'—*pauvre Luc;* I don't keel heem. Ees de trut'—"

Harley put his arm around her in an awkward attempt to comfort her.

"There, there, Thérèse, don't cry. I believe you. I know you didn't do it." She smiled up at him, grateful through her tears, and before he realized what she was up to, she kissed him moistly on his hard cheek.

HARLEY decided that he had done enough comforting for one evening. He hurriedly started to depart—when an idea came to him.

"One more thing, Thérèse." He stopped on the point of opening the door. "By any chance did you see anyone down there that night?"

She thought for a moment and then tossed her curls vigorously.

"*Oui*—yes, I remember. I see somebody, but I'm not sure who eet ees."

"Where?" His fingers unconsciously tightened on the latch as he waited tensely for her answer. "Think carefully—where?"

"I'm comin' back on Lac Manicouagen een de canoe whan I hear a noise on de water b'hind me. I'm not sure, so I go very quiet close to de shore an' wait, not makin' noise. By an' by, I hear a sanoe, she's passin'. I don' mak a sound; I'm very scare'. Dey don' see me." Then she added: "But I don' see dem neither."

Harley's hopes fell. "Couldn't you tell if there was one person in that canoe, or more than one? Surely you must have seen something!" he insisted.

"*Non,* Harley, eet ees ver' dark. I jus' see dese light shadow she's passin', an' eef I don' hear de water from de paddle, I theenk dat be de *loup-garou* for sure. I'm very scare'." She shuddered at the recollection, and put her hands over her face. He crossed the room and patted her shoulder.

"You'll be all right; just don't forget to bolt your door from now on until this thing is cleared up—and if you value your life, don't tell anybody else what you've just told me!"

The Ranger stood a few minutes outside Thérèse Bouchard's cabin, thinking hard and allowing his eyes to become accustomed to the darkness before proceeding cautiously down the trail that led past the guardian's cabin to his own. Even back here in the shelter of the trees the wind was strong, and occasionally a broken branch crashed in the surrounding woods.

He had a strong feeling that Thérèse had been telling the truth, and that her part in this macabre affair had been entirely innocent. He must look elsewhere for the answer. Yet, things he had found out tonight had made his visit to Teegee's stepdaughter well worth while. It explained a number of things and opened up new possibilities.

By the luminous dial of his wristwatch he saw that it was after eleven. He wondered if Bert Steele had changed his mind and had stopped by the cabin while he was away. Maybe even now he was waiting to name the person he had seen throw the broken shaft into the woods.

Gradually a feeling came over Harley Johnson of impending disaster, a sinister feeling of someone, maybe himself, being in great danger. It made his scalp prickle, and he loosened his leather jacket to reach more easily the revolver in his belt. Why hadn't he thought sooner to warn Bert of the folly of retaining such dangerous information after revealing that he had it?

Harley quickened his pace, then stopped short and jerked the gun out of his belt. There, not ten paces away and half-hidden by the trunk of a tree, stood the vague outline of a figure waiting beside the trail.

"Who's there?" he shouted hoarsely above the sound of the wind, and switched on the fading beam of his flashlight, the revolver held ready for instant action.

The figure started forward, and the light revealed a very frightened Joan Travers, devoid of all sophistication, her face dead white in the darkness.

"Harley! Harley, it's me—Joan!" she whimpered. Then she was in his arms, crying like a little girl, her heart pounding on his chest. He stood holding her without relaxing his vigilance. He had received a bad scare himself, and his eyes probed the night as Joan gradually regained her composure and his own pulse returned to normal.

"What are you doing here, Joan?" he demanded severely.

"Oh, Harley—I was lost. I dropped my flashlight back there." She pointed vaguely in the direction of the Lodge. "And it broke. I kept on through the woods to my cabin, feeling from one tree to the next, and then I saw you. I was never so glad to see anyone in my life!" She buried her face in his shoulder and clung to him. "At first I thought you were a bear or something. I couldn't even scream, I was so frightened."

"You took the left turn in the trail when you should have gone straight ahead," he remarked, wondering if this was all an act, and if she had been eavesdropping at Thérèse's cabin instead. And how had she managed to miss bumping into Teegee's cabin? She could have got her bearings from there. He realized the futility of questioning her, and decided that if she hadn't really been lost, then she was a magnificent actress. He said: "Come along, I'll lead you to your cabin."

She held tightly to his hand, and in a few minutes they arrived at the wooded point. He opened the door and switched on the lights in her living-room. When he moved to leave, she pushed the door closed behind them, shutting out the stormy night with its clamor of wind and waves.

"Don't go just yet, Harley. Have a drink first." She gave him a disarming smile, brushing her blonde hair back with her hands. She was quickly regaining her old self-assured poise. "I certainly need one after that experience!" And before Harley could voice an objection, she disappeared into the kitchenette.

WITH firm resolve not to repeat the previous evening's performance, the Ranger settled himself on a sofa. It would be one nightcap, and then he'd be on his way. He had a long trip to the Tokenkutuk ahead of him in the morning, and tonight he could use a little sleep. Joan returned with the drinks. "Here's to my rescuer!" she toasted in mock seriousness, and perched herself on the arm of the sofa, looking down at him with her green eyes lighting up in the way he knew so well.

She was, he decided, the most exciting, the most desirable, the most thoroughly feminine woman that he had ever known, but strictly taboo as far as he was concerned. A man could pipe the devil's tune over a woman like Joan Travers. She interrupted his thoughts with a question:

"What do you make of it all, Harley—I mean, have you come to any conclusion as to who might have murdered Lee?"

He shook his head in a tired gesture. "Too many pieces missing yet to get any kind of a picture. I know a bit more than I did this time yesterday, but I'm still a long way from an answer. Colonel Tremblay will have to supply that." Then to change the subject he looked around the comfortable room and asked: "What are you going to do with this place now that Mr. Travers is gone? I can't quite picture you coming up to the Club on your own. How about Bert Steele—think he might take it over?"

Joan looked thoughtful for a moment before answering, sipping her drink and staring into space.

"Bert loves the Swan River country," she finally said. "And now that he'll be taking over Lee's share of the business, he can well afford to buy it. But I'm not so sure I want to sell. I like it here." Her visitor stared at her incredulously, and she leaned forward with a serious note in her voice. "You know something, Harley? You won't believe it, but this is the first time for a very long while that I've really been happy—which probably sounds pretty awful to you under the present circumstances.

"I've found something here at the Swan River that I guess I've always been looking for, ever since I was a little girl—when my family took me to a tiny place called Geutherie in the south of France, near Biarritz. We had a lovely villa on a high bluff overlooking the Atlantic. I didn't have any brothers or sisters, and there weren't many people around—I could explore on the deserted beach with my nanny, and run and sing if I wanted, without wondering what other people thought, and swim without any clothes.... Oh, it was such fun. You'd have loved it, Harley!"

The Ranger nodded, not knowing whether to suppress a grin at the thought of swimming in the buff with Joan Travers, or to take this astonishing outburst of confidence seriously. He was seeing an entirely new side of her. He remained silent and let her run on.

"Whenever I was tired of the beach, I would watch the old Basque shoemaker making sandals for the tourist trade, or go for long drives back into the country with Pops to watch them play *jai-alai,* and sometimes we'd see them net doves in the deep valleys, or we'd go to a fandango. It was wonderful! I was free and as uninhibited as those simple happy people. The sunshine was marvelous—and the rain and the fog—just like here, covering the mountains and the valleys; and the next day it'd be gone and everything would be so fresh and clean."

She paused for breath, her face radiant. The cynical Ranger had forgotten to smile. He was seeing the snow-capped Pyrenees, and the sun dancing on the Bay of Biscay, and a lovely young girl without a care in the world. "To me, that life was real—not the make-believe life that I lived after I got out of school and married Lee. I've grown hard and cynical—almost as cynical as you, Harley.... I lost my sense of values.... Look at this stuff!" She surveyed the luxurious furnishings of the living-room with a scornful eye. "No wonder Tim MacLeod laughed at me when I brought an interior decorator up here to try to bring my little world with me—to a country that could swallow it all up overnight if it wanted to." She bit her lip and hurried on. "I was afraid of this wilderness—couldn't understand it at first. I guess I just didn't want to—but I do now. It's big." She opened her arms dramatically. "Bigger than any of us, Harley. I've grown to love it, even despite myself."

He was staring in amazement. Joan Travers had never indicated in any way that she gave a tinker's dam for anything or anybody—except maybe Bert Steele.

"I know what I want now, Harley; it's this—not always, but I want to be able to come back and know that here on Manicouagen I've got a place of my own where I can loaf around and have my friends and not have to struggle with anybody. Call it escapism if you want.... No, Harley, this place is not for sale to Bert or anyone else. I'm just beginning to live again."

The Ranger rose to leave. "Well, I guess that answers my question," he said. She held out her hand and he took it automatically.

"Good night, and thanks for escorting me home safely—and listening to me let my back hair down. It does me good to unburden myself sometimes to someone who understands—and I think you do."

"Good night. Thanks for the drink," he said and then to himself when the door had closed behind him: "Well, I'll be damned!" He discovered that his heart was beating more rapidly than normal. Could it be that what she had said was the echo of his own unspoken protest against the regimentation and sham of a more civilized life? What about that Savage .300?

He shook his head in wonderment, awakening to the reality of the menace which still confronted him. The wind had let up a bit, and he was grateful for that. It was beginning to get on his nerves. In a few moments he came in sight of his own cabin, a dark blur in the night. Strange, he thought, he'd left a light burning. He fumbled for the latch. The door was half-open. He stumbled and caught himself on the sill and looked down at his feet. He was looking at Bert Steele, sprawled across the door sill, the handle of a sheath knife protruding from his chest.

Chapter Eight

A Gleam of Suspicion

For a long moment the stunned Ranger stood stock still, his heart beating a tattoo in his chest. As the shock of his discovery gradually wore off, the flame of the lighter in his hand flickered eerily among the black shadows, revealing the sightless eyes in the immobile face of Bert Steele. He knew without feeling for a pulse that the young broker was dead, stabbed through the heart.

The first two deaths were bad enough; but this killing with cold steel was murder in its most violent form, shocking, revolting and utterly final. Bert probably never knew what had happened as he knocked on the Ranger's door, only to have the killer plunge the blade into his chest. The light in his cabin had probably been turned out while the killer waited in ambush. A sudden horrifying thought struck the Ranger—had the killer mistaken Bert Steele for himself in the dark?

He carried the dead man inside, placed him tenderly on the bed and covered him with a blanket, careful not to touch the handle of the knife. The General had been right—there had been a mad killer lurking in the darkness. He looked down at the covered form of the young broker who, like his murdered partner Leland Travers, had loved this Swan River wilderness so well.

The muscles of the Ranger's jaw and neck ridged in hard cords as he looked at the young man, so still in death, so genial in life, who had had everything to live for. The monstrous shame, the horror of this cold-blooded deed swept over him in an overpowering emo-

tion. He ripped open the cabin door and stood cursing and shaking his fist futilely at the black wall of night, while tears of frustration coursed down his lean cheeks.

"So help me God, I'll kill you for this!" he shouted. "I'll kill you if I have to track you to the Pole and back!" There was no answer but the sighing of the wind in the evergreens.

Gradually the raging fire within him subsided and he turned slowly back into the cabin, shoulders drooping in hopelessness. Three people murdered in as many days—Leland Travers, Luke Lemoine and now Bert Steele. Harley suddenly knew that he would have to work fast if he were to prevent a fourth and possibly a fifth murder!

He sat for a long moment groping, as he had done so often these past two days, for the slightest clue to the motive that led to the deaths of Travers and Lemoine. There was no doubt in his mind that Steele's death was directly connected with the others. Steele had been killed because he had guessed the identity of their murderer. Harley felt largely responsible for the broker's death in not having insisted that he accompany him to the Ranger cabin immediately; Bert would still be alive —or they'd *both* be dead. He realized that the closer he came to solving the mystery, the closer he came to being the fourth victim.

Abruptly he rose, opened the door and stepped out into the darkness.

HE hurried quickly along the trail leading to the Lodge, too preoccupied with Steele's cold-blooded murder to worry about a possible attack. It was midnight, and to all outward appearances the Swan River Club was asleep. He reached the open ground in front of the big log building and drew his revolver. He fired twice into the air in rapid succession, waited five seconds and fired twice again, the time-honored signal of distress in the bush. After another pause, two more shots went crashing into the night for good measure. He heard the babble of excited voices almost before the sound of the last shots died away. Lights flashed on in the Lodge, and he could hear the pounding of running feet. Harley bounded quickly up the steps and entered the Lodge. General Fahnestock emerged from the living quarters just as he switched on the lights. The old man blinked owlishly as he struggled with his dressing-gown. He saw the Ranger reloading the pistol and stopped short.

"Harley, what were those shots? What happened?" he asked anxiously. Others in various stages of undress were crowding into the big room. Without wasting time with preliminaries, the Ranger came straight to the point.

"There's been a murder—" He paused to let this startling announcement sink into sleep-fogged minds. He watched their expressions and reactions closely, but if he had hoped to see some sign of a guilty conscience, he was disappointed. A woman gave a frightened exclamation and several men cursed savagely. In a moment he was surrounded by worried frightened faces pleading for details. He ignored their questions and addressed the group.

"You're all to remain here until further notice." And then to add emphasis to his words, he added: "I want it clearly understood that, as a Quebec Ranger, I'm in charge here until such time as the Provincial Police take over. Whatever you say will be held against you." He turned to Ruth Wayland, who held a protective arm around her mother. "If I remember correctly, you mentioned once that you'd taken a secretarial course." She nodded silently, and Harley continued: "I'll need you shortly, so see if you can find a pad and a pencil." He motioned to General Fahnestock to follow him into the kitchen, out of earshot of the others.

More than anything else, he felt the need of a trustworthy ally; and without thinking to have the testimony recorded, he questioned General Fahnestock in low tones. Finally, satisfied that the General had retired to his quarters in the Lodge shortly after the evening's radio contact with Chicoutimi, Harley told him in detail of his grisly discovery.

The old soldier's eyes glittered dangerously and his jaws clamped shut. He gripped the Ranger's arm, and looking him straight in the eye, shot a number of terse questions at him in return. The latter explained briefly how he had accompanied Joan Travers back to her cabin after finding her groping through the woods after dropping her flashlight. He did not mention his visit to Thérèse Bouchard.

"Then Steele was murdered sometime between eleven o'clock and midnight—is that right?"

"No, it might have been earlier. I left my cabin around ten," Harley answered evasively. He hesitated, debating whether or not to take up valuable time in explaining how he had spent that hour. The General watched him narrowly as Harley finally blurted out: "I can account for my actions with proof—it's just that it would take too long to explain right now; there're more important things to do. I think Doctor Shepard may be able to fix the time of death more accurately, and I suggest that the three of us go to my cabin immediately, have the Doctor take a look at Bert and search the ground around the cabin for tracks. Then you and I will interrogate everybody in camp as to what they were doing since ten o'clock this evening—not that it'll do much good. Everybody'll say they were asleep, and it'll be pretty hard to prove they weren't. However, there's always the chance that somebody'll let something slip. I'll get Tim MacLeod to round up everyone who isn't here."

The General nodded and Harley stuck his head into the living-room and called for the head guide. Tim MacLeod left the group of guides standing silent and watchful near the front door. All eyes followed him in silence as he made his way across the room and disappeared into the kitchen. The Ranger gave him his orders quickly.

"Get everybody in camp in the living-room as soon as you can, and see to it they stay here until I get back—understand?"

Tim nodded vigorously, his usual cheerful countenance glum and expressionless. He licked his lips nervously and started out the kitchen door. "They're all here but the Bouchards an' Mrs. Travers," he said. "I'll go get 'em right away."

"How about the Indians across the lake?" Harley asked.

"I think they're comin' now," the other answered, "I heard a motor out on the lake a minute ago. They're probably comin' to investigate the shots."

Almost as he spoke there was a commotion in the living-room, and the three men glanced in to see five swarthy Montagnais hunters file through the front door.

"Better explain the shots to them, Tim, and send one of them back to bring the rest of the bunch. Never mind the squaws."

The head guide went up to the Indians and spoke a few words to them in their native tongue. The five hunters listened in passive silence. Only their black eyes revealed their curiosity. Harley spoke to Doctor Shepard, who, like some of the others, had taken advantage of the conference in the kitchen to finish dressing. Then the three of them set off for the Ranger's cabin.

STOPPING only long enough to pick up a portable spotlight at the tool shed, the three men walked quickly along the trail toward the cabin with its tragic occupant. The powerful beam pierced the night like a headlight of a locomotive, throwing the gray trunks of the nearby spruce and balsam into sharp relief against the somber background of the forest. A small, vicious animal scur-

ried into a thicket, its eyes, like two pools of green fire, momentarily catching the rays of the light—a killer on the prowl.

Harley unlocked the cabin door, and while Doctor Shepard was examining the murdered man, he and General Fahnestock went over the surrounding area foot by foot. If the murderer had left a trace, it passed unnoticed. They straightened their aching backs as the Doctor emerged from the cabin and joined them.

"*Rigor mortis* is beginning to set in," he announced in his professional tone. "I should say that Steele met his death sometime before eleven o'clock, certainly not later." His thin face looked cadaverous in the reflected rays of the spot and dark shadows obscured his keen eyes. He fished a cigarette out of his jacket. "Any luck in your search?" he asked.

THE other men shook their heads. Harley asked a question to which he already knew the answer.

"Any fingerprints on the knife handle?"

"Not a one. It's staghorn, and its surface is too rough to retain prints. I wrapped it up in my handkerchief and left it on the table."

The Ranger relocked the cabin and suggested:

"Let's get going. We've wasted too much time as it is. I'll have a couple of the men remove the body later."

"Quite a morgue we've got in the icehouse." Doctor Shepard's laconic comment was ignored by the other two. Harley turned to the General.

"You and Doctor Shepard take the light and go on back to the Lodge. There's a little matter I've got to attend to. It'll take me a few minutes, so I'll join you later. Ruth Wayland can help you record the testimony." Then he added as an afterthought: "Not to be insulting, but you'd better start with the Doctor here." He disregarded Doctor Shepard's hostile glance, and a shadow of a smile crossed the General's stern face as he noted the physician's annoyance at being considered a suspect.

"Just routine, Shepard. Harley's right," he remarked. "It's for your own protection and the record." There was a moment's silence while both men waited for the Ranger to explain his mysterious errand. When he didn't speak, General Fahnestock muttered, "Be careful, m'boy!" and without further words he and the physician departed in perplexed silence.

The Ranger waited a few moments to give them a good start. He made certain that his revolver and flashlight were both in working order, then headed for the guardian's cabin, mentally crossing his fingers as he cautiously approached the small darkened building.

By the time the Ranger had reached Teegee Bouchard's cabin, the other two were entering the Lodge. The General's cold blue eyes swept from one to another of the assembled men and women with impartial severity. He noted three distinct groups in the big room where the cheerful blaze on the hearth was the single exception to an otherwise oppressive atmosphere. The Indian hunters, augmented by several of their swarthy brethren, remained silently aloof. Close by, an equal number of French-Canadian guides conversed in low excited tones and cast apprehensive glances at the imperturbable Indians. It was obvious whom they suspected of this latest killing. The Club members and their guests, numbering eight in all, were gathered in front of the fireplace. It was evident to each one of them who the latest victim was, one of their own group, and this second invasion into their ranks knit them together as nothing else possibly could.

Muriel Shepard uttered an exclamation of relief and sped to her husband's side, grasped his arm and looked questioningly at his foreboding countenance. He nodded slowly and while anxious eyes besides his wife's watched him intently, he murmured in a low voice:

"Bert Steele—stabbed through the heart."

The General's keen ears overheard the remark, and he whirled angrily. "Doctor!" he thundered. "Please refrain from any further comments." The tall physician was decidedly uncomfortable under the General's censoring eyes; he muttered an apology. Muriel Shepard's eyes were hostile.

"We've got a right to know," she stated hotly. "You can't treat us like a bunch of criminals!" The old man disregarded her outburst and turned on his heels. He spoke to Ruth Wayland and motioned her to follow him into the kitchen.

"Just want her to take notes," he explained, and then addressed the entire group. "Kindly stay here until you're called, and we'll get this over with as rapidly as possible so we can all get some sleep. MacLeod, bring all the hunters in first."

There was a decided lessening of tension in the room as the head guide herded the Montagnais out into the kitchen and stood by to interpret their guttural tongue to General Fahnestock. In a few minutes, Harley Johnson stepped quietly into the kitchen through the back door, a gleam of satisfaction in his gray eyes. He pulled up a chair and listened while the General continued the interrogation in his most military manner. The questions shot out like rifle-fire and left a number of people cursing under their breaths before he was finished. When it was all over and only he and Harley remained in the kitchen, reading the result of the questioning that Ruth Wayland had set down in her precise handwriting, he lifted his head and fixed the Ranger with tired eyes.

"What do you make of it?" he asked. "Did you hear anything tonight that can point our suspicions at anyone in particular? I have to admit that I didn't."

Harley nodded slowly, looking the General straight in the eye. "Yes," he spoke slowly and thoughtfully, "yes, I did. I think I know now who we're after, but we're going to have a hell of a time proving it." The General waited for him to continue and when the other hesitated, growled impatiently:

"Well, dammit, speak up, man—who is it?"

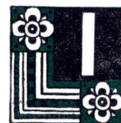
The Ranger took an exasperatingly long time in lighting a cigarette before answering the General's question. At last he replaced his lighter and exhaled a jet of smoke.

"General, I know you're not going to like this—but I don't think I should tell you right now. It's just a suspicion, and it's definitely going to color my thinking, unfairly perhaps. I think it would be a big mistake if we both got to barking up the wrong tree. You heard what I did and evidently drew no inference from it, which might indicate that I'm wrong. Under the circumstances, I think it might be best if one of us kept an open mind on the subject."

General Fahnestock, although far from pleased at being thus left in the dark, was forced to agree with the wisdom of the Ranger's reasoning.

Chapter Nine

The Black Swamp



IT WAS EARLY MORNING. MANICOUAGEN LAY still as glass under a thin blanket of fog as the Ranger slid the canoe quietly into the lake. Its bow broke the surface, and ripples lapped the damp sand. He knelt and splashed water on his unshaven face to clear the burning sensation out of his eyes. Two hours of sleep were hardly enough for the thirty miles to the rough Tokenkutuk country, but time was running out. Another day, and he might be too late, if what he suspected were true.

Harley got to his feet and placed a light pack and an axe in the bow of the canoe, then gingerly eased a small outboard onto the floorboards, taking care not to let it strike the gunwale. The slightest sound was magnified a hundredfold in the deathly stillness of early dawn. The duck-light was in the east; somewhere back in the forest a warbler trilled an eager little song that broke off as suddenly as it had started..

A five-gallon can of gasoline and a trout rod completed the light load, and the disheveled Ranger paddled silently up along the shore of the lake. Anyone watching from the bluff would have thought it strange that the Ranger had picked such a time to indulge in early-morning fishing. Fishing, however, as sport, was not in the day's schedule as far as he was concerned; the rod was to be used to test a theory. Harley silently cursed a kingfisher that started up from an overhanging branch, uttering its shrill cry of alarm. He glanced anxiously back at the bluff, but there was still no sign of life.

Two miles of steady paddling carried him out of sight of the camp, and he decided to risk using the motor. Four miles beyond this point he rounded the last headland and emerged from the narrow southeast arm of Lake Manicouagen. Ahead, the lake broadens westward and northward into a seemingly limitless expanse of water.

The moment he put the headland to port, he could feel the change in the dip of the canoe's bow as the kicker drove him steadily northward against a quartering wind. Bursts of spray swept over the gunwale in regular intervals and drenched his shirt. He missed the once-familiar hiss of water striking a hot manifold. Outboard motors had come along with the times, and now streamlined jackets protected them. The thought came to him that no matter how he tried, no industrial designer could streamline the beauty of the vast Northland about him without destroying it utterly. It was the same today as it was when the Montagnais had inflicted a crushing defeat on a marauding Iroquois war-party on the shores of Manicouagen centuries before.

A breaking wave showed green as the canoe climbed its crest. If the wind increased, it would be necessary to put in to shore to wait out the blow. He couldn't afford to wait. With a worried frown he hugged the long, sandy beach on his starboard side with its tumble of windfalls and small streams draining the tiny lakes on the treeless escarpment that rises steeply beyond the eastern shore of Manicouagen. He wished now that he had taken a nineteen-foot square-stern instead of the small conventional canoe that was bucking in the waves like a half-broken colt. His back was beginning to ache from counterbalancing the weight of the motor, clamped on the side by means of an aluminum bracket. He had chosen the smaller craft because of its lighter weight on the portage.

For two hours the Ranger followed the almost unbroken shoreline of the big lake before he finally made out the rotting cabins on a high point that mark the site of the recently abandoned Hudson's Bay Company post. He was approaching the narrow northeast arm of the lake, into which flows the upper branch of the Swan River. Twice he had surprised bears prowling along the beach, and once a startled band of woodland caribou bounded swiftly off across the marshy ground.

A mile and a half up the river, Harley came to a series of chutes and low waterfalls that made further progress impossible. He beached the canoe and cached the motor and gasoline, to be picked up on the return trip. Nearby, a weathered blaze on a tamarack, its needles like pale green lace against the contrasting spruce, indicated a little-used portage that leads back into the hills to the east. It was mid-morning, hot and muggy. The sun was beginning to break through the overcast and arouse the black flies that had survived the recent cold spell.

It was three years since he had been over the trail, but he remembered that after two miles of rough uphill going, it eventually dipped down suddenly into a big muskeg swamp through which flows the Tokenkutuk River. Several miles above the swamp with its black stinking mud the Tokenkutuk drains a barren lake that had stood squarely in the path of a forest fire a number of years before. As Harley remembered it, the lake was a scene of utter desolation—twisted skeletons of trees and fire-ravished earth that no longer supported growth except for a thin layer of moss and lichen and the ubiquitous fireweed. Bare outcrops of basalt, gabbro and gneiss were everywhere, thrusting upward from a deep-seated fault in the earth's crust. It was a region shunned by Indian hunters—devoid of life.

The lake was Harley's destination, the lake he felt certain was the one indicated on the water-stained map salvaged from the pocket of a man drowned in the Devil's Elbow. Somewhere in this desolate country lay the answer to the crimes that threatened the existence of the Swan River Club. He was certain of it.

Harley shouldered the light pack, swung the canoe over his head and started the long climb up the steep ridge, sweat soaking the tump-line and streaming down his neck. He snapped off a small balsam branch with his free hand and slapped savagely at the flies around his face as he labored up the trail. Occasionally he stopped and wedged the bow of the canoe firmly between two trees. Resting the stern on the ground, he would duck out from under for a short rest. He had long ago learned that a great deal of energy expended in portaging a canoe was used in swinging it up from the ground to one's shoulders. Jammed, on an angle, between two trees growing conveniently close together, it was a simple matter to straighten up under the canoe, lift the bow out of the crotch, back off and continue up the trail.

After almost an hour of portaging, the trail started to descend into the swamp valley of the Tokenkutuk. The footing was bad, treacherous with damp moss-covered rocks, and several times as the rotted earth crumbled beneath his step, he came within a hair's-breadth of plunging headlong down the slope. Occasionally he noticed signs that the dim trail had been recently used, but whether by man or beast, he could not be sure—a bit of moss scraped off a ledge, a crushed plant, but no tracks. Whatever had passed this way had managed to avoid the soft earth. Then Harley remembered the prospector, Claveau. He might have used this portage on his way north from the Swan River Club, and if that were the case, he had passed this way within a week—but there had been a good deal of rain since then. He knew now that he must find Claveau at all costs; he only hoped that he would find him alive.

He felt reasonably certain that the prospector was camped somewhere along the two-mile-wide lake, but on which side? Again he cursed himself for not having examined the map more carefully. Suddenly he stopped short!

There, alongside the trail, impaled on the stump of a sapling, was a bleached skull! He swung the canoe quickly off his shoulders and wiped the sweat out of his eyes. Yes, it was a skull, but—and Harley laughed aloud—a bear's skull. He sat down on a nearby log and gazed at it speculatively, only vaguely aware of the flutings of a wood thrush from somewhere along the ridge. He was seeing in his mind's eye the ancient Indian custom reënacted, a custom gradually disappearing from the Northern scene and one that he had once been privileged to witness:

The Ranger knew that of all the animals in the bush the one most revered by the old Indian hunters was the bear. It had been a gripping scene that late fall after-

noon. There had been a great wind driving the ragged clouds across the bleak northern sky, a wind that had stripped the frost-seared leaves from the aspen and birch in a fitting backdrop to the pagan ritual.

The wiry, gnarled hunter had placed his tump-line across the dead bear's chest, and then, with deep lungfuls from his pipe, the Cree had blown smoke to the four winds in turn, smoke that was quickly ripped to shreds in the turbulent air. Regardless of the direction in which the spirit of the slain beast had gone, it would hear the old man's plea for forgiveness, and be in some measure appeased for having been deprived of its earthly shell. The skull, with the lower jaw tied in place with babiche thongs, had been carefully placed on a sturdy pole, and as a last gesture of repentance, the old Cree had put a pinch of tobacco in its fleshless mouth. Others like him would emulate his example when they passed that way and add their offerings—a pinch of salt, of tea—and continue on their way, secure in the knowledge that the spirit of this bear, at least, would never dog their footsteps and raid their caches.

Out of tradition, rather than any belief in the occult powers of the departed bear, the Ranger placed his small contribution of cigarette tobacco in the weathered skull, then shouldered the canoe again.

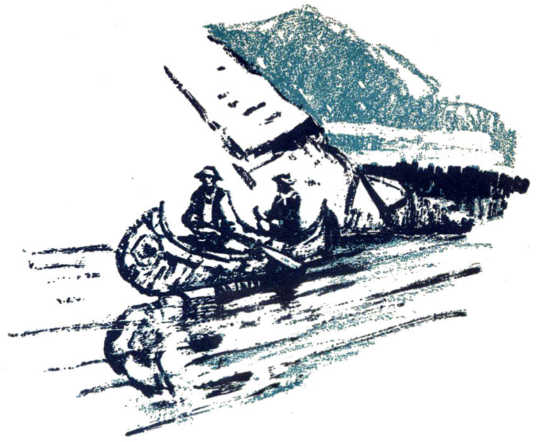
Just before reaching the swamp, the trail winds through a tangle of hardwood saplings and alder bushes. The moss underfoot holds water like a sponge. The muskeg clung tenaciously to Harley's boots, occasionally throwing him off balance as he exerted every effort to withdraw his feet from the sucking ooze.

It was during one of these moments of floundering that the bow of the canoe struck a wind-bent birch that paralleled the portage. There was a stunning jolt, and the sound of splintering wood. Suddenly the canoe was half-lifted, then jammed against his neck and shoulders. He was hurled sidewise and the gunwale caught him a heavy blow alongside the head. For long minutes he lay in the muskeg, too dazed by the blow to move from under the canoe that was pinning him down. Gradually his head cleared, and he struggled to a sitting position, staring at the smashed bow of the canoe with dull incomprehension. He saw that the damage was beyond immediate repair, and his stomach tightened with the realization of his predicament. He searched the surrounding forest with pain-dulled eyes for the thing that had demolished his only means of transportation with one crushing blow.

His immediate thought was that he had stumbled onto a she-bear with cubs, or perhaps a savage old bull moose that had whirled to attack in the moment of surprise; but there was no sign of a living thing in the silent forest about him. His heart thumped painfully in his chest. He leaned back to ease himself from under the canoe, and then he saw it—high above his head, swaying slowly back and forth, black and coiled like a huge snake—a snare made from 16-gauge steel cable!

Harley had seen them before, these sinister inventions of the devil, used by unscrupulous hunters to take big game. Its very appearance was the personification of evil, like a gigantic hangman's noose, cleverly concealed with moss on a forest trail. It took at least two men to tie down the spring-tree that, once sprung by a careless tread, would jerk a four-hundred-pound bear six feet off the ground, bawling and snapping at the flexible steel cable that held it by one paw, to die slowly of starvation. A moose, with its greater weight, was seldom lifted completely off the ground, and usually took longer to die.

The Ranger had once come across such a scene and would remember it to his dying day. It had been a young cow moose, and judging by the way the bark and leaves had been stripped within her reach, she had been in the snare for two weeks. Harley had the impression that, had she been able to, she would have thanked him for the bullet that ended her suffering.



"When the weather failed to break, Travers and Lemoine decided to make a run for it by canoe."

He shuddered at the fate he had so narrowly missed. Suspended by one leg, head down and powerless to cut the steel cable with his knife, he would have been better off than the beasts: he would have been dead within twenty-four hours. The canoe, striking the spring-tree, had saved him from that fate, but the bow had been virtually severed by the cable as it was jerked into the air. The craft was useless. He wondered how long it would take him to build a raft when he got back to the river where he had cached the motor. The idea of arriving at the Swan River Club on a raft propelled by an outboard motor brought a fleeting smile to his grim countenance. General Fahnestock and Tim MacLeod would get a laugh out of that. He wondered who, besides the General, knew where he had gone.

Thinking of the General gave Harley a sudden ray of hope. Surely, when he failed to return by evening, the General would become alarmed and send a search-party. It was a comforting thought, and although there was little likelihood that anyone would arrive before the next morning, he felt considerably relieved. He lit a cigarette and thought over the situation. Claveau must have a canoe up on the lake—if he could only find him. Harley decided to continue to the lake on foot and attempt to attract the prospector's attention by firing his revolver. He would borrow a canoe for the return journey to the Club and get one of the guides to return it. If he failed to locate Claveau, he could always go back to the river and wait until the General's search-party showed up.

Leaving the damaged canoe to be picked up on the return trip, the badly bruised Ranger shouldered the pack and started down the trail. It was ten-thirty by his watch, and he was anxious to make up for lost time. He had covered a few hundred feet when he suddenly remembered the snare. Cold fury at the inhumanity of the contraption seized him. Dropping the pack, he hurried back, his mouth set in a thin line. A few deft blows with the axe, and the spring-tree crashed to the ground. He quickly cut out the section of wood around which the end of the cable was clamped, wondering the while how Claveau had missed falling a victim to its diabolical efficiency. He realized that there could be only one answer: the snare had been placed on the trail within the week, after the prospector had passed; and in that case, there was a good chance of running across the Indian

hunters who had not only defied an unwritten law of the North in setting it on a portage, but had also broken the Provincial law that outlawed such fiendish traps.

He dragged the cable along the ground and it slithered and snaked through the moss behind him like a live thing. Ten minutes later he reached the edge of the swamp and heaved it into the black muskeg, watching with satisfaction as it sank quickly from sight. Then he continued on toward the muddy bank of the Tokenkutuk River, its waters flowing deep and placid like black oil.

There are a few specific spots in the North where all the flies on earth appear to congregate—the end of the portage at Lake Onistagane is one, and the head of Lake Onatchiway is another—surely, Harley told himself, the banks of the Tokenkutuk is a third. Hordes of mosquitoes, black flies and tiny black gnats, "no-see-ums," whose bites are like fire, rose to meet him. He cursed silently, and quickly smeared his face, neck and hands with fly dope. The distant throb of an airplane motor caused him to pause as he was rubbing behind his ears, and he scowled at the sky, trying to locate the sound. It gradually faded, and he turned his attention to the river.

PLACING a nylon leader in the water to soak while he fitted the trout rod together, the Ranger thought of the many stories he had heard of men in the bush who had had the misfortune to lose their fly dope, men who had been driven raving mad by just such hordes of insects as were now being kept at bay by the oil which he had smeared liberally over his exposed skin and around his boot-tops. He had seen Indians come down from their trapping-grounds in the late spring, sick to the point of death from the poisonous bites of myriads of insects that had given them no peace day or night. He had seen the emaciated carcasses of moose washed up on lonely beaches in mid-July, literally tormented to death by vicious deer flies. He was only too aware of the fact that the flies were the one curse of the North that all but outweighed her many virtues.

He momentarily forgot the flies as he prepared to test one of the theories that had impelled him to venture north to the Tokenkutuk at a time when he was sure that others would condemn him for going off on a wild-goose chase. He made a few tentative casts with the trout rod and watched the red-and-white fly, a *Parmachini Belle,* flash back and forth on the end of the tapered leader before letting it drop lightly onto the black current. It looked like trout water, and the sky was overcast. In a few minutes, if his luck held, one of his theories would either be substantiated or disproved. He felt the tempo of his pulse increase as he raised the tip of the rod, and retrieving the line with his left hand, caused the fly to dance across the water.

Was this the water from which Leland Travers' deep red-bellied squaretail had come? Harley had agreed with General Fahnestock that Big T's record trout with its brilliant markings hadn't come from Lac Betshibi as the financier had claimed. It had been taken from black swamp water such as this, the only big muskeg swamp within thirty miles of the Swan River Club. The old man had implied at the time that the fish might have come from the Tokenkutuk, but Travers had vehemently denied ever having been to the Tokenkutuk.

Harley prayed for a strike as he never had in his life—hoped and prayed for the swirl of a big red-bellied trout with strange markings—waited tensely for great hooked jaws that would lazily engulf the *Parmachini Belle* that was skittering so invitingly across the water near the muddy bank.

It wasn't a lazy swirl that answered his prayer but an underwater upheaval that shattered the stillness of the black swamp. Waiting for a fraction of a second, Harley set the hook hard and let the fish have its head in one wild rush that nearly stripped the line from the reel. Gone was the sporting instinct as the initial excitement wore off. This was one trout that Harley couldn't afford to miss, and he played it grimly with all the experience of a hundred such encounters at his command. Again and again the fish tried to break water to shake the fly loose from its upper jaw. Down and back would go the rod tip, throwing the fish hard like a lassoed steer before it could use the force of its leap to smash down on the water and jerk out the number 6 hook.

Gradually Harley increased the bend of the rod—"giving him the butt" in fisherman's parlance—until the big trout began to tire under the killing strain. There were a few sporadic lunges for freedom, and twice the fish reversed its direction with the line cutting through the water like a taut bowstring, but the automatic reel, which Harley had purposely used, never for a moment permitted the double-tapered line to slacken to the point where the big squaretail could slam down hard and snap the nylon leader. With a pounding heart, Harley worked the fish into shallow water and maneuvered the flat of the axe-blade alongside the momentarily motionless two-foot length of the trout. Then, with a sudden strong pull of the rod and a great upward thrust of the axe, he sent the monster flopping into the shallows in a smother of spray. The leader snapped under the strain, but the Ranger had already dropped the rod and was floundering on his knees in the water with both hands gripping the struggling fish that was still far from beaten. He held it up flopping—six pounds of deep red-bellied brook trout.

There was no longer the slightest doubt in his mind where Big T's trout had come from. Here was living proof that Leland Travers and Luke Lemoine had lied about not having been in the Tokenkutuk country. Regretfully, he killed the big trout with a flat blow of the axe and wrapped it in ferns before placing it in his pack. The General, for more reasons than one, would be interested in seeing it.

Harley spent five minutes studying the best route to proceed toward the lake which lay a couple of miles up the river. He was about to pick up the pack when a distant sound caused him to straighten up quickly, a look of deep consternation on his bronzed face. There was no mistaking it—even at this distance. It was the report of a high-powered rifle, from the direction of the lake.

Chapter Ten

The Secret of the Tokenkutuk

ANY THOUGHT THE RANGER HAD OF STOPPING for lunch was dispelled by the distant shot. Under different circumstances, the sound of a gun would not have concerned him unduly. The Tokenkutuk is many miles north of the Swan River Club's limits, and there is no closed season on game as far as the Indians are concerned, but nevertheless the sound aroused his curiosity. He decided that it was the prospector Claveau who had fired the shot or possibly one of the hunters who were responsible for setting the snare on the portage. In either case he was anxious to catch up with the unknown rifleman.

He sloshed through ankle-deep water to the edge of the swamp where the going was easier. Gradually the mosquitoes were left behind, and only a few black flies continued to dog his footsteps as he worked his way into burnt country. An hour of hot, sweaty climbing over windfalls, and finally he could hear the river flowing over shallows down to his right. The lake must be near. Occasionally he caught glimpses of the river down in the

valley, shimmering in the sun that was finally breaking through the overcast. Topping a small rise, he saw the lake through the lifeless trees a half-mile ahead.

The fact that he would have had to wade the Tokenkutuk River to gain the east shore decided him to continue on his present course, his eyes ever-alert for a sign of human existence in the seemingly empty country. There were no songs of birds to detract from the general gloom around him, not even a hawk riding the wind currents or a lone raven winging across the empty sky. He had become so accustomed to the solitude that his hand jumped instinctively to the gun on his belt when a Canada jay unexpectedly fluttered to a nearby branch and denounced his intrusion with raucous cries. The jay followed along, floating from one tree to another as Harley half-slid down to the lake shore.

He quenched his thirst from the tepid water and looked about him curiously. It was a scene of awe-inspiring grandeur. Towering cliffs of serpentine, cut by deep crevices, ended in a jumble of boulders at the water's edge. High up on the mountainside caverns, exposed by rock slides, gave the appearance of large baleful eyes peering down at him from above. He had the uncanny sensation that a thousand eyes were watching his every move, and yet there was no sign of life other than the gray-and-white bird that now followed him silently and—it seemed to Harley—ominously.

A half-mile ahead, as nearly as he could judge, he could see a great buttress of rock jutting out into the water, cutting off his view of the upper portion of the lake. He had no idea how far the lake extended beyond this point, but of one thing he was certain: it was impossible to negotiate the sheer face of the cliff that dipped sharply into the water; he would have to climb to the top of the ridge behind him in order to get around it. It was heartbreaking work, and several times Harley almost decided to give up the search for Claveau. Each time the memory of the rifle-shot spurred him on.

Three-quarters of an hour later he was gazing down on a rock-bound cove; and there, on what appeared to be the only spit of sand along the entire lakeshore, was a lonely tent, brilliantly white against the black sand. He watched it intently for long moments, but there was no sign of life. As he was about to start his descent his attention was caught by an object floating in the water just offshore. At first glance it appeared to be a weathered log, but the longer the Ranger studied it, the more convinced he became that it was something else. The thing in the lake five hundred feet below him appeared to contain water. He could see the reflection of it as it turned slowly on the rippled surface. Dread seized him as he realized the nature of the object that was floating heavily in the water. It was a half-submerged canoe.

He slid down the remaining distance to the tent with mingled emotions, heedless of the rock that cut his clothes and boots. A man used to the bush didn't go off and leave his canoe where it would apt to be at the mercy of the wind and waves—no more than a horseman would forget to hobble his horse at night. From what little Harley knew of the prospector, Claveau had spent his life in the bush and surely must know the disaster that would accompany the loss of his most important piece of equipment next to his axe. The loss of his canoe could easily be the end of the trail for a lone man in the northern bush—starvation, unless he had enough food to last until the lakes and rivers froze over in the late fall.

When the Ranger peered into the hot interior of the tent it became evident that there was no such quantity of provisions. There appeared to be just enough flour, tea, sugar, salt and lard to last a man a couple of weeks if he ate frugally. Evidently Claveau's work in the Tokenkutuk country was nearly completed if he hoped to eat on the way out. All his equipment was there ready to go—his stove, sleeping-bag and fly net, his rifle and pack. On the floor were canvas bags filled with rock samples. A crude shelf held the Geiger counter which he was reputed to have had with him. Only his axe was missing. The Ranger sat on an empty crate and contemplated the scene while bluebottle flies buzzed incessantly. He examined the rifle, a battered Savage .300. The rifling in the barrel was worn and pitted. As far as he could tell, the gun had never known a cleaning rod, and there was no way of telling when it had been fired last. Had it been Claveau who had fired the shot he had heard nearly two hours before?

Harley turned his attention to the canoe. Possibly by the time he had retrieved it Claveau would have returned. He took his axe and fashioned a rough narrow-bladed paddle out of a piece of driftwood, then removed his clothing. The water, after the sweat and toil of the morning, felt deliciously invigorating and he floated serenely on the surface for a few minutes before swimming the hundred yards out to where the canoe lay almost motionless.

It wasn't much of a chore to push it slowly to the beach. The canoe was only half full of water, and there was little wind to contend with. He was splashing knee-deep up the black sand when he had a good look at its interior for the first time. What he saw caused him to straighten up like a shot and lick lips that had suddenly gone dry.

The water that sloshed inside the canoe was stained a deep red. Here was the reason for the shot earlier in the morning! The Ranger, in that awful moment, knew that he was on the right track at last, and that what he had foreseen in theory, had come to pass. He had found Claveau, but he had found him too late. The prospector was in all probability at the bottom of the lake within a hundred yards of shore with a bullet-hole in him.

Emptying the canoe, he dressed hurriedly without taking time to dry himself. There was just one thing left to do before returning to the Swan River Club as rapidly as possible. Again he entered the tent, and this time he ripped open one of the sample bags and let the contents spill onto the floor. Holding the receiver of the Geiger counter firmly to his ear he listened intently as he brought the apparatus close to the chunks of mineralized rock. There was an insistent buzzing in his ear, and he didn't need a mineralogist to tell him that the sound he heard was not made by the bluebottle flies but by the uranium content of the rock.

There was a tag attached to the canvas sample bag with the word *"carnotite"* written on it in indelible pencil. He puzzled over it for a moment before remembering a small handbook on mineralogy among Claveau's personal effects on the shelf. He found the book and quickly ran his finger down the alphabetical list until he came to the word. Turning to the page indicated, he read that carnotite was one of the hundred-odd mineral ores that contain uranium, or to be more exact, that in its purest state, carnotite contained sixty per cent uranium and twenty per cent vanadium. He whistled softly and snapped the book shut.

Here was the motive for murder for which he and General Fahnestock had racked their brains, here in the harmless-looking piece of rock which he held in his hand, in the insistent buzzing of a Geiger counter—motive enough for four murders, and maybe more!

He stared at the rock sample, temporarily oblivious to his surroundings. He didn't hear the rustle of the canvas, disturbed as though by a stealthy hand. A shadow fell across the tent as a cloud momentarily obscured the sun. Outside, the stiffening breeze tugged again at the guy ropes and stirred the canvas.

"What had prompted Leland Travers to start by canoe, with his guide, without telling anybody?"

The startled Ranger's thoughts snapped back to his present surroundings. The atmosphere of the place, always sinister, had suddenly become fraught with danger. His one desire was to leave as quickly as possible. He hurriedly scooped the rock samples back into the canvas bag. Picking up the bag, the Geiger counter and the handbook, he stepped outside into the sunlight and carefully closed the tent flap. He examined the rock face of the ridge behind him with a tightening sensation in his chest, momentarily expecting to hear the reverberating crack of a high-powered rifle. There was no movement among the crags that he could perceive, and he went about loading the canoe, weighting down the bow with a water-soaked log for ballast. He knew better than to use rocks; one vicious squall in these mountain lakes could flip a canoe over like a tin cup, and it would sink bow first, faster than a dead otter.

Harley stood on the black sandy beach, debating whether or not to take the rifle that he had seen in the tent—in case someone tried to bushwhack him on the return trip. Finally he decided against it, reasoning that the gun would just be an added burden on the portage. If the killer was still in the vicinity and wanted to kill him, he would have had ample opportunity to do so by now. The fact that there had been no sign of anyone indicated that the murderer had left the scene of the crime immediately by some trail back in the hills, probably figuring that it would be a month at least before anyone came across the swamped canoe, washed clean by rain and waves.

Harley shoved the canoe out into the lake with powerful strokes of the makeshift paddle. Claveau's paddles must be floating nearby, but he had neither the time nor the inclination to search for them. It hadn't surprised him that both paddles were missing. A man needed two paddles, tied across the thwarts, to rest on his shoulders while portaging; he would keep them both in the canoe out of force of habit and in case he should lose or break one. Evidently they had been washed overboard as Claveau toppled out of the canoe, mortally wounded within sight of his tent by a killer who had waited patiently for his return from an early-morning prospecting trip. Now that he thought about it, Harley didn't remember having seen a prospector's pick in the tent. Claveau had probably had it with him in the canoe along with his axe.

His arms kept pace with his racing thoughts and despite the inefficiency of the rough paddle, the canoe traveled through the water at a fast clip. Almost before he knew it he had swept down the Tokenkutuk River and was once again in the black swamp. Now he *knew* who the murderer was, and the reason why the crime had been committed. Knowing made him realize how difficult it was going to be to prove the guilt, and unless this one was proven, the others would go unavenged too. All the pieces of the puzzle that had appeared so complex a short time ago fitted together now and told a story of calculating greed and ruthlessness that was hard to condone. There was only one missing piece, a very important piece and Harley tried and rejected a dozen theories to find it. Without this missing piece, he knew that he would have difficulty in persuading Colonel Tremblay that his theory was the correct one. He must get the answer to that one question; maybe the General could supply it if he would. But General Fahnestock was the last person Harley wanted to ask—for a very good reason.

He thought of the plane he had heard during the morning. He should have made certain before leaving camp that morning that neither of the two amphibians could fly. In his hurry he'd forgotten that detail, so that was that. Sometimes the hound made as many mistakes as the hare.

He reached the scene of his recent encounter with the snare and recovered his paddles from the smashed canoe. Despite his haste, he took time to examine the set again—more carefully this time, hoping to find something to incriminate those who had placed it there, something inadvertently thrown away or left behind. Finally he saw something that caused his pulse to beat faster. He knew now why the snare had been set—not to catch some four-footed animal that happened to blunder into it. He himself was the big game for which it had been set!

THE broad expanse of Lake Manicouagen sparkling in late afternoon sunlight was like a breath of pure untainted air after the stifling atmosphere of the country he had left behind. The sight of the camp on the bluff and the Provincial Police plane tied up to the dock was an antidote to his melancholia. Colonel Tremblay had arrived and the two private amphibians were still at their moorings.

The little motor was rapidly cutting down the remaining mile as the tired Ranger studied the two planes in the half-light of dusk. Somewhere in the back of his mind a small spark was beginning to glow, and suddenly his whole being seemed to be on fire. He struck the side of the canoe excitedly with the flat of his hand. "I've got it!" he explained aloud to himself. "I've got it—the

missing piece!" He was so elated that he almost forgot to shut off the motor in time. Eager hands caught the bow of the canoe as it nosed rapidly up to the dock. The anxious faces of General Fahnestock, Jim Schingler, Doctor Shepard, Tim MacLeod, Brulé and others peered down at him. Three were new faces he didn't recognize.

Chapter Eleven

Bait for a Trap

GENERAL FAHNESTOCK'S RELIEF WAS EVIDENT in his greeting. "Thank God, you're back safely, Harley! Colonel Tremblay and I were beginning to worry when you didn't show up by suppertime. The Colonel was just going to send the Fairchild Husky to look for you—" He stopped short as he noted the strange canoe by the absence of the Club's insignia on its bow. The Ranger saw him stiffen. "Looks as though you changed horses," he commented as he reached out a helping hand, steadying the canoe as Harley disembarked. His face held a puzzled expression, waiting for the younger man to explain.

"It's a long story, General," the Ranger replied wearily. "It'll have to keep till I get some hot tea and a bite of food inside me." He tried to make his remarks as casual as possible for the benefit of the assembled group. There was no point in throwing another scare into them just yet. Maybe this one would keep until after it was all over. He stretched his cramped limbs and gratefully accepted Tim MacLeod's assistance with the canoe and motor.

Harley glanced up to see a stocky middle-aged man with a neat military mustache approaching him. He had noted that the stranger, evidently newly arrived on the police plane, had been standing to one side, observing the group with more than casual interest. Now his intelligent eyes examined the Ranger with the same keen trigger-quick eyes that took in every detail. Despite the gray flannels, the tweed shooting-jacket and cap, Harley instinctively knew that this was Colonel Leonce Tremblay, O.B.E., Chief of the Quebec Provincial Police.

Colonel Tremblay extended his hand. When he spoke, his vibrant voice held a trace of his French ancestry, and its warmth dispelled something of the coldness of his eyes.

"Ranger Johnson—I'm Tremblay. Glad to meet you." A quick smile momentarily lifted one corner of his graying mustache as Harley acknowledged the greeting. "I trust your voyage was a success." Harley couldn't be sure whether Colonel Tremblay's remark was in the nature of a rebuke for having taken it upon himself to be absent from the Club for the entire day, or whether it was a question. He nodded briefly. Colonel Tremblay was a blunt man, as his next remark showed.

"I won't bother you with questions until after you've had a chance to wash up and get some hot food. You must be pretty tired and hungry after the trip you've had. I've been examining the map with General Fahnestock—it's a long ways from here to the Tokenkutuk by canoe."

Again Harley thought that he could detect overtones of a question, but he made no comment other than to agree. He wanted to find out what General Fahnestock had told the Chief of Police before contributing his own information. He picked up his pack and took the trail to his cabin.

"I'll have a drink waiting for you at the Lodge," General Fahnestock called cheerfully, and then suddenly remembered Harley's status as a Quebec Ranger. He threw a quick glance in Colonel Tremblay's direction and gave a short laugh. "Restorative measure, you understand, Colonel."

There was a spark of amusement in the other's keen eyes. "Might join you myself," he said. . . .

Later, Harley Johnson felt better than he had in a long while as he lounged back in his favorite chair. He didn't know whether it was the excellent meal that Madame Bouchard had prepared for him that gave him this enjoyable feeling, or whether it was the comforting presence of Colonel Tremblay and his two inspectors; possibly both. Thérèse had been back in form, flirting outrageously as she served him. He wondered if the General and Colonel Tremblay had noticed her conduct while they sat at the dinner table with him, indulging in small talk and studiously avoiding the topic uppermost in all of their minds.

The three men had adjourned to the Ranger's cabin, which afforded more privacy than the Lodge. General Fahnestock and the Chief of Police occupied the other two armchairs in Harley's small, comfortable living-room. Both men were puffing thoughtfully on their pipes. A birchwood fire crackled on the hearth. The doors and windows were tightly shut and the curtains drawn, not only to keep out the chill of the late August evening but also to insure against eavesdropping. As an added precaution, Colonel Tremblay had posted his men outside, at both front and rear doors, with orders to admit no one.

It occurred to him that he was no longer acting in the rôle of inquisitor. He, like all the others at the Swan River Club, was just a suspect, to be grilled as efficiently as the Chief of the Provincial Police knew how. With this realization came a sense of relief. He sat back and listened while Colonel Tremblay took over. The Colonel was saying in his resonant, authoritative voice:

"Johnson, let's see if I've got the facts straight up to the point where you decided to carry your investigation thirty miles north of here." He paused and surveyed the Ranger with searching eyes. "I understand that you went up there to investigate a prospector. General Fahnestock has been unable to enlighten me as to your reasoning—"

"I don't believe Ranger Johnson had any particular reason other than to check up on the man." The General hurried to explain, but Colonel Tremblay cut him short.

"I understand all that. Let's get on with this résumé for the time being. Johnson will have a chance to explain later." Then his manner changed, and the quick smile flickered at the corner of his mustache. "I don't mean to be officious, gentlemen, but I've a lot of catching up to do. It appears I'm three murders behind."

HARLEY thought of the bloodstained canoe, started to say "Four!" but decided against it. He didn't want to disturb Colonel Tremblay's present train of thought. The police plane had arrived late in the afternoon, but already the Colonel knew a great deal about what had transpired at the camp since that rainy morning when Teegee Bouchard had announced his gruesome discovery in the rapids. Harley admired the Chief's quick grasp of the situation and the way he checked off the known facts quickly and efficiently although he wasn't certain that he liked the man, despite the occasional moments of disarming warmth and the fleeting smile.

"Kindly correct me, gentlemen, if I'm wrong in any of the details." He paused to relight his pipe. "On Monday morning, Doctor Thomas Shepard of New York City was fishing on the Swan River with Bouchard, your club guardian, as guide—" He enumerated the times and distances involved, starting with the Doctor's five A.M. departure from camp and his subsequent activities along the river. "When Doctor Shepard couldn't find his pipe,

immediately he presumed that he had lost it along the portage. He sent Bouchard back to look for it while he continued with his fishing. This was about quarter after ten. They had seen no one up to that time. These times were given to me by Shepard and later verified by Bouchard. Tomorrow, Johnson, I'd like to have one of your men take Inspector Dufour over the route by canoe with an outboard of the same horsepower, to check the distances and times involved."

Knowing what he did, the Ranger realized the futility of this move, but nevertheless he nodded and the Colonel continued:

"To wind up the Doctor's story of his part in Monday's activities, he discovered his pipe in his waders when he went to put them on. By that time, Bouchard had already left on his wild-goose chase. Shepard fished for an hour, working his way up along the river. Evidently, occasionally he had to cut back into the woods to avoid deep water. He says that on one of these occasions he heard an outboard motor heading upriver, but by the time he got back to the riverbank, the canoe was no longer in sight. He presumes it was Bouchard."

"Yes, but Teegee Bouchard wasn't using an outboard motor when he arrived at camp; he was paddling!" Harley objected.

There was a glint of amusement in the other's eyes. "If you had questioned him, with times and distances in mind," he said dryly, "you would have found out that in his haste to get back to camp, Bouchard cut too close to shore and sheared a propeller pin on a submerged rock. Apparently he was still so unstrung by finding the bodies of Travers and Lemoine that he dropped the spare shear-pins into the lake. The motor was therefore useless, and he removed it from its bracket so that he could paddle the remaining couple of miles to camp without its interference." He smiled at Harley's obvious discomfort at not having checked up on this detail as he had planned to do. "In view of the serious nature of the news that Bouchard brought, I can readily appreciate how you happened to overlook the motor on the bottom of his canoe. Your man MacLeod saw it, though."

The Colonel's last remark was of little consolation. Harley wondered if, since he had miffed one significant detail, Colonel Tremblay would discount his theory and consume valuable time in checking on the many other details involved before considering a plan that he had in mind to trap the killer.

It was a risky plan, and one that might not meet with approval because it meant placing someone's life in danger. He was only half-listening as he weighed the chances of success or failure. Colonel Tremblay continued with his summation of the accumulated facts covering the past three fateful days at the Swan River Club. It was apparent that, with the exception of the events that had transpired in the Tokenkutuk country and a few facts that Harley had unearthed at the camp and had kept to himself, Colonel Tremblay was remarkably well informed.

Although he and his two inspectors had arrived in the late afternoon, already their interrogations had covered nearly everyone in camp, with the exception of the Ranger and a few of the guides. The shorthand reports of the inspectors lay on a small table at his elbow and he referred to them in turn as each individual's actions and possible motives were discussed.

Evidently Harley as a Quebec Ranger, and General Fahnestock as senior member of the Swan River Club, were being taken into the Chief of Police's confidence. They listened intently to various conversations that had been recorded and to the reactions of those questioned, waiting for a discrepancy or a variance of fact as they knew it. Harley was reasonably certain that at least one reported conversation would contain a series of falsehoods. . . .

Colonel Tremblay had finished discussing Doctor Shepard and Teegee Bouchard. Neither one had contributed anything that his two listeners did not already know. The next person was Joan Travers.

She had finally admitted that she was not aware of when her husband had left on his ill-fated journey downriver, since they had slept in separate bedrooms. Yes, she stood to inherit a considerable sum of money and valuable property as Leland Travers' widow, which pleased her more than she cared to admit to the observing inspector. She had taken little pains to conceal the fact that she and her late husband had not got along too well in the past because of a "difference in temperaments." She had been considering a divorce, and was reasonably certain that her husband would have been anything but coöperative. She denied being in love with Bert Steele, but appeared considerably upset over his violent death. She admitted owning a Savage .300, but was unable to produce the gun. "It disappeared from my cabin," she had said. Colonel Tremblay paused, and was about to comment on this incriminating testimony when Harley interrupted to recount the circumstances of the rifle's disappearance.

"It's in the lake just off Travers Point," he concluded. General Fahnestock looked at him in amazement, a shocked expression in his blue eyes.

"Why in the devil didn't you tell me about it when it happened, Harley! That's our man!" His voice rang with conviction.

"He's dead," Colonel Tremblay snapped.

"Oh—" came the General's deflated exclamation. "Yes—yes, of course. Well, I still can't see why you didn't tell me," he finished in an injured tone.

"I didn't know *whom* to trust—not even you, General," Harley explained uncomfortably. "And later, when Bert himself was murdered, I figured he must have been shielding Joan Travers—and I thought that perhaps it wouldn't be quite right at that time to expose what was evidently a gallant act on his part." The General seemed satisfied, and Harley relaxed in his chair, only to be immediately set back on his heels by a caustic remark from the Chief of Police.

"And when he was no longer able to shield a young lady who might quite conceivably be a murderess, you took over the job! It would appear that she has more than one knight in shining armor." His heavy brows were raised questioningly and a smile twitched the infernal mustache again as he asked: "You're not in love with her yourself, are you?"

Harley Johnson flushed over his deep tan.

"Hell, no!" he exploded, and the two older men exchanged amused glances. Colonel Tremblay abruptly changed the subject.

"Well, let's get on with this: MacLeod is the next person on the list. I questioned him myself." He stroked his chin reflectively, a frown accentuating the fine lines around his brown eyes. "I don't know just what to think about this man. I have a feeling that he knows more about this affair than he lets on. He appears to be above average intelligence for his type, efficient in his job, and liked by all the guides with the exception of Bouchard. I suspect a little professional jealousy there—mutual, as he was very coöperative in supplying information about the guardian—and Mrs. Travers. By the way, Johnson, while I think of it, there's a little matter of a missing radio crystal that I want to discuss with you later on."

Colonel Tremblay digressed for a moment.

"It's amazing what you can find out about a bunch of people when you start prying into their affairs," he

chuckled ruefully. "MacLeod doesn't like Joan Travers; Joan Travers doesn't like MacLeod; Bouchard doesn't like MacLeod; Luke Lemoine didn't like Bouchard; Johnson, here, didn't like Lemoine; the General evidently wasn't overfriendly with Leland Travers—and so it goes. It seems that everyone liked Bert Steele—but he was murdered nevertheless."

"I trust that you're not implying that these men were murdered over petty clashes of temperament, Colonel," the General stated severely, eying the Chief of Police with eyes that glittered frostily. The latter saw that perhaps he had overstepped the bounds of discretion and hastily apologized.

"Not at all, not at all, General. I'm afraid I was being a little facetious. Forgive me. I realize that there are bound to be some marked likes and dislikes when you get a number of people together in an isolated spot like this, where it's difficult not to have daily association with those who get on one's nerves. We already know that MacLeod doesn't care for Mrs. Travers," he went on. "How did he get along with Mr. Travers?"

"First rate," the General answered after a moment. "As a matter of fact, Travers was a stickler for efficiency and detail. Tim MacLeod is good at both, and consequently was a favorite of his. Wanted him to go down to the States this winter—to run his shooting-place in Alabama, or something of that sort. I imagine MacLeod's pretty disappointed, now that he won't be going. The invitation hardly extends as far as Mrs. Travers."

Colonel Tremblay suddenly went off on a different tack.

"How much does one of your freight canoes weigh, Johnson?" The question caught Harley by surprise, and he hesitated a moment before catching the drift.

"Five hundred pounds, sir; but it's humanly impossible for one man—or two for that matter—to paddle one of them against the current of the Swan River in the vicinity of the Devil's Elbow. I'm sure it wasn't MacLeod who bushwhacked me, if that's what you're driving at."

"There was the motor—"

"A ten-horsepower kicker makes a hell of a racket against the current," Harley replied. "We'd have heard it, even above the sound of the river."

"The two Indians could have helped him paddle that canoe across," the Colonel insisted.

"I'm afraid you're barking up the wrong tree," General Fahnestock remarked. "Those two have been with us from the beginning—fine records. Johnson and I put them through the third degree, even threatened them with arrest for withholding information. Scared the daylights out of them—Indians are deathly afraid of the police. Couldn't shake their story that MacLeod was with them the whole time, and that they didn't sneak back across the river."

"Did either of you happen to know that the pilot, Jim Schingler, was Travers' nephew?" Colonel Tremblay had a trick of changing the subject with startling rapidity. When both shook their heads in amazed silence, he continued: "His mother was Leland Travers' sister. She and his father are both deceased, and Travers was his guardian. Provided for him quite handsomely in his will, I might add. Does that change the picture any for you?" Neither answered. "Incidentally, Schingler studied geology in college, and is attached to one of Travers' mining companies for tax purposes."

He halted for a moment, enjoying the bewildered expression on the faces of his two listeners.

"You see—while we were waiting in Quebec for the weather to clear, we weren't exactly asleep." He indicated a well-filled briefcase at his side. "I imagine we know more about some of these people than they know themselves, except what they've been up to these past few days."

Colonel Tremblay glanced at his wristwatch and noted the lateness of the hour. He touched briefly on Harvey Wayland and his wife, and their daughter Ruth.

"Now, there's a nice girl," he remarked lightheartedly, "worth donning a suit of armor for, I should say." If he was hoping to get a rise out of Harley Johnson, he was disappointed. When the latter preserved an impassive silence, he passed on to the two remaining members of the Club who were present in the camp, Earl Rand and Monk Winters, adding little that his two listeners didn't already know. Neither appeared to have the slightest motive for murder. Colonel Tremblay arrived at the report that appeared to interest him the most, the one that concerned Thérèse Bouchard. He studied it for a few minutes.

That tempestuous girl had been no match for the subtle police inspector, who had quickly wrung every scrap of information from her to the point of hysterics. It had been necessary for the Chief of Police, himself, to assure her that she was not about to be sent to prison for life for being in possession of vital information. He had lent her his handkerchief to dry her tears, and she had sniffled coyly as he patted her shoulder with almost paternal concern. He had evidently done a good job of soothing the girl's feelings, for she had shown no effects of her emotional upset while serving the Ranger at dinner. Colonel Tremblay caught himself chuckling, and quickly cleared his throat.

"It appears quite obvious, gentlemen, that Travers was in a hurry to get back to civilization for one reason or another; and that during the course of his secret—or almost secret—departure, he was murdered for one of three possible reasons: either to prevent him from reaching the outside, or because it was an auspicious opportunity for the murder, or for something he had in his possession. I think that we can pretty well discount the latter motive, as it would have been practically impossible to retrieve that object under the circumstances in which the murder took place—unless it was possible to do so later during the natural process of examining the body, let's say as the—as the examining physician or whoever it was who examined their pockets for personal belongings.

"I think we'll find that the guide, Lemoine, had the misfortune to be in the canoe when the murderer struck at Travers. As a matter of fact, the guide was probably an integral part of the plan, as Travers would not have been in that helpless position had not the guide been present. To put it cold-bloodedly, he was just part of the scenery, the same as the canoe or the paddle.

"I think we're all agreed that the other victim, Steele, was a victim of his own indiscretion, that he would be alive today if he had either kept quiet about the knowledge he possessed or else shared it with the camp when you, Johnson, gave him a chance to do so. The General tells me that you feel pretty badly about that show, that you feel partly to blame for Steele's death. Well, I wouldn't, if I were you. There's not much you can do when a man decides not to talk.

"To get back to the subject: what do you gentlemen make of all this?" Before the General or Harley had a chance to speak, Colonel Tremblay remembered the Tokenkutuk, and the prospector Claveau. "What did you find out up there, Johnson? Did you find your man?" he asked.

The Ranger nodded.

"Yes and no," he answered evasively, and the Colonel looked at him inquiringly. "What I mean is, Colonel—I think I'd better start at the beginning. I didn't speak of this sooner, because I wanted to make sure that you

had the whole picture so you could see why I decided that I had to get up there as rapidly and as secretly as possible. It turned out that it wasn't so secret." General Fahnestock started to say something, and Harley interrupted him. "I know it wasn't you, General—you wouldn't tell anybody; but somebody knew, nevertheless, and it nearly cost me my life.

"I think I've got this thing solved," he said quite seriously and without histrionics, "what with what I found out in the Tokenkutuk country, plus a few things I found out around here. Let me start from the beginning and see whether or not you agree.

"First of all, to show you that I'm quite serious when I say that I think I've got the answer, here's some disturbing news for you: Colonel Tremblay, awhile ago you said that you were three murders behind. I wish to correct that statement and make it four! Claveau, the prospector—"

A poignant silence followed the Ranger's verbal bombshell. Then both men started asking questions at once, faces tense and unbelieving.

"I called the turn this time," Harley went on; "that's why I was so anxious to get up to the Tokenkutuk, but I was a couple of hours too late."

Step by step, he related why he had decided that it was the prospector's turn next, and what had transpired since he had left camp early that morning. General Fahnestock and Colonel Tremblay listened in silence, too intent on what he was saying to interrupt for a moment.

"You see, if my theory is correct, it was really my turn next. I'd found out too much and was apt to find out more." The others nodded grimly. "I guess you know now who the murderer is," Harley concluded. "The problem is—how to prove it?"

The Colonel finally broke the long silence, during which each was wrestling with the same problem.

"Johnson, if everything you've told us is true, we've *got* to prove it. That's not just wishful thinking—we've got to, that's all there is to it," he stated flatly. "We're not much for beating confessions out of people, but in this case—four men murdered in cold blood—"

Harley hesitated, took a deep breath and finally said: "I've got a plan in mind that might work. Unfortunately, it means risking one person's life."

General Fahnestock shook his head emphatically.

"I haven't the slightest idea of what you have in mind, son, but I for one will not consider any plan that places anyone's life in danger. We've had enough blood spilled as it is."

Colonel Tremblay broke in.

"Let's hear what Johnson has to suggest, General—maybe we can get around the risk." He turned to the younger man. "Go ahead, Johnson, we're listening."

"As you know," Harley began, "Thérèse Bouchard was on that old winter trail the evening that Mr. Travers and Luke Lemoine were murdered. Later, as I told you, she saw somebody on the lake whom she couldn't recognize in the dark. Presumably, that was our murderer, who doesn't know that Thérèse was anywhere around at the time. Now then, if this person 'happened' to find out that Thérèse had been there and had recognized the killer, but is keeping silent only because she is temporarily frightened, wouldn't it be logical to expect an attempt on her life within the next day or so before she changed her mind and told the police who she'd seen? We'd be ready and waiting." He waited for the reaction to his suggestion, and it wasn't long in coming—from the General. He gesticulated with his pipe.

"We can't jeopardize that young girl's life like that! I'm ashamed of you for having suggested such a plan, Harley!"

"Now, wait a minute, General," the Chief of Police cut in sharply. "Maybe Johnson has a point there. There're enough of us here to protect the girl." He scratched his chin reflectively. "We can let it be known that she has incriminating information which she's hesitant about divulging, and that we're taking her back with us to Headquarters for further questioning—say the day after tomorrow. I think Johnson's right—our suspect will decide that, once in the protective custody of the police, she'll talk. That would mean an attempted murder tomorrow night!"

General Fahnestock stormed out of his chair with angry objections. Colonel Tremblay held up his hand to still the old soldier. "Don't worry—we won't let her out of our sight." And while the General continued to grumble over the heartlessness of certain people, he became absorbed with the details of the contemplated trap.

"Yes, I think it might work," he mused. He turned to Harley. "Think the girl will agree to be bait?" His next remark caused the General to glare furiously at him. "If we have to, we can go ahead without her approval. However, it would be more ethical to get it. Think you can manage that? You seem to know her pretty well."

Harley nodded, smarting under the crack.

"I think she might agree—if she's approached in the right way," he answered.

"You're the man to do it." The Colonel smiled behind his mustache and even the General's stern countenance relaxed for a moment.

It was only after considerable persuasion that General Fahnestock was finally convinced that Harley's plan offered the best chance of apprehending the criminal, and then only after assurance from Colonel Tremblay that he and his inspectors would never for a moment let the girl out of their sight, once the camp had been made aware of the information which she supposedly possessed.

"It's the only way, General," Colonel Tremblay repeated. "Tomorrow night we'll set our trap at the girl's cabin, the five of us. You, Johnson, my two men and myself. I'll be inside with the girl—or she might prefer Johnson," he added innocently, and Harley reddened. The Chief of Police checked his watch.

"It's late, but I think we'd better get her over here right now." He went to the door. "Cameron," he called to one of the inspectors, "bring Mademoiselle Bouchard here!"

Chapter Twelve

A Vacancy

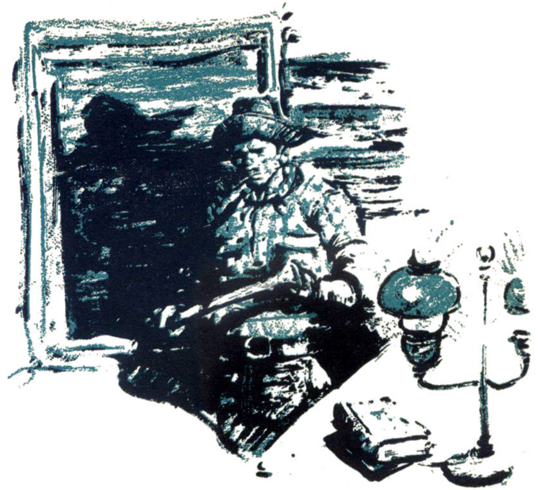
It was midnight. The trap was set and baited, and all that remained to be done was to wait quietly and watch for a murderer stalking a fifth victim. Four men lay nervously in the heavy underbrush near Thérèse Bouchard's cabin, and noiselessly as possible fought off the occasional mosquito whose high-pitched discord was superimposed on the other sounds in the night.

The Ranger crouched in the deep shadow of a towering spruce, a Smith & Wesson clutched in one hand and a powerful flashlight in the other. He sensed rather than heard General Fahnestock's presence a little distance off to his right, and knew that he too was occasionally wiping the perspiration from his brow despite the chill of the Northern night. The sky was dark, and only a few stars were visible directly overhead. Harley's eyes, accustomed now to the darkness, could barely make out the vague outline of the cabin set in the small clearing. He wondered if he would be able to spot anyone against the

weathered gray logs. He must rely mainly on his hearing, and he strained to catch the slightest alien sound in the forest.

Somewhere around the clearing, also hidden in the underbrush, were the two police inspectors. Inside the silent darkened cabin was the frightened girl, the intended victim of a ruthless killer who must try tonight to still her voice if their calculations were correct. With her was Colonel Tremblay, waiting intently, one hand on the light-switch and the other on the revolver that lay on the small table beside him. He watched the door with unwavering eyes, and listened for the creak of its hinges. He had been in the cabin since ten o'clock that evening, a half-hour before Thérèse had been escorted home by Harley Johnson on the pretext of helping her carry some fresh linen.

It hadn't been easy to set this trap without arousing the camp's suspicions. The police plane had taken off late in the afternoon with a canoe strapped to the struts of one of its floats, presumably bound for the lake at the headwaters of the Tokenkutuk River for the second time that day to seek the absent prospector and spend the night at the lake if he didn't show up. It had already made one flight during the morning. On the second flight, General Fahnestock had exchanged places with Harley, who remained behind to keep an eye on Thérèse Bouchard.



This had not been an accident; it was murder!

TEN miles up Lake Manicouagen the plane had glided to a power-off landing, out of sight and hearing of the Swan River Club. The canoe had been unslung and the passengers had lost no time in paddling back toward camp, keeping close in to shore. Within two hours they had cached the canoe a mile from the camp and had wormed their way quietly through the woods to Thérèse Bouchard's cabin. Colonel Tremblay had slipped quickly inside, while the other three hid themselves in the surrounding vegetation, ready for the long vigil ahead.

The Ranger, after escorting Thérèse from the Lodge, had gone to his own cabin, making more noise than necessary. He had listened impatiently to a radio program for a half-hour, finally slammed his cabin door, and in a few minutes had switched off the radio and the lights. He had waited in the darkness, scarcely moving, for another ten minutes, almost certain that the killer was lurking nearby. Once a squirrel had chattered noisily, disturbed by something in the woods below it.

Then he opened the back door inch by inch and eased himself out of the cabin. He locked the door carefully and took a few gingerly steps in his moccasined feet, barely breathing. A twig snapped in the forest close at hand, and the night wind stirred the tree-tops. He froze. Five minutes had passed, and his body ached from the strain of remaining immobile. Finally, when there was no further sound, he glided slowly down the trail.

He had spotted his position by the big spruce earlier in the day and had carefully cleared away any twigs and dead branches that might crack under a careless step. Now he gave the predetermined signal to the others he knew were secreted around the clearing—the high thin whistle of a white-throated sparrow, very softly, to give the impression that the bird was in the tree-tops and not close to the ground, where it is seldom found. There was an answering chirrup from a nearby thicket, and all was still again except for the minute dronings of mosquitoes and the sighing of the night breeze.

Time dragged interminably. Frequently, the Ranger glanced at the luminous dial of his watch and fought off a feeling of drowsiness. His initial nervousness had long since passed. It was two o'clock in the morning, and he shivered slightly in the cold air. In another two hours it would be dawn, and he began to wonder if their prey had been too clever to fall for the trap. Maybe they had been too obvious in hinting what Thérèse Bouchard supposedly knew. Maybe the killer had decided to wait and waylay the girl in the early daylight when she left her cabin to go to the kitchen at the Lodge instead of trying to force an entrance into her cabin during the night and risk her screams of terror.

Harley didn't think that this was likely as he had casually mentioned to several people during the evening that under the circumstances he intended to accompany Thérèse to and from her cabin until the police returned from the Tokenkutuk, and that he would be considerably relieved when they took her to Quebec with them. He decided that if there was to be an attempt on her life, it would have to come in the dark of the pre-dawn hours, while the police were supposedly still absent. He shifted his cramped position and stared intently at the gray logs.

Later, Harley Johnson couldn't remember when he first noticed it, whether the smell of it was borne to his nostrils by the night wind, or whether he first became aware of the snapping and then the dull roar of the flames. He instinctively started up to investigate the catastrophe, a wild fear clutching at his vitals, the dreaded specter of a forest fire before him. Almost immediately he changed his mind. This was the moment they'd been waiting for; he was certain of it. The killer was about to strike during the confusion that was sure to follow the discovery of the fire. He forced himself to remain quietly where he was, every nerve taut. Nobody else had moved. They too must have realized the true purpose of the fire, and were now waiting grimly for the last act.

The air was full of acrid smoke; and dimly through the trees in the direction of the lake the Ranger saw the glow of fire. It was his own cabin that was now burning fiercely. There were distant shouts down by the lakefront; they were striving to bring up the portable pump.

Two-thirty in the morning. The night air was charged with suspense. The noise made by the fire now effectively covered any sounds that would give warning of anyone's approach. He must depend on sight alone. His eyes swam from the strain of trying to penetrate the darkness, and when a furtive movement in the clearing caused him to catch his breath, he thought at first that he had imagined it; but a wind fanned the flames and a dark form was momentarily revealed crouching near the cabin. Then it moved quickly across the lighter background of the weathered logs, toward the doorway.

The Ranger started forward, nerves on edge. He mustn't be too soon—nor too late. He was so intent on the shadowy figure in the clearing that a hoarse whisper caused him to whirl violently, to find Inspector Cameron almost at his elbow. Cameron said sharply:

"Hold it! Don't want to tip our hand yet."

"You sure the Colonel's ready?" Harley asked.

The other nodded reassuringly.

"Yeah, wait and see!"

They moved forward a few paces and waited tensely for the next move. For the time being they were merely spectators. Everything now depended on the girl and Colonel Tremblay; if they missed their cues—what then! He and Cameron stood side by side at the edge of the clearing, not daring to go any closer for fear of revealing their presence.

Suddenly they heard a voice calling the girl's name. At the same time there was an urgent knocking on the door. They heard her muffled exclamation from inside the cabin and then the voice again—telling her to dress quickly, that the forest was on fire. Evidently she hesitated, for the voice grew impatient, instructing her to look out the window to see for herself. There was a brief excited answer, and then silence while Thérèse was presumably scurrying frantically to find her things in the dark. Then the bolt was being slid back.

By the glow in the sky, two people could be seen at the doorway—the girl and someone whose back was toward them. There was a muffled curse and the flash of a knife—then the sharp crack of a pistol. Cameron and Harley shot the rays of their lights full on the scene. Someone turned to flee, caught in the glare of the flashlights. Whoever it was staggered slightly and quickly disappeared around the corner of the cabin. Colonel Tremblay's voice rang out loudly:

"Halt! Halt, there! Shoot, men!"

In the same instant Harley realized that it wasn't Thérèse who had come to the door, but the Chief of Police, with her dressing-gown thrown over his head and a revolver in his hand. Now he clutched his shoulder where the blood was already beginning to flow from a knife wound.

"Dammit, I wasn't fast enough!" he growled through clenched teeth. "I should have—" A series of shots punctuated the night behind the cabin. There was the sound of scuffling and angry cries. By the time they reached the spot it was all over.

Colonel Tremblay stooped over the still form on the ground and shone his light down on a face twisted with pain as a last shuddering breath contorted the features and shook the body of the person lying there.

"You were right, Johnson!" the Chief of Police stated grimly. "Looks as though the Swan River Club will be needing a new head guide."

General Fahnestock shook his head numbly. "It's hard to believe," he said and turned away.

Chapter Thirteen

A Clambake

TO HARLEY IT SEEMED THAT ALL HELL HAD suddenly popped loose at once. Tim MacLeod was dead; Colonel Tremblay was nursing a badly lacerated shoulder, Thérèse Bouchard was having a fit of hysterics (for which he didn't blame her), and everybody else was rushing to fight a fire that was threatening momentarily to engulf the whole camp. There would be no post-mortems just yet, not in the face of this latest catastrophe. Nevertheless, while people coughed and choked in the smoke of flaming spruce logs, the news of the startling climax at Thérèse Bouchard's cabin spread quickly from one to another. At first they wouldn't believe it; and then, gradually its effect became apparent in their faces and voices. A few began to joke as they fought the flames. They were no longer looking sideways at each other, wondering who among them was a murderer.

FOR a few minutes the fire roared temporarily out of control, and it was Joan who was largely responsible for averting a near-panic among several of the women and a number of the men as well. Harley wondered where a woman of Joan's background had learned some of the language the occasion provoked. He laughed despite the seriousness of the situation.

"Good girl," he shouted above the din. "Keep it up!"

Their eyes met for a moment, and she gave him an appreciative smile. She looked radiant in the savage light of the leaping flames, her blonde hair disheveled, her high cheeks glowing from the heat and streaked with sweat. She stood beside him for a moment and wiped the sleeve of her jacket across her forehead while he finished toppling a spar-straight spruce out of the fire's path.

"Good girl," he repeated as he laid aside his axe and straightened up. "That mule-skinner talk seems to have done the trick." He chuckled and accepted the wet towel she held out to him. He buried his face in it for a long moment.

"What a night!" she exclaimed. "The General told me about MacLeod. I suspected him from the start, you know—feminine intuition! You knew it all the time too, didn't you, Harley?" He continued to swab his face in silence. Her voice took on its normal husky note. "My fair-haired boy came through again—with the solution and everything. Harley, you're wonderful!"

If someone else had said it in just that tone of voice, he might have believed she meant it, but not from Joan Travers. She was baiting him as usual. He was sure of it after her next remark. "This reminds me of a clambake—I'll arrange one for you when you come down and visit me this fall on Long Island."

Harley ground his teeth in impotent rage. That did it! Death and destruction, and she was talking about a clambake! For the life of him, he couldn't understand this woman who appeared so unaffected by tragedy. He suppressed a bitter retort, realizing that she was laughing at him, as she always did in his serious moments. He shook his head bewilderedly and picked up his axe. She left him after a moment with a mocking laugh.

"Put the fire out quickly, Harley; I can't wait to hear you tell about MacLeod!" He muttered an expletive under his breath and turned his attention to the fire.

Later, hours later, a tired, red-eyed bunch of people gathered in the big room of the Lodge and hungrily munched sandwiches and drank steaming black coffee. There was little conversation and no thought of sleep. Behind them, the lake shore was a smoldering ruin, an ugly scar that would take years to heal. People collapsed wherever they could find a place to sit down, guides, guests, club members, Indians, and police alike, and stared vacantly into space, too exhausted to move. Finally Colonel Tremblay entered the room, looking pale and drawn, his left arm in a sling. He walked slowly to the big hearth, directly under the great trumpeter swan on the chimney above the stone mantel, and turned to face the thirty-odd people who had been waiting for this moment. The atmosphere of the room was heavy with suspense as they leaned forward to catch the Chief of Police's words.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, with a nod that included them all, "there's only one person who knows the whole story of the tragedy which has been concluded here today. I'm referring of course, to Ranger Harley Johnson, without whose brilliant—and I might add, courage-

ous—detective work, this grim affair might have had an even more tragic ending."

He paused, and everyone glanced curiously at the Ranger, who reddened under his tan and shifted uneasily in his chair. Colonel Tremblay held a lighter to his pipe and expelled several deep puffs of strong tobacco smoke before continuing.

"I don't intend to soliloquize on crime and punishment; I think the results are self-evident, always have been, and always will be. Rather, I'm going to ask Ranger Johnson to tell you—possibly in more detail than he has already told me—just why he became convinced that it was your head guide who was the perpetrator of these shocking murders—surely one of the worst series of crimes it's been my misfortune to come across during my many years with the Provincial Police." He stopped speaking and glanced at his watch.

"It's ten A.M. now, and my men and I will be leaving by noon for Quebec. I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your coöperation, particularly you, Mademoiselle Bouchard, you, General Fahnestock and, of course, Ranger Johnson." He bowed to each in turn and concluded: "Except for the usual details, the case is closed. Johnson, will you take over?" He indicated the hearth with a gesture of his pipe, then walked over and sat down beside the General.

Chapter Fourteen

Loose Ends

A RÉSUMÉ OF WHAT'S GONE ON AROUND HERE during the past three days would fill a book," the Ranger began. "A lot of things you already know so I'll stick as much as possible to the things you don't know.

"To begin with, for various reasons, I suspected nearly everyone here at one time or another. However, Doctor Shepard was my first real suspect, due to the pipe episode on the river, and because he appeared rather anxious to play down my murder theory when I showed him the severed paddle that first night in my cabin. He also absent-mindedly delayed in turning over a map which he found in Leland Travers' pocket. At the time he had no cause to suspect foul play, and I see now that his attitude toward my murder theory was merely the cautious approach of a medical man." His eyes sought out Doctor Shepard, and the two men exchanged self-conscious grins. There was no longer any hostility between them.

"I was interested to note that there were others besides the Doctor who had a personal relationship with Mr. Travers besides their mutual interest in the Club. For instance, Mrs. Shepard was his niece; Bert Steele was a business partner; Jim Schingler, it turned out, was not only his pilot and a geologist attached to one of his mining companies, but was also his nephew, a point that no one had had the occasion to bring up prior to Mr. Travers' death. Then there was Mrs. Travers, of course, his wife; and there I had five suspects right off the bat, any one of whom might have had motive enough for murder. With the possible exception of Mrs. Shepard, all are fairly good shots with a rifle." There was a ripple of nervous laughter at his reference to Muriel Shepard's notoriously poor marksmanship.

"Teegee Bouchard can use a rifle too, and with all due respect to the deceased, he had excellent reason to dislike Mr. Travers. Teegee was being railroaded out of his job as the Club's guardian in favor of Luke Lemoine; he was told so in so many words by Mr. Travers over my objection. I knew, too, that Luke Lemoine wasn't popular with Teegee for other reasons which I won't go into." Harley was thinking of Teegee's stepdaughter. "Well, Teegee Bouchard brought the number of suspects to six. Then there was General Fahnestock. You'll forgive me, General," Harley hastened to add, and the other chuckled.

"Of course, of course, Harley. Everybody knows that Travers and I didn't hit it off—business reasons as well as a difference of opinion over club policies. Go ahead with your story."

"Thank you, sir," Harley replied with a relieved smile. "Let's see—oh, yes, Thérèse Bouchard was number eight on my list, due to"—again Harley caught himself. He had no wish to air her affair with Luke Lemoine before the others—"due to her footprints being on the old winter trail." He looked over at Teegee Bouchard. "Yes, I saw them before you knocked me out, Teegee. Moccasin prints left by a woman—only one woman wears soft moosehide moccasins away from camp!"

There was a gasp of astonishment, and Teegee Bouchard half-rose from his chair, completely caught off balance by the Ranger's last statement.

"Oui, Harley, oui—you are right! *Ma fois,* I be scare'! I theenk I heet you too hard. One chance you have a hard head, but how you know dat?"

"I didn't know it was you at the time, Teegee, but the more I thought about it, the more I realized that it had to be you. First the footprints, and the fact that you were near me at the time. Later, when I found out that Thérèse had lost her crucifix, I reasoned that if she had dropped it around camp somewhere, somebody would have surely picked it up. Therefore she must have lost it away from camp, on the old winter trail where you found it. However, I don't blame you for trying to protect your daughter when all the evidence on the trail pointed to her as being the person who fired that shot.

"I took the liberty of searching your cabin the other night when you were all gathered in here, the night that Bert Steele was killed." Harley reached in his pocket and produced the crucifix, which he passed along to Thérèse. She exclaimed with pleasure and clutched it to her breast.

"I also found the missing shell in your cabin"—he held up the empty .300-caliber cartridge—"and Thérèse's letter to her brother, which you removed from my pocket at the same time, which I now return. If you hadn't taken the letter my attention might not have been so forcibly drawn to the fact that someone was trying to shield Thérèse—and who would be more apt to do so than her father, who was there at the time?"

Teegee Bouchard slowly shook his head in admiration. Even Joan Travers was listening with no trace of mockery in her eyes. Harley went on with his story.

"I had practically eliminated one suspect—Teegee, and later that afternoon I eliminated another—Bert Steele. I watched Bert dispose of Mrs. Travers' Savage .300 by the simple expedient of throwing it into Lake Manicouagen. If it had been Bert Steele who had fired that shot, he wouldn't have waited so long to get rid of the gun. Besides, he wasn't too sure where to look for it when he first entered the room." A thought came to Harley, and he hesitated in some embarrassment before addressing Joan Travers.

"I apologize for deranging your closet, Mrs. Travers," he said stiffly. "The caliber of the murder weapon was a .300, and I knew that you had one of the same caliber. Bert almost caught me looking it over."

JOAN gave a little laugh.

"I wondered who had messed up my closet. You of all people, Ranger Johnson!" Several people laughed, and he felt his face getting red.

"As a matter of fact," he went on grimly, "it *was* the rifle used. It was a simple matter to take it out of your

camp and return it later. I'm afraid Tim MacLeod had no great love for you, Mrs. Travers. He had planned to have Big T's and Luke's murders look like an accident, but if there was a slip-up—as there was, the finding of the paddle—he undoubtedly figured that you would take the rap for the murder of your husband. I'm practically certain that the ballistic experts will find that the firing imprint on this shell and the firing pin on your rifle match."

For once Joan Travers' composure was shaken. She hid her face in her hands. Harley went on talking.

"Bert Steele thought a great deal of you, Mrs. Travers, enough to have willingly placed himself out on a limb as an accessory after the fact, had you been guilty of murder. Bert thought at first that you *were* guilty. He was trying to shield you when he threw your rifle into the lake." Harley saw that her nerves were on edge. She sat very still, staring straight ahead. He quickly changed the subject.

"While I was away, somebody had taken the paddle, the salvaged stern of the canoe and the map out of my cabin. We know now who that was—MacLeod. And speaking of the paddle, I guess you all know why MacLeod had to get rid of poor Bert Steele. It was Bert who had seen him throw that broken paddle back in the alders down by the river where Teegee's dog eventually found it—Bert, who couldn't bring himself to believe that Tim MacLeod was a murderer.

"MacLeod was shrewd. I don't think many of you realized how shrewd Tim MacLeod was. It was like him to confuse the trail by using a knife in order to throw suspicion on Teegee Bouchard, whom he disliked, or on one of the Indians, whom he detested. Then too, a knife is silent.

"The evening of Bert's murder I had a talk with Thérèse Bouchard to find out how her footprints happened to be on the old trail down by the river—which, incidentally, she explained to my satisfaction. It was from something she said that I got my first inkling as to who the murderer might be; and after talking to her, I was no longer confused by the red herring, so to speak—the supposed attack on my life. I had already begun to suspect that it wasn't in the script as far as the murderer was concerned.

"In telling me of her trip back from the trail that evening, Thérèse mentioned that someone had passed her in a canoe in the dark—that all she could make out as she hid in a small cove was a grayish form in the darkness. It occurred to me that white looks gray in the dark, and that one person in camp habitually wore a white and black plaid shirt with large white squares in the plaid—Tim MacLeod! Surely that shirt might appear gray in the dark. I checked to make sure—and it did!

"From Thérèse's information, which I had no reason to doubt, the person I was looking for had to know of the existence of the old winter trail, that person had to be a good rifle shot, and they had to know how to paddle a canoe silently and find their way across Manicouagen in the dark—assuming, of course, that that was the murderer. I had to assume *something* in order to get a start. Shortly after my talk with Thérèse, it developed that a knowledge of the use of a knife was another prerequisite—assuming again that the murderer of Bert Steele was one and the same person. Taking into consideration the shirt, one person filled the bill—Tim MacLeod. I'd given up trying to think of a motive, although I believe now that had I known one fact then, I could have guessed it sooner than I did.

"Believe me, it was the hardest thing I've ever had to do—to force myself to believe that I was on the right trail at last. Tim MacLeod and I were fairly close through our work together here at the Club during the past couple of years. It was unthinkable that the man I'd known so well, and with whom I'd spent many months in the bush, was a cold-blooded murderer; but the night of Bert Steele's death, I was certain of it. He gave himself away. I don't think the General heard; otherwise he would have spotted it too."

Harley added the last remark to atone in some measure for not having taken the old soldier into his confidence.

"When I told MacLeod to make sure that everyone was assembled here in the Lodge, just after I'd discovered Bert murdered, MacLeod remarked: 'They're all here but the Bouchards and Mrs. Travers!' Although Bert Steele wasn't present, MacLeod hadn't included him among the absent. And yet, if you'll remember, I had carefully refrained from mentioning Bert Steele's name when I announced to you that there had been another murder!

"The inference was obvious, and I must admit, a bit nerve-racking to realize that I must now deal with a murderer who had killed three men, and not betray with the slightest blink of my eye or tone of voice that I knew. One false move on my part, and I knew that my turn was next. I was not being heroic in keeping this dangerous information to myself. God knows, I wanted to blurt it to the whole camp, but I had no proof and no motive. I didn't even entrust it to General Fahnestock, for fear he might make a slip. As it was, I gave myself away and nearly paid for my stupidity with my life. MacLeod finally suspected that I was on his trail—but I'll tell you about that in a moment.

"There were a number of facts that didn't appear to make sense at first. What had prompted Leland Travers' sudden decision to start downriver by canoe with his guide, Luke Lemoine, in the first place? And without telling anybody? It was only through Luke's evident indiscretion that Thérèse Bouchard knew of their plans. Actually, Travers gave himself away as far as MacLeod was concerned when he kept pestering me for weather-reports.

"Why had they lied about their recent trip to the Tokenkutuk country, telling everybody that their record trout was taken at Lac Betshibi, forty miles southeast of the Tokenkutuk? Both General Fahnestock and I knew of the peculiarly colored trout found only in the Tokenkutuk River, and we were convinced that that particular trout had come from there, although we didn't make an issue of it at the time. Later, I went up there and caught one a couple of pounds smaller but with identically the same coloring, and proved to our satisfaction that Travers and Lemoine had lied. Obviously there was a good reason for their not wanting anyone to know that they'd been up the Tokenkutuk. What did the map of that country, found in Leland Travers' pocket, signify? It was too detailed to have been used merely as a fishing map, but unfortunately the detail was in ink and was nearly obliterated by its submersion in the rapids."

Harley paused and asked Madame Bouchard for a cup of coffee. There was a buzz of excited conversation as he stirred it and took a few sips before continuing with his recapitulation.

"A prospector by the name of Claveau passed through here several days ago, the day Mr. Travers and Lemoine headed downriver, as a matter of fact. Some of you might have noticed him. I thought at the time that he was on his way north to the Tokenkutuk, but I found out subsequently *via* radio that Saguenay Air Service had flown him up there last June. Why, then, had he come all the way down here, spent a few hours talking to Tim MacLeod, and then headed back, giving out the information through MacLeod that he had just come up from Chicoutimi? He hadn't even stayed for a meal or spent the night, so it couldn't have been that he had come down for a social visit. Everything began to point to the

Tokenkutuk as holding the solution to the whole mystery. When Saguenay Air Service told me that Claveau had a Geiger counter with him, I began to see daylight at last.

"You probably all know what a Geiger counter is, but just in case you don't, it's a device used to locate uranium-bearing ore." Various members of the audience began to nod in growing understanding.

"I see some of you are beginning to reason the way I did," he said dryly. "Yes, you're right, uranium, the most precious metal of all, was the motive.

"Unfortunately, although Saguenay Air Service knew that Claveau had a partner somewhere, neither they nor I thought that he was of any importance in the case. That was the fact that I should have got and didn't. Later, Colonel Tremblay informed me that Claveau's partner was Tim MacLeod! Some of you may remember that MacLeod was a prospector himself before taking on the job of head guide here at the Club."

At the noisy exclamations, Harley stopped speaking. General Fahnestock held up his hand to quiet the room.

"Go on, Harley, let's see how the whole thing fits together, once you realized that MacLeod was your man and that a uranium deposit was the thing that started the whole rotten mess. Evidently, this prospector you speak of discovered uranium north of here in the Tokenkutuk country—is that right?"

The other nodded.

"Yes, that's right, General. You saw the ore samples I turned over to Colonel Tremblay—but I'm getting a little ahead of my story." He faced the others again.

"I came to the conclusion, and the evidence seems to bear me out, that Leland Travers, with Luke Lemoine as his guide, went up to the Tokenkutuk on a fishing trip and bumped into Claveau. Evidently they saw the samples of uranium ore in his tent, just as I did. There was also a map showing the whereabouts of his discovery. Travers, having extensive mining interests, would have been quick to appreciate the value of such a deposit. From Claveau's subsequent actions, it would appear that Travers and Lemoine appropriated that map. They came back here, planning to fly to Quebec and the Bureau of Mines to register that claim for themselves. Unfortunately for their plans, the weather was bad and they couldn't fly out. They knew that it was only a matter of time before Claveau would discover his loss and hot-foot it down here to charter a plane by radio, so they removed the crystal from my radio transmitter.

"Claveau did come down and explained the situation to his partner, MacLeod. There was a tremendous sum of money involved, as you can well imagine, and both men were desperate to get hold of that map and stop Travers and Lemoine from reaching the outside before they had a chance to register the claim. That was to be MacLeod's job, while Claveau went back to the Tokenkutuk to protect the discovery. When the weather failed to break, Travers and Lemoine decided to make a run for it by canoe.

"We know now that Claveau never intended to resort to the desperate measures used by his partner, and the reason we know it is because MacLeod killed him too! We flew up yesterday morning, and found his body in the lake."

There was a moment of stunned silence, and then horrified gasps from the astonished group. Harley waited until the bedlam subsided before continuing.

"There's very little more to tell you. If you'll bear with me for a moment, I'll wind this up and tell you why MacLeod killed his partner.

"A few moments ago, I told you that I slipped once with MacLeod and it nearly cost me my life. Well, although I still didn't know that these two men were partners, I reasoned that if Travers and Lemoine had done what I've just told you they must have done, Claveau had a purpose in coming to Manicouagen. I decided to go up to the Tokenkutuk to check my theory, to see if they *had* been there. I told the operator at Saguenay Air Service in Chicoutimi over the radio that I was planning to go up there the following morning. Only General Fahnestock was with me at the time of that broadcast. We used earphones and a hand-microphone. Nobody else in camp knew that I was going, because they couldn't have heard the conversation from outside of my cabin. I say that nobody else knew—but I was wrong, as it turned out.

"When MacLeod killed Bert, I knew that he would kill anybody who got in his way, anyone who had the slightest information that might lead to his apprehension. If my original theory was correct, Claveau, knowing what he did, was doomed unless I could reach him in time. I also knew that the same applied to me if it became known that I was planning to go up to talk to him. However, I felt reasonably safe; General Fahnestock was the only person in camp who knew my plans.

"I don't imagine many of you have seen a snare made from steel cable set for big game. Take it from me, they're wicked, efficient and deadly. Well, that's what was waiting for me on the portage to the Tokenkutuk River! I was damn' lucky that it misfired and only smashed my canoe to bits instead of jerking me apart." He paused significantly.

"I was wrong when I thought that the General was the only person in camp who knew where I was going. MacLeod knew, and had left camp before I did, earlier that morning. The snare had been set the same day—I could tell by the marks at the base of the tree; and it had been set with the aid of a pulley, a pulley that was still missing from the tool-shed when I got back here that evening. That meant that one man could have set it alone." Harley explained briefly how ordinarily it takes two men or more to bend down a sapling strong enough to jerk a four-hundred-pound bear off the ground.

"Evidently, one outright murder was enough for MacLeod. My death was supposed to look like an accident—just as Travers', Lemoine's, and Claveau's were.

"Claveau's tent was untouched when I got there and found his canoe awash out in the lake. There was no sign that anyone else had been there. After shooting Claveau, MacLeod, without a canoe to hinder him, had taken a shortcut through the hills back to Manicouagen, where he had cached his canoe and motor. Colonel Tremblay spotted that trail from the air yesterday. That's why MacLeod and I didn't meet face to face."

The Ranger put down the coffee cup that he had been toying with while he was talking.

"I had my case but no proof. There was only one point that I couldn't explain as I came back to camp that night. How did MacLeod know that I was planning to go up to the Tokenkutuk the following day? I don't know if some of you have already guessed it, but I know *I* felt like a damned fool when I finally figured it out. It came to me as I got within sight of the camp and saw the two amphibians moored out there on the lake.

"MacLeod had merely paddled out to one of them in the dark while I was talking to Chicoutimi and tuned in on our frequency on the plane's radio!"

Harley withdrew amid a shower of congratulations. Joan caught up with him as he was ruefully surveying the remains of his cabin. Lake Manicouagen danced and sparkled in the morning sunlight. She put both arms around his neck and kissed him and then leaned back, gazing at him with eyes that reflected more than the sunlight.

"Harley, you're wonderful!" she said.

And this time he knew she meant it—at least for the moment.

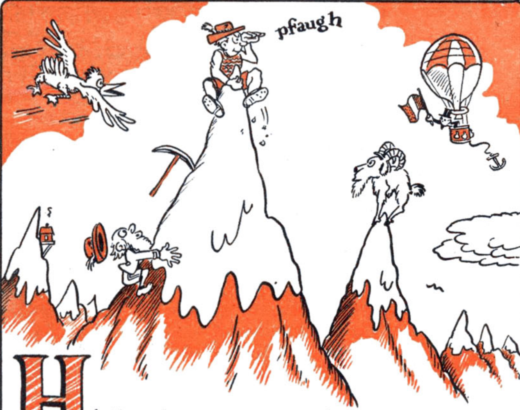
I have a Friend...

by

Peter Wells

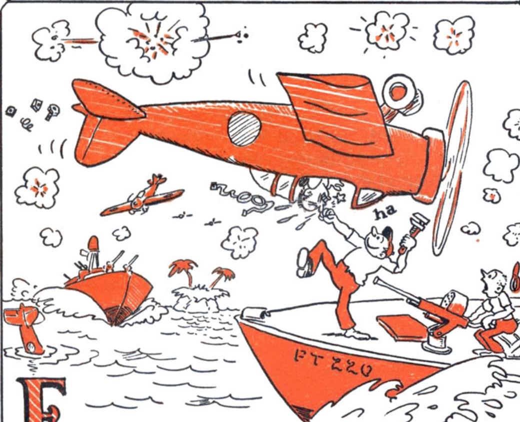
From Boyhood he was *brave*... His deeds of daring came to be greatly admired, except by parents.

Peril he encountered in far places: A *Born Leader*; his followers all remained a safe distance to the rear.



High places brought never a quiver to his nerves of steel.... He never cried "Halp!" from an Alp.

Nor yet did the depths of the Sea dismay his dauntless courage- -Dread, fright, panic & horror all passed him by...



Even the terrors of *War* found him cool amid danger. The leaders of the enemy feared his name.

But, LO! Who trembleth in his own home when his wife entertaineth the *Girls*??! -Pshah!- His reputation is safe with *us*, eh, *Friend*??

Who's Who *in this* Issue

John L. Normoyle

I AM twenty-eight years old and have spent most of my life in the Chicago area where I was born. I am married and have a fourteen-month-old daughter. She weighs only twenty pounds, but can be as destructive as a Mark V tank.

I enlisted in the Army in 1942 and was almost immediately made a corporal and assigned to an infantry training camp. At the end of two years I was still a corporal in the same training camp. My assignment had got monotonous, so I volunteered for the paratroops.

One jump while in training at Ft. Benning will not fade from memory. I didn't mind the twelve pounds of TNT the instructors tied on each leg, but the eight bare brass detonating caps they taped around one boot seemed to me to be carrying things too far. I noticed that the sergeant was taking great pains to line up the caps neatly while taping them on. When I commented on this he told me, "That's so that if they go off, they'll leave a clean stump." I never sweated out a jump so much. Nor completed it safely with so much satisfaction.

I served overseas with the 82nd airborne division during four campaigns and the occupation of Berlin. I jumped with the division into one campaign. We went into the other three in trucks and forty-and-eights.

During the Battle of the Bulge I attempted to shoot it out with an enemy rifleman who'd caught me in the open. I was armed with a .45 automatic pistol. He got me in the left arm just before a buddy of mine dropped a grenade in his lap. As I was bandaging my left arm, a German-made rifle grenade dropped out of nowhere and deposited a fragment in my right arm. About that time I decided to get out of there before the Krauts started playing rough.

After leaving the service I studied journalism at Northwestern University and television at the American TV Institute of Technology. Since 1947 I have edited *The Purple Heart,* a magazine published by the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

J. L. Francine

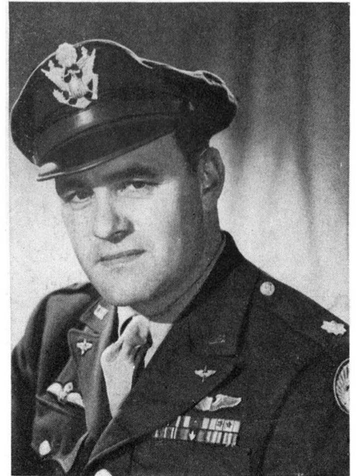
DID you ever write a macabre fictitious event and then have it come true with yourself repeating the rôle of one of your characters? Well, it happened to me the other day in Northern Quebec, and it gave me the creeps for more reasons than just the nauseating feeling I had as I headed my freight canoe up Lake Pipmaukin to report to the Quebec Rangers that a close trail-companion had just drowned in the river before my eyes after the wind and heavy current had flipped over his canoe and outboard.

The circumstances in my story, "The Adventure of the Wild Swan," in this issue of BLUE BOOK leading up to Teegee Bouchard's arrival at the camp are not the same, as you will discover, but the arrival scene in the opening chapter, written at Pipmaukin a year ago, is authentic—believe me! I shall try not to be so realistic in my story-telling in the future.

I've been eulogizing Northern Quebec off and on in various publications for a dozen years, ever since I led an expedition to Ungava for the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences after graduating from Dartmouth in '37.

Two years as a fur-trader in the North (the Bush) prior to World War II gave me the background of the Northern Quebec bush (I delivered two Indian babies and baptized one!). Two years as a flying-boat pilot in Nova Scotia, Labrador, Newfoundland and British Columbia made me partial to Canada and the Royal Canadian Air Force. Later, in the Aleutians, I commanded one of the two heavy bomber squadrons in the 11th AAF, and the flying was duck-soup after Labrador.

Strangely enough, dodging those damn' balloons in the haze over England in the evenings after a mission was the toughest of all (not counting the reception committee over Drummer Lake in the land of the supermen!). As partial as I was to Canada, I must admit that a year in Paris as Staff Operations Officer for the SHAEF Air Mission to France nearly converted me back to the land of my forefathers.



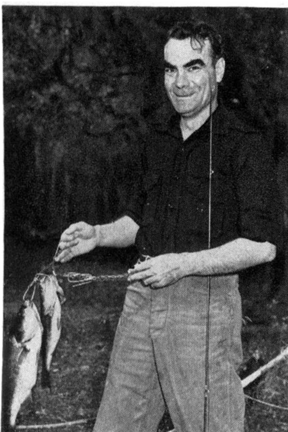
J. L. Francine

The camp in the story is one that a group of us planned to build; but to date, other than a small cabin, it has not materialized other than in fiction. The trout fishing, in case there are any doubting Thomases in the house, can be substantiated by three prize awards in the 1949 *Field & Stream* Big Fish Contest. There would have been more in '50's contest except for the tragedy that cost the life of one who loved the Wild Swan as much as I do. I dedicate this story to him—to Al Townsend, late of Jeffersonville, N. Y.

Wyatt Blassingame

WHEN Wyatt Blassingame was graduated from the University of Alabama, he and a fellow-student, feeling flush with $8.50 between them, started for California. There he received a windfall of ten dollars as a graduation present, and with it the two visited Mexico and many of the Western States, arriving back at the University as the fall session started.

From then on, his work as a college instructor, newspaper man, and free-lance writer has been interrupted by various trips—through the Caribbean, the Canadian lumber camps, sections of South America, Hawaii, Okinawa, etc. —the last few while serving as a lieutenant in the Navy. His nickname—surprisingly—is Hobo. His hobby—surprise?—is fishing; and his non-military headquarters—you'd never guess it from his story—is Florida.



Wyatt Blassingame

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