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THRILLING ADVENTURES

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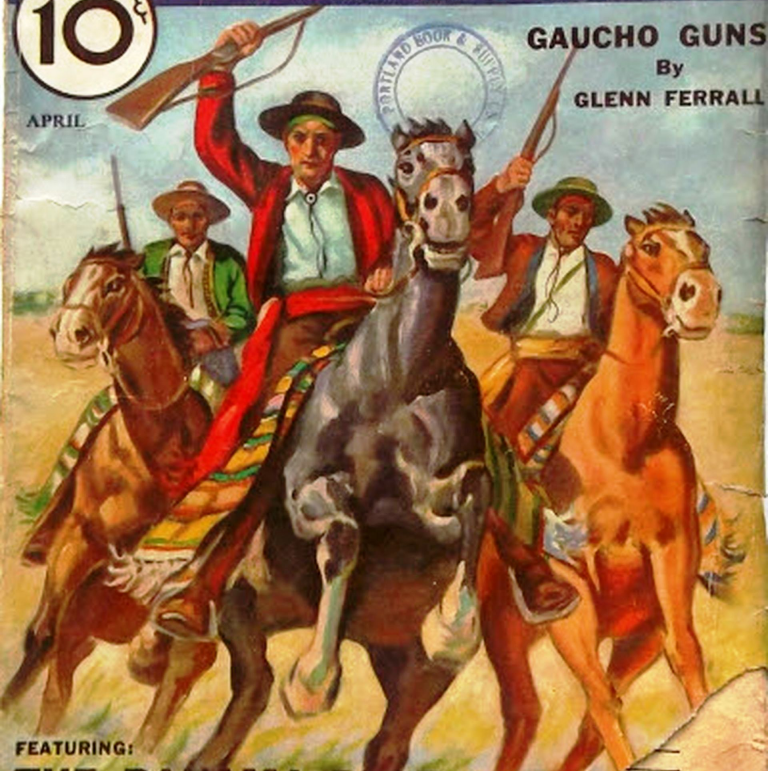
By
GLENN FERRALL



FEATURING:

THE PANAMA PLOT
A Complete Book-Length Novel

By L
JOHN

MAGIC CHEESE CHIPS

Coast-to-Coast Success!

POSITIVE PROOF

OF UP TO $60 TO $300 A WEEK AT HOME

NO HOUSE-TO-HOUSE CANVASSING

Experience Unnecessary—No Costly Machine to Buy

THE new coast-to-coast food hit. You work at home, chips come to you already made. Simply drop into hot grease and they're ready to eat! No complicated work, no experience, no failures! Positive proof of opportunity to make up to $30 *first day*. Distributors now making high as $60 to $300 a week clear! Not a machine. No need to buy special equipment. Stores do your selling for you. NO LOSS on unsold goods—we take care of it! A phenomenal success! Sells faster than potato chips, donuts. Magic Cheese Chips are big, fluffy, giant-size chips bigger than potato chips. Irresistible taste makes them act like an appetizer. The more you eat, the more you want to eat, and you never get filled up! It's a revelation! Nothing like it. Crowds Maine to California devouring thousands of pounds weekly!

$2.00 A POUND PROFIT!

An enormous profit on a small investment! Everyone likes this tasty tidbit any time of the day. 5 and 10 cent bags of Magic Cheese Chips sell like wildfire. Sales often run up to hundreds of dollars daily.

MEN, WOMEN EVERYWHERE Start at Scratch, Build Up to 1,000 Pound a Month Businesses

Men and women succeed alike—no super-salesmanship—no skill—no canvassing. E. Weiler, California, starts with 10 pounds, uses profits to build up to 30 pounds, then 60 pounds, then places standing order for 150 pounds EVERY THREE DAYS! ALL PAID FOR OUT OF PROFITS! One of the largest bakery chain systems in the U. S. bids for exclusive rights in 200 cities, but we had already allowed exclusive to others, except in 9 cities which they grab eagerly. Buy 150 pounds at a clip for each store! J. F. Knudson, living in a small New York city, wires, "RUSH ONE HUNDRED TWENTY POUNDS. OUR TRADE WILL REQUIRE UPWARD OF FIVE HUNDRED POUNDS MONTHLY." Large Pacific Coast concern wires, "INCREASE STANDING ORDER TO ONE HUNDRED FIFTY POUNDS WEEKLY. SHIP TODAY SURE THIRTY POUNDS ADDITIONAL EXPRESS." Long distance calls, telegrams flooding in from everywhere—we've had our plant working twenty-four hours a day to meet the demand! No hard times for MAGIC CHEESE CHIPS!

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We furnish everything—advertising, display stands, etc. Don't wait until it's too late to get the FIRST BIG PROFITS in **your** locality. Mail the coupon at once for complete details and share the enormous profits immediately!

FLUFF-O MFG. CO., Dept. U-4, St. Louis, Mo.

NEW NOW!

The Smash Hit of the day! The big fad at parties, outdoor games. People everywhere munching 'em on the streets! Takes instantly. Biggest food novelty boom in years!

VIRGIN TERRITORY EVERYWHERE

Hundreds of successful businesses now operating. Thousands of open territories. Hundreds of cities open—thousands of small towns. Immediate success possible anywhere. Write today.

SEND for ACTUAL PHOTO-COPIES of ORDERS from MAGIC CHIP DEALERS

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Without obligation to me, rush full information at once about Magic Cheese Chips and your proposition where I can make up to $60 to $300 a week at home.

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»»»»» These Four Famous «««««

CHAMPIONS

Hold National and World's Records

They are all pupils of George F. Jowett and are now being trained by him for coming A. A. U. events

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Joe Miller is a "natural". He holds many records on the Olympic lifts. He has "jerked" 290 pounds and "cleaned" over 300!

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For 5 years National lightweight Champion! The only man in America to do more than his body weight in the one hand snatch!

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The first American to emulate his teacher, George F. Jowett, and lift double his body weight in the two hand "jerk"!

BILL GOOD

First American regardless of body weight to exceed heavyweight totals on the 3 Olympic lifts. 311 lbs. with two hand "clean and jerk"!

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So sure am I that I can do all that I say, that I make this unqualified guarantee... the guarantee that no Physical Instructor has ever DARED to make . . .

»» I Guarantee to Add at Least . . .

3 INCHES TO YOUR CHEST 2 INCHES TO YOUR BICEPS

. . . or it won't cost you one cent! Signed: GEORGE F. JOWETT

Test my full course, if it does not do all I say—and I will let *you* be the judge—then it won't cost you one penny, even the postage you have spent will be refunded to you.

Those skinny fellows that are discouraged are the men I want to work with. I'll build a strong man's body for them and do it quickly. And I don't mean cream-puff muscles either—you will get real, genuine muscles that will make your men friends respect you and women admire you!

While my full course only costs a few cents a day, I want you to try one of my test courses first . . .

Send for "Moulding a Mighty Arm" a Complete Course for only 25c

It will be a revelation to you. You can't make a mistake. The guaranty of the strongest armed man in the world stands behind this course. I give you all the secrets of strength illustrated and explained as you like them. You, too, can get an unbreakable grip of steel and a Herculean arm.

Try any one of my test courses listed in the coupon at 25c. Or, try all six of them for only $1.00.

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It describes Geo. F. Jowett's rise from a puny boy to be one of the world's strongest athletes with a chest measurement of 49 inches and an 18 inch bicep! It explains why he is called "Champion of Champions"—and there is a "thrill" in every page.

It is a priceless book to the strength fan and muscle builder. Full of pictures of marvelous bodied men who tell you decisively how you can build symmetry and strength the equal of their own. Reach out . . . Grasp This Special Offer.

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THRILLING ADVENTURES

Vol. V, No. 2 J. S. WILLIAMS, *Editor* April, 1933

COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

COMPLETE NOVELETTE

THRILLING SHORT STORIES

THREE-PART SERIAL

THRILLING FEATURES

Published monthly by METROPOLITAN MAGAZINES, INC., 570 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y. M. A. Goldsmith, President; N. L. Pines, Treasurer. Yearly, $1.20; single copies, $.10; Foreign and Canadian, postage extra. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., on Oct. 16, 1931, under Act of March 3, 1879.

Manuscripts should be accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes and are submitted at the author's risk.

Why waste time on *old fashioned methods*

—when you can learn to play at home without a teacher

DON'T let the thought of long years of tiresome practice scare you away from learning to play! Don't let the thought of an expensive private teacher keep you from letting your dreams come true! For you — *anyone* — can easily *teach yourself* to play—right in your own home, in your spare time, and at only a fraction of what old, slow methods cost!

It's *so* easy! Just look at that sketch at the right. The note in the first space is *always* f. The note in the second place is *always* a. The way to know the notes that come in these four spaces is simply to remember that they spell *face*.

Now, isn't that simple? You don't have to know one note from another in order to begin. For the U. S. School way explains everything as *you go along*—both in print and picture—so that, almost before you know it, you are playing *real tunes and melodies* right from the notes.

You simply *can't go wrong*. First you are *told* what to do, then the picture *shows* you how to do it—then you do it yourself and *hear* it. No private teacher could make it any clearer.

Easy as A-B-C

No wonder over 600,000 men and women have learned to play this easy way. For this famous course is based on sound, fundamental musical principles, highly simplified. It's not a "trick" or "stunt" method. You learn to play from notes, just as the best musicians do. You learn to pick up any piece of music, read it, and understand it.

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Trombone
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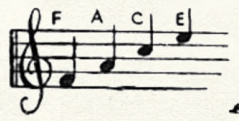
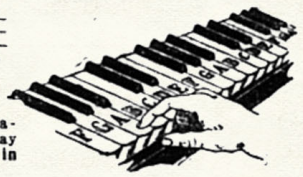
No Talent Needed

Forget the old-fashioned idea that you need "talent." Just read the list of instruments in the panel, decide which one you want to play, and the U. S. School of Music will do the rest. And remember — no matter which instrument you choose, the cost in each case will average just the same—only a few cents a day.

You'll never regret having learned to play. For those who can entertain with music at parties—who can snap up things with peppy numbers — are always sought after, always sure of a good time! Start now and surprise your friends.

Easy as A-B-C





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"How You Can Master Music in Your Own Home," is an interesting little book that is yours for the asking. With this free book we will send you a typical demonstration lesson that proves better than words how quickly and easily you can learn to play your favorite instrument by note—in less than half the time and a fraction of the cost of old, slow methods—the U. S. School way. The booklet will also tell you all about the amazing new *Automatic Finger Control*. No obligation.

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A new and revolutionary religious teaching based entirely on the misunderstood sayings of the Galilean Carpenter, and designed to show how to find and use the same identical power that He used.

DR. FRANK B. ROBINSON
Founder of "Psychiana" and author of "The God Nobody Knows," "America Awakening," etc.

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BELIEVES AND TEACHES AS FOLLOWS:

FIRST—That there is no such thing as a "subconscious mind."

SECOND—That there is, in this universe, a FAR MORE POTENT and DYNAMIC POWER, the manifestations of which have been erroneously credited to some other supposed power called the "subconscious mind."

THIRD—That this INVISIBLE, DYNAMIC Power is THE VERY SAME POWER that JESUS USED when He staggered the nations by His so-called "miracles," and by raising the dead.

FOURTH—That Jesus had NO MONOPOLY on this Power.

FIFTH—That it is possible for EVERY NORMAL human being understanding spiritual law as He understood it, TO DUPLICATE EVERY WORK THAT THIS CARPENTER OF GALILEE EVER DID. When He said "the things that I do shall YE DO ALSO"—He meant EXACTLY WHAT HE SAID.

SIXTH—That this dynamic Power is NOT TO BE FOUND "within," but has its source in a far different direction.

SEVENTH—THAT THE WORDS OF THIS GALILEAN CARPENTER WENT A THOUSAND MILES OVER THE HEADS OF HIS HEARERS 2,000 YEARS AGO, AND ARE STILL A THOUSAND MILES OVER THE HEADS OF THOSE WHO PROFESS TO FOLLOW HIM TODAY.

EIGHTH—That this same MIGHTY, INVISIBLE, PULSATING, THROBBING POWER can be used by anyone—AT ANY HOUR OF THE DAY OR NIGHT and without such methods as "going into the silence" or "gazing at bright objects," etc.

NINTH—That when once understood and correctly used, this mighty Power is ABUNDANTLY ABLE, AND NEVER FAILS TO GIVE HEALTH, HAPPINESS, and OVERWHELMING SUCCESS in whatever proper line it may be desired.

DR. FRANK B. ROBINSON

considered by many to be one of the keenest psychological minds this country has ever produced, and one of the most earnest, intense searchers into the spiritual realm, believes, after years of experimentation and research, that there is in this world today, an UNSEEN power or force, so dynamic in itself, that all other powers or forces FADE INTO INSIGNIFICANCE BESIDE IT. He believes that this power or force is THE VERY SAME POWER THAT JESUS USED. He believes further that the entire world, including the present church structure, MISSED IN ITS ENTIRETY the message that He came to bring. He believes that

The world is on the verge of the most stupendous spiritual upheaval it has ever experienced —the advent of Christ being of small importance when compared to it.

FREE ... FREE ... FREE

Every reader of this magazine is cordially invited to write "PSYCHIANA" for more details of this revolutionary teaching which, if true, might very easily be discussed the ENTIRE WORLD ROUND. Dr. Robinson will tell you something of his years of search for the truth as he KNEW it must exist, and will give you a few facts connected with the founding of "PSYCHIANA." NO OBLIGATIONS WHATSOEVER. Sign your name and address here.

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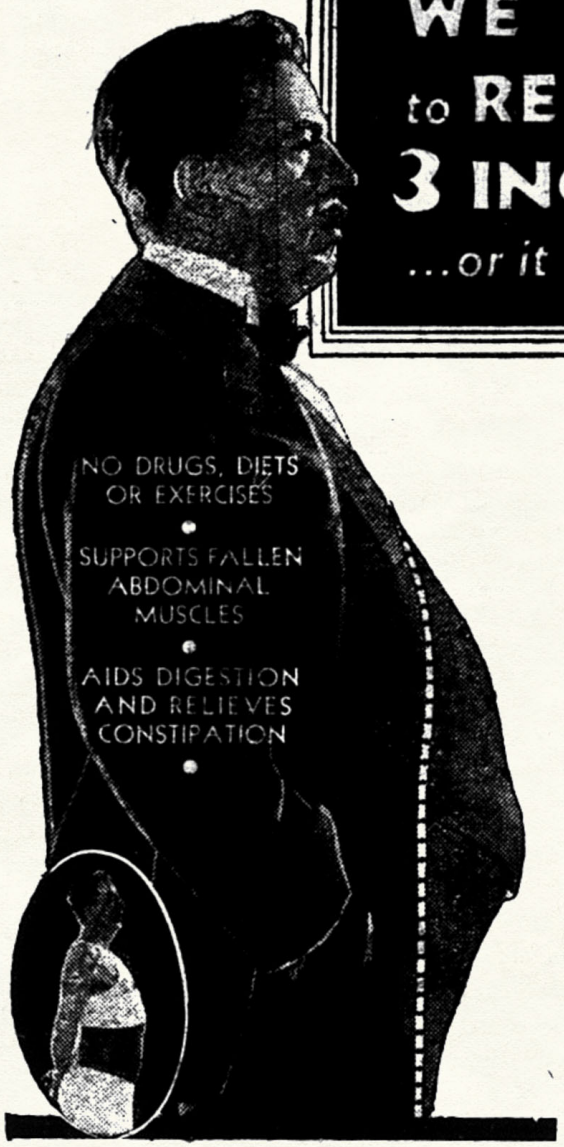
WE GUARANTEE to REDUCE your WAIST 3 INCHES in 10 DAYS ...or it won't cost you a penny!



THE WEIL REDUCING BELT

will make you appear many inches slimmer at once, and in 10 short days your waistline will actually be 3 inches smaller—three inches of fat gone—or it won't cost you one cent!

It Greatly Improves Your Appearance!

It supports the sagging muscles of the abdomen and quickly gives an erect, athletic carriage. You will be more than delighted with the great improvement in your appearance.

Don't be embarrassed any longer with that "corporation" for in a very short time, only the admiring comments of your friends will remind you that you once had a bulging waistline.

This Famous Reducing Belt will prove a great boon to you, for now you can be your slimmer self without strenuous exercise, diet or drugs!

It Is the Massage-Like Action that Does It!

You will be completely comfortable and entirely unaware that its constant gentle pressure is working constantly while you walk, work or sit . . . its massage-like action gently but persistently eliminating fat with every move you make.

George Bailey writes: "I reduced my waist 8 inches in seven months." W. T. Anderson writes: "I reduced my weight 50 pounds! Many enthusiastic wearers write that it not only reduces fat but it also supports the abdominal walls and keeps the digestive organs in place—that they are no longer fatigued—and that it greatly increases their endurance and vigor!

Don't Wait—Fat Is Dangerous!

Fat is not only unbecoming, but it also endangers your health. Insurance companies know the danger of fat accumulations. The best medical authorities warn against obesity, so don't wait any longer.

YOU CAN'T LOSE—Send for our 10 day free trial offer. We repeat—either you take off 3 inches of fat in 10 days, or it won't cost you one penny! Even the postage you pay to return the package will be refunded.

SEND FOR FREE 10 DAY TRIAL OFFER

THE WEIL COMPANY, INC.
1033 HILL STREET, NEW HAVEN, CONN.

Gentlemen: Send me FREE, your illustrated folder describing The Weil Belt and full details of your 10 day FREE trial offer.

*Name*_____

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Use coupon or write your name and address on a penny post card.

FRED WOLF

FELT LIKE A NEW MAN!

Weil Belt Co., New Haven, Conn.

Gentlemen: Your belt is truly wonderful . . its possibilities are innumerable . I feel like a new man!

It caused me to assume a correct posture, thereby putting my stomach in its proper place . . . in fact I was treated for ulcers that did not exist.

In the three months I have worn your belt, a reduction of 5 inches seems to be permanent.

You may use this letter and my picture. FRED WOLF

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REDUCED 26 POUNDS IN SIX WEEKS!

Gentlemen: Please send me another of your Reducing Belts. I got splendid results from my other one in 6 weeks and reduced my weight 26 lbs. and my waist measure 4½ inches.

My blood pressure is again normal. Circulation is better, and I sleep a lot better. You have my permission to use this letter

Very truly yours,

Pampa, Texas. CLYDE R. PRICE.

PANAMA

A Complete Book-

By LIEUT. JOHN

Author of "Dangerous Heritage,"

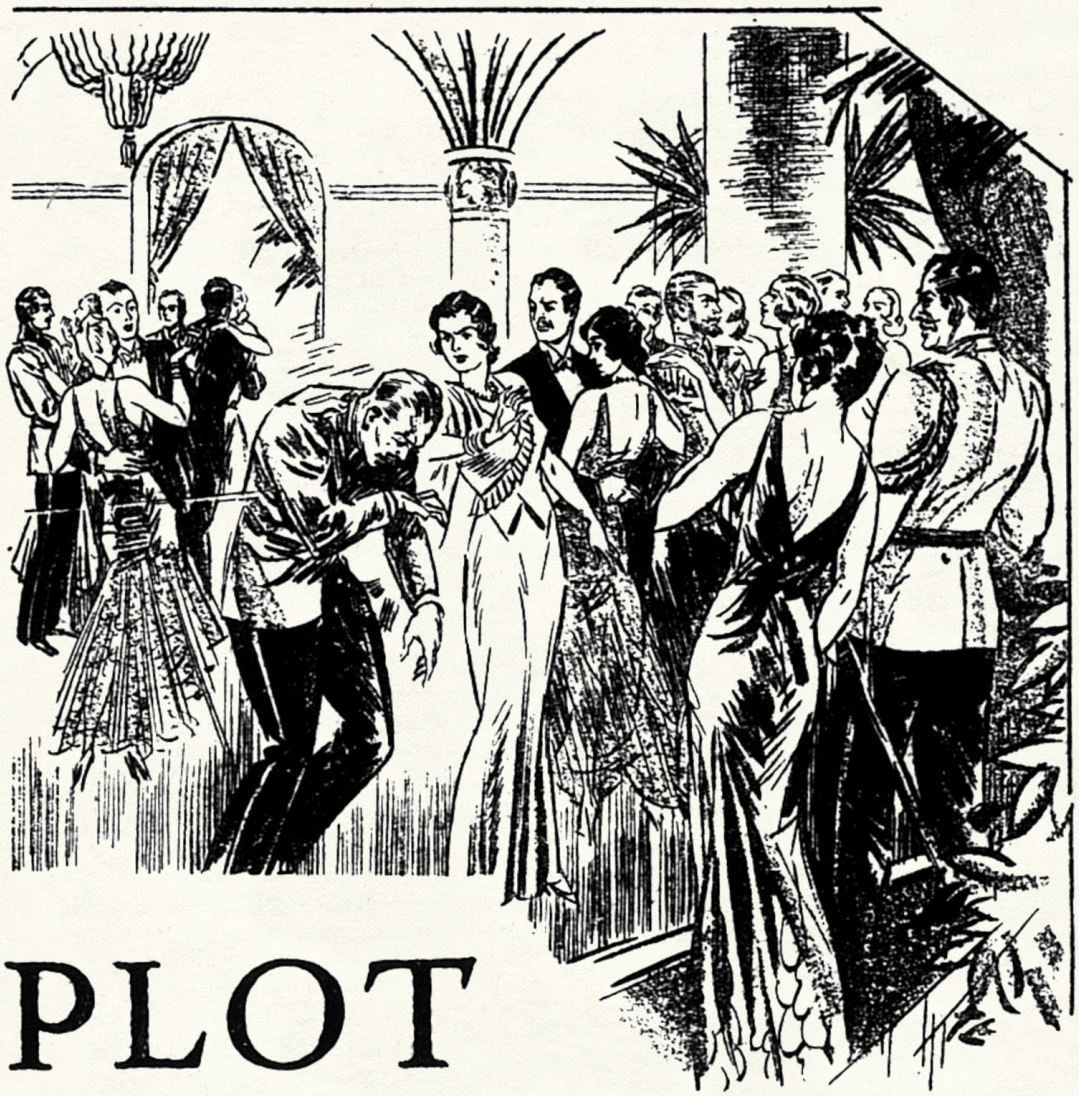
CHAPTER I

The Death Dance

LIEUTENANT DICK SAUNDERS, U. S. Army, sat alone at a little table on a balcony of the Century Club, Panama City, R. de P. Through the open doorway in front of him, he could see the ballroom, which presented a most colorful, military scene. Officers in black trousers and white jackets ornamented with gold braid, danced with women whose evening dresses, in color and sheerness, outdid the exotic, tropical flowers with which the ballroom was banked.

Saunders was a little bored. His lean, tanned fingers touched his close-cropped mustache to hide a yawn. He did not care much for these monthly military dances sponsored by the army officers stationed

"Mister Zero" Holds the Fate of a Nation in His



PLOT

Length Novel

HOPPER

"Deserter," etc.

at the various forts that protected the Pacific entrance of the Panama Canal. For one thing, he had no girl. He had not seen anyone in the tropics at whom he cared to cast a second glance.

Saunders toyed with the empty cocktail glass in front of him, and gratefully breathed the warm, fragrant night air. He was glad he was not dancing in the hot ballroom. He much preferred to sit out on the balcony and look at the quiet street below him. Across the way was a park, and a high, white, tropical moon was silvering its palm trees.

It was getting late, thought Saunders, and pretty soon he would go home. He had only come to the dance because military custom dictated that junior officers put in an appearance at formal affairs.

His glance strayed through the

Hands in This Stirring Novel of the Canal Zone

doorway again, and he saw Lieutenant Bill Delahoyt, his roommate at the fort, dance by in the swirling throng. The girl in Bill's arms held Saunders' gaze. She was beautiful in an evening dress of cream white silk, long and very plain, needing no embellishment other than the perfect form to which it had been faithfully molded.

Her hair was as black as gleaming ebony, and she wore it long, coiled around her shapely head in an unusual, striking fashion. Her features, covered with a white, satiny skin, were perfect. Her lips formed a warm, full crimson bow.

As Saunders stared at her, she suddenly lifted her long-lashed eyelids beyond the shoulder of Delahoyt's white jacket, and stared back at him. Caught staring, Saunders turned his gaze away quickly, and reddened to the edge of his dark hair. Her eyes, a vivid sea-green, like the Caribbean under the tropical sun, always disconcerted him anyway. They were startling eyes, all the more unexpected, because her hair was so dark.

She was a Russian princess, exiled by the Soviets. Even so, Saunders did not like the Princess Sonya. He tolerated her because she happened to be Bill Delahoyt's current flame.

AT that moment Saunders noticed a man standing beside the doorway. His back was turned, but from his well-tailored tuxedo, Saunders guessed him to be a civilian. He was a man of medium height and build, with jet black hair plastered down smooth and shining to his head.

Suddenly Saunders was gripped with astonishment. He saw this man's black-clothed arm appear from the region of his chest and raise a revolver, which he pointed at Delahoyt, dancing with the glamorous girl warm in his arms, and wholly unaware of the death at his back.

For a fraction of a second Saunders sat astounded with clenched fists. What he was witnessing seemed to stun his senses and paralyze his muscles. This mad thing couldn't really be happening! At a formal military dance! Deliberate, cold-blooded murder!

AT the same instant that Saunders hurled himself forward with a shout, he heard the sharp report of the gun. He saw the revolver jump in recoil in the assassin's hand, and out of a corner of his eye, he saw Delahoyt stumble forward, clutch at his dancing partner, and then slide ominously to the floor as she screamed.

The man whirled and saw Saunders charging at him. He raised the revolver swiftly and brought it down in a tremendous blow. If Saunders had not had his hands up in swift, instinctive defense, the heavy barrel of the gun would have crushed in his head like an eggshell. As it was, he received a glancing blow on the forehead, which sent him staggering back on the balcony to upset the table.

In that brief instant Saunders caught a flashing glimpse of the man's face. It was dark; its forehead was high and bulging; the lines from the prominent cheek bones met in a point at a small chin. In that face, a pair of dark eyes sunk into deep cavities under the broad forehead, glittered with mad, killing light.

The dance music ended in a series of discordant notes from the various instruments in the orchestra. Those who had been dancing so pleasurably and unconcernedly a moment before, swept back in a widening arc from the body of Lieutenant Delahoyt, crumpled face downward on the polished floor.

They stared in horror at the crimson stain slowly dying the back of Delahoyt's white jacket. Some women screamed, and others fainted. More than one pair of eyes were fixed upon the woman with whom Delahoyt had been dancing. She stood a few feet from the body, with her slim, white, jeweled hand pressed tightly to her face, staring down with wide, fascinated sea-green eyes.

Meanwhile Saunders had scrambled to his feet from the wreckage of the flimsy table. He was just in time to see a pair of hands disappear from the railing of the balcony as Delahoyt's assailant dropped down into the street.

Saunders did not hesitate. He leaped to the balcony railing.

It was a long drop from the balcony to the street. Saunders made it, and straightened in time to see his quarry disappear around the corner of the block on which the Century Club stood. As the hour was late, no other persons were on the street.

SAUNDERS raced for the corner and turned it at full speed. Consequently when a man's dark bulk loomed suddenly out of the shadows of the street before him, he was running too fast to swerve aside to avoid a collision.

The two men came together forcibly. Saunders heard the other give a short grunt of astonishment and pain. Then Saunders felt two arms clutch him and drag him down to the sidewalk.

Saunders' chest was to the sidewalk. The man he had bumped into was sprawled across his back. A quick suspicion stabbed the officer's mind that he had been purposely waylaid. Accordingly he began to writhe and twist furiously to escape from the other's clumsy but effective embrace.

The man on top was heavy and fleshy. He kept grunting angrily, and snorting some strange words which Saunders did not understand. He seemed to be making no direct effort to keep Saunders pinned to the sidewalk, but his weight combined with his clumsy clutchings and rollings held the army officer down effectively.

FINALLY Saunders managed to push away and jump to his feet. His glance immediately darted down the deserted, black-shadowed street, but met no sign of the man he had been pursuing.

Baffled and angry, Saunders turned to his companion, who was rising laboriously to his feet, with many puffs and grunts. He was short and stout, and wore civilian full dress. A colored ribbon diagonally crossed the crumpled bosom of his stiff white shirt. Several small medals glittered and gleamed at the button holes of his swallow-tailed coat. His round face was creased with wrinkles of age, where it was not covered by a full, luxuriant beard.

He brushed his clothes and collected his pompous dignity.

"I am ver-r-ry sor-r-ry," he acknowledged, his speech strongly flavored with a foreign accent. "I deed not see you coming around thee corner so fas'."

"I was after a man," explained Saunders shortly. "He ran down this street. Did you see him?"

The gentleman lifted his heavy eyebrows in astonishment.

"A man? No," he confessed slowly. "I have seen no one. I have jus' stepped out from the club, when we were so unfortunate to have knock' each other down. Ten thousan' pardons, sir! I look for my car, as I weesh to go home."

Saunders received the apology in

silence, scrutinizing the other man narrowly. The officer still felt bitter about having lost trace of the man who had shot Delahoyt.

"I'm sure," he said, selecting his words carefully, and glancing toward the side entrance of the Century Club, which was a few feet from where they stood, "that the man could not have come down this street without your seeing him." Saunders paused a moment before adding significantly, "A moment ago, he shot Lieutenant Delahoyt in the ballroom of the Century Club."

Watching the man closely, Saunders thought he saw a momentary glitter in his eyes, which faded as swiftly as it had been born.

"Ah, yes!" he breathed in sympathetic horror. "I was een thee ballroom when eet happen'! A mos' terrible theeng! I am sorry you deed not catch thees man!"

SAUNDERS glanced thoughtfully toward the side entrance.

"Perhaps," he suggested, "we had better go back. There may be an investigation going on now."

The stout man smiled regretfully and shook his head.

"I go home," he stated simply. "Thees has been very bad for my nerves."

Saunders stood indecisive, trying to decide what to do. He had a twofold purpose in desiring his companion to return to the club with him. He could bear out Saunders' story that the officer had been chasing Delahoyt's assailant, who had managed to make his escape somehow through the deserted, shadowed streets and alleys surrounding the Century Club. The second reason was purely personal on Saunders' part. He wanted a better scrutiny of the man who had so coincidentally collided with him at a crucial moment.

Saunders' eyes widened when he turned them toward the club entrance again.

A moment before the doorway had been empty. Now a woman was standing in it, silently observing him. She wore a clinging wrap of a deep wine red. A thick collar of white fur formed a striking background for her pale, beautiful face and black hair. Saunders instantly recognized the Russian princess, who had been Delahoyt's partner in the dance of death.

CHAPTER II

Secret Agent Number Five

SHE hurried toward them in agitation, her strange green eyes wide with apprehension.

"My father!" she breathed, the merest trace of accent marring her English. "What is the matter?"

Saunders was startled. He had known that the Princess Sonya was in Panama with her father, the Grand Duke Boris, but he had never seen the old man. Delahoyt had been very close-mouthed about his girl, perhaps because he knew that Saunders disliked her.

The grand duke shrugged his heavy sloping shoulders.

"Eeet ees notheeng, my child Thees gentleman an' I have had what they say in English, 'bump into.' He says that he was chaseeng thee man who have shoot thee Lieutenant Delahoyt. An' now he desire that we go back to thee ballroom for an investigation."

The girl drew very close to Saunders. His heart beat faster at the subtle perfume emanating from her. There was no doubt, the officer admitted to himself, that she had allure.

"I have just come down from the ballroom," she said, in a low, vibrating voice. "There is no investiga-

tion. I am glad because I do not think," she said frankly, "that I could stand such a thing just now."

Her lower lip trembled, and her green eyes grew misty.

"It was so horrible! I shall never forget. Bill—killed in my arms."

The Grand Duke Boris placed an arm around his daughter, and spoke comforting words to her in their native tongue. Saunders stood by silently, feeling very uncomfortable.

The Princess Sonya raised her head with determined courage. She even managed a faint smile.

"Everyone is free to go home," she told Saunders. "My father came down ahead of me to procure our car."

At that moment a long, low, sleek limousine, piloted by a uniformed impassive chauffeur, appeared out of the shadows of the street and purred to the curb.

The girl held out her hand to Saunders.

"I KNOW how you feel," she said, with a catch in her voice. "You and Lieutenant Delahoyt lived together, didn't you? Bill used to tell me about you." Her voice tightened and threatened to break. "It was so —so awful. I don't know why, or who could have shot him."

After she and her father had entered the limousine, Saunders stood for a moment at the curb and watched their departure. The blinking ruby-red tail-light was vanishing into the warm blackness when he heard a dry, cackling laugh from the doorway of the Century Club.

Startled, Saunders whirled and saw a curious figure of a man. He was abnormally tall, and, although the night was actually hot, he was completely swathed in an overcoat. Its upturned collar met a dark felt hat pulled down low over his face.

He began to speak in a dry, nasal voice.

"You're the officer who jumped over the balcony! Well, you've just seen the murderer depart."

"What!"

The slouch hat inclined slightly toward the disappearing tail-light of the limousine.

"Yes. He's gone off in style—with the Grand Duke Boris and the Princess Sonya."

SAUNDERS followed the man in the overcoat up the stairs to the upper halls of the club, which were filled with excited officers and ladies making ready to depart from the ball that had ended so tragically. Without glancing to the right or left, Saunders' strange guide led the way to a small private dining room and carefully closed the door behind them. Then he tossed his hat and coat on the table.

Saunders saw that he was abnormally thin as well as abnormally tall. In his civilian tuxedo, he seemed to be a collection of prominent bones covered with dry, tight, pasty-gray skin. A few wisps of gray hair ineffectually tried to cover the large dome of his head. Blue eyes, more piercing than any Saunders had ever seen, looked out from beneath an abnormally high forehead. The man's lips were thin and bloodless over a prominent, bony chin. His nose, too, was abnormally large, looking like a hawk's beak, and also looking as if he could touch his chin with it if he tried.

He gave his overcoat a scant, wry smile.

"Can't stand tropic nights," he explained. "People look at me, and probably think I'm crazy to wear that stuff, but it seems to keep the chills away from me. Got the fever once down here. That was in the old days."

He grinned crookedly.

"Ever hear about how we wangled the right to build the Panama Canal, Lieutenant? It was pretty dark and dangerous work. In those days, there were as many spies in Panama City as there were mosquitoes."

He made a grimace.

"But we beat them all. The United States built the Canal, and a dozen prime ministers of foreign countries were madder than blazes.

"And now," he lit a cigarette and held up the match to blow out its flame with a cloud of smoke, "I've been sent down here again. It seems that the mosquitoes are all gone—but there's a new crop of spies."

Saunders had been listening to his companion's garrulous speech with only half a mind. The main thing in his thoughts was Delahoyt. When Saunders had jumped from the balcony, he had not known that he was pursuing a murderer. He had seen Delahoyt fall, but he had hoped that his wound would not be fatal.

GOOD old Bill—murdered! Saunders' blood boiled at the thought of the killer who had shot a man in the back, accomplishing the dirty deed at a dance, where no man would expect an attack. Shot him while he was dancing with a woman.

Saunders and Delahoyt had been firm friends and roommates ever since they had been in the tropics. They had come down from the States together in the same army transport. They had been assigned to the same fort and the same regiment. Both were West Pointers, but Delahoyt had been in the class of 1920, while Saunders had been in 1925.

Puzzled thoughts whirled through Saunders' head. Why had Bill been murdered? As far as Saunders knew, Bill Delahoyt had no enemies in the world. He was far too good a fellow—honest, square and loyal—for that.

Saunders realized suddenly that the man in the room was speaking directly to him.

"You saw the man who killed Delahoyt, Lieutenant? What did he look like?"

THE questioner smoked thoughtfully while Saunders described the man with the sleek black hair.

"M-m-m-mh! I thought so. In fact, I practically knew it," said the tall, thin gentleman, as he leaned against the dining table behind him.

Saunders now thought it was his turn to ask a question. In the first place, he was curious about his odd companion. The man had an official air about him, but Saunders did not recall having ever seen him before. That was a little strange, for nearly all Americans stationed in the Canal Zone got to know each other after a while.

But Saunders' first question was about Delahoyt's murderer.

"You said that he was in the limousine with the princess and her father?"

"It was a guess on my part, Lieutenant. But a darned good one, I think."

"But—but how?" sputtered Saunders. "If he had been, the princess and her father must have certainly known it!"

"I don't doubt that they did," came the calm reply. "The murderer was probably out of sight on the floor of the car. That's how you missed him, Lieutenant. And that's how he disappeared so quickly. The car was probably waiting for him in the shadows down the street. And when the grand duke accidentally knocked you over, he was only playing his part."

"I—I don't understand," said Saunders bewilderedly. "The Princess

Sonya was a very good friend to Delahoyt. She and her father certainly wouldn't have shielded the murderer."

Saunders looked at the man in front of him with sudden suspicion.

"If you knew he was in that car," he cried, "why didn't you stop him? Who are you anyway?"

THE man smiled, and for an instant it looked as if his hooked nose were going to touch his pointed chin.

"Before I tell you who I am, Lieutenant, I want to ask you if you'd like the opportunity to settle scores with the murderer of your friend? You see, I know quite a good deal about you. I knew Lieutenant Delahoyt—well."

"I certainly would," answered Saunders shortly.

"I thought you would." The other's smile widened. "Well, I'm just plain Jim Jones—which means nothing. But I am also"—the smile faded—"Number Five, United States Secret Service."

Saunders stared.

"You don't have to take my word for it," said Number Five dryly. "In the morning you can go to the Panama Canal Zone Department and be convinced. Lieutenant Delahoyt has been working with me—until his unfortunate demise this evening." Number Five hesitated. "That's what you have to expect," he sighed, "in our game."

His icy blue gaze penetrated deeply into Saunders' eyes.

"I'm offering you Delahoyt's place—for two reasons. First, because Delahoyt was your friend, and you'll work hard to avenge him. Second, because you saw the man who killed him. Of all the crowd in the ballroom tonight, I doubt if anyone besides yourself saw the murderer. He stood unobtrusively by your balcony, probably selecting it because he thought it was untenanted. You were alone, and back in the shadows, weren't you?"

Saunders nodded his head.

"But what is it all about?" he demanded. "Why did that man kill Delahoyt? And what about the princess and her father?"

Number Five lit another cigarette.

"Lieutenant, the Princess Sonya and the grand duke no more belong to the old Russian nobility than you or I do. It's just their front. They know that titles will get them into the society of foolish people. That's why they claim that they are refugees of the Russian revolution. And who can prove differently? There are Russian emigres all over the world, and a few of them really did belong to the imperial nobility.

"For some time I have suspected that the princess and her father were plain Reds, here in Panama to do their best to damage the United States. Tonight, when Delahoyt was murdered, I became sure of it. Delahoyt was working secretly with me. He was a spy, making love to the Princess Sonya solely for the sake of information. She and her comrades must have found him out in some way, and so—they killed him."

SAUNDERS stared unbelievingly at Number Five's lean, withered face. The army officer's thoughts were jumbled in his brain. Even his wildest imaginings would not have given him the thought that the princess was a Red agent, upon whom Bill Delahoyt was spying.

Saunders moistened his dry lips.

"And—and you want me to—to—" he hesitated.

Number Five nodded his head sharply.

"Exactly, Lieutenant. Pick up where Delahoyt was forced to leave off. Make a play for the girl your-

self. Anything. *But get information about what those people are doing.* Oh, it's dangerous business," went on Number Five grimly. "Murder means nothing to them. Witness Delahoyt tonight. If they once suspect you—" Number Five waved his cigarette. "Poof!" he finished meaningly.

"The girl will be nice to you," he continued. "Just as she was to Delahoyt. They'll take you at face value, a young officer attracted to the princess because of her beauty. And they'll try to get information out of you. But play dumb. Never give them the slightest opportunity to suspect that you are spying on them."

By now Saunders' thoughts had adjusted themselves.

"But why can't they be arrested for the murder of Delahoyt?" he cried. "That would put an end to their activities."

Number Five smiled thinly.

IT'S not so simple as all that, Saunders. We very probably could find the man who killed Delahoyt, and put him away on your testimony. But, what about the others? We wouldn't be able to get a thing on them, and they would go on with their work here.

"No," he said determinedly, "what we've got to get is the dope on all of them."

Number Five began pacing the room slowly.

"You undoubtedly know, Lieutenant, that the Panama Canal is most important to our national defense. We realized that in '98 when we had to send a fleet clear around the Horn to fight the Spaniards. Those were anxious days, when the entire country wondered if the fleet would make the trip around South America in time to prevent the Spanish from bombarding the large cities on the West Coast. Well, we still have enemies, and it's still just as important to have a short cut for our fleet.

"You also know that we do not own the strip of land across the Isthmus in which we have dug the Canal. We have leased it for ninety-nine years from the Republic of Panama. The lease has a great many years yet to run—if it is not canceled. We do not want it canceled. We cannot afford to permit such a thing."

"But how could it be canceled?" Saunders demanded. "The government of Panama is very friendly toward us."

"This government is. But suppose there should be another? Look what happened to Spain, and in a dozen South American countries only this year!"

Intensely absorbed, Saunders stared at Number Five's peculiar, uncanny features.

"Revolution!" he cried. "But not here, in Panama! The country is peaceful; the people are satisfied."

"The surface may look like that," smiled Number Five grimly. "But all hell might be boiling underneath, just waiting for someone, or something, to kick the lid off. You never can tell, these days. The mad impulse to revolt, the crazy desire to destroy all organized and decent and sensible standards of law, order and government has been creeping insidiously around the world, poisoning everything with which it comes in contact. Those responsible for it look with eyes of hatred and envy toward the United States.

THEY know that the loss of the Panama Canal would seriously cripple the military power of our country. Princess Sonya, the Grand Duke Boris and whoever else is associated with them, are undoubtedly here to foment a revolution. They are

probably seeking just one fool, just one Panaman with a little name and influence, for a puppet, to lead the masses of his country to ruin. That is why, Lieutenant, we cannot expose the princess and her friends now. We've got to find out the name of that man."

CHAPTER III

Saunders Sets a Trap

THE next day was Sunday. Saunders rose early. He glanced through the doorway to the adjoining bedroom and sighed heavily at the sight of Delahoyt's empty bed.

Going downstairs, Saunders found the lower floor of the bachelor officers' building deserted. From the kitchen in the rear, however, came the sound of rattling pans and the cheerful aroma of percolating coffee. Following his ears and nose, Saunders tentatively pushed open the swinging door that separated the dining room from the kitchen. A stout, old negress, who cooked for the bachelor officers of the fort, was busily engaged in extracting a pan of hot biscuits from the oven of the gas stove.

She glanced up, startled at Saunders' entrance, and nearly dropped the pan.

"My goodness, Lootinunt!" she exclaimed. "You is up early this Sunday mornin' now!"

She noticed his sober face.

"Wasn't it terrible about poor Lootinunt Delahoyt?" she continued. "You surely mus' feel awful, Lootinunt Saunders."

Saunders nodded his head in silence.

"Well," said the motherly old native, shaking her turbaned head, "you just sit right down to the table, Lootinunt, an' I'll be bringin' your breakfast directly."

Saunders ate mechanically, hardly tasting the food he put into his mouth. His thoughts were wholly on last night. He had agreed to work with Secret Service Agent Number Five. But, puzzled Saunders, how to begin?

He wanted to do something immediately. Saunders' eyes narrowed over a cup of steaming coffee. More than anything else in the world, he wanted to avenge Bill Delahoyt's murder.

Saunders thought of the Princess Sonya. Beautiful—but more dangerous than a rattlesnake. The snake at least rattles to give warning before it strikes.

Folding his napkin, Saunders rose from the table.

OUT on the palm-lined street in front of the bachelor officers' quarters, he took deep breaths of the fresh morning air. The sun was strong on the bushy-headed palms and on the red-tiled roofs of the fort's white stucco buildings. In the distance Saunders could see the Pacific entrance of the Panama Canal, which the fort guarded. The sun glittered on the smooth, gray water, but it had not yet attained the blistering, suffocating heat it would reach at midday.

At the guarded gate of the fort, Saunders secured a taxi, and a few minutes later he was deposited on the Sunday quiet streets of Panama City. At his destination he began to wonder why he had come. He had no definite purpose in mind. He decided that he was restless.

Shrugging his shoulders in his white uniform, he stared leisurely along the streets, stopping now and then to gaze into shop windows at the ivory, silks, jewels and perfumes, all rare and all at ridiculously low prices found nowhere else but at the "Crossroads of the World." Brown,

turbaned Hindus, bland Chinese, smiling Japs, all tried in a mixture of English, Spanish and their own tongues, to entice him to enter their shops and buy. But Saunders shook his head and walked on.

He glanced at his wrist watch, and saw that the time was ten minutes to twelve. He recalled that the drawing in the National Lottery occurred every Sunday at noon in the Cathedral Plaza. It always attracted a crowd of people, natives because of their gambling fever, and white people because of curiosity.

Saunders' heart began to beat faster. Now he knew why his subconscious mind had brought him to the city. It was in the hope of seeing the Princess Sonya, or Delahoyt's murderer. Saunders quickened his steps.

THE *Lotteria Nacional* was in a tiny office across the plaza from the old cathedral. As he had expected, a crowd of dark-skinned natives was milling around on the sidewalk, waiting for the week's lucky numbers to be posted. Saunders could see over their heads into the office, where a little girl, surrounded by somber Panama officials, was reaching into a wire cage filled with white balls. The numbers were contained inside these balls.

Suddenly Saunders heard a voice behind him, which whirled him around with more speed than dignity. He found himself gazing straight into the fathomless green eyes of the Princess Sonya.

"Good morning!" she greeted, in her full, throaty voice. "I hope you have a winning ticket, Lieutenant."

Prepared this morning for the hot, tropical sunshine, she wore a white linen dress, which although made with a practical eye for coolness, did nothing to detract from her dark, exotic beauty. With a slight motion of her slim hand, she indicated her two companions preparatory to introducing them.

Both were men. With a start, which he barely checked before it became too noticeable, Saunders saw that one was the man who had fired the fatal shot at Delahoyt the preceding evening. There was no mistaking the fanatic eyes under the high, bulging forehead, the prominent cheek bones and the small chin.

The other man was older, and possessed a most distinguished appearance. He was tall and powerful. He wore his freshly laundered, tropical linen suit with a dignity that would have been more familiar with a frock coat and a top hat. His beard was a lustrous, silky brown, trimmed to a smart Vandyke. Above the thin lines of a cruel mouth was a mustache with sharp, waxed ends. His dark eyes surveyed Saunders coldly and keenly.

"A very dear friend of my father's, Count Rimski," smiled the princess, introducing him first. Turning to the man who had killed Delahoyt, she continued, "This is Serge Glinka, my father's personal secretary."

Saunders received the prefunctory bows of the two men in silence. He had recovered from the astonishment of seeing again the man who had slain Delahoyt. He marveled that Glinka had the nerve to appear publicly, especially immediately following last night.

PROBABLY, Saunders thought, Glinka was certain that he had not been recognized at the dance. He had knocked down the army officer on the balcony so quickly. Or else, came Saunders' second thought, Glinka, playing a dangerous game, knew that he would not be picked up for the murder until various other activities could be proved against him.

Saunders wondered if the grand duke's secretary recognized him. But the face of Serge Glinka showed no more interest than that of a first meeting.

Thinking of Delahoyt, cold in death upon a marble slab in Gorgas Hospital, while these three unconcernedly promenaded the tree-shaded walk of Cathedral Plaza, Saunders became aware of a red fury in his brain. It was all he could do to keep himself from seizing Glinka's throat. Just in time, the recollection came to Saunders that he was now playing a bigger game, in which men and women were mere pawns, and their deaths, while unfortunate, were not especially important.

SAUNDERS' senses grew keenly alert, seeking any little clue which might inadvertently be dropped. He also realized that the three in front of him were studying him just as keenly. A thrill shot through him. He was like a war horse scenting battle. For the first time, he understood why spies chose their peculiar, dangerous calling. There was a shivery zest in meeting one's opponents as friends, knowing that they would gladly plunge a knife in one's back, if the chance should offer.

"My father insisted that I take a walk this morning," smiled the princess wistfully. On the next sentence her voice broke. "He said that it would be good for me to get out into the air and sunlight after—after last night."

"Oh!" She closed her eyes and shook her head, as if she would shut out the horrible memory in her brain. "I shall never forget it. Never! If I live to be a thousand years old, I shall always be able to close my eyes and see *him* on the floor before me. And I was dancing with him so—so—"

She placed a tiny lace handkerchief to her eyes. Count Rimski extended a comforting arm around her trembling shoulders and spoke softly to her in Russian.

This exquisite bit of hypocrisy made Saunders' blood boil again.

"It was very sad," he forced himself to murmur.

Sonya's handkerchief came down from her face, leaving it more lovely than ever. A pitiful smile touched her enticing lips.

"I know I should be braver," she said. "Forgive me, but when I see the uniform, you know—"

"We must be going on," she interrupted herself suddenly. "Serge must catch the afternoon train for the Atlantic side of the Canal. He has some business of father's to attend to in Colon tomorrow morning."

She extended her hand graciously to Saunders.

"Please come to see me, Lieutenant. You were Lieutenant Delahoyt's closest friend. We have his memory in common, haven't we?"

In all his life Saunders had never hated anyone as much as he hated this beautiful woman standing before him. He understood what the tone of her voice implied. Come and see me, it said. Delahoyt is gone now, and I like you.

AS Saunders took her hand, and felt the firm, intimate press of her fingers, a flash of inspiration struck him.

"By the way, I'm flying over to the other side this afternoon, Princess," he said. "I shall be glad to land Mr. Glinka," he turned toward the secretary, "at France Field, which is only a short taxi ride from Colon."

"Oh!" exclaimed Sonya. "I thought you were a Coast Artillery officer like Bill was. I didn't know you were a flyer."

"I'm not in the Air Corps, if that's what you mean," laughed Saunders easily. "But I can fly a plane."

"I'm afraid I can't go with you," said Glinka in good English. "I do not care very much for airplanes."

"I'm sorry," said Saunders sincerely. "I was hoping I'd have someone to fly over with me. I have to take some important papers for the commanding general to the transport that's sailing for the States in the morning."

Saunders warmed to the part that he was playing—a dumb army officer talking too much.

"They're a bunch of reports to Washington about some spy activities that are supposed to be going on down here. Imagine!" he laughed. "Spies in peace time! Oh, well! That's Headquarters—always getting excited about some darned thing that doesn't even exist."

OUT of the tail of one eye Saunders saw Count Rimski and Glinka exchange rapid, meaningful glances.

"Oh, why don't you go with him, Serge!" said the Princess Sonya suddenly. "After all, an airplane is nothing to be afraid of these days."

"I don't know," hesitated Glinka, striving not to appear eager to change his mind.

Saunders seized the opportunity to land his fish definitely.

"Better come along!" he urged heartily. "I'll be shoving off from Fort Clayton at two o'clock. A half an hour later, you'll be in Colon."

"All right," agreed the secretary, with apparent reluctance. "I'll take the chance."

A few minutes later, after having said good-by to the princess and her companions, Saunders was in the Hotel Central. He was in a room whose windows looked down upon the populous Cathedral Plaza. Number Five, registered "James Jones" on the hotel's book, was seated by one of the windows, wrapped to his ears in a woolen lounging robe. Smoke from a cigarette curled between his lean, yellowed fingers.

"You sure," he demanded dryly, "they didn't see you come in here?"

"Positive," Saunders assured him. "I walked around several blocks, and finally ducked in here through a side entrance."

Just looking at the eccentric "Mr. Jones" wrapped in his woolly robe made Saunders perspire freely.

"So you want a military plane," said Number Five thoughtfully. "Can you pilot one?"

"Yes, sir. My first love was the Air Service. I was a flying cadet at Kelly Field. I graduated, and was all set for the Air Corps, but I resigned on my mother's request. My father had just died, and—well, you know how mothers are."

Number Five nodded his head.

"And the official envelope?"

"That's easy," replied Number Five. "I can get you that easier than I can get the plane. But I suppose," he sighed, "it can be done."

Saunders' heart leaped.

Number Five stroked his pointed chin thoughtfully.

"Your scheme is pretty daring," he mused, "and it might work. But don't forget, young man, you've started to walk around with death's black angels at your heels!"

CHAPTER IV

Death on Wings

SAUNDERS' yellow roadster approached the hangar on the flying field at Fort Clayton. The time was approximately two o'clock. Saunders was clad in a leather flying jacket and helmet. An official envelope protruded from the pocket of the jacket.

The road curved around to the front of the hangar, where Saunders stopped his car. On the firing line a few yards away, a group of mechanics were supervising the warming up of an all-metal military passenger monoplane.

Saunders' eyes gleamed as he gazed at the plane. Secret Agent Number Five certainly could work miracles in a swift, secret way. The bogus official envelope had arrived at the bachelor officers' building at Fort Amadaor at exactly one-thirty, the time Saunders had specified. It had arrived by soldier messenger, just as if it had contained official documents instead of pieces of blank paper.

AS Saunders was climbing out of the car a long, low, powerful limousine slid to a silent stop beside him. He looked up to see the princess, her father, Count Rimski and Serge, the secretary. They descended from the limousine to greet him, and then they moved across the field together to the plane.

Saunders held the cabin door open for the secretary. After Glinka had entered, he turned to the group, and his eyes looked steadily into the sea-green gaze of the Princess Sonya.

"A pleasant trip," she smiled at him.

Saunders' answering smile became grim at the corners.

They were three thousand feet in the air. Below them, the Canal was just a slim, silver ribbon winding between thick, dark green vegetation that was jungle.

Upon entering the ship, Saunders had deliberately placed his flying jacket around the back of the pilot's seat. The pocket with the official envelope protruding temptingly from it, was in full view.

For several minutes they had been flying without conversation. The only sound in the cabin was the steady drone of the propeller. From time to time, Saunders raised his gloved hand ostensibly to scratch his head under the flying helmet. In reality, he was watching the movements of his passenger behind him, for in the palm of the glove he held a tiny mirror.

Glinka was staring through the window beside his seat, which was directly behind the pilot's, and less than an arm's reach from the enticing document in the leather coat.

For about the fifth time, Saunders raised his hand to scratch his head. Studying his passenger's face, he decided with an involuntary shudder, that Glinka resembled the monster in the motion picture *Frankenstein.*

Saunders was about to lower his gloved hand again, when the scene in the mirror caused his eyes to widen and his heart to quicken its beats. Glinka was doing what Saunders had hoped he would. It was for this that Saunders had arranged the airplane ride. He had felt that if he could put temptation in the secretary's path, Glinka would succumb to it. Then Saunders, catching him in the act, could probably make him talk.

GLINKA'S arm was now stretching toward the envelope. In an incredibly brief time, Glinka had secured the envelope, secreted it in his own coat, and had replaced it by another which looked exactly like the original.

Saunders narrowed his eyes and smiled slightly. He banked the ship until they had reversed their course and were heading back toward Panama City again. He increased the revolutions of the propeller.

At these maneuvers, Glinka, who had resumed his gazing through the window, now glanced curiously at Saunders' back.

"We are going back to Panama?" he questioned in wonder. "Is there something wrong?"

Saunders could have laughed aloud at the success of his plan. Instead, he said quietly:

"We're going back to Fort Clayton. The military authorities will be interested to know that you have stolen secret dispatches from me."

Glinka's eyes dilated for a second. The next second, he seemed astonished, and just a little bit indignant.

"Are you crazy, Lieutenant? Even now, I see the dispatches you worry about in the pocket of your coat."

THIS time Saunders did laugh. He cut the engine and twisted back in his chair.

"Oh, no, they're not!" he contradicted grimly. "Right now they are inside your coat somewhere. We shall have a search for them when we get down."

Serge Glinka's dark eyes began to glitter dangerously.

"We are going to Colon," he said softly, rising slowly from his seat. "And when we land at the field, you will say nothing to anybody, and you will come with me. Or else, my smart friend," he concluded menacingly, producing a revolver suddenly from his clothing, "this little thing will have something to say."

Saunders grunted contemptuously into the muzzle of the gun. "That's the one you used on Lieutenant Delahoyt, isn't it? Well," he looked full into Glinka's eyes, "here's one place where that stuff doesn't work. You're in an airplane, and I am piloting it. You can't get back to earth alive without me. When we go down, you'll be *my* prisoner, so you might as well begin right now. Throw that gun out of the window!"

Glinka kept his gun leveled on the space between Saunders' eyes.

"I thought you were the one who tried to stop me on the balcony last night," he murmured softly. "This morning I wasn't sure. But I'm glad to know it now," he added significantly.

"Do you think I'm a fool?" he continued with a sneering laugh. "If I didn't know how to pilot a plane, I would not have come up with you. I was an ace in the army of the Czar before you ever saw an airplane," he added contemptuously.

"Now, Lieutenant, which will it be? I would prefer you to land this plane at France Field. It would save me a little trouble. But if you'd rather remain foolishly obstinate, I can kill you now, land the plane in some field, set fire to it, and leave your body behind. Then nobody will know for sure what happened. It is so simple," he smiled sarcastically.

The plane, lacking the pulling force of the propeller, was beginning to lose altitude, so Saunders cut in the motor again, and straightened out on the course—still toward Panama City.

Meanwhile he thought rapidly. This was a surprise, more than he had bargained for. This morning, in Panama City, he would have sworn that Glinka not only did not know how to pilot an airplane, but also that he was hesitant about riding in one. Now Saunders was just as certain that the man meant what he had said, that he had been an aviator in the World War, and probably knew more about flying than Saunders did himself. His manner was too assured to be a bluff.

IT was a tight jam, thought Saunders, with his mind on the gun at his back, the gun that had pointed so fatally at Delahoyt's back. Glinka most certainly was a dangerous and desperate man. If Saunders did not follow Glinka's orders, he would be killed, and later left in a burning

plane. But if he did follow them, he would only be postponing his death, for now Glinka knew that Saunders was a spy.

How to escape from this tight, extremely ticklish situation. Suddenly Saunders' eyes gleamed.

He quickly pushed hard on one end of the tail bar, and then on the other. The plane immediately lurched violently, throwing Glinka momentarily off balance. When he recovered swiftly with a snarl, he saw that Saunders had pulled the control stick from its seat, and was holding it through the open window beside the pilot's seat.

GLINKA paled. Now the airplane was without control.

"Go ahead and shoot!" invited Saunders mockingly. "And when you do, this stick will fall from my hand—and even if you were Lindbergh himself, you couldn't bring this plane down without this control without killing yourself."

Glinka looked as if he would like to tear Saunders apart with his bare hands. Saunders laughed at him.

"Even Stephen!" he jibed. "You can kill me, but in doing it, you certainly sign your own death warrant."

Saunders narrow his eyes.

"Since you are a crack flyer," he continued, "you probably realize that this ship cannot continue to fly this way indefinitely. Pretty soon it's going into a spin. Your life is in your own hands. *Give me that gun —butt first!*"

For the first time in a life full of precarious predicaments, Serge Glinka knew that he was outwitted. Looking into Saunders' hard eyes, he realized that he was facing a man who thought as little of death as he did. Glinka was not a coward, but he had been through danger enough to prefer future uncertainties to a present certainty, especially when the present certainty was death.

Although his eyes were burning with hatred, he extended the gun, butt first, at the same time making a hissing sound with his lips.

Saunders received the weapon with a grim smile, and replaced the control stick in its socket.

"Now I want information," he demanded, keeping the muzzle of the gun trained on Glinka. "Talk, and talk fast! Who is the Panaman with whom you Reds are dealing in Panama?"

The Russian sneered and lifted his shoulders.

Saunders' teeth clamped together, and his eyebrows lowered.

"The man you murdered last night," he began grimly, "graduated from the same school I did. West Point. Ever hear of it? We have an old tradition. When you lick one West Pointer, you'd better watch out for the rest of us. You get what I mean, I'm sure. It wouldn't make me feel badly at all to let you have a slug of your own medicine. You're a spy, and you're caught. You know the penalty."

Perspiration pushed out in large, cold drops on Glinka's stained face. But he lifted his chest in pride.

"Shoot!" he said simply.

THEN suddenly, he could not resist his last opportunity to crow in victory, even in his defeat.

"Shoot!" he cried passionately. "Our work is done! Tomorrow you will die! All the Americans down here will die. Nothing can prevent the revolution. Shoot! I'll never tell you who is the great and glorious Panaman, who will lead his people with our help, to independence and freedom, securing the Panama Canal, which your cursed country has stolen from them."

He laughed like a maniac in Saunders' face.

"Tonight at midnight, they sign the pact!" he raved. "Tomorrow the revolution begins. Neither you nor anyone else can stop it!"

Glinka's wild laugh conquered the roar of the engine.

"Shoot!" he screamed. "Shoot!"

SAUNDERS' brain whirled around what he had just heard. The revolution was all set and primed to explode in the morning! He had failed to extract from Glinka the name of the man most necessary for the success of the revolt—the Panaman, for the people had to have one of their own kind to lead them, even if he were but a puppet.

Saunders turned his troubled glance upon Glinka again. There was no doubt that Glinka had nerve enough to die with his mouth shut. Saunders had hoped otherwise when he had planned this plane trip.

Something had to be done—and done before midnight. The Panaman had to be located. No longer was Saunders motivated mainly for desire for revenge for Delahoyt's death. The matter was far greater, and more important. His own country, the United States itself, was in grave danger.

Saunders cast a quick glance over the side of the ship. He had formed another plan in his mind—wild and daring—but such measures were necessary now.

He saw they were flying over the Pacific end of the Canal. He headed the nose of the plane toward a palm-occupied shore of Panama Bay, which he knew was sparsely inhabited.

He shut off the motor and faced Glinka again.

"I'm not a murderer," he shot out rapidly. "I'm going to give you the same chance for life as I'm taking. I'm going to crack up this ship, in the bay, just off that point there."

Saunders wasted no time. He shoved the stick hard forward.

Glinka leaped at him, shouting.

"Are you mad?"

The ship dived downward with sickening speed. The water, glittering with sunlight, rushed up to meet them.

The grin on Saunders' face was frozen. His hands were frozen to the stick. His heart was cold in his breast. He hoped and prayed he would have nerve enough to finish what he was doing.

CHAPTER V

Dead Men Walk

THAT afternoon the eyes of perhaps a thousand people in the vicinity of Panama City might have been seen idly watching the military all-metal monoplane droning by overhead. Probably most of these widened in amazement and horror as they saw the airship suddenly hurtle precipitously downward toward the earth.

People spending a lazy Sunday afternoon on the verandas of waterfront clubs left their tables and rushed to the railings, where they excitedly watched the tragedy happening in the distance across the bay. The women screamed and men clenched their fists.

They saw that the plane managed to level off for a fraction of a second when it was but a few feet above the water. It was a scant period of grace. One wing dipped and gashed the water. The remainder of the ship swiftly followed. After a moment of breathless suspense, the observers saw a streak of red and yellow flame dressed in black smoke shoot up from the wreckage. The report of the explosion boomed dully across the bay.

But not a single eye saw the lone swimmer strike out from the plane an instant before the explosion occurred.

A few minutes later, he had accomplished the distance from the wreckage to the shore, and staggered across the beach of white sand to an area of thick bushes beneath some palm trees.

Saunders quickly divested himself of his water-soaked flying helmet and overalls. Beneath these he wore a suit of civilian clothing.

Stepping out of concealment, he presented a bedraggled figure. He glanced around him cautiously to see if he were being observed. No one was in sight. But he would have to hurry, if he wanted to get away from this spot before the arrival of rescue parties and sightseers.

HE hesitated for a moment to look at the smoking, charred remnant of his plane. He had been fortunate, he thought to himself, to have escaped with nothing worse than a few bruises. As a flying cadet, he had learned the lesson well on how to crack up a ship and escape alive.

He thought of Glinka. Not even the secretary's body was in sight.

Shrugging his shoulders, Saunders turned and struck off through the brush toward a country road, which he knew was not far away.

In the tropics night comes abruptly. Between full daylight and darkness, there is a brief period of purple dusk. With its vague shadows and flowery perfume, it is all too short after the glaring sunlight of the white-hot day. Then comes night, rich, deep black, alive with the scent of tropical flowers, and warm with gay, light-hearted natives in the street.

Like a velvet curtain night had just fallen over Panama City, over *la Plaza de la Catedral.* Secret Agent Number Five, alias Jim Jones, sat beside a window in his room in the Hotel Central. As usual, he was wrapped to the ears in his woolly lounging robe. As he stared down at the stream of faces, black, white and half-white, which circled around and around the park, he smoked cigarette after cigarette. His thin face was drawn, tired and worried.

At the door of his room there came a faint, guarded knock.

Number Five's piercing blue eyes turned toward the door, while his hand slid into the pocket of his robe, where it touched the reassuring cold steel of his pistol.

The knock continued, and he rose finally to cross the room to the door.

"Who is it?" he called in a low voice.

When the muffled reply came through the wood, he threw open the door hastily. When he saw the man who darted past him into the room, his hand fled back to his gun precipitously. This man's hair was blond, and he was clean shaven. His clothes were old and worn. They consisted of scuffed, high lace boots, faded corduroy breeches and a gray woolen shirt open at the throat. He carried a battered felt hat in his hand.

"Who are you? What do you want?" demanded Number Five grimly, his finger on the trigger of the gun in his pocket.

A FAMILIAR grin broke across the stranger's face.

"Don't you recognize me?" he asked in a voice that Number Five knew.

"Saunders! My God! Is it really you? Alive!"

"Very much," assured Saunders dryly. "But I had a helluva time finding a barber to dye my hair and

shave off my mustache. Finding these clothes was worse, though! I had to search the city for them. I discovered one thing, however. In Panama you can get anything, or get anybody to do anything for you—if you've got the money."

Number Five went back to his chair.

"I've just been grieving for you," he said. "It's all over the Zone that you were killed in the crack-up. A hundred people recognized your plane and saw you fall. There's a crew out in the bay right now, dragging for the bodies of you and your passenger. What happened to *him?*"

"I guess he's dead all right," answered Saunders grimly. "I saw him—we hit—and then I didn't see him any more."

Number Five's eyes gleamed.

"And that," he remarked, "pays off for Delahoyt."

"Oh, no, it doesn't!" corrected Saunders. "There're the rest of the gang yet."

"What did you learn?" asked Number Five eagerly.

WHEN Saunders told him, his face lengthened, and his eyes grew worried. He lit a cigarette and began to pace the room.

"So the lid is coming off of hell tomorrow?" He looked at Saunders. "We've got to do something quick—before midnight. We've got to find out who the Panaman is that they are working with."

Saunders began to speak slowly, unemotionally.

"I'm supposed to be dead, killed in the crack-up this afternoon. I'm going to stay 'dead.' That's why I changed my appearance. I'm a man nobody knows. I'm going to find the Princess Sonya and her crowd tonight—and I'm going to find out whom they are dealing with."

Number Five's eyes were narrowed and he stroked his pointed chin thoughtfully. Finally he snapped his bony fingers.

"Saunders, I believe you can do it. They certainly won't recognize you! I didn't recognize you myself until you told me."

He hesitated, thinking, for another moment.

"I can tell you where you will most likely find the princess and her associates," he resumed slowly. "There's a night club on the *Avenida Central.* It's called the Siberian Moon. The man they call Count Rimski is supposed to operate it.

"Gossip has it that this cabaret is the only means of livelihood of the count and his very dear compatriots, namely, the grand duke and his daughter. But I know that it's a place where they can meet, and cover their activities. It is actually swarming with Reds, and you'll be taking your life in your hands to go there."

SAUNDERS lifted his shoulders in a slight shrug.

"It is either that, or else—" he said grimly.

Number Five understood him.

"If you need help," he said, "there'll be an old lottery woman seated on a stool beside her board of lottery tickets across the street. She'll be tall, and very stout," he laughed.

Saunders knew that Number Five was going to play the part of the lottery vender.

Number Five picked up a strip of lottery tickets from a table beside the bed. He took a common pin from the lapel of his robe.

"If you should desire to give the lottery woman a message without speaking to her," he told Saunders, "just take this pin and put holes in the numbers like this."

By using the numbers on the tickets to designate letters of the

alphabet, Number Five showed Saunders how to prick a simple message, which was undiscernable to the eye, but which could be readily felt with the fingers.

Saunders turned toward the door.

"I'll be seeing you," he said soberly.

Number Five shook his hand tightly.

"Good luck, Saunders, and—"

"Not 'Saunders' any more," the officer laughed warningly. He hesitated to think of a name for himself.

" 'Zero,' " he finally grinned. " 'Mr. Zero'—the man who was born full grown in Pamana Bay this afternoon. The reincarnation of the 'dead' Lieutenant Saunders. 'Mr. Zero'—the man nobody knows—not even the Princess Sonya and her friends."

NUMBER FIVE drew the pistol from his pocket and offered it to Saunders.

"You haven't a gun, have you? Then take this. I have another."

Number Five followed Saunders to the door.

"Good-by, Mr. Zero," he said softly. "Don't forget the native lottery woman."

The Siberian Moon was going full blast when Saunders lounged carelessly into it. He found himself in a narrow room with a long bar, before which a number of men stood drinking. One or two gave him a casual stare, but that was all.

Through a doorway he could see a dance floor and a number of tables. There was the club proper. Saunders wandered nonchalantly into this large inner room and took a table close to the dance floor, where he could see everyone who entered or left the club.

Although it was still early in the evening, most of the tables were occupied. It seemed that Count Rimski had a successful business venture in his night club. Most of the customers were men, but there was a sprinkling of women among them. Some men had their own; others were being entertained by hostesses, with which the place abounded.

Panama City is cosmopolitan. It attracts men and women from all nations of the world. As Saunders looked around him, he saw swarthy faces and white. His heart was beating rapidly, but it soon dropped with disappointment. He saw nothing of the princess or her associates.

A black-skinned orchestra in a corner struck up a throbbing rhumba. Spotlights were directed upon the dance floor, and a dancing couple glided into the center. Evidently they were part of the stage show of the place.

Saunders leaned forward to stare at the girl member of the team. She was a surprise to find in a Panama night club. In her Russian costume she was beautiful, lovely. Her white satin skirt edged with fur swirled above her trim boots as she danced. Her hair beneath her tall, Russian hat, was a gleaming auburn and curly. She smiled at Saunders, and his heart leaped.

In a moment her partner, a lithe young man dressed in Cossack uniform, bowed and disappeared through a door, leaving the girl behind to sing a strange, haunting Russian melody.

WATCHING her, Saunders was entranced by her fresh, youthful beauty, and the clear sweetness of her voice. He said to his astonished self that never before had he seen a woman to affect him like this girl.

His attention was drawn from her by a commotion at the table next

to him. He saw a party of men—Panamans, he judged by their swarthy features—trying to persuade one of their number from going out upon the dance floor. But this man was very drunk, and he shook off the hands that endeavored to detain him. In another moment he was lurching across the floor for the girl.

She stopped singing and shrank before his advance. Other drunks in the place were shouting encouragement to the man. The place was turning into an uproar.

SAUNDERS saw the girl's frightened face. He heard her low scream when the Panaman seized her.

Instinctively Saunders acted. In a single stride, he was across the floor. He grasped the drunk by the arm and tore him loose from the girl. In the next second, Saunders had a glimpse of a passionate, drink-congested face. At the same time, he heard the girl gasp. He caught the glitter of a knife in the air, heading like a streak of lightning for his breast.

Saunders' fist shot out swiftly, and there was a sharp crack of sinewy muscle and bone meeting flabby flesh. The knife clattered from the Panaman's hand to the floor. He twirled a little on his toes, and sagged back into the arms of his friends who had jumped from their table to assist him.

For a moment it looked as if there was going to be a free-for-all fight. The man's friends glared furiously at Saunders, who was by this time bitterly regretting that he had allowed impulse to interfere with his night's most important work.

But three or four powerful waiters, evidently Russians, surrounded the troublesome group and firmly edged them from the floor and out of the room. The singer had watched all this with her eyes wide, and her hands clasped tensely over her breast.

Suddenly she and Saunders found themselves alone on the floor, facing each other. Their eyes caught and held. Saunders stared into deep, expressive pools of magenta. Then without a word, the girl turned and fled through the door which probably led to the dressing rooms of the entertainers.

Saunders returned to his table and sat down again. An obsequious waiter was hovering near, and he sent him away for a drink. People at other tables were staring curiously at this blond-headed man in the clothes of an engineer.

Saunders was mentally cursing himself for having helped the girl. It was instinctive on his part, but reason would have told him that the bouncers of the club would have saved her before the drunk could have done her any real harm. It was not a night, Saunders fumed, for him to go around rescuing women in distress, even if they were beautiful and had magenta eyes. Now that he had thoroughly attracted attention to himself, it might be that he would fail in his mission. It might be that he had put himself in actual danger.

For a moment he grew panicky. He hoped that his disguise as an American engineer was effective.

THE waiter brought him his drink, a whisky straight. Saunders downed it at the first attempt, and felt better. He thought of the girl again, and was glad that his instinct was in good working order. She certainly looked like what he had always pictured his girl would be like. He frowned. What was she doing working in a place like this—in Panama City, where the night clubs are the wildest along the

American coast, which included South America?

His frown deepened. She was probably a member of the Reds.

Feeling a stir in the room, he glanced up to see the cause, and his heart almost stopped beating. The Princess Sonya was crossing the dance floor. And with her was Serge Glinka, Delahoyt's murderer, the man whom Saunders had left for dead in the wreckage of the burning plane that afternoon!

CHAPTER VI

The Hidden Eye

SAUNDERS abruptly caught himself staring foolishly, with his mouth half agape. It didn't seem possible that Glinka could be here, *alive,* but there he was. His sleek, black hair was plastered smoothly to his head. He carried himself with his powerful, swinging, catlike stride. His deep-set eyes burned penetratingly around the room. No mark on him at all to show he had been anywhere but to a tea that afternoon.

The Princess Sonya herself looked more alluring and glamorous than ever. She was wearing a clinging green evening dress, whose shade exactly matched her sea-green eyes. As she crossed the floor, she smiled and bowed to various people in the room.

Saunders saw Glinka scrutinizing him keenly. The army officer's heart began to pound. He wanted desperately to turn his head away, but he feared that the action would arouse Glinka's suspicion. So he returned the Russian's stare boldly, and depended upon his blond hair and smooth-shaven face to protect him.

There were a number of small booths against one wall of the room, and Saunders covertly watched Sonya and her companion make their way toward one. He saw them seat themselves and order drinks. Their heads bent together.

An intense desire to know what they were saying tormented Saunders. He strove to find a way to eavesdrop on their conversation. Finally he summoned his waiter.

"I'd like to have a booth," he said. "I—I feel rather conspicuous right here in front after—after—"

He grinned and looked embarrassed.

The waiter understood him. The American who had rescued the little singer did not like to have people staring at him because of his deed.

"Why, surely, sir," said the waiter. "The booths are for everybody. Just take any one you like."

Saunders finished his second drink, and then rose nonchalantly to make his way toward the booth next to the one in which sat the Princess Sonya and her father's "secretary." He chose his approach carefully, so that the pair would not see him enter the booth.

ONLY a thin wall separated the two booths. When Saunders first sat down he could only hear an indistinguishable murmur of voices. He leaned his head back against the partition, as if he were thinking, or tired. Now he could differentiate between their voices, hearing them faintly but clearly. The woman's voice was thin and sharper, while Glinka's was a rumble.

"I tell you, he was killed!" Glinka was insisting. "When the crazy fool crashed, something hit me on the head, and I was stunned for a moment. When I came to, the cabin was almost under water. The front part of the plane, that is, the engine and where he was sitting, was just a water-logged, charred mass. He must have been burned alive. I

managed to get out of the cabin and swim to shore. Fortunately there was no one around. I didn't want to wait and be questioned by any rescue parties," he concluded meaningly.

IN his booth, Saunders smiled grimly. Glinka thought his army officer pilot dead. Then he wouldn't be expecting him to turn up with bleached hair and no mustache.

Saunders heard Sonya's voice purring softly.

"I'm so glad, Serge, dear, that it was you who escaped. I couldn't have stood it if you were killed. You know what you mean to me."

Saunders pricked up his ears. That revealed to him where the Princess Sonya's heart lay. She was in love with her father's secretary! In love with him, while she had played being in love with Delahoyt to gain his confidence. Saunders felt his hatred rising within him. She was cold and cruel. She was a siren to lure men to their deaths.

"I can't understand," Sonya was saying, "what led him to do such a crazy thing! What did he have to gain by crashing the plane?"

"Death, I guess," Glinka sneered. "Anyway, I should have had him where I wanted him," he boasted, "if he had not pulled his mad stunt."

Saunders laughed silently to himself.

"Well," Glinka's rumbling voice continued, "what about tonight? Is it going to go through?"

Now Saunders listened tensely. This is what he wanted to hear.

On the wall of his booth there was a crude oil painting of Peter, the Mad Czar of All Russians. So intent on listening, Saunders did not see a painted eye of the Mad Czar slide out of place, and a flesh-and-blood eye appear. The eye saw Saunders with his head against the wall listening. The eye glittered and disappeared. An instant later the painted eye was in its former position.

"S-s-sh! Be careful, Serge!" Sonya's voice warned. "Do not speak so loudly. Someone may be in the next booth."

"There is no one there," Glinka assured. "I looked as we came by. But tell me, what is going to happen tonight? There is one American—that army officer—who knows of the revolution tomorrow—but he is dead," Glinka concluded contemptuously.

With fast beating heart, Saunders turned his ear to the wall to catch the reply of the princess.

"Yes, everything is all right," she said in a low voice that was all but indistinguishable to Saunders. "We are to go to Salvador's house at midnight. The grand duke and Count Rimski will meet us there."

Saunders' heart leaped. Salvador! He was a native of Panama and its most wealthy citizen. Everyone knew Ricardo Salvador. It was said that four cents out of every nickel spent in Panama went through his hands. It was also well known that he had political aspirations, but there was one thing which stood in his way. He had been touched with the "tar brush," there was black blood in his veins.

HE had a tremendous popularity with the masses of people, most of whom were in position similar to his as far as blood was concerned. But the ruling class of the country were descendants of the early, conquering Spaniards, and they had kept their white blood untainted by misalliances. These had managed to keep Salvador from securing power in the government.

Naturally Salvador hated them.

And naturally he was the ideal man for the Reds to secure to help them.

All these thoughts swarmed through Saunders' head as he sat listening to the conversation in the next booth. He was greatly excited, for he knew that he had found his man, the man whom Number Five feared and sought.

The next problem, Saunders knew, was to get out of the club and take the information to his superior. Before midnight the Panaman government would have Ricardo Salvador safely in prison.

SAUNDERS did not wish to rise immediately to make his exit. Glinka and the princess might notice him going from the booth, and their suspicions might be aroused. Saunders decided to wait a few minutes, appearing to drink and enjoy himself. Then he would rise leisurely and saunter nonchalantly from the club.

He gazed around him. By now the club was filled. Every table accommodated a celebrating party. The air was thick with cigarette smoke. Voices and laughter hummed above it. Waiters were kept busy circulating, carrying trays loaded with glasses.

Someone brushed quickly by Saunders' booth. He had a brief glimpse of a short, white satin skirt. It was the singing girl. He stared at what she had left behind her. In passing, she had flicked a note onto his table.

With a puzzled frown, Saunders read it.

> You are in terrible danger. Do not attempt to leave by any of the public exits or you will be killed. There is only one way you can escape from here. Go to the door leading to our dressing rooms. You will find yourself in a narrow hallway. Turn right and follow it to the end, where you will see another door. They will not think to watch that one. It will take you to an alley behind the club, and you can easily make your escape. Please believe me.
>
> THE RUSSIAN DANCER.

For a long moment Saunders sat staring at the note. He felt a curious prickling sensation all over his body. His presence had been discovered by the Reds! He glanced out of the booth. Everything seemed normal, like an ordinary harmless night club. It did not seem possible that he was in danger. There were so many people in the place, some drinking at their tables, others dancing to low, throbbing music. All he had to do if he were attacked was to cry out. Surely some in the crowd would come to his assistance.

Saunders frowned at the note in his hand. Perhaps the trap was *there!* It urged him to leave the club proper, to go to a narrow, dark hallway, where he would be alone, out of sight and out of hearing of the crowd.

Shaking his head, Saunders folded the note and placed it in the pocket of his shirt. It did not please him to think that the little Russian entertainer was in league with the Reds. But, logic told him she must be, if she worked in this club.

Saunders snorted contemptuously at the trick she had tried to play on him. Undoubtedly she had thought that he would think her grateful for being rescued by him from the attack of the drunk. He would think her warning a friendly tip.

SIGHING, Saunders rose to his feet. The dancer was like the Princess Sonya, who had known while she was dancing with Delahoyt that he was going to be shot in her arms. Well, thought Saunders grimly, he wasn't going to be taken in by a woman.

Assuming an appearance which suggested that he had perhaps just a little too much to drink, he

started toward the exit which led to the long barroom. As he neared the doorway, he saw two men straighten beside it. The right hand of each disappeared inside their coats. Saunders, watching closely, saw the dull gleam of a half drawn knife.

His heart began to pound. The conviction settled on him that if he tried to pass through that doorway he would be dropped by a knife in his chest. He couldn't cry out now, and if he did, one of the men would be upon him before he had a chance to utter a second cry.

SAUNDERS thought of the note again. A doubt assailed him. Perhaps the little dancer was on the level. He was a man of quick decision. He would be in no more danger trying the way she had told him. If she were telling the truth, he would be better off. Accordingly he turned nonchalantly and made his way through the dancing couples swirling on the floor. He deliberately chose the dance floor because he would be hidden from the view of the men in the doorway.

He found the door leading from the club. It was unguarded. Throwing a glance over his shoulder, Saunders noted that no one seemed to be paying him any attention.

A moment later he was out of the big room and into a narrow, dark hall. He turned to the right, as directed, and groped his way cautiously to the end. There he found another door. It yielded readily to his tentative push. He could see a shadowy alleyway beyond it, and a night sky spangled with stars.

Just as he was about to step out a scream smote his ears. He stopped frozen on the door sill. It was a woman's scream, high, short and imperative.

With a chill of apprehension, Saunders recognized the voice. It belonged to the little Russian dancer and it came from the other end of the hall. Looking that way, Saunders saw a narrow strip of light which apparently came from under a door.

Saunders' thoughts whirled rapidly. He saw the girl in his mind. Evidently she had honestly tried to warn him, for here was the door, as she had written in the note, wholly unguarded. And now, Saunders feared, the others had probably discovered what she had done. They were making her pay for it.

Saunders' blood began to boil. He fingered the gun in his pocket. The girl had got into trouble for his sake. He hesitated, trying to decide what to do. All his instincts and training were against leaving without trying to help her.

Suddenly another scream, more compelling than the last, sounded down the hall. At this, Saunders made up his mind. He whirled and darted toward the crack of light.

Behind him two dark figures crept from the alleyway into the hall. One of them sheathed a knife. Then both silently followed after Saunders.

CHAPTER VII

A Lady Dies

SAUNDERS burst through a door into a dressing room. A single glance showed him a vanity bench kicked over, and a man and a woman struggling in front of the triple glass of the vanity dresser. The man's back was turned to Saunders, but the army officer could see that the woman was the dancing girl.

They had not heard him enter. The girl was struggling desperately. Her auburn hair was down her bare back, and with her tiny fists she was beating a futile tattoo on the stiff bosom of her attacker's evening shirt.

The man was laughing at her puny efforts to hold him off. He was bending her back; and his head was gradually lowering to meet her lips.

Saunders' eyes narrowed, and he crossed the room with silent, purposeful strides. Seizing the man by the shoulder, he whirled him around. Astounded, he stared into the hot, furious eyes of Serge Glinka.

Glinka did not recognize him.

"Get out of here!" snarled the Russian venomously. "This is no business of yours!"

FOR answer, Saunders brought his fist up in a short, powerful uppercut, which landed squarely under Glinka's chin. The Russian's arms flailed out to the sides as he crashed backward across the room. He smashed against the wall with an impact that shook the room. He breathed heavily for an instant, while his dark eyes glittered on Saunders. Then his hand darted into the pocket of his tuxedo coat.

"Look out!" the girl cried to Saunders.

Saunders had seen the action himself. Before Glinka could draw his weapon Saunders' pistol was out and covering him.

Meanwhile the girl was leaning against the dresser. Her satin costume was ripped at the shoulder, and she was holding it with her hand. Her eyes were wide on Saunders.

"You shouldn't have come!" she breathed. "They'll kill you!"

Glinka did not dare to withdraw his hand from his pocket. With eyes full of hate, he watched Saunders silently.

"Come on," Saunders said in a low voice to the girl. "You're coming with me."

She hesitated and stared at him as if she did not comprehend.

Saunders was looking at her. His back was to the door. Suddenly he saw her eyes dilate, and her lips open to scream. He knew that danger was behind him.

He whirled about, and looked straight into the muzzle of a revolver. It was no more than a foot from his face. Beyond the man who held the gun there was a second man, who was nervously fingering a knife.

Saunders knew that the drop was on him. If he moved a muscle the gun in front of his nose would blow his head off. He let his own gun fall to the floor, and he slowly raised his hands.

Glinka approached him.

"Dog!" the Russian snarled. He turned to the two men. "This American is drunk. He wandered in here from the club. Take him out into the alley and give him a beating that he'll remember. Then let him go."

Saunders' heart bumped in hope. Glinka had not recognized him. The Russian thought that he was merely a drunken American engineer. But the words of the man covering him with the gun dashed Saunders' hopes to the depths.

"This is a spy, comrade. He was seen listening to you and Comrade Sonya in the booth. We were waiting for him in the alley, but he came back here when he heard her scream." He nodded his head at the dancing girl.

Saunders turned to look at the girl again. Then she had lied to him in her note! These men had been waiting for him in the alley. Saunders twisted his lips contemptuously.

THE girl's wide, long-lashed eyes returned his stare appealingly. She seemed to be trying to make them say that she hadn't meant for Saunders to be caught. But Saunders was past believing her. He had

been a fool, he cursed himself bitterly.

Glinka scrutinized the prisoner narrowly.

"A spy!" he said harshly. "Take him downstairs and—"

He looked at the man with the knife, and significantly drew his forefinger across his throat.

THE man with the knife nodded, and his black eyes gleamed. As he and his companion placed themselves on either side of Saunders, the officer was frantically debating whether or not to put up a fight for life right then.

"Wait a minute!" said Glinka suddenly. He studied Saunders again.

This time Saunders thought he would surely be recognized.

"We don't know who he is," continued Glinka speculatively. "If he is a spy, we want to find out what he knows, and for whom he is working. Perhaps it is just as well that we do not kill him now. We had better question him first. Keep him downstairs until further orders."

Saunders could have sobbed with relief, but his face remained stoical. He knew that while there was life there was hope.

He saw the girl's face as he was taken from the room. It was strained, and more appealing than ever. Saunders managed to smile mockingly.

He was brought to a small stone room, evidently in the cellar of the club. It had a single electric bulb in the ceiling. There was only one means of ventilation, a narrow, barred slit high in one wall.

Saunders was left alone with one guard, who seated himself on the only stool in the chamber, crossed his knees, and gave himself up to the task of rolling cigarettes, smoking them, and watching Saunders with indifferent curiosity. He kept his pistol thrust into the front of his belt, where he could reach it easily and instantly.

There were many things for Saunders to think about in the ensuing silence. Although he was a prisoner he knew that he should be glad that he was still living. He was certain that if Glinka had recognized him, his throat would have been cut by now.

Saunders' main thoughts were bitter. He blamed the girl for his predicament. After a while, however, reason convinced him that the outcome could not have been any different, even if the girl had not given him the warning note. All doors had been watched. He could not have escaped, even if he had not gone to her dressing room.

He wondered why Glinka had seized her in her dressing room. It could not have been because of the note, for Glinka had not known that there was a spy in the club until told by one of his men. One reason suggested itself to Saunders. The girl was very pretty.

This trend of thought irritated Saunders. He admitted to himself that he did not like to think of her in Glinka's arms.

His mind turned to his greater problem—the problem of getting out of here to carry his information to Number Five. It had to be done in some way. Saunders thought worriedly of the time. At midnight the Reds were meeting at the house of Ricardo Salvador.

HE asked his guard for the time, and received in reply an indifferent shrug of the shoulders.

"What do you want to know the time for, comrade?" the Russian grinned. "You are not going any place. You are never going any place—from here. Besides," he added frankly, "I have no watch."

Saunders began pacing up and down the stone cell. Finally he stopped and stood on tiptoe to stare through the iron grating of the ventilator. He found that his eyes were level with a sidewalk. Legs and feet occasionally passed back and forth in front of his vision. The room evidently was on the side of the club that fronted upon the *Avenida Central,* which was Panama City's main street.

IN intervals between passing legs Saunders could see across the street. He caught his breath. On the corner was a native woman bundled in the usual voluminous skirts. A shawl was wrapped around her head and tied under her chin. She sat patiently on a stool beside a large lottery board draped with tickets.

Saunders knew that every busy corner in Panama City contained a lottery vender similar in appearance to this one. He looked again, and noted that she seemed unusually tall, even squatted bulkily on her stool.

There was no doubt in Saunders' mind that he was looking at Number Five. His brain raced on busily. Just a short distance separated them, but it might as well be a thousand miles. If Saunders raised his voice he knew that the man on the stool would kill him at the first outcry. The barred slit was too small to signal from.

But there must be some way to gain contact with Number Five! Saunders strove to find it. He gazed covertly at the guard.

"Do you play the lottery?" he asked, assuming the air of one making conversation to pass away the time.

"Yes," said the guard. "But I think it is crooked. I have never won anything."

Saunders laughed.

"You're not lucky! Perhaps you should try holding a dead's man's tickets. That's a new one, and it should bring luck."

"What do you mean?" asked the guard curiously.

Saunders' heart began to pound.

"Well," he shrugged his shoulders. "I guess I'll be a dead man by Sunday, when these lottery tickets are drawn."

"Oh, you'll be dead before then!" grinned the guard.

Saunders shivered slightly at his confidence. But his voice remained even, nonchalant.

"I see there's a lottery vender across the street," he remarked carelessly. "I play the lottery myself regularly. But I haven't got my tickets for this week yet."

Saunders pulled a roll of bills out of his pocket.

"I guess," he smiled wryly, "this money won't be much good to me any more. I'd just as soon buy a bunch of lottery tickets with it. The old lady'll make a commission. And" —he eyed the guard—"if anything happens to me, you can have the tickets. Who knows? You might win the first prize. Dead man's tickets."

THE guard's eyes were shining greedily. He didn't dare rob his prisoner of his money. The comrades above him might find out, and punish him. But if the prisoner had a bunch of lottery tickets, well, it wouldn't matter to those higher up what became of them. The first prize was twenty thousand dollars, American gold. A great deal of money. And who knows, as the American had said. Perhaps a dead man's luck would win.

Watching the guard, Saunders sensed what was passing on in the man's mind. He held his breath and hoped.

The guard rose carelessly to his feet.

"Give me the money," he said. "I'll send out for the tickets. No harm in that."

Saunders hoped that the guard would not notice his trembling fingers as he passed over the money.

Stepping to the door, the guard opened it and shouted down the hall. Someone appeared, and was given directions to buy the tickets. The guard closed the door and sat down again.

A FEW minutes later there was a knock on the door, and a sheaf of tickets was passed in to the guard. He looked at them longingly, and finally surrendered them reluctantly to Saunders.

Saunders' blood was racing swiftly as he took the tickets. He glanced hurriedly through them, and saw that there were enough numbers to make plenty of letters. From the pocket of his shirt, he extracted the common pin which Number Five had given him. Then, appearing to be absorbed in the numbers, tracing them with the pin as preoccupied people do with a pencil, he punctured lightly to spell out a simple message.

"RICARDO SALVADOR"

The name alone, he knew, would be enough for Number Five.

Meanwhile, the guard watched him curiously. He did not interfere, however, thinking undoubtedly that little harm could be done with a common pin.

Saunders prepared for his big act.

"I want some more zeroes!" he complained exasperatedly. "Zero is my lucky number. Can't you send these tickets back and tell the old woman that I want tickets with zeroes in them?"

Number Five had sent tickets which contained no zeroes. There was no letter in the alphabet to correspond with zero.

The guard looked dubious. He eyed the tickets in puzzlement.

"That's right," he agreed. "There aren't any zeroes on these tickets. Funny she didn't send some!"

He glanced at Saunders. If zero was Saunders' lucky number, he thought, it would be well to get zeroes.

He was picturing how sick he'd feel next Sunday if the winning number contained a zero.

"All right," he sighed. "I'll send these back, and get some with zeroes."

Through the slit in the wall, Saunders watched the messenger return the tickets to Number Five, and receive a new batch in exchange. Saunders smiled exultantly to himself. Number Five would read the message with his fingers. The pin pricks in the numbers would spell out the name of Ricardo Salvador. Number Five would know well enough what to do then.

And also, Saunders reasoned, Number Five would know by the message that Saunders was held prisoner somewhere in the Siberian Moon and would take steps to rescue him.

IT was with relieved heart that Saunders received the new tickets. He barely glanced at them before presenting them to the guard.

"You may as well have them now," he smiled. "I'm satisfied."

The words were hardly out of his mouth before the door of the cell burst open and Glinka, followed by Count Rimski, appeared.

"What's this about lottery tickets?" Glinka asked the guard sternly. "I was told that you ordered some tickets for the prisoner," he glanced

at Saunders, "and then exchanged them."

The guard was trembling.

"That is right, comrade," he admitted. "I didn't think it would do any harm. The man is about to die, and—"

"Fool!" Glinka hurled at him. "Dolt! Imbecile! He could have scribbled a message on those tickets under your eyes!"

"He did not write anything," whined the guard. "I watched him all the time. All he had in his hand was a pin—an ordinary, harmless pin."

"A *pin!*"

COUNT RIMSKI'S voice whipped across the room.

"With such a thing," he reminded Glinka, "the prisoner could have pricked a message!"

Glinka strode across the room and peered through the slit.

"She's still there," he said grimly. "But she is packing up to move—naturally. Come, we shall have to hurry!"

At the door he paused.

"Any more slip-ups," he said coldly to the guard, "and you will die with the spy."

"Yes, comrade," whined the man meekly.

When the door had closed behind Glinka and Rimski, he threw Saunders a reproachful glance.

"See what trouble you have got me into," he said. "Now no more tricks!"

Saunders paid him no attention. He was staring at the lottery vender. Number Five was gathering up his board, but he was moving with agonizing slowness. Saunders did not know what the Russians intended doing, but he was sure that if Number Five did not soon get away from there he never would.

At that moment he heard the rattle of a sub-machine gun. It blazed away for just a second or two, but when it had finished, the lottery woman had fallen across her board of tickets and blood was running across the sidewalk.

There was a commotion and a hubbub in the street. But no one seemed to know where the bullets had came from.

Saunders turned away from the ventilator sick at heart. The last chance to checkmate the Red plotters had vanished with that burst of fire. And also, the thought dawned horribly on him, his last chance to escape from the Siberian Moon alive.

CHAPTER VIII

Woman for Sale

THE GUARD had relinquished the stool and was standing against the wall stolidly smoking a cigarette. Saunders was seated, and he was holding his head in his hands. His thoughts were dismal. He knew it was growing later. It must be almost midnight. The last time he had looked through the slit, there were fewer legs passing by. Long ago Panaman police and an ambulance had taken away the lottery vender.

A knock sounded on the door, and a moment later a man pushed into the room. Saunders glanced up wearily, and recognized the young Russian who had danced with the girl earlier that evening.

"What are you doing here?" the guard demanded surlily. "You know that you are not supposed to bother about anything that does not concern you."

"I'm looking for my sister," said the young man. "She is not in her dressing room, and they are almost ready for the midnight show."

Saunders raised his head again, and found the young man's eyes

curiously on his face. The officer saw now that there was a strong resemblance between brother and sister.

"Do you expect to find her down here?" jibed the guard. "Go back upstairs where you belong."

The young man seemed abashed and flustered.

"All right. All right," he muttered apologetically, backing toward the door.

Suddenly he hurled himself at the guard, who was too astonished to put up an effective resistance. Before either he or Saunders could realize what was happening the young man had the pistol and was pointing it grimly at the guard.

"Shut up, you!" he ordered tensely.

AT the beginning of the struggle Saunders had leaped to his feet. Now he stared in wonder at the girl's brother.

"I am Dmitri," he said tensely, keeping his gun on the cowering guard. "Anna, she is my sister. They have taken her away. Glinka," Dmitri spat, "wants her. She has told me that you are her friend. Will you go with me," he appealed, "and help me take her away from Glinka?"

Saunders was astounded by this sudden turn of affairs. His heart beat faster at the thought of Anna, this man's sister, in Glinka's power. But Saunders had learned to be wary. He suspected another trap of some kind.

Dmitri saw his hesitation and sensed its cause.

"Please believe me!" he urged desperately. "We have no time to lose. You are the only one who can help us. We do not belong with these others." With a sweep of his gun, he indicated the guard and meant all with whom the guard was connected.

"Ann and I have not been long here. We were hired because a night club needs entertainers. We knew that something else was going on, but it was none of our concern. Then Glinka began to pay attention to Anna. She hates him, and she is afraid of him. He has made her go with him to a house in the city, where he has a very rich and powerful friend. I have found out his name—Ricardo Salvador.

"I have also found out that all of them leave tonight for the jungle. There is going to be big trouble in the city tomorrow, and these people are afraid that something will happen to them tonight. So they are going into the jungle to hide."

Saunders' heart pounded. Salvador and the Reds were going to the jungle tonight! He knew what that meant. They feared to stay in the city lest they be seized by the authorities. They would vanish to the jungle, and appear when the revolution was well under way. And they were forcing Anna to go with them.

Saunders clenched his fists.

"Let's go!" he gritted.

Out in the dark hallway they found the bolt of the door, and pushed it home so that the guard could not get out to carry the news of their escape.

ANNA'S brother knew the basement and Saunders permitted him to lead the way. They came to a manhole in a damp moldy, dark corner.

"This goes to the sewer," whispered the young Russian. "It is the only way we can get out of here. Glinka's men are everywhere upstairs."

They tugged together to slide off the rusty iron plate.

"You go first, my friend," suggested Dmitri.

Saunders did not hesitate, but

started to lower himself into the black, foul-smelling hole. At that moment he happened to look across the cellar and his heart almost stopped beating. He saw several dim figures approaching on the run. Their escape had been discovered!

He heard the report of Dmitri's gun deafeningly in his ears. A second later, he heard dull, answering reports.

SUDDENLY the man above him standing astride the manhole, pitched to his knees. Saunders knew that the young Russian had been hit.

He reached up immediately to drag him down into the sewer.

Dmitri looked down at him with pain-distorted face.

"Go on!" he breathed hoarsely. "They've got me! But I can last a little while longer. I'll keep them away until you are lost in the sewer."

His voice continued in hot, racking gasps:

"Go—on — please. Find — Anna—and—watch out—for her."

Saunders wanted to stay, but he knew that Anna's brother was badly wounded. To stay would only mean the capture and death of both of them. More than that, it meant the fate of a nation and the fate of a woman.

Saunders dropped down into a narrow, pitch-black space. He stumbled blindly forward, up to his knees in slimy filth. Somewhere ahead of him, he knew, was the sea, where there was open air, clean air—and freedom and life.

His passage through the sewer was like a horrible nightmare. It seemed that he was wading for miles in the dense, warm blackness. Now and then he nearly slipped in the ooze, and thrust out his hand to the slimy masonry to save himself. Once he touched something firm, round and slick, that curved sinuously away. His scalp prickled, and he screamed aloud. He knew that deadly, tropical snakes infested the sewers of the city.

He staggered on, the thought of Salvador and Anna driving him relentlessly. He prayed aloud for the end of the sewer. He had a frightful feeling that time was long past the hour of midnight.

The foul, still air strangled him. He tore at his throat for air fit to breathe. Once he fell his full length in the slime. Now and then he glanced behind him in dread, fearful of hearing the sounds of pursuit. But he saw only the blackness of eternity and heard only the silence of a crypt.

When it seemed that he could no longer go on, that he must drop where he was and die, he fancied he caught a faint glow of lighter darkness, the wholesome, fresh darkness of night.

With a mad, glad cry, he forced his leaden muscles to carry him onward, and at last he found himself on a beach, under the sky, under the winking stars, and facing the Bay of Panama.

He gulped in huge lungfuls of sharp, fresh, salty air.

But he could not rest. He did not dare. His will lashed his weary, exhausted body along the beach until he came to where a wharf thrust itself into the black water. He turned and followed this back until he came to a dark and deserted street on the outskirts of the city.

HE broke into a run as he neared a dim street light on a corner. He leaned in exhaustion against the light pole.

The noise of an approaching automobile aroused him. He stepped out into the glare of its headlights. The car stopped with a screaming of

brakes, and he saw that it was a cruising taxi.

"What time is it?" he gasped at the negro driver.

The negro stared at him in astonishment.

"Phew, boss!" he exclaimed. "You don't smell like no rose!"

"What time is it?" Saunders demanded again.

THE driver spent an eternity squinting in the dim light at a large, nickel watch.

"Near's I can make out, boss, it's about ten minutes to twelve."

Saunders opened the door leading to the rear tonneau.

"Take me to town! Hurry!"

The driver was suspicious of his bedraggled passenger, picked up in a lonely section of the city.

"Let's see the color of your money, boss!"

Saunders searched desperately through his pockets, and found that he had given all his money to the guard for the purchase of the lottery tickets.

The taxi driver frowned threateningly.

"No money, no ride, boss. You'd better get out—hear?"

Saunders was at his wit's end. He had no time to argue or fight with the driver over the fare.

"Take me to the house of Ricardo Salvador," he begged. "You'll get your money there."

"*Señor* Salvador!" exclaimed the negro in a hushed tone of respect. He shifted his gears. "Boss, that's all right. Why didn't you say so before that you was going to call on *Señor* Salvador?"

The mansion of Ricardo Salvador, the richest man in Panama, was located in the most exclusive suburb of the city. On all four sides it was surrounded by a high stone wall. The house and its grounds occupied an entire block.

After instructing the driver to wait for him, Saunders left the taxi in the palm-lined street, and walked boldly through the gate and into the landscaped grounds. As he followed the flag walk toward the house, he had little idea of what he was going to do. He only knew that Number Five was unable to do anything, and it was squarely up to Saunders himself.

There wasn't time to go for help, for the conspirators' meeting was scheduled for midnight. Any time after that, they might all leave the city, and go where they couldn't be found in time to prevent the revolution. It was up to Saunders to stop them now. But how? he asked himself.

As he neared the house, in which there were lights in the hall and in several rooms, Saunders left the path and advanced cautiously through shrubbery. He heard a hum of voices coming from a window along the side of the house.

Cautiously drawing close to this window, he found that it was protected by a luxuriant vine supported by lattice work. Saunders raised himself to his tiptoes, but could see nothing, as the window was too high. He studied the lattice work, and then began to climb it soundlessly.

PEERING through the leaves of the vine, he found himself looking into a room which he judged to be the library. The walls were lined with books, and the shaded lights glinted on the backs of those which happened to possess titles in gold.

The man seated behind a massive mahogany desk was Ricardo Salvador. A green-shaded desk lamp cast a white glow over Salvador's head and shoulders as he bent over some

papers. A wide, bald streak ran across the top of his head. On both sides of the streak were patches of gray hair that looked like wool. Hunched over his desk, Salvador resembled a little old, dark-brown gnome in modern clothing.

IN deep leather chairs grouped before the desk, were the Red conspirators, Glinka, the Grand Duke Boris and Count Rimski. The Princess Sonya was absent.

Salvador raised his head.

"Yes," he said, in a high, thin voice. "I am agreeable to these plans."

Count Rimski smashed his clenched fist upon the desk.

"Good! The Industrial Revolution and the Brotherhood of Man are sweeping through the world. Nothing can stop them. Not even," he grinned crookedly through his beard at Salvador, "the great and powerful United States. Tomorrow they will receive their greatest blow, one that will cripple them until the time comes to wipe them off the earth forever. My friend, it will be good to see the red flag over the Canal. And you will be dictator!"

"Are you sure," Salvador quavered anxiously, "that your government will recognize me?" He clasped his hands together nervously. "I could have done this long ago—by myself. But," he spat venomously, "the United States would have re-established the old government, and then the white Spaniards would have executed me for a rebel. I have had to be careful," he sighed. "Smiling at the *Americanos* and these white Spaniards when I have hated them!"

"Don't worry," assured the grand duke blandly. "A dozen governments weel recognize thee independence of thee new state. Depend on us for that. And eef thee United States object," he shrugged his thick shoulders, "poof! Eet weel only hasten their downfall."

"And now, said Salvador greedily, rubbing his purplish hands together. "About the—woman? She will be mine?"

He turned to the grand duke.

"You are her father, eh?"

The Grand Duke Boris laughed easily.

"Not quite. She is just a woman—of Moscow."

"But a very beautiful woman. A lovely woman," whispered Salvador. "A white woman!" he breathed.

CHAPTER IX

Fair Death

SAUNDERS stared astoundedly through the lattice work. It seemed that old Salvador was bargaining for a woman. It was common gossip in Panama that he desired marriage to a white woman.

A fear icily clutched Saunders' heart. *What woman did they mean?* He thought of Anna, the little Russian girl, whom Glinka had forcibly carried from the Siberian Moon to this house.

Glinka leaned forward smilingly.

"She'll be willing all right. For her country. But let me handle her. She may be a little difficult—at first."

"But in the end she will be mine—mine!" cackled Salvador.

Listening, Saunders felt sick to his stomach. But the old mulatto's next words widened his eyes.

"The Princess Sonya," he was crooning. "What a wife she will make to me. And she will help me rule this country—my country!"

The Princess Sonya! It was she, that proud, beautiful woman, whom the Reds were plotting to give to Salvador for his allegiance to their scheme! It was almost enough to make Saunders whistle. He won-

dered how Glinka was going to handle it, for Sonya was in love with him. It was evident that Glinka was the arch plotter of the group. He used women to further his ends, and when he was through with them, he sold them callously—still to further his ends.

Salvador was speaking again.

"That was a very pretty woman whom you brought here tonight," he leered at Glinka. "What are you going to do with her?"

"Take her with us," Glinka laughed. "Do you think I'd let her stay in that night club? Night after night she drove me crazy with her beauty and her dancing. But I could do nothing until tonight. I could not take a chance with Sonya. She's jealous as the devil."

"Where have you got the dancer?" Count Rimski asked heavily.

"She's upstairs. In the room above this, I guess," replied Glinka.

SAUNDERS looked upward involuntarily. He saw that the lattice work went to a sort of balcony, which evidently extended from the second floor. Anna was up there.

Saunders decided to climb. Using the utmost care not to make the slightest noise to alarm those in the library, he pulled himself up bit by bit until he found himself on a marble terrace.

French doors led from this into the house proper. He walked silently down a carpeted hall until he came to a door of a room that he judged to be over the library. He tried the knob softly, and the door yielded.

Saunders entered a magnificently furnished bedroom. A single floor lamp was burning, and it cast a mellow glow over the bed at one end of the room. And on the bed was lying the Russian dancer, tied hand and foot. It was the work of a minute to free her.

Her wide eyes stared unbelievingly at Saunders.

"Come on," he whispered, taking her arm. "I'll take you to the balcony. I want you to climb down and escape. I have to stay here—for a while. You'll find a taxi waiting out on the street. Go to the police station, and have them send a squad of men out here as soon as possible."

She obeyed him unquestioningly.

Saunders opened the door and stared into the muzzle of a tiny, gleaming revolver—and the grimly smiling face of the Princess Sonya!

"I thought I heard voices in this room!" She narrowed her green eyes. "Come on! Both of you!"

THE men in the library stared at Saunders and the girl as the Princess Sonya marched them through the door.

"I caught them upstairs," she announced calmly.

Glinka glared in amazement at Saunders.

"The spy!" he cried.

"A spy!" echoed Salvador, in a quavering, fear-filled voice.

"A spy!" repeated the grand duke thickly.

Count Rimski said nothing, but his eyes narrowed to glittering, black slits. He drew a revolver from his coat and bowed gravely to the master of the house.

"With your permission," he said.

Salvador's face was gray with terror as he stumbled to the count and seized his hand.

"Not here!" he begged, between chattering teeth. "The shot may be heard in the street!"

Meanwhile Saunders' glances kept darting around the room. His brain strove desperately to evolve some scheme that would promise a frac-

tion of a chance to escape. He knew that his death was a matter of minutes—seconds. It was not that, however, which goaded him. It was the thought of these men escaping after his death to carry out the revolution, and the thought of the girl beside him.

"He must die," said Glinka grimly to Salvador. "Our plans and our lives are in danger. He has escaped once before. How he did it remains a miracle to me. But he must not escape again."

"Yes! Yes! I know!" agreed Salvador, almost sobbing. "But we must be careful! If the wrong person should happen to hear a shot coming from my house—"

COUNT RIMSKI stroked his beard.

"You are right," he said finally. "We must be careful—tonight." He turned a hard eye toward Saunders. "But—"

The dwarfish Salvador interrupted him.

"I have a vault with thick, strong walls in the cellar. Let me send for my men."

Rolling his eyes until the yellow eyeballs showed, he cackled gruesomely.

"When the throat is cut, there is no noise," he hissed. He moved to the desk, where his fingers sought a push button.

Saunders saw Salvador's shaking hand fumbling under the desk for the push button. Perspiration stood out in glistening beads on the officer's lean, tanned face.

Suddenly an idea, so hopeless that he almost rejected it, flashed into his brain. He turned swiftly toward the Princess Sonya.

"You are a fool for this bunch!" he cried. "They've sold you to that —over there." He pointed at the withered, repulsive mulatto. "Your comrade Glinka promised you to him so that he could have this girl." Saunders inclined his head toward Anna.

At first Sonya listened incredulously. By the time Saunders had finished, she was frowning at Glinka.

"Serge!" she demanded, "is this true?"

While the count and the grand duke sat frozen in their chairs, Glinka raised a temporizing hand He was about to brand Saunders' statements as lies, when Salvador himself intervened.

"It's true, my dear," he cackled possessively, gazing avidly at Sonya's full, white beauty. "I want you to know it now. No tricks about it. When Panama is mine, you will share it with me."

Sonya recoiled from him in loathing. She whirled on Anna.

"Has—has Glinka made advances to you?" she demanded furiously.

"That's why he had me brought here tonight," answered the dancer bravely.

HELL hath no fury like a woman double-crossed by her lover.

"Well," Sonya spat viciously, "you don't sell me to a native!"

Glinka's face grew stern.

"You'll do as you're told, Sonya," he warned grimly, "or else—"

That was as far as he got. The tiny revolver in Sonya's hand cracked once. A red blotch appeared on Glinka's shirt front. It widened slowly as he swayed drunkenly on his feet. He finally spun halfway around, and thudded to the carpet.

The suddenness of the killing gripped everyone in the room but Saunders. He had been waiting for, praying for this break. Before Glinka's comrades could recover from their amazement, he had leaped at the Princess Sonya. In the next second he had possession of her gun.

She seemed dazed by what she had done, and allowed him to wrest the weapon away from her without resistance.

Saunders swept the men with the muzzle of the gun.

"Over there against the wall!" he ordered grimly.

Muttering curses into their beards, the grand duke and Count Rimski backed to the wall behind Salvador's desk. Salvador himself followed them cringingly, keeping wide eyes of fright on Saunders.

THE Princess Sonya was kneeling over Glinka's still form. She suddenly let herself fall across his body, sobbing heartbrokenly.

In Saunders' mind there was one thought—escape. But he knew he had to take his prisoners with him. Or else kill them. He was prepared to do even that to prevent a revolution.

He knew that the shot must have aroused Salvador's servants. Through the library door, he already heard the excited murmur of voices and the sounds of running feet.

He looked around him hastily. There seemed to be only one avenue of escape, the window. He knew that he could not make it with his prisoners.

Suddenly there came a pounding of fists on the door. It finally burst open, and on the threshold Saunders saw Secret Agent Number Five, muffled to his ears, as usual, in an overcoat. A dozen Panaman police were crowding behind him.

Number Five and Mister Zero stared at each other.

"I didn't think," said Number Five, in his thin voice, "to find you here!"

"And I," breathed Saunders, "thought you were killed!"

Number Five raised his hat to disclose a bandage.

"They chipped me," he admitted grimly. "I was unconscious until after midnight. I got your message, but I was afraid I'd never get here in time. In fact," he admitted, "I probably wouldn't have if you hadn't got here before me."

He turned to the police behind him and directed them to herd the prisoners into the hall. He himself took Anna's arm to push her out with the others.

"Wait a minute," smiled Saunders. "I promised her brother that I'd look after her. She isn't a Red. She's true blue."

The LAST PATROL

A Tense, Exciting Story of the Rigid Code of the Northland and a Courageous Mounted Policeman's Perilous Man-Hunt

By GEORGE J. TALLON, R.C.M.P.

CORPORAL CAMERON dug his swishing snowshoes in deep and struggled up the last rise to reach the summit of Pine Ridge. Once on top of the frigid pinnacle he tottered against the skeleton trunk of a dead pine and leaned his heavy pack on it. Above him the black remnant of trunk and barren limbs protruded gaunt, stark and ghastly, against a swirling background of unbroken whiteness.

Mechanically, he loosened the tightly bound thongs of his snowshoes to ease the tired and aching muscles of his swollen feet, then he drew a stiff fur-mittened hand across his face and for the thousandth time that day flecked the swiftly swirling snow from his eyes to scan the flat, unbroken country spread out beneath.

"Thank God!" he muttered to himself with an evident sense of relief, "this is the last patrol."

He was on the last stretch of the trail to home, and the final patrol of the season was just about completed, with no untoward events, no unusual happenings to make comments on when he finally gained the barracks to write up his usual official report.

The worst of the patrol was be-

hind him. One more night in the snowy white, one more day of solitary trekking and he could reach the barracks of the Royal Mounted at Spruce River Station.

MILE after mile he had trudged along in the fading glow of the afternoon sun, headed for a point of frozen, snow-covered land where the Spruce River joins the mighty Mackenzie some forty miles to the north.

Once down the side of the ridge, he stepped out on a flat plain, heavily forested, and sloping almost imperceptibly until it merged into the banks of the one great artery of the Northland—the sombre and silent sweeps of the Mackenzie and the site for his camp that night.

But Corporal Cameron didn't camp that night. He trekked but a few paces further on and came to *a small white mound* on what was otherwise a level plain of soft packed snow. Mounds like this weren't usual things and Cameron stopped to investigate.

He dropped the heavy pack from his shoulders and with his mittened hands began to dig into the snow. Soft and freshly fallen as it was, it wasn't hard to move, and his probing fingers soon came to something that was hard, stiff, and unyielding to the touch.

"Umph!" he mumbled.

He began to scrape the covering mantle away with desperate swipes. The body of a frozen Indian soon lay revealed in the waxing light of moon and cold blue stars, an Indian with the entire top of his head shot away by a charge of buckshot that must have been delivered from very close at hand.

Though the top of his head was shot away his facial features were still intact and Corporal Cameron recognized him right away—Mike Running Wolf, a Loucheaux Indian, who worked a trap line near Ptarmigan Lake on the Caribou Trail, a lonely trail that paralleled the course of the Mackenzie some thirty miles inland.

The corporal dug further into the snow and exposed the sleigh over which the Indian had fallen and frozen solid. Around the sleigh there were traces of a desperate struggle.

Mike Running Wolf had fought hard for his life—and possessions, before giving in. A bale of pelts, which he was evidently sledding to some trading post, had been torn asunder and some of the pelts still remained scattered about within a few feet of the sleigh.

Corporal Cameron examined the remaining pelts, gasped as he did so, for they were the rarest of silver foxes. A sleighful would have been a fortune.

"Umph!" he mumbled again. "Motive enough for the murder. But who—"

Cameron scraped more of the soft fallen snow away, saw in the hard frozen crust beneath, imprints of *mukluked* feet here and there in many unnatural positions, and almost obliterated by the superimposed prints of many dogs—a hopeless tangle from which no definite deduction could be made.

HE stood up and looked about. Back, over the trail he had just come, rose the eerie cry of a marauding wolf which rent the still night air like the wail of a long forgotten soul from the limbo of the lost. He shuddered in spite of himself.

Ever and anon his eyes searched the north and the rose and silver sheenings of the Borealis seemed to him like the wandering spirits of lost souls, who, like the unhappily fated Running Wolf, had miserably

perished in this lonely land and now roamed across the rim of the earth seeking, ever seeking, a place of rest and happiness which they had never known nor would ever find.

CORPORAL CAMERON shook his head violently from side to side to dispel the horrid visions that fluttered through his mind, walked over to the sleigh, reached down and straightened the Indian's body along the length of the sled as well as he could. Then he carefully covered it with snow to a depth of several feet, after which he picked up his pack, adjusted it over his shoulders, turned about and went trekking back the long and arduous trail he had just come.

It was the only thing he could do. If the murderer had gone on to the north, he could seek for traces of his flight when he came back over the ridge again. If he had gone south, which Cameron had a hunch he had, there was nothing to do but turn back and go after him.

The patrol, which he had thought almost ended just a few hours before, seemed now to be just in the beginning. It might mean that he would have to spend the whole winter away from his home barracks at Spruce River Station.

Corporal Cameron uttered no gasp of relief this time as he turned back on the trail, yet he suffered no poignant feelings of despair. It was the code of the Mounted. A heinous murder had been committed and it was up to him to find the murderer and bring him to justice. Cameron's lips were set tight and his eyes were narrowed down in heavy thought as he trekked slowly but steadily up the back trail across Pine Ridge.

All night he shuffled along and towards morning he reached the shores of Ptarmigan Lake. In the far distance across the frozen surface, from a little valley on the opposite shore, he saw a wreath of pale blue smoke swirling up from the chimney of a lone cabin; Tom Slade's cabin. It was the sole habitation within an area of a hundred miles, occupied by old Tom Slade and a younger partner he had brought up from Edmonton some three years before.

Corporal Cameron had not expected to see smoke curling from its chimney. For just the day before when he had stopped there on his way to Pine Ridge, Tom Slade had told him he was going out to run his trap lines. And Grant, the younger partner, was already out and wouldn't be expected back for another two days.

"'s funny," Cameron mumbled to himself just as he prepared to swing across the lake. "But I'd better go over and investigate."

Tom Slade was sitting at the end of his table hastily devouring a breakfast of sourdough biscuits and bacon strips when Corporal Cameron appeared at the door and knocked thunderously.

"Come in, stranger," Slade answered without getting up. "Come in, warm your feet an' partake."

CAMERON opened the door and pushed in.

Old Tom Slade's waterless, gray eyes went slightly apart and he was apparently surprised at Cameron's return to his cabin.

"Huly gee! Corporal," he piped. "I s'posed you'd be home at th' barracks by now. I thought you was on your last patrol."

"I was," the Mountie replied, removing his *parkha* and mittens. "But I forgot a little job I had to do on the back trial, so came back to do it. Saw smoke from your chimney and

thought I'd come over and get a bit of hot breakfast. Grant back, too?" he added as sort of an afterthought after glancing around the room.

"Sure thing," said Slade. "Sit down an' fill up. Visitors ain't often in these parts, you know. No, Grant ain't back yet, 'spect him tomorrer, though."

Cameron seated himself at the opposite end of the table and Slade watched as he silently devoured the hasty meal he had put on the table for him. He noted again the piercing, gray eyes, warm and cold by turns; the massive broad shoulders and long, rippling muscles that were perceptibly noted with each movement of the arms under the vivid, scarlet tunic of the Corporal of the Royal Mounted—the law's sole preserver in that far flung area around Ptarmigan Lake and the Caribou Trail.

Finally after a long silence Cameron spoke.

His words came forth very casually and matter-of-fact like.

"Slade, you've been in this country a long time. You know its ways and its laws. You know that a rat can't survive—the rigors of the north nor the vengeance of its men. But Grant, what about him, has he been here long enough to know the code? By the way," the Mountie changed his tone abruptly, "Grant's running the north trap line, isn't he?"

SLADE, who had listened closely with a cunning, nevertheless, interrogative glint in his eye, answered with a blunt affirmative.

"Yes, he took the north line. But I don't get just what you're drivin' at, Corporal. About the North and its laws—an' Grant. 'Course you and I know he's weak. He's got the husky frame of a bull caribou with the heart of a chicken. But I been watchin' over him, protectin' him. He's gettin' along."

MAYBE too well," said Cameron bluntly, as he pushed his plate and coffee cup away. "You or Grant seen anything of Mike Running Wolf lately?" he suddenly snapped, and watching Slade closely, he detected a slight quiver of the body, a nervous flicker at the down drooped corners of his sagging lips. Then quickly:

"He's your only competition in these parts. But I suppose you two'll run him out in time. One Indian can't compete with two white men."

"Ain't seen him, Corporal," replied Slade with a hesitant glint in his waterless eyes, "since I run into him at the Russian's trading post on Great Slave, last Spring. But we get along. It doesn't take much for an Indian to make out on. There's plenty of room here for all three of us."

"But not enough valuable pelts," broke in Cameron, a forced laugh fringing his tight lips. Then very suddenly and with evident seriousness: "How come you're not out on the line yourself, like you said when I went through yesterday?"

Slade's brows narrowed and his eyes glinted.

"I don't mind answering all those questions, Corporal," he replied cagily. "But I'd sorta like to know what's up. Who you after an' why? Tell me that an' maybe I can give you some help."

"I don't mind that at all," said Cameron, smiling. "But you answer mine first. We'll keep everything in order then."

Slade got up and looked out the window towards the lake. It was snowing again and a growing wind was whirling the flakes across Ptarmigan in fitful frigid gusts.

"It's been bad weather," said Slade

when he came back from the window. "I'm waiting for Grant to come back with the dogs. I haven't run my line for some time an' the trappin's been good. I feel there's more'n I can pack on my back, so's I decided to wait for Grant an' the dogs. Now tell me what's on your mind. I spoke my piece."

CORPORAL CAMERON got up from the table, pulled on his *parkha* and mittens, and took up his rifle leaning against the cabin wall while Tom Slade looked on quizzically.

"I'm leaving my pack here," he said, as he opened the door and went out into the growing blizzard. "I'm going down to the lake and look around. I'll be back soon. I'll tell you what's up when I get back. I'll know more about it then."

Slade watched him go with an enigmatic stare in his eyes. A hundred yards from the cabin Cameron was completely swallowed up by the thick, white blanket of whisking snow. Then when he was certain that he was far enough from the cabin to be safe from Slade's gaze, he stooped and plucked a long, slender willow branch from a bush.

He trimmed it with his knife of small twigs and shoots. Then starting at a point about half way between the lake and cabin, he began to walk slowly around in a circle with the cabin as a center.

The stick he held swiftly at his side and ever so often he poked it down sharply through the soft falling snow before him. Slowly he pushed around in his ever widening circle, being careful to keep out of sight of Slade in the cabin.

He had completed the half circle to the north and was half way around on the arc to the south of the cabin when his thrusting willow branch struck a spot beneath the snow that seemed to resist the gentle pressure he applied. Dropping to his knees now and looking around over his shoulder to make sure that he was not observed, he began hurriedly to scoop away the freshly fallen snow. When he finished an exclamation of satisfaction escaped his set lips.

There beneath the soft snow were *mukluked* footprints and sled runner tracks—and they pointed in the general direction of the Caribou Trail and Kressakoff's Russian trading post on Great Slave Lake. Without question they were Grant's. He had gone south instead of north, contrary to Slade's explanation.

Corporal Cameron stood up, threw away his willow branch and kicked fresh snow over the tell-tale tracks. He looked towards the cabin again with his rifle crooked under the arch of his left arm, then making certain once more that he was unobserved, he shifted the rifle into his right hand and opened the cartridge magazine, removed the shells from it and dropped them in the pocket of his tunic.

A FEW minutes later he pushed open the door of Slade's cabin and re-entered, leaning his rifle against the wall as he had before and removing his *parkha* and mittens.

"Well," said Slade, who had been standing at the window looking out at the gathering storm. "What'd you find out? Enough to tell me who or what you're after?"

"Yes," said Cameron stalking over towards the hot stove non-concernedly. "I have. Grant ought to be back from the north soon, hadn't he?" The corporal stressed the word *north* rather queerly and Tom Slade stared at him fixedly, a slightly puzzled look reflecting from his narrowed, gray eyes.

"Tonight or tomorrer," Slade an-

swered after momentary hesitation. "But what's that got to do with what you found out?" Slade moved out from behind the stove and took a chair near the door right beside the Mountie's rifle when he finished speaking.

CAMERON'S head jerked almost imperceptibly, and he, too, moved from the hot stove, taking a standing position right below the twin pegs on the far cabin wall upon which Tom Slade's 30-30 Winchester was laid.

"Plenty," he said, as he walked across the room. "Mike Running Wolf has been shot to death. And I'm waiting right here until Grant comes back. He might know something about it."

Again the corporal of the Royal Mounted stressed certain words unduly and old Tom Slade stared at him queerly.

"Why, er—er, you ain't figurin' that young Grant did it, are you?" he asked rather haltingly, then added more emphatically. "I don't think so. He h'aint got the guts to shoot anybody—"

"I don't think so, either," said Cameron, and his gimlet eyes bored into those of Slade. "But he might know something about it. I'm waiting here to question him."

For long minutes Cameron and Slade remained without words and carried on a silent battle of wits. The tall Mountie paced back and forth beneath Slade's Winchester hung on the pegs, and Slade sat sombrely by the door, watching his every movement and trying to divine the thoughts in Cameron's mind by his physical actions.

The silence was broken finally by the sudden barking and howling of sled dogs. Slade jumped up and stepped to the window, saw through the swirling snow the tall, fur-clad figure of Grant, coming down off the rise that led to the Caribou Trail, running behind his lightly loaded sled.

"It's Grant," Slade piped with an obvious and nervous hesitance in the tone of his voice.

"He's back a little early, isn't he?" Cameron said, still pacing across the room in front of the rifle pegs.

Slade crossed to the door and put his hand on the knob to pull it open. "I'd better go out an' help him put up the dogs," he said.

"I think you had better not," Cameron replied. "You sit there in the chair behind the door out of sight."

Slade halted with his hand on the knob and looked back over his shoulder at Cameron. Cold sweat beads had broken out on his forehead and the snow-bronzed lines of his tense face were fringed with a sickly saffron.

"Go on, Slade, sit down!" Cameron commanded. "I'll do all the talking to Grant. You keep still until I finish."

Slade hesitated for a moment, then his hand dropped from the knob and he idled back to the chair, edging it over closer to Cameron's rifle as he sat down. An action which the Mountie acknowledged with a sly momentary smile, but no apparent concern.

GRANT tied his dogs outside and pushed through the door into an atmosphere tense and electric, and pregnant with evil foreboding.

"Hello, Slade," he greeted as he entered. But before Slade could answer his attraction was diverted by the scraping of the Mountie's steel spurred boots on the rough floor. "Why, er—er-uh, Hello, Cameron," Grant stammered, utterly surprised and groping for words. "How come you're here?"

"I thought you'd be surprised to see me, Kid," Cameron said, dryly.

Puzzled, astonished, and suddenly gripped with an overwhelming fear, Grant stared wildly from Slade to Cameron. In the Mountie's eyes he caught the gleaming glint of triumph. In Slade's, stark horror was reflected. He leaned over towards the Mountie's rifle against the cabin wall.

"What's he mean, Slade? What's he doing here?" Grant mumbled weakly and stared at his older partner while his face went ashen white and his lips began to tremble.

"Come on in. Close the door. Take off your furs and get warm," Cameron said, still standing within easy reach of Slade's .30-.30.

Grant kicked the door back behind him, stalked towards the stove, cold fear constricting his heart while the blood stream turned frigid in his veins.

Cameron advanced a few paces, placed his hand on Grant's shoulder.

"In the name of his Majesty the King, I arrest you. But I'm in no hurry to be on the way. Take your furs off and get warm—"

Grant stared frantically from Cameron to Slade. His knees shook, his great frame trembled. Fear gripped him like the steel jaws of a trap gripped the stricken animals caught in its clutches.

"Tell him, Slade," said Cameron. "Tell him what it's all about. You're his friend and partner."

SLADE, slumped down in his chair and quaking, told him briefly about the murder of Running Wolf, while his younger partner listened with a querulous and horrified expression in his eyes. Then Slade, jumping up from his chair, pointed an accusing finger in Grant's face, blurted:

"Damn you, Kid. I didn't think you'd double-cross your partner like this. You're a rat! Not fit for the north. The devil and the Royal Mounted take you!" Then whirling swiftly and pointing his finger at Cameron: "Take him, Corporal! Get him out of my sight!"

GRANT'S trembling frame ceased quivering, then stiffened. His massive fingers constricted into fists and came up from his sides. He stared down at Slade and bubbles of froth poured from his trembling white lips.

"Slade! Slade!" he suddenly exploded, then he leaped.

The older man went down on the floor beneath him. Grant's massive fists unfolded and the long fingers twisted around Slade's neck. Slade's long arm shot out and his clutching fingers grasped the Mountie's rifle leaning against the cabin wall.

But Grant heaved and shook, wracked Slade from head to foot like a bulldog would shake a rabbit. All fear, all timidity had left him. The chicken heart within his massive chest had suddenly expanded into that of a lion when his older partner had pointed the accusing finger at him.

"Slade! Slade! You—! You know—you know that's a lie," he rasped through chattering teeth, mad with blind fury.

Cameron still stood beneath the rifle pegs with his hand to his chin and his eyes narrowed down thinly watching the tangle.

"Shush—shush!" Slade cautioned in a coarse whisper with his mouth close to Grant's ear as they rolled over on the floor. "It's only a stall. He's got us dead. I had to think fast. Let me up. I got him now. I got his rifle—"

Grant held on tight for another moment, then a slow thought began to percolate through his mind. Slade was right. The Mountie had the evi-

dence, no doubt. It would be curtains for both unless they could escape.

He loosened his grip on Slade. Slade rolled over on his face, one eye still fastened on Cameron. The rifle was gripped tightly in his right hand.

SLADE came up on one knee, then with the suddenness of a panther he bolted upright with the long barrel of the rifle pointed menacingly at the Mountie's heart.

"Move an' I plug you!" he rasped with slanted lips. Then a diabolical flame leaped in his waterless eyes, and he laughed. "Thought you had me, eh? Well, the tables are turned. It's your turn to make tracks now."

Slade cocked the rifle and held his finger poised over the trigger.

"I wouldn't do anything rash, Slade," Cameron said very coolly. "The Royal Mounted will get you no matter how far you go."

"Yeah?" Slade sneered, and Grant looked on dumbly and spellbound.

"But you're not going far, Slade," Cameron replied, as he slipped a pair of bracelets from his pocket. "Put down my rifle and stick out your wrists. You and Grant are going along with me." He began walking towards Slade.

Slade's finger constricted on the trigger and it clicked—hollowly.

Cameron smiled, advanced slowly. Slade's gray eyes narrowed to pin points and he tried to throw another shell into the breech. But the magazine was empty. Panic took him and he whirled the rifle around end for end, attempted to bring the butt of it down on Cameron's head.

But the Mountie was quicker than lightning. He ducked and came up with his booted foot to Slade's groin. The man sank to the floor, groveling in pain. In the moment of his sinking Cameron snapped the steel bracelets on his wrists. Then he whirled toward Grant, who was so surprised and thunderstruck he stood immobile and helpless as a marble statue —and just as white.

"Go on, Grant, you might as well confess," Cameron snapped.

"But, er—er, I didn't kill Running Wolf," Grant stammered, and he pointed with his trembling finger toward the man on the floor. "He, he—he did—"

"I figured that," snapped Cameron. "But you took the furs to the Russians and sold them I saw your outgoing footprints and sled runner marks under the snow. You're an accomplice. Stick out your hands."

Dazedly, Grant did. Cameron snapped a second pair of handcuffs on him.

OUTSIDE the storm was still growing and a raging blizzard swirled over Ptarmigan Lake, but Cameron went out and made the dog team ready for the long trek to Spruce River station with his prisoners.

"The last patrol," he mumbled to himself, when he had them securely lashed to the sleigh and swarthed in furs. "Well, thank God, it soon will be. The north is no place for rats."

"Marche!" he ordered, and snapped his whip over the lead dog's ears. The dogs leaped off on the run and soon disappeared into the heaving ocean of snowy white.

WOLF CRY

Poorga Was An Outcast Among the Wolves Because He Was Different—And He Traveled Alone, Until . . . .

By **PERLEY POORE SHEEHAN**

Author of "The Leopard Man," "White Tigers," etc.

MAYBE animals have their destiny as well as men. Wolves, for example. Wolves have a special cry that they utter at the rising of the moon. It's a sort of short, excited yapping—the nearest thing to a bark that a wolf ever gets to. A regular moon-call, old as the moon itself. But, somehow, the first time that Poorga let out that call and the moon came up, he felt a queer shiver of satisfaction.

There was something personal about it. His was the voice the moon had been waiting for. The moon had recognized him. He'd recognized the moon. There was a secret bond between them.

At that time, he'd been nothing much more than a pup. Yet it was a feeling that he never lost. It was just as well. He was going to need some sort of a sustaining influence in his troubled life.

He'd always been a little different from other wolves. If he hadn't been, he'd have passed out with the others

practically before he'd got his eyes open.

At the time of his birth, there'd been a terrific blizzard raging; and this one followed by another and another. The sort of driving snowstorm straight out of the Arctic that the Koraks of Northeast Siberia call a "poorga"—a white blizzard—from which Poorga himself was named.

IT was along sometime in April, at a time when the wild reindeer herds should have been returning from the South. Like that, the wolf-mothers who had denned in the North should have had plenty of meat when their pups arrived. But the blizzards had changed all that. The reindeer migration was delayed and starvation hit the dens. In any case, out of a litter of what might have been seven or eight—or even ten—Poorga was the only one to come through alive.

Perhaps the reason his parents hadn't killed him in that time of famine was that his puppy fur had been a little lighter than that of the others. He was to grow up almost white. Not an albino. Just white.

His early growth was swift. For, from one day to the next, it seemed, there'd been a transition from famine to plenty. The reindeer were coming up toward the shores of the Arctic like an unnumbered army, scattered and easy to kill. The wolves were getting fat again. And Poorga, the pup, had inherited the milk-wells—overflowing now—of the brothers and sisters who had died.

A bad beginning but a good ending, as they say. This was to be one of the fat years straight on through. A perpetual gorge—on everything from sweet wild berries to stranded whale; unlimited birds and eggs—grouse, ducks, geese; then salmon, reindeer, horses, an occasional bear.

These latter—especially the horses and bear, but the reindeer also—brought Poorga and his tribe into contact with men. The bears killed by the wolves were those that had been wounded in the Korak traps, a sort of spring-gun set with a drawn bow and a heavy arrow; or maybe some bear with a leg broken in a deadfall.

It was in retaliation for this—and also for the sake of the wolf-pelts—that the Koraks put out poisoned bait. A dozen times that first summer Poorga saw mates of his die the curious and terrible death of poison. It made such an impression on him that from this time on he was going to leave easy meat alone—until, that is, the time came when he could be sure.

Yet of food he never seemed to have enough. When he did have enough, still he'd come out of the first sleep famished again. He and his mother would leave some sheltered den—under the snow or under a rock. There'd be an ice-green sky, as likely as not, and a world of silence and twilight in which the air was keen. Then, from away off beyond the horizon they'd hear the blood-call of other wolves—a long high note, shrill and ghostly. Just one, coming out of nowhere like a phantom goose. Then another, from a different direction. Then another. And Poorga and his mother would be off to join the hunt, as swift—and mostly as silent—as frightened shadows.

THERE were other calls—all of them different, yet each with something mournful in them; to the ears of other creatures, and, for that matter, to the ears of Poorga himself.

There's been the way his mother had called him when he was little. There was the bedtime cry, plaintive and as if discouraged at the end of the night.

The mournfulest cry of all was when a blizzard was headed down from the North; and at first the young wolves couldn't understand this. The old wolves would start it at times even when the stars were shining and there wasn't a breath of wind from anywhere. Yet the old wolves — apropos of nothing, it seemed—would sit on their haunches and lift their muzzles straight up. They'd shut their eyes and make an "o" with their mouths. Their bushy throats would swell and out would come the blizzard howl—a note that would travel for miles.

MILES away the herds and flocks would raise their heads and listen. So would the herders and every other living thing. It was like a death-threat—the wailing voice of Death itself.

It meant: "The poorga—the poorga is coming!"

There was another call that the young wolves didn't understand at first. And this was the mating-call. It began to be heard just along at about the time when the blizzard warning was to be heard oftener and oftener. And the mating-call sounded a little like the blizzard-warning—or, to untrained ears, it might have done so. A sobbing note, with something wistful in it, sent off in no particular direction or coming in from a section of hill or tundra where it was known there was nothing to eat.

Then strange wolves would appear and there were likely to be battles. Other wolves would drift away.

A big gray wolf with black, diamond-shaped marks about his eyes, pushed Poorga aside one day and rubbed faces with his mother. Poorga jumped at him, but the big gray knocked him over almost before Poorga knew what had happened; and there was Poorga on the ground with the diamond framed eyes close to his own.

Poorga growled and tried to slash the gray's face; but, at that, the gray in an instant was fumbling at Poorga's throat. Poorga lay still, and the gray backed away—stiff-legged—without hurting him. It was Poorga's first threat, with any meaning back of it, from a full-grown wolf; and it suddenly, somehow, became clear to him that from this time on he would have to travel on his own.

All the time that the big wolf had been threatening him, his mother hadn't stirred, hadn't uttered a sound. Presently the two of them, the big gray and Poorga's mother, faded into the night and Poorga was left alone.

Just how much he was to be alone, he had still to learn.

While his mother was still with him, he had been much with other wolves—sometimes with large packs, sometimes with small. And, from the time he'd begun to run, his squabbles had been practically continuous.

Sometimes, even while Poorga and his mates were but little better than pups, these squabbles drew blood. To such a point that the mothers themselves would get to fighting—their eyes showing green and their white fangs flashing. The fights were savage while they lasted. But the wolf-mothers, even then, would be thinking of their children first; and when these scattered, the fighting mothers would separate with nothing worse than a few slashes. They didn't fight to kill as the dog-wolves did.

BUT Poorga, in any case, had learned a lot about fighting. Individually, there was no wolf of his age that he feared. Had it come to that, there was probably no young wolf of that year's breed that he couldn't have bullied and robbed at

the time of a tribal feeding if the two of them had been alone.

Other young wolves were doing this constantly—snatching the meat from some weaker rival, shouldering such as they could from a good place at a kill. But each time that Poorga had tried something like that he'd found himself at once fighting not one but a gang.

He'd never stopped to reason this out. It was just so. That was all. It was always himself against the gang, the gang against himself. And hitherto he'd had his mother there to save him in a pinch. Now she was gone.

He ran, that night, with the remnant of his mother's pack; and the running happened to be good.

By this time, the reindeer were heading south again. Most of the migration had already passed. But the wolves had cut off a bunch of stragglers, hamstringing only the best of them and letting the others go. A night that should have been dark, out on the open tundra; no moon, no stars; but all the northern half of the sky hung with pink and purple curtains of the Aurora Borealis that crackled and burned and shook out waves of colored light.

Poorga, running a little apart, found a yearling reindeer heifer that had been crippled by one of the old killers of the wolf-pack who'd then passed on to continue the chase. Poorga, now considerably more than half-grown, slit the victim's throat as neatly as a butcher might have done and began to feed.

HE'D scarcely started when he heard a growl. Without stopping to look or growl a return, he'd flashed his head around with a slashing movement.

The moment he'd done so, he must have seen that he was up against murder. There wasn't just one wolf there. There were two—two brothers who'd often picked on him before. Their ears were flattened. Their eyes were green. Their lips were drawn back from their fangs.

Poorga jumped sideways, slashing at one of the brothers as he did so. Unless he could disable one of them at once, his chances would be slim. They were a perfect team.

Only one of them had sprung, the other had sidled around. As Poorga landed, the one on the ground attacked, almost throwing him. Poorga pivoted and was lucky enough to fasten the other's cheek. It was a hold that Poorga held for seconds; and he and the wolf he'd seized came up to their hind legs like boxers.

NOT a yelp, not a sound except that of their throaty breathing.

Poorga had a hold that might have meant the end of the battle if it had been wolf against wolf. It was a hold that the other wolf couldn't break. Poorga held the entire side of the other's lower lip in his teeth. Little by little the rival would have been exhausted. At the same time there would have been an unrelaxed shifting of Poorga's hold to a grip on the throat.

But Poorga was fighting two, not one.

Still clamped, Poorga jerked himself up and around.

He hadn't been a second too soon—nor the hundredth of a second. The other wolf-brother had made a dash at one of his legs. A lightning snap and he'd have been hamstrung like a reindeer calf.

For a moment or so the three wolves were in a furry tangle—and no telling in that shaking light from the Northern streamers which was which. The brothers were a yellowish gray. Poorga was white. But the green and purple, the pinks and

yellows, that crossed them with dissolving shadows made them all of a color.

They jerked apart, all of them standing up for a second like hairy men.

Then Poorga had slammed himself against them with a double movement of his front feet exactly as a boxer might have done with chopping rights and lefts. The others did likewise. In the turmoil there was a snap of bone.

It was curious how quickly the other wolves got news of the battle. So far, it had been but a matter of swift seconds with scarcely any sound. And the other wolves had been preoccupied—with killing, with the first undiminshed satisfactions of the gorge. Yet here they came streaking in—ten, fifteen, twenty—fighters, all of them, old or young, and more interested in fighting just now than they were even in food. The food could wait. They must have known that this fight couldn't last very long.

There may have been some other impulse at the back of their brains.

One of the wolf-brothers had gone down with a front leg broken.

Quick as flash, Poorga had jumped and writhed down and without a moment's hesitation had caught the cripple from behind and flung him over helpless.

THE pack did the rest. They were all on the cripple—heading into him as if to a feed-trough. Out of this they backed with blood on their jowls—snapping, shouldering, threatening new fights.

The fallen wolf lay there as still as the dead reindeer—both of them bloody and torn. An old she-wolf and a couple of undersized young ones now fell upon the carcass of the reindeer and began to feed. But the other wolves watched the fight.

Poorga and his remaining antagonist were again on their hindlegs and their forelegs locked. As they pushed and wrestled, their mouths, open and slavering, clashed with a sound like that of ivory mallets.

Then, swiftly, as this whole fight had gone, Poorga had swung his head lower and the other wolf's head went up. Poorga had his adversary by the throat. As swiftly as that fatal drive at the throat had been delivered, the two wolves went to the ground, Poorga still holding on.

IT was now that the amazing and distressing thing happened, so far as Poorga was concerned. He'd fought a good fight against overwhelming odds. And he'd won it. The second wolf was as good as dead.

The other wolves had come crowding to finish him, just as they'd finished that other brother. But as they did so, Poorga had felt his own flank slashed. Whether it had been by accident or design he didn't know. He didn't stop to ask. The chances were that it was the result of some old grudge—some young wolf he'd punished or cowed trying now to get even under cover of the pack.

Whatever it was, Poorga had released his hold on the throat of the second wolf he'd thrown and was fighting again. In an instant, it seemed, he was fighting the pack and the pack was bent on killing him.

This was a night of blood. No moon. The mating season. The deep edge of winter. Those Northern Lights streaming and fluttering to upset the minds of men or wolves.

Some sort of a haunting realization of all this came to Poorga.

The pack was bent on killing him because he was different, because he was white.

It's hard to say just how this

realization did come to him. But there it was. The unanimous action of the pack in tearing at him was what brought him the knowledge perhaps, a stored up memory of how he'd been fighting the gang and how he'd been persecuted by the gang ever since he could remember.

He was fighting—fighting—with all that he had of brain and nerve, muscle and fang. But down deep inside of him there was a pool of quiet thought unruffled by what he was going through. He cut and twisted. There was clash of fangs as his own white teeth met others. Even so, down there in the quiet pool of his inmost thought there was a reflection of the moon. The moon was his friend. The moon was white.

He was almost free. Two more cuts given and two received—one down his shoulder and one down his cheek. But then he was free.

He ran.

HE felt as if he'd been cut to ribbons.

But none followed him. What had actually happened—he knew it—was that he'd been driven from the pack. He'd better not try to return.

He ran for a long time, then rested. He started to run again, then stopped, and stood where he was with one paw lifted. He was weak and dizzy. He was wavering on his feet. But his brain was clear enough to take note of things.

He slowly turned. The Northern Lights were fading. The stars were beginning to show. A cold breeze drew across the tundra. It was already white with the winter's first snow.

Poorga raised his lacerated mouth and sounded a few short, plaintive barks. He saw a silver glow in the east. The moon was coming up.

Poorga headed toward the moon. He kept traveling, not very fast but steadily, until the moon had made about a quarter of her slanting climb. So far she had guided him all right. He'd found a cut bank where a few dwarf willows grew, and here he'd almost stepped on an arctic hare. This he'd caught and killed in an instant with the last reflex of his exhausted strength.

HE dragged the hare along with him as he limped on in search of a den. He'd need it.

For every now and then he'd stop to listen and rest himself, and across the great silence he'd hear the faint, the weird and mournful howl of the wolves who'd tried to kill him foretelling now the coming of another poorga.

He found a hole under the bank and hauled himself into it. He ate the hare lying down. He was comfortably filled. He spent another deliberate hour licking his wounds. He licked them again and again, over and over.

This done, he found that he had recovered enough of his strength to improve the place. From the back of the hole he was in he scratched down sand. In this he turned himself round and round with an air of thoughtfulness and care. It was a long time, tired as he was, before he was satisfied with his arrangements. But finally he coiled up, making a circle of himself as compact as that of a coiled python. And still sensitive to every whisper of earth and air he slept.

It was a full day and a half after the wolves had given their warning before the storm came down from the North. And after that it raged three days without let-up—a howling white blindness that scourged this part of the world with needles and knives. Sometimes it changed its

note from high to low—from a steady shriek to a galloping moan But with never a let-up.

And all this time Poorga lay where he was. He slept. He waited. He barely stirred except to lick his wounds. He spent long hours doctoring himself. He never whimpered. He made no sound at all. Now and then he would stop to listen. But at last he'd recoil himself and sleep again.

He must have been listening even in his sleep. For suddenly from a deep sleep he arose and, through what would have been darkness to some eyes, he went without hesitation to a place in the snow-wall that blocked the entire front of his shelter. His wounds were still tender, but it was less than a minute before he'd dug his way up and out to the open air.

EXCEPT for the surface of the earth the night was black. But there was no wind. The cold had a burning solidity about it as if the world had been frozen into a cake of ice. There was no sound whatsoever—a silence so pure that presently Poorga could hear his own breath turning to crystals—the crawl of the new snow under his feet readjusting itself to the pressure of his weight.

There was warmth in the den he'd just left. But he was famished. He started away on a long sliding trot, still toward the east.

This was the season of long nights. For barely two hours or so now every day the sun would show itself low and red over the southern horizon. There it would drift, then sink again. But sometimes, as if to compensate this, five suns would show themselves instead of one, the five of them linked with arcs and circles of burning light. Or again, the whole North and East and West would be flaming and quaking with that magnetic pageant of the Northern Lights.

It was a country of magic and magicians. The magicians were medicine men—shamans. When a rich native was sick, a shaman would be called. A part of his treatment would be to impale a dog or two, or a reindeer or two, and put them up on stakes above the dugouts in which the Kalmaks spent their winters.

The first scent that reached Poorga on that first long famished run of his from the den where he'd nursed his wounds was that of a snowbound Kalmak camp where sacrificed reindeer had been offered to the spirits of the air.

He circled the camp again and again. But each time the circle was smaller.

The camp was a mere cluster of snow mounds seen from the outer world, each mound crested with new filth and letting out a curl of smoke from an opening that was both chimney and doorway; then, over such an opening, those slanting poles with the bodies of sacrificial victims impaled on them.

Traps, poisons, a great cunning, and ways past finding out—these were facts associated in Poorga's thought with the man-tribe. But there'd always been a lure and a fascination about the talking animals in spite of all that—for Poorga just as there was for other wolves; and for those half-bred wolves, it seemed, who served these hind-feet walkers as slaves.

POORGA drew near that one of the reeking dens that promised most. The fumes from the open vent almost stifled him. But his hunger now was a raging desperation. He jumped for one of the impaled and

frozen reindeer and clung to it for a swinging moment.

He dropped back to the snow-covered roof. But now he'd had a taste of the meat. It was like a whiff of air to a creature held too long under water. He jumped again, and this time brought the carcass down.

IN a moment he was tearing at the frozen meat, gulping it in ragged lumps.

He was aware of a commotion in the dugout beneath him while he was doing this, but his hunger was such and the feeding-excitement was so great that now nothing could frighten him away.

Poorga heard a shout.

And there was a strange creature thrusting itself up through the hole right in front of him—a face that was almost black, wrinkled and almost hairless, yet surrounded by a mass of fur that was unmistakably that of a wolf.

After one look—the green-eye challenge coupled with a growl—Poorga went on eating. If this thing was a man, he made mental note, then man was merely a sort of wolf. There'd be peace between them so long as the man-wolf didn't interfere with his feeding—

The long winter wore away, and in the world of men in that far northeast corner of Asia the shamans were singing now of a new white devil who had come to rule them—a "kamuk," a devil—in the form of a white wolf; and the kamuk was "sheepka hooda"—very bad, very powerful, accountable for smallpox and things like that, to be placated by offerings of meat.

Which was a good thing for Poorga, for the seasons were upset again and running into famine-times for men as well as wolves.

Several times Poorga had tried to break in on various packs of wolves and get himself accepted. But now, it seemed, he had some other sort of brand on him—from having been too often in the smoke from buried dugouts. So his overtures merely resulted in other fights. He was white and he smelled of the hind-feet dens, the dens of the poison tribe.

But now Poorga was no longer a pup. He was almost full-grown, although far from being fully developed. He fought. Several times he killed wolves older than himself. But it was always the same in the long-run. The wolf-packs meditated murder while his back was turned. He'd have to run or be gang-killed. His only real friend was the moon. Alone and lonely, he called her up. When she came at his call he wasn't lonely anymore.

This constant turning of his to the East—toward the rising moon—had brought him at last to the coast. And there, for a while, he threw in with a harum-scarum pack of wolves that were outcasts like himself from the reguar packs. They raided the fishing camps until the rivers opened and the salmon began to run. Now and then they had a grand blood-glut when they'd managed to corner a pod of hair seals in some crotch of the shore where sweet water came down from the wild interior.

BUT the band, even now, ran into hunger—and peril as well.

They spent one entire night jumping up at the floor of a little man-den set high on posts. There came down from that log nest such a smell of smoked meat and dried fish as to drive them crazy. They looked crazy as they jumped and dropped, jumped and dropped. They were like animals jerked by strings. But at every jump their white fangs

sheared away a little more of the logs that formed the floor.

Then, suddenly, without warning, from down-wind, there came a burst of fire and thunder. Three of the pack went sprawling while the others ran—they were gone like shadows.

But one of those on the ground was Poorga.

He was there when the thunder-makers came up. One of them touched Poorga with his foot.

At the touch, it was as if Poorga had been touched by a finger of lightning. He'd merely been knocked unconscious by a bullet that had grazed his skull. The touch had revived him. He was up and away.

After that he wanted nothing more to do with the men-wolves or the wolves themselves. He didn't answer the call of other wolves. Now and then, though, he'd hide along a slope and watch some mother-wolf make a kill, then call her litter to her with a warbling note. That was another wolf-cry, but it was as soft as the cooing of a pigeon. Once, Poorga recalled, he'd answered a note like that.

HE kept on going east whenever he could—over toward the place where the moon came up. And it was natural for him, anyway, to go on up toward the North as long as the food held out. All that summer he fared alone—in a general way following the coast. The coast bore east and north. He didn't mind the northern drift. It was the direction of the moon's coming up that mattered.

This was something he didn't try to explain. All he knew was that he felt a friendliness for the moon. He only called the moon at certain times, and this he might not have been able to explain either. But he did know this—that never once when he'd called her had she failed to appear.

Sometimes when the moon did come lifting over the eastern rim of the world he'd sit and watch her for a while; and always when he did he'd feel some quiet pool of peace and well-being down deep inside of himself—just like some quiet pool left by the melting of the snow—and in this there would be a reflection of the moon.

Maybe he'd had an ancestor who'd come from the country where the moon came up.

ANYWAY, some sort of a purpose seemed to be calling him on. He didn't turn back when he began to see the scattered herds of wild reindeer headed south again. There were days when he saw the arctic geese go south—nights when he heard them flying south high up among the stars.

By the end of summer—and the snow was already flying in September—he'd worked his way far up and over into that extreme corner of Asia where Siberia reaches out toward Alaska—only a scant sixty miles apart. And there, one clear day, Poorga looked long at that far coast.

He was no longer a pup. Not in any sense. This second summer had built him up and filled him out. He'd had plenty of contact with other wolves. It would probably have been hard to find his fighting equal of any kind. He'd also profited by his contact with men—their atrocious scent, their gift for thunder-fire that could put a crease in your head from a distance, their traps and their poison.

He'd been happier, as a matter of fact, when he was away from both men and wolves; and this may have been what it was that now held him in the North when so much of

Northern life was scudding south. Besides, anyway, there was still plenty of food about for one of his present training.

When the tide was out at night Poorga, in the still dark, would go far out across the tidal rocks and sand, and there, at times, he'd see—far away across the icy waters—strange stars that flashed and disappeared and came again.

HE sheltered through half a dozen blizzards and came out of them still to find plenty of food about.

But now as he came again to look at the wide stretch of open water that had lain between him and the country from which the moon came up he saw that a great and impressive change had taken place.

Now, instead of water, there was what looked like nothing so much as frozen, snow-drifted tundra.

The ice-fields had been carried into the passage by those northern gales and the surface of the waters was covered with them—churning, groaning, howling.

It was as if out there a pack of wolf-giants—of super-wolves, wolves big as clouds—were howling, shaking the world with news of importance.

Poorga seated himself on a frozen hummock to contemplate the wonder. As he contemplated it, there was a profound change going on inside of himself. He could feel it. Yet he didn't know what it was. It became an ache. It was something like an ache of loneliness; and yet it wasn't that.

He'd passed through loneliness. This was more distressing still. It was somewhat as if he'd called the moon and the moon had failed to rise.

At the thought of this, the impulse came to Poorga to howl again—howl anyway. And he raised his nose straight up. He made an "o" of his mouth. His bushy white throat swelled as if in measure to the swelling of his heart. And a howl came up — quavering and mournful, long-sustained, with something inexpressibly wistful in it.

And only then he remembered—not how he'd howled this way before. He'd never howled this way before. But he'd heard other wolves do it. This was the mating-howl.

He brought his head down dizzily. Without knowing it, without intention, he'd uttered the mating-call. This wasn't something that he'd done for himself, invented of himself. It had come to him like a gift from the moon.

It made him reel a little. He wanted to run, wanted to fight.

Who would answer his mating-call? And again he raised his head. This time, with conscious effort, he poured his whole soul—and the contents of his powerful lungs, the lungs of a long-distance runner—into his howl.

It may have been his imagination—it may have been but an echo of his own voice sent back from a scudding, belated goose; or the far hoot of a siren from some coast-guard vessel; again it may have been a howl from the grinding floes. Or—who can ever know for sure about such things? It may have been some ancient inborn radio of Poorga's own heart and wolf-mind. But, even as he was howling, he felt an overwhelming conviction that he'd heard a responsive howl.

IT had come from somewhere over there to the east.

He was strong. He was well-fed. He was in great condition for a run—and a fight at the end of the run, if it came to that.

With no hesitation at all he ran down to the shore and out onto the

nearest ice. Straight ahead he ran, never questioning for an instant what sort of ghastliness might lie ahead. He jumped a crevasse where the black water lapped beneath him and ran again.

When he came to a strip of black water too wide to jump he plunged into it without a moment's hesitation and began to swim. Once in the water he couldn't even see the far side of it, and he felt that a tide like that of a great river in a time of flood was bearing him away in a direction where devils lurked and not a moon.

But he thought of the moon and strangely the thought steadied him, gave him his direction even here in the midst of the baffling black waters and the ice-walls that occasionally blocked his way.

Once more he'd found the pack-ice; but now it was too high for him to pull himself out as he swam; and under his feet he could feel the pull of a depth like that of a mountain valley.

HE swam on and on, and at last he found what he'd been looking for, a shelving slope—an old walrus-slide, most likely—and here he dragged himself out. He could barely stand. But he stood, and then, careful lest his feet be frozen, hauled himself over to some dry snow, where he shook himself and finally lay down and rolled.

But it wasn't for long. Almost at once he was up again and on his way, his fatigue forgotten, and nothing at all in his heart or brain except that call he had uttered and the reply to it he was sure he had heard.

There was no charting that run he made, nor the distance he covered, before the sun showed itself again.

This was the season of the year when the sun rose late. It showed itself but a little before noon. It floated red for a time in the southern sky, then sank again.

But before it did show itself, Poorga had climbed from the ice pack onto a new land of frozen tundra. And across the tundra he'd continued to run.

THEN, suddenly, he seemed to know that this was the country he'd wanted to reach all along.

He'd traveled, perhaps, a hundred miles, practically without stopping. He'd crossed from one continent to another. Yet, for the first time in his life, it seemed, he felt at home.

He let out his mating-call again, and threw his whole soul into it.

He heard an answering call—

He met her under the brow of a wooded hill—a wolf-bride almost as large and as white as himself. She was all alone. And that she'd been running, too, he could tell—running far. From some mysterious retreat in the wooded depths of this moon-country she'd heard a call like his—heard it with her heart if not with her pointed ears.

Yet they approached each other slowly. There was nothing frolicsome about them. This was a solemnity come down from the ages. For this the moon had come up.

Presently they touched faces—two great white wolves—who'd found each other across weary miles and—who knows?—perhaps across as many weary ages.

Anyway, as their furred faces met, it seemed to both of them that they'd known each other always, since the beginning of the world. To Poorga it seemed as if the moon herself had taken the shape of a wolf.

"We'll run," she seemed to say.

She turned, and started back through a snow-banked valley, showing Poorga the way.

Famous Soldiers of Fortune

"FIGHTING BOB" EVANS -

AS THE YOUNGEST COMMISSIONED OFFICER ABOARD A MAN-O-WAR IN THE UNION FLEET, AT THE START OF THE CIVIL WAR, - BEGAN A CAREER THAT GAINED FOR HIM THE NAME OF HAVING "THE MOST INDOMITABLE WILL THAT EVER STRODE A QUARTER DECK."

AT THE CAPTURE OF FORT FISHER, THE MOST BRILLIANT ACHIEVEMENT OF THE WAR, YOUNG EVANS PROVED HIS BRAVERY, AS A VOLUNTEER IN A PARTY OF 62 MEN, (OF WHOM 54 WERE KILLED), WHEN STORMING THE STEEP SLOPE LEADING TO THE WALLS OF THAT STRONGHOLD.

WHEN NEAR THE WALLS EVANS WAS SHOT IN BOTH LEGS AND ALTHOUGH UNABLE TO WALK HE CRAWLED AND FOUGHT HIS WAY THROUGH THE GUNFIRE INTO THE FORT YELLING ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE OTHERS.

AFTER MONTHS IN A HOSPITAL HE NEARLY LOST BOTH OF HIS WOUNDED LEGS. THE SURGEONS HAD DECIDED TO AMPUTATE — THEN EVANS BECAME AWARE OF THEIR PLANS AND PULLED HIS SERVICE REVOLVER FROM UNDER THE PILLOW AND THREATENED TO SHOOT THE FIRST DOCTOR WHO CAME NEAR HIM. EVANS' NERVE AND HIS DESIRE TO CONTINUE HIS NAVAL CAREER — WHICH HE REALIZED HE COULD NOT DO IF HIS LEGS WERE REMOVED — GAVE HIM SPIRIT TO REGAIN STRENGTH TO ENABLE HIM TO WALK AGAIN. GREATLY HANDICAPPED, BUT REMAINING IN THE SERVICE OF THE NAVY, HE SOON GAINED GREATER FAME FOR HIS BRAVERY.

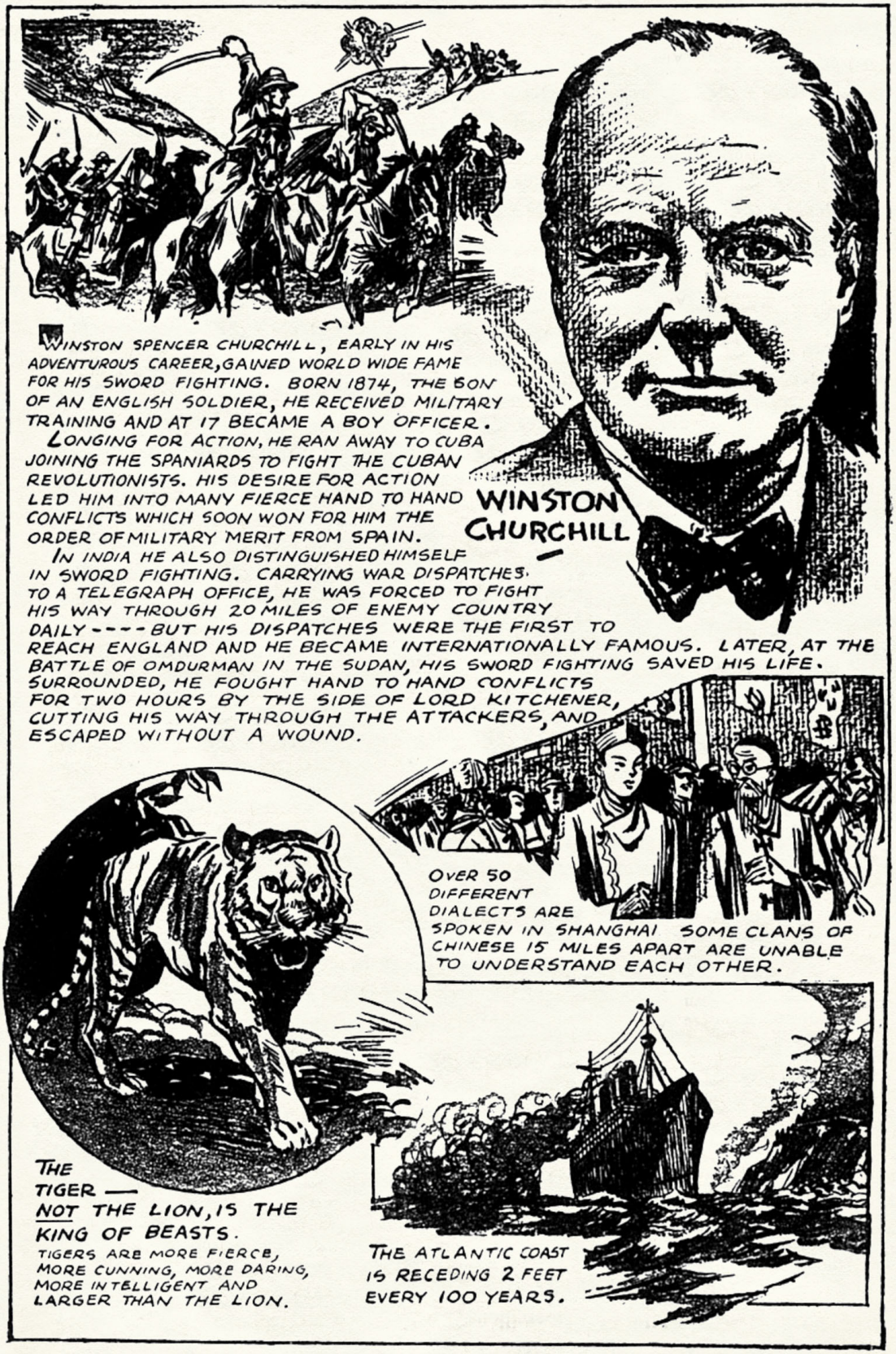
IN COMMAND OF THE IOWA DURING THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR HE WAS THE HERO OF THE GREAT SEA BATTLE OF SANTIAGO AND LATER WAS MADE THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF U.S. NAVY.

WOUNDED FIFTY FIVE TIMES IN WORLD WAR - - - - - - - - - - -

DANIEL EDWARDS, HERO OF WORLD WAR, LOST A LEG AND AN ARM AND RECEIVED FIFTY FIVE WOUNDS. HE HOLDS COMMISSIONS OF BRIGADIER-GENERAL, COLONEL AND LIEUTENANT AND HAS BEEN DECORATED WITH 83 MEDALS.

DANIEL EDWARDS

This is the Original Illustrated Adventure



Feature—the First to Appear in Any Magazine

Begin This Weird and Exciting Serial of

The Prowling Creature

A Three-Part Serial

By CAPT. KERRY McROBERTS

Author of "Legion of the Frontier," "White Sands," etc.

PART ONE

CHAPTER I

For a Thrill

JIMMY RYDER cheated the headhunters of New Guinea even as he had cheated death in a dozen forms while he bummed the island jungles for three years.

When he climbed aboard a tramp bound for Liverpool he left behind him a long trail of adventure as red as the sunset in the Southern Ocean.

Still a young man, Ryder had already seen his share of the dim trails that led around the world. He had faced the dread death of Africa's tsetse belt, and the skulking savage claws of the Malay jungle. But to Ryder it was the only thing in life that counted, floating with the tides, mixing it in hard-handed brawls along the waterfront in Saigon, sipping poison with a killer breed in a Singapore dive. And dodging death at every turn.

Now he found himself headed for Liverpool. That meant London. And London was the place where so many of his ilk, the adventure clan, wound up periodically, only to start out again on the quest of the thing that lurked over the rim of the world.

London looked strange to Ryder after years of thick green forest paths, and miles of hazy white and blue beach, where the scum of the earth's so-called white men mingled with the yellow, the brown and the black.

It was strange, this vivid contrast of glowing white-clothed table tops and gleaming silver and glass, when Ryder looked backward over his footsteps to the bamboo floors of the island huts where a man could see the muck of the swamp through the spaces between his knees. Men in

Breathless Adventure on an English Animal Farm

immaculate evening dress and women; beautiful women.

Even Ryder himself felt a little stiff as he realized that he was dressed like these other men, that this was no stagged off cotton trousers leg that crossed his knee, that the faded Kahki buttonless shirt had been dropped overboard long before the tramp steamer entered the Suez Canal.

TONIGHT it was London and a night club. Except for the slight accent that accompanied the service at the table, it might have been 'Frisco, or New York, or Paris. Certainly it was a far cry from the kind of dump that Piggy Malloy ran in Rio, or that shack on stilts that hid away on a curve of the upper Amazon where a white man's life was worth something less than a bullock's.

The low mournful moaning of the saxaphones followed the rhythmic beating of the tom-toms. Jungle land! Buzz Bixby's Hottentots filled the Golden Pheasant with the throbbing music of the juju dance while half-named belles imported from New York's own Harlem pranced a weird routine amid the setting of the creepers and the palms. London night life buzzed like Broadway.

From their tables around the dance floor the audience watched with keen appreciation. Eyes smouldered in the shaded greenish light and fingers tapped the tables to the pulsing tempo of the savage scene.

BUZZ BIXBY'S muted clarinet squealed like a tortured thing under it all. Far back in the thick foliage that melted into the mural on the big wall in which the scenic artist had cleverly pictured the darken-

ing tangle of the endless jungle, two eyes gleamed above the bared sabre teeth of a stalking tiger.

"Nice effect," said Chester Sanford, a theatrical producer from New York, who was in London searching for English stars to feature in his forthcoming American productions. "This night club craze has taken hold on this side of the Atlantic I'd dare say as firmly as at home."

ACROSS the table from Sanford sat Britain's latest stage favorite, Alice Grannis. Her dark brown eyes were sparkling as she followed the serpentine contortions of the dancers. She seemed under a spell.

"Beautiful," she finally admitted with a long sigh, as she turned to her other companions at the table. "Doesn't it get you, Diana?" she went on in a hushed tone. "The lights, the music, the rhythm—well—the whole picture it makes?"

Diana Carleton, a brilliant blonde whose fame as a comedienne had reached not only far into the Continent, but to American shores as well, was rapt in the enchantment of the setting. Her blue eyes framed in mascaraed lashes gave even the casual observer an impression of frank wonderment. Now, as she glanced away from the shuffling, stomping barbaric dance to look at Alice, she blinked as if she had been roughly awakened from a dream.

She turned toward Alice, then to the fourth member of the party who leaned with his elbows resting on the table. He was a big fellow, somewhere nearing his thirties, with close-cropped brown hair, gray eyes slightly overhung by heavy brows, a well shaped head and a dent in the bridge of his nose. His mouth seemed forever on the verge of smiling.

This man's name was James B. Ryder. Those who knew him called him "Jimmy." Some learned his nickname, "Buck." Buck fitted him like a glove—a fighting glove, if you want it that way. He was a world tramp with a lot of speed on the ball. A gentleman adventurer and roughneck who could wear dinner clothes and polish with the grace of a prince, and swap them with a grinning relish for a pair of stagged-off trousers and half an undershirt if he saw a chance for a thrill in the headwaters of the Amazon.

Ryder was a member of that clan whose home is always "just over the hill." He had lugged a Springfield in the trenches, taken a free-lance whack at the Berbers in the hills of Morocco, helped to put the skids under a no-good Presidente in one of Latin America's bloody banana republics.

And London had given him a kindly handshake. You could see it in his eyes. As a guest of his fellow American from far-away Broadway, Buck Ryder was burning a little midnight oil.

Diana roused herself from her reverie and felt Ryder's eyes on her.

"I'm fascinated," she said, "by that winking tiger there in the foliage." A visible shudder shook her shapely shoulders. "It's so terribly real looking. I've been waiting for him to spring on one of the dancers."

THE music grew louder, swelling to a great din of sound. The entertainers danced madly, their eyes rolling. The tom-toms thundered. Diana Carleton, theatre born and bred herself, drew her chair a little nearer to Ryder's.

Alice Grannis made a queer small noise down in her throat, and Sanford, watching her keenly, smiled. She had a lot of fire, that girl. And that was what made her stage work so real, so convincing. No wonder London audiences had made an idol of her.

The producer looked at the watch on his wrist. The guests at the table next to them arose and started toward the cloak room. Early birds going home to bed, to beat the daylight.

"I'll tell you what," suggested Sanford suddenly, "Let's all drive out to Joe Colletti's, eh?"

THE others turned on him with questioning glances. The girls both knew Joe Colletti. He was well known in the world of the stage. Even Jimmy Ryder had heard of him.

Colletti furnished animals for many music hall acts and special productions. But why go there at this hour of the night?

Alice Grannis voiced the question. "Are you going mystery, Chet?" she inquired, smiling. "Why I don't even know where his place is. And even if I did—Joe would think we were crazy. What an idea."

"Nonsense," countered Sanford. "Come on! You've got plenty of time and my car is still outside. I just remembered that I promised you a leopard kitten to wear with your leopard coat. Didn't I?"

Diana was on her feet already, eagerly excited. But Alice demurred. She had to be persuaded by both men. A leopard kitten. The lure was too great. At last she capitulated.

Piling into Sanford's Rolls Royce the four sped swiftly away through the quiet streets of London. Across Piccadilly Circus and Leicester Square, down Charing Road past the Nelson monument in Trafalgar Square and into the Strand. Then Fleet Street where they flew eastward at a faster speed until they reached Fenchurch and were leaving the heart of the city behind them.

CHAPTER II

At Colletti's

FOR HOURS Dummy Harlow had cowered beneath the window sill. From a narrow slit between the frame and the bottom edge of the lowered shade he had searched the night for something that moved. It was black out there in the yard. The thick, solid blackness of the still, starless night on the Essex marshes. Motionless, but not quiet. For sounds crept up to the Dummy's room; sounds rumbling from deep, cavernous throats.

As the dawn broke slowly in the East the Dummy's tired, watery blue eyes were strained for a sign of the prowling horror, for a glimpse of the thing that had haunted him for years. Yet it did not come. Nothing moved.

The gray changed to a pale, silvery yellow, and beyond the high walls of corrugated sheet iron the Dummy could see the mist rising up from the marsh, steaming in the sunrise.

The Dummy's thoughts, if he could speak them now, were filled with terror, a terror that stalked on padded, velvet-cushioned feet. For in those rows of bare walled buildings and little sheds were housed the tenants of Sorrento Colletti's far famed animal farm; a thousand jungle beasts, a nightmare of gleaming fangs and killer claws that lurked behind black iron bars.

Or did they lurk behind the bars? Dummy Harlow wondered, trembling. What made those beasts of hell growl all night long? What thing had happened there inside those wire-topped walls of iron to set the snarling throats to howling in the night?

The coughing of the big cats had echoed through the dark hours, deep, reverberant snorts of the king of

beasts, the lion; the savage, lean-bellied blasts of the tigers, and the shrill, high-pitched cackling laugh of the hideous hyenas.

There was no sound in the little house where Dummy Harlow waited. Fear gripped his almost emaciated body. His mouth hung open as if it were an effort to hold it shut, and his tongue trembled as he slid it out to wet the lower lip. The Dummy was wondering where Colletti was. Why had the "boss" let the animals go on like that, growling, roaring and spitting throughout the night?

Perhaps Colletti, too, was watching. Maybe he could see from his room; see one of those fierce Bengal man-killers crouching in the open, waiting for the boss or for Dummy Harlow to come unsuspectingly out into the yard. And then—

The Dummy shuddered. Once before, more than a year ago, a jaguar had broken from its cage and Colletti had lost a square foot of skin in the battle that followed. The Dummy remembered that and nodded to himself, still awed by the memory of Colletti's daring pursuit of the vicious, half-free jungle cat.

That was the thing that had haunted the Dummy. To walk out there in the early day and come face to face with death; with the yawning, slavering white-fanged jaws of a monster loosed from its time-worn cage.

YET the Dummy had done it, year in and year out, while Colletti said he was a coward and a half-wit. Perhaps he was, but even the Dummy knew that only blood, the scent of red blood, would work those wild things up like that, would whip them to a frenzy of fear and hatred, would sting their forest bred nostrils with the lust for flesh. It might be that one of the beasts had killed its mate or a big she cat had killed her kitten and eaten it. Such things had happened.

Dummy Harlow gathered his thin, almost forgotten courage, and crept noiselessly toward his bolted door. There was no sound below and he went step by step, cautiously, down the stairs to peer into the alleyway leading past the feed bins to the kitchen. Everything was as it should be and the Dummy opened the door to glance warily across the bare yard.

He could see, from there, the door of Colletti's house, slightly larger, hardly more pretentious, where the owner of the animal farm had his office and his living quarters.

SWEAT broke out on the Dummy's face, on his hands. His ears were filled with the mingled snarls and growls of the beasts down those streets between the cage houses. A quick survey of the barren space showed Harlow that there was no crawling tawny menace, were no furtive eyes wedged between the buildings. The way was safe.

With a sudden leap the Dummy hurled himself from the step and raced over to Colletti's office door and opened it to cry out in his strangled voice. It was no word, no name, nothing. Only the half-gurgled noise that fear forced from his lips.

Dummy Harlow was tongue-tied. But his fist banged on the opened door and his eyes blinked against the dark still room. There was no answer, not even the breathing of a man asleep. Where was Colletti?

The Dummy turned and looked again toward the streets of cages. What if one of those gigantic reptiles from the Amazon jungle had worked its way to freedom and was sliding from cage to cage in search of prey? Terror lived in those streets for Dummy Harlow.

He picked up a pointed iron bar and swung around as he thought of the garage. It was around the house, behind it, and the idea that his employer might be there, sent him, with quick steps, toward the corner of the building.

With a strange sound that escaped his speechless lips the Dummy halted, his arm thrown out suddenly as if to ward off a blow.

His eyes bulged from their sockets with the horror of the sight that met them.

Before him, just past the corner of the house, he saw the body sprawled there on the gray gravel drive. His knuckles flamed red as he gripped the iron bar and he half stooped to stare aghast at the face.

It was "Sorrento Joe" Colletti. Dead! The boss. The animal king of the British Isles. A pool of blood was spread like a crimson rug beneath his bashed-in head. The Dummy's lips moved and a frightful rasping moan fled from his throat. He looked around him swiftly, frantically. Then, like a rifle volley breaking over the bedlam of savage thunder back there in the cages, he heard the pounding of someone on the high sheet iron gate.

Dummy Harlow's eyes rolled with a new terror and he crept softly toward the corner of the house where he could see the gate. Beyond was the built-up road leading through the marsh. Who was that pounding on the gate of the animal farm with dawn just breaking in the sky?

CHAPTER III

A Man's Murdered

AT THE FORK formed by Whitechapel and Commercial Roads Sanford's big car swung into the latter. Stepney and the grim Limehouse districts blinked at them as they slid through the dim street.

Smooth and fast as one of the quarter's shadows the car swept into the East India Dock Road; square after square and over the bridge at Bow Creek to stretch out in a race that wound behind the looming hulks of factories and docks that flanked the north bank of the winding Thames.

Along the Essex shore, north of Tilbury, lies the region of the marshes. Between Benfleet and the Blackwater, for miles the flat gray-green maze of salt grass is grooved with tiny myriad creeks and trickling streams that ebb and flow with the tide of the great river and the sea.

IT is a place of mystery with a strange fascination about its vast silent space and the suggestion of faint whispering that comes from the lush green reeds that wave in the winds whipped across the headlands on the North Sea.

Jimmy Ryder, sitting in the back of the sedan with Diana Carleton, smoked and marveled at the driving of his friend Sanford. For an American showman Sanford surely knew the highways and byways of London and its environs. It was as if he had spent his life on the roads.

"This would be a nice spot for a breakdown, Chet," laughed Ryder as the car shot into a black forest road below Belmont Castle just west of Little Thurrock.

"Don't even speak of it, please," gasped Alice Grannis turning in her seat beside Sanford. "I'm holding my breath now. Aren't we coming to the moors, or whatever you call them?"

"Pretty soon," said Sanford, swerving suddenly to avoid collision with a sleepy farmer's cart. "I'm cutting over now. Look out there across the

downs. They call that a mist here in England, Buck."

Ryder and the two girls saw a wall of fog that rose like an impenetrable cloud, lead-white and thick as cream. The machine swung swiftly into a narrow dirt road, and the headlights bored two smoking yellowish holes into this mist; holes that seemed to stare at them like a pair of ghastly empty eye sockets.

"There's a built-up sort of drive through the marsh," said Sanford. "Colletti put the road down first, then filled in a lot of swamp to make his animal farm on. It's an isolated place."

Slowly, driving with great care now, he tooled the car over the dangerous path. The daylight was close at hand as could be seen from the steadily increasing light in the heavy, dripping mist. Ryder lowered a couple of windows so they could keep their eyes on the sides of the road. Suddenly the car came to a halt.

TO their ears came the muffled thunder of the jungle beasts roaring in the gloom. The two girls shrank back in the car and looked at each other. Sanford called out loudly. "Hello, Colletti!"

Inside the fence, his befuddled brain startled by the new sound, Dummy Harlow shivered. Behind him lay the dead man. Across the yard there was someone—something—at the gate. He listened, then heard a voice calling for his boss.

The way was clear. A quick glance toward the cage streets showed him no sign of man or beast. It never occurred to the Dummy that he would be found alone with death. He welcomed company. With swift frightened steps he ran to the gate and rolled it open, standing mutely, his working jaws making no sound.

"Where's Joe?" demanded Chet Sanford, rolling the big car through the gate and stopping near the office door as the Dummy caught up with them.

The Dummy's eyes, faded and worn from a night of terror, stared horror-stricken at the visitors now. He tried to steer Sanford around the house, pointing, but the American producer beckoned toward the door. The horrible sound that came from the Dummy's opened mouth halted the four on the step. The fellow was insistent.

"He's a little off," said Sanford, aside. "Joe keeps him here because he can depend on him. He works steadily. Don't be afraid, girls. Wait a minute here; I wonder what's bothering him. We'll see."

ACCORDINGLY Sanford followed the Dummy. At the corner of the house he stopped as if jerked by a rope. A half uttered curse slipped from his lips. The others saw his face and became alarmed.

"Why—what's the matter, Chet?" cried Alice Grannis. "What is it you see? Or are you just giving us a thrill with your talents at pantomime?"

Sanford's face was ashen. "Stay where you are," he said, motioning with his hand. "We've—there's something pretty nasty happened here. Now take it easy, don't be frightened. It's Joe Colletti."

Ryder started toward him waving the girls to remain where they were. "What are you talking about, Chet?" he challenged.

"Colletti's been murdered!" said Sanford hollowly.

Buck Ryder's hands were clenched hard as he stopped beside his companion and looked past him, over his outstretched arm, to see the thing on the ground. The Dummy was star-

ing stupidly, from one to another, fear graven on his face. Behind them, a hundred feet away, was the first of the animal cages. From behind the bars of countless prisons came the thunder of the beasts.

The two girls turned their eyes toward the threatening sound, clutching at each other.

"Who?" Sanford gestured at the Dummy rather helplessly. "Who did it?"

THE Dummy's head waggled wearily. He blinked his eyes and struggled desperately to form a word. But he could not. No more than he could back there along the winding, snake-like St. George's Street East, where for years he had groveled through the murky nights among the crimps and sharpers.

The Dummy had looked on death before. But he never told and Limehouse had let him wander on his way until Joe Colletti picked him up one night, to take him to the lonely jungle farm far out in the solitude of the marshes.

"The poor fellow," sighed Alice Grannis, watching the effort.

A sudden fierce inarticulate cry sprang from Harlow's straining throat. The iron bar in his shaking hand slipped and fell to the ground. Sanford started, saw Ryder pick it up carefully, look at it and shake his head. The Dummy shrank away, beating with his hand against his narrow chest, trying hard to speak, shaking his head pitifully.

"He's trying to tell us he didn't do it, I guess," whispered Sanford. "But if he didn't—then—Who did?" He turned to Jimmy Ryder whose lips no longer were smiling.

"I guess we're in for something, Buck," he said in a low voice. "My God, those bloodthirsty beasts sound as if they were going mad. Do you suppose it's the—?"

"The blood," finished Ryder grimly, then as if to calm the others he lit a cigarette. "Now just get hold of yourselves," he ordered them, "We're going to have a little trouble perhaps. This gent won't be much help," indicating the unfortunate Harlow, "and we've got a murder on our hands."

Sanford watched Ryder as his fellow American flipped his cigarette away and bent over the body of Colletti to make a cursory examination of the dead man.

"Shot?" ventured the Broadway play producer.

"No," replied Ryder. "Colletti was beaten to death. And it looks mighty funny to me. Do you see that smear of blood on the wall there? Well, the one who murdered your friend was *some* man—and *some* powerful gent. Did Colletti have any enemies? Do you know?"

Sanford shrugged. He knew little about Colletti personally.

CHAPTER IV

A Crimson Ghost

IT WAS MORE than the chill of early morning that sent a dread shudder down the spines of Sanford's party. It was the chill of dread horror. Even Buck Ryder, hardened in the crucible of roving adventure and death in many lands. Always he felt it in those first few moments. They were standing in the presence of—death, itself so mysterious, so deep and unfathomable. Sanford's lips were fixed in a thin, tight line. Unconsciously he moved nearer to Alice Grannis.

"We ought to do something, hadn't we, Buck?" he said strangely.

"Let's get in the house," said Ryder. "We'll call Scotland Yard and get it started."

The Dummy watched them keen-

ly, his lips trembling spasmodically. Sanford had stepped toward the door, but Ryder held him back and went in first. The Dummy made a jumbled sound with his throat. Sanford pointed to Ryder and made the motions of a man at a telephone. The Dummy grew interested, nodded, showing that he understood.

The office was not over orderly. Papers and magazines from the Continent and America littered the floor. Sanford saw Ryder grab the phone and stand listening. Ryder waited a moment, frowning. Then he jiggled the hook impatiently. There was no buzzing, no feeling of life in the thing. He shouted once, twice, then jiggled it again.

"It's dead!" he cried, suddenly realizing the fact that the line was broken. "Somebody—they've cut the wires."

The other three pressed toward him as he said it. Sanford jerked the chain pull on a light socket. The light came on.

"It couldn't be the Dummy," said Ryder under his breath. "He wouldn't have savvy enough for that. You say he's alone here on the marsh. He wouldn't have any reason to do it. He could have walked out of here and faded like a shadow."

SANFORD nodded agreement in a dazed manner. Ryder went to the door and turned.

"Wait here," he told them. "I'll go outside and see if the wires are really cut. This begins to look like a bad job to me."

Dashing out of the door and leaving Sanford with the girls, Ryder looked over the face of the building, hurried around past the gruesome scene at the side and caught sight of the wires where they reached the building, coming in over the high fence.

One wire came in alone. The light line. Ryder nodded to himself. Beside it was a pair. He traced them down the side of the house to where they were caught in the firm grip of insulators. There he saw the break. They were broken like one would break two sticks of soft licorice.

LOOKING around Ryder studied the position of the body. He raised his face and looked at the wall of the house. There were no upper windows on that side. Joe hadn't jumped or fallen.

But then how could he have gotten such a frightful blow on the head? Why his skull was crushed as if he had been shot headfirst from a cannon mouth to crash his head against the wall of stone and cement. Whoever did this—

"Oooooooh—!" The scream that he heard with a start came close on the heels of a sudden heavy pounding. Bump—bump—bump. Somewhere in the house. And it was the voice of Alice Grannis, pitched at the top of her soprano; hysterical, trailing out into the early morning mist in a thin high panic of sound, mingling with the bedlam from the cages further away.

Then, as he ran madly in the direction of the door, he heard Diana's agonizing cry split the dwindling echoes of the other voice.

Ryder broke through the door to find the two girls huddled in one dark corner of the office. The Dummy, mouth agape, was staring from them to the half-crouched figure of Chet Sanford, whose eyes were fastened on a closed door at the back.

"What was it?" shouted Buck, now frankly puzzled. "Did you see anything?"

Even as he spoke he heard the sound again. Bump. Bump. Bump! Like some one pounding on a wall with a muffled sledge hammer

Alice and Diana gasped audibly, their faces blanched with terror. "Oh, if we'd never come here. It's terrible. Buck—where are you going?"

"Please, Alice," gestured Ryder. "Be quiet." He had started for the door, slowly, on tiptoe.

"Guuuuuuuuggggyhhhhh," gurgled the Dummy tearing at his throat. He was making motions at Ryder, his eyes alight with knowledge that he could never impart.

"He wants to tell us something, Buck," said Sanford. "If he could only talk."

Ryder shook his head and shrugged. "What?" he asked Harlow.

The tongue-tied East Ender beckoned him toward the door and threw it open to skip through without hesitance. The moment it opened they all heard the louder pounding, the heavy thumping sound reverberating through the room.

Then the Dummy was strangling something, something that sounded like a command. The sound he made was like the frantic babbling of a child. The two girls crept slowly behind Sanford who followed Ryder into the second room. It was Joe Colletti's bedroom, piled with clothing of every sort. The walls were plastered with pictures of men and women, stars of the London stage.

AT the right a short narrow door was cut into the wall. And here Buck Ryder's steel gray eyes were fixed on a narrow crack that showed beside this door.

A single staring, shining eye peered from that crack and behind it, against a pale light, Buck Ryder could just make out a huge shadowy shape.

As he saw it the room thundered with the bumping of the wall.

"Look!" shouted Buck, alarmed. "What in God's name is it, Chet?"

Sanford gazed past Ryder, and the girls crowded into the doorway trembling, looking backward over their shoulders, then again into the room. The Dummy pointed at the crack.

"Guuuuuuuuugghhhhkkkaahh," he blurted, sweeping his thin arm in a wide gesture as if trying to brush the thing from his sight.

But the thing did not move. Nor did the small round black beady eye. It did not even blink. The Dummy grimaced and turned to another door in the corner. Ryder saw his move and noted the second door. He noted also the heavy iron bar across it; the same as the one across the first door. With clenched fists he stood, puzzled, wondering.

ALL of them watched the Dummy now; saw him take the bar down and swing the door open. As he did the shadow disappeared with the eye from the crack and the four heard a great stamping. Something uttered a frightful guttural cough.

With a leap Ryder was at the door beside the Dummy, looking in. Behind him came Chet Sanford, warily. A soft whistle broke from Sanford's pursed lips.

"It's Gunga," he cried out with evident relief and wiped cold sweat from his brow.

Ryder mumbled an awed warning, but the girls were close behind the two men, staring into the dimness. There was a narrow passage. A wall on one side; the front bars of a huge cage on the other. As they looked, straining their eyes against the unaccustomed light, they beheld a great beast hunkered down in a corner of the cage almost hidden in a pile of hay.

Slowly it arose, its small eyes fixed on them from beneath scraggy, lowered brows. His long thick arms hung loosely at his sides, half crook-

ed. Suddenly, with a snort, he leaned toward them and made as if to rush the bars. His feet stamped and he beat one long paw against the wall beside him.

Diana screamed and clapped a hand across her own lips.

"Oh!—" she gasped. "Isn't he a horrible creature," she whispered. "Don't let's stay in here. I think he's terrible."

LIKE a cyclone the great ape swept up a pile of hay before him and came thundering at them, straight for the bars. A scream of mad terror and both girls turned, flinging themselves out of the passage, the two men at their heels.

Ryder stopped and frowned strangely. Sanford motioned to the girls.

"Alice," he said softly. "You remember Gunga. It's the gorilla that Colletti used in the varieties. He played him around all the music halls and used him in some pictures. He's quite tame. Just a big jungle brute. Joe had him well trained. Don't be afraid."

Alice shook her head, her eyes wide. Horror of the creature was reflected in the eyes of both girls, despite Sanford's words. He edged them over and showed them the padlocked gate in the cage front, then the heavy iron bar that held the small door secure in the wall. Gunga couldn't get out.

"Gguuuuggghhhkkk!" The Dummy had gone into the office and returned with a couple of bananas which he found in a dish on the table. He threw these into the cage and Gunga scooped them up with a hairy claw to take them into a corner where he crouched in the hay to eat them.

"Nice place," said Buck Ryder. "Those things in the cages out there snarling and roaring like a mad house and this brute beating on the wall. I remember once down in Sumatra—"

"Do you suppose," cut in Sanford, "that the thing knows about its master? He's smart, Buck. Used to pick cards and tell time and do a lot of tricks on the stage."

"Whatever he knows," replied Ryder sternly, "will be a secret as far as we're concerned. Do you know whether Colletti kept any other workmen here? We've got damn little to work on, Chet, unless we start in and comb the whole area inside the fence."

"I never heard of anybody else," stated the theatre man. "Say isn't that awful?"

THE big beast in the next room, where the cage occupied almost the entire space, had begun pounding again on the wall. It was a chilling, ghostly racket, loud, yet soft, like some one trying to break his way out of a casket, from a tomb.

"Let's get outside," suggested Ryder. "The phone is kapoot and we ought to have a look around."

Glad to get out of the haunting atmosphere of the house the girls rushed to the side of the auto. Ryder and Sanford came out and the latter offered an idea.

They should pile into the car and drive to the nearest local police post, and then return to London. Alice Grannis shook her head emphatically.

"You wouldn't go away and leave poor Joe like that?" she chided. "We can't do that, Chet. Isn't there something—?"

Buck Ryder was scanning the animal farm looking for possible means of escape. The fence was scale-proof. He turned on Alice.

"Listen, lady," he said, "this is dangerous business. Without a doubt some tough killer is hiding here now; he may be even watching us. A man who murders will stop at

nothing; you girls—" His voice broke off as if a hand had been clapped over his mouth. Involuntarily he reached toward the women. They were all staring at one another.

From inside the house, the building they had just left, came the sound of music. Deep throbbing rhythm of jungle music. It was uncanny, weird. But it was there without a question. Their faces became tense, rigid. It was real, yet almost unbelievable. Some one was playing a phonograph.

Buck looked now at Chet Sanford. Chet's eyes were starting from his head. The Dummy! Where is the Dummy? Buck's unvoiced question was answered by another sound that came from the house nearer the gate.

"It wasn't him," Sanford's voice was like a thing from far away. It did not sound like his own. He swallowed. "I saw the Dummy go over there," he managed to say.

RYDER'S hands moved warily to his pockets, then he muttered something under his breath. This was no out trail in the Arctic, nor the white beach of some island below the line. He was a few short miles from London and he was unarmed, weaponless.

Only his two big-knuckled fists, fists that once, before Ryder had yielded to the call of the Red Gods, earned him no little fame in the squared circle. And now he was starting into Joe Colletti's office. Why wait for Scotland Yard?

"Buck!" cried Diana, threatening to follow. "Buck, please." Then she felt herself drawn backward by Alice's strong fingers.

Buck Ryder had disappeared into the dimness of the house where some ghost hand—but no ghost turns on a phonograph. And a killer would be a fool to give himself away like that. Unless it was a trick, a ruse to draw another victim into a trap.

Outside the house the three stood, clinging to each other, tense, stiff with fear, listening to the eerie music. Sanford tried to make light of the occasion, but he was not convincing even himself. The music inside slowed down, scratched itself to a squeaky stop, then the only sound that filled the place was the growling and barking of the big cats.

RYDER did not call. Sanford felt a growing fear taking possession of him. He was in a quandary. He dared not leave the girls for fear they would follow him, and he wondered what had become of his reckless friend.

Then came Dummy Harlow. From the building near the gate he trudged, pushing a cart before him. He was wheeling it toward the first of the rows of cage houses. The fading sound of the music, as it stopped, caught the Dummy's ear, penetrated his dull senses, and he turned toward Sanford.

His face was screwed into a tight frown of bewilderment. Then his mouth opened and a loose, vapid smile replaced the frown. Somewhere back in the Dummy's narrow stinted consciousness he had been able to subtract one from four, leaving three. The one—the other man, that big gray-eyed husky—was in the boss' room and had started the music.

So Dummy Harlow, with chunks of meat and piles of fruit and vegetables on his cart, moved away to the cages.

Unable to stand the strain any longer Sanford rushed away from the girls and dashed into the building.

"Buck!" he called nervously. "What the hell is it, Buck?"

That pounding began again. Bump, bump, bump. On the wall in there.

The gorilla in its cage. With a quick start Sanford became aware of footsteps. But where? They were like an echo.

He faced the door and waited a moment, then boldly marched into the bedroom. He stopped and heard the big beast moving in the hay, making strange noises to itself. Sanford's eyes reached past the opened door and he felt his skin go cold in a swift brushing of icy prickles. The door was open. The one that the Dummy had opened and closed. And Buck Ryder was nowhere in sight.

"Buck—" Sanford's voice was a thin whisper. Sweat oozed out on his face and hands. He wished he had a pistol. Now he could hear the steps again. He wet his lips and decided they were above him. There *must* be an upstairs, though there were no stairs that he could see. Somebody was moving from front to back of the house, from side to side. But how? Wait!

Mustering a new resolve Sanford crept to the passage entrance. He glanced sidewise into the cage and saw the fierce creature hunched in a corner. It was watching him. Sanford was dead certain of this.

A MOMENT later he was as certain that he had found the way to the upper floor. There was a door at the end of that passage. It was ajar, showed a lighter space about three inches wide.

"Hello, Gunga," said Sanford taking the first step toward the door.

The gorilla moved its head and the eyes glittered dully. Without warning something crashed upstairs. The gorilla snarled and made a leap for the front of his cage as Chet Sanford plunged toward the door. It was a leap for life and he found himself covered with a cold sweat, dazed, in a sort of hall. Behind him now the beast was thumping the wall as if to demolish the building.

"Buck," shouted Sanford.

"What the hell?" called Ryder. "I can't find a damn thing, Chet."

SANFORD found Ryder in a shabby storeroom, standing over a shattered pedestal. He stared at his rugged companion and caught himself listening keenly for something else. Ryder chuckled grimly, showing his hard even teeth. There was no other sound. Only the deep steady rumble of the animals down in the cages. Gunga had stopped his pounding.

"It's getting me, Buck," declared Chet. "Damn. I'm all on edge. The place is a mystery. Who started the phonograph?"

Ryder nodded absently, lighting a cigarette. "That's just it," he replied. "Until we heard it I felt sure that whoever killed this Colletti had made a getaway. But now—why we've just stepped into the middle of a dirty crime—and—"

His next word was never spoken. For a terrifying cry rent the morning air, a scream that echoed inside the high iron fence. It was the voice of the two girls combined in a frenzied call for help. Sanford's jaw fell, and his eyes bulged like a man in torment. Buck Ryder shoved him.

"Quick!" shouted Buck making a leap for the door and the stairs.

What New Horror Causes the Terrifying Cry Heard by Ryder and Sanford? Who Killed Colletti? What Part Does Dummy Harlow Play in This Strange Drama? For the Answer to These and Other Exciting Questions Read the Second Thrilling Instalment of "The Prowling Creature" in Next Month's THRILLING ADVENTURES

BLACK SHADOWS

White Man's Ju-Ju Is Matched Against Native Magic in This Exciting Story of Murder and Superstition

By WALLACE R. BAMBER

Author of "Steel Fists," "Fly to the Hills," etc.

CAPTAIN CASSIDY straightened his tunic and carefully adjusted his Sam Browne belt before pushing open the door of the commissioner's office and entering.

The commissioner, a small gray-headed old man, lifted his spectacles off his nose and peered down the length of them in that cold appraising manner that was his habit.

"Captain," he said, after some moments, "I've picked on you to go up river."

The captain stood erect as a post, never batted an eyelash; but despite his love for strange and dangerous missions, the assignment took him slightly by surprise. There was something else he wanted to do before being sent up river.

"You're going up to Hughendon Station and straighten things out up there. Charlton, Hampson and the man I sent up just last month—all have failed.

"I know you've studied the up-country dialects until you can make

the natives sit up and take notice on any subject from black-birding to Ju-ju magic. And I think you've got something the other fellows lacked." The commissioner pointed his stiffened forefinger at his own gray locks which were brushed back carefully above his ears. "You've got something up here."

"Yes, sir," Captain Cassidy said. "When do I leave?" He was anxious to get through the assignment and be on his way, now that he knew he had drawn it.

THE commissioner noted Cassidy's obvious nervousness, and replacing the spectacles on his nose, motioned for him to sit down and be at ease.

"Take your ease, Captain," he said, and there was a sudden surge of warmth to his words. "Draw up that chair and sit down. There's much I want to tell you about before you go up. And remember, also, that I am expecting you to come back with the murderer of Charlton, Hampson and Grant—"

Captain Cassidy's eyes glinted, and the muscles of his lean jaws tightened under their tan.

"Er-er, murdered?" he stammered. "And you believe all three murdered by the same man?"

"Yes. Murdered in cold blood. And all by the same man!"

The commissioner waited for the full significance of the words to sink into his subordinate's mind; for the shock of the resultant nervous reactions to be stilled. Then:

"You've never been up as far as Hughendon? No, of course not! Well, it's the last station up-river, and about seventy-five miles above Gilbert. That's the nearest place you can look for help in case you get snowed under up there, so you might as well know in advance that you'll be left pretty much to your own resources. As I said before, I've picked on you because I thought you could.

"Hughendon is just about the last civilized spot this side of Hell. And if it wasn't for the gold that's supposed to be in the hills beyond the settlement, there wouldn't be any settlement there. The whites would have left it to the blacks and forgotten about it, glad to be shorn of its wretchedness. But because of the gold that might or might not be there the government thinks it important. There's some little trade up and down the river. All this is in the hands of a Portuguese who claims the name of Manuelo.

"And there are also a couple of Russians, who seem to have no business whatever. But you'll have to keep a wary eye on them. They might furnish you a lead to work on. Whenever you meet a Russian in this country, you can know he is up to dirty business. In the old days they carried on the slave trade with the black birders that put in at Normantown. I've put a stop to that since I came here, but lately it seems to be reviving.

THE gold fields are not being worked and the blacks are still having as many children as ever. Something has to be done with the surplus population, and the native chiefs are not averse to bartering human bodies for gaudy clothes and baubles, especially when a few barrels of giggle water are thrown in.

"You'll have to watch the chiefs, and the best way to watch the chiefs is to watch the Russians—there not so many of them. And the chiefs don't swap slaves among themselves.

"I gave Captain Charlton the same instructions I'm giving you when I sent him up-river. I gave him the same leads to work on—only he had no murderer to catch. Hampson, who followed him, did. So did Grant.

They all failed. Now it's up to you—"

Captain Cassidy let a sigh escape his tight lips.

"The slave trading used to be done quite openly," the commissioner went on. "But now it's all under cover. It will take a clever man to catch them—and the murderer of your three predecessors at Hughendon. Do you think you are up to it?"

CAPTAIN CASSIDY'S grim jaw sagged and his eyes flashed.

"I'll do my best, sir. If I fail, I die, like those who went up before me. I don't want to die—yet."

There was a catch in his voice when he mouthed the words, and unconsciously his hand fell across his tunic and grasped something that was inside his breast pocket.

The commissioner's head nodded slightly. He put his hand to his chin and leaned on the desk, while his cold, almost colorless eyes could almost be felt like sharp pointed needles as they stared into those of Captain Cassidy.

"Hampson, I thought would be a good man to send up there in command. He was a steady, trustworthy officer, and brave as a lion. But the blacks got the best of him, despite that. Ten days after he took up his duties he was found dead in his bed.

"And Grant was murdered in the identical manner while lying in the same position. Each man had been forewarned; they slept behind barred doors and armed sentries paced around the hut.

"In fact, Captain Grant went a step further. He posted his *Hoya* sergeant inside the bedroom with him. Had him watch with a rifle, ready and cocked in his cradled arms. Yet, Grant was murdered just the same. The sergeant swears that he heard nothing—saw nothing. Yet Grant was alive one minute and dead the next. Died in the same identical manner as the others, his throat slit with a knife."

Captain Cassidy, who had been thinking heavily with his eyes half closed, opened them fully, suddenly; and exclaimed:

"Black magic, I suppose. *Ju-ju* palaver and all that sort of hokum? Bunk and blah! I know how it gets them after a time in this country. Spell of the river, and whines and moans of the wind that blows through the forest at night. I suppose that knife was wielded by a black ghost—invisible, silent—and therefore ten times more deadly than any murderer in human form!"

THE commissioner shrugged, the slightest tinge of a smile flickered across his lips. His subordinate was at last warming up to the task at hand. His original emotional reactions had been stilled.

"Yes, it's all put down to that. *Ju-ju* palaver. The native *Hoyas*, of course, are sure that black magic was worked on the captains. And not at all without reason. For it seems that the fetish man of the tribe had made a big palaver on the same night each murder occurred. The fact that the white men were killed immediately afterwards was sufficient in the *Hoya's* mind to convince them of the efficacy of *Ju-ju*."

"You say that there was a sergeant in the hut when Captain Grant was killed?" Cassidy asked. "Isn't it possible that he might have had a hand in the business, you have only his word for what happened?"

The commissioner smiled openly.

"The obtrusiveness of the obvious, eh," he remarked. "Well, you'll probably throw out that lead when I tell you who the sergeant was. You had him in your company for some time before he was transferred to Captain Grant's, and perhaps know him even

better than I do. You haven't forgotten old Maga Zanar, have you?"

Captain Cassidy's brows arched, his eyes widened.

"Well, that's the man."

Cassidy knew him very well. He had, in fact, served under him for one full enlistment.

"No," admitted Cassidy, "I don't think the slightest suspicion can fall on old Maga. Nor can I believe that he has repeated anything but the truth—as *he* saw and heard it. But the *Ju-ju* palaver must have affected him like it has all the rest. If it is that I have to combat up there, I'd like to have your permission, sir, to take along the portable electric light plant I have been tinkering with here in my odd moments—"

OH, yes—yes," the commissioner broke in. "You have been tinkering with some sort of an electrical contraption, made out of scraps you salvaged from the wreck of the *Indanus*. Certainly, go ahead, take it with you. But, I ask, what has that to do with *Ju-ju* palaver?"

Captain Cassidy smiled, for the first time since he had entered the commissioner's office.

"Sir, I have been thinking that I ought to be able to use it up there."

The commisioner tapped his forefinger on his head and nodded approvingly.

"Fine idea," the commissioner said. "I thought you had something, now I know it. I have no more instructions. I am sure you will be able to take care of yourself—and bring back the murderer of Charlton, Hampson and Grant."

Captain Cassidy rose to his feet, resumed his stiffly erect military bearing. "When do I start, sir?" he asked.

"Immediately," the commissioner answered, and called an orderly to his side. "Order the bugler to sound *quarter dress* for B Company at once." Then he turned back to Cassidy. "When your company has assembled on parade, pick out three of the best squads and a machine-gun crew. Instruct them to draw five days' rations and prepare themselves to embark immediately, so that the up-river launch can get under way tonight."

Captain Cassidy answered with a snappy salute and curt "yes, sir." The commissioner smiled when he went out the door.

The arrival of a power boat on the lonely reaches of the upper Flinders is a rare and interesting event. And as was usual, the whole population of the settlement turned out to welcome or stare at the sight. A chattering mob of native black women lined the sandy foreshore; the men, bolder and even more curious, gathered around the landing stage and fell in at the rear of Captain Cassidy and his column of *Hoyas* as they departed from the boat and marched across the narrow strip of sand that separated the village from the river.

THE manner in which the resident *Hoyas* under Sergeant Maga Zanar accepted being relieved gave Captain Cassidy much food for thought. Ordinarily they were eager to be drafted for up-river duty where formal parades and other uninteresting military details were few and far between. And there were often chances for real first-class fights which they relished; but the little resident garrison was undisguisedly pleased at the prospect of getting back to Normantown.

When the captain questioned old Sergeant Maga Zanar, he freely admitted that such was the case.

"Thees fella, dem ver' glad dey leeb for Normantown this time," he

told the captain in his quaint coast English, of which he was very proud. "Dey hab plenty wind up, sar. Too muck plenty so *Ju-ju* palaver is make heah, sar."

"What kind of *Ju-ju* palaver are you talking about?"

Maga Zanar looked at the officer inanely, apparently surprised that he should ask such a question.

"Dem fetish man heah, he make bad kill *Ju-ju* with um *Ju-ju* knife that leap an' fly in dark," he explained. Cappie Charlton, Cappie Hampson, Cappie Grant—dey all leeb for die this time. *Ju-ju* very bad."

"Yes, I know that." Captain Cassidy snapped. "But *how* did it kill them?"

Maga Zanar shook his head hopelessly.

"I no savvy, sar. I no understan'. Cappie Grant him sleep—*Ju-ju* knife kill him. Dem knife it come out of"—he waved his arms upward and rolled his eyes—"dark night, from nowhere. It come an' stab him t'roat an' he leeb for die right way."

Captain Cassidy studied the face of his old friend carefully for some moments, then he spoke suddenly, satisfied that little information of any use might be obtained by further questioning. "You show me the hut where all this happened."

MAGA ZANAR shrugged his shoulders, led the way.

"Dis all same hut," the sergeant announced as he entered a low rambling building and made his way to a particular room.

Though it was still light outside, the interior of the hut was in darkness because of the lack of windows. Captain Cassidy picked up an oil lamp, and holding it above his head, made a slow and critical survey of the room's interior. It was circular in shape and considerably larger than most native dwellings.

The walls were thick and made of hard red clay reinforced with bamboo shoots and reeds. The roof was composed of long river reeds that had been dried in the sun, and then closely woven into a thick, waterproof thatch. A knife or spear could have been thrust through it from the outside, but Cassidy made a close examination of the roof and satisfied himself that no such thing had been done.

The walls were solid and without a crack anywhere, so Cassidy turned his attention to the door. It was of solid wood with heavy bolts and hinges of American make and gave absolutely no indications of having been tampered with.

Nothing that he had so far examined seemed to give him even a remote hint toward solving the actual manner of the killings. And until he had figured out *how* the three captains were killed, he felt wholly impotent in concocting any method to trap or apprehend the murderer.

THE bed was curtained off by itself in one corner of the room and was of stern Spartan simplicity, being a simply constructed affair of woven rattan fibre stretched over four solid mahogany uprights firmly embedded in the sandy floor of the hut.

Cassidy walked up to the head of the bed and threw the single covering back, revealing a short gash in the fibre mat, the edges of which were stained a dirty, smudgy brown. A whistling sigh escaped his lips as he turned to Maga Zanar.

"That *Ju-ju* ghost must have had a strong arm, eh, Maga?" he said, rather curtly to the old sergeant. "And the knife must be damn sharp and double-edged to boot—even if it is invisible—in order to go clean

through a man's throat and out through the mat below."

Maga Zanar rolled his eyes, and his thick lips twitched nervously. "Dem *Ju-ju* palaver too much plenty strong heah, sar," he declared convincingly, with a trace of terror in his voice.

"Tommyrot!" Cassidy piped. "And again, Tommyrot!"

Logical reasoning told him it was impossible for anyone to have entered the room and committed the murders unseen or unheard—yet, there was that ominous stain on the bed mat. He turned suddenly towards the old sergeant.

"Look here," he said. "I want you to show me just how Captain Grant was killed."

The native sergeant went through the act in pantomime, reenacted the scene that took place on the night of the murder.

"Just a minute," Cassidy interrupted. "Was the lamp lit all the time?"

"Yes, lamp, him lit all time. Cappie Grant he lib one minute. Nex' minute he leeb for die."

"Maybe you dozed off, too?"

MAGA ZANAR shook his head emphatically and his eyes flamed. "Me go sleep in hut where kill *Ju-ju* come! No!" he answered in such a tone of horrified finality that Cassidy was satisfied on that point at least.

"Well, go ahead," he said. "What next?"

"All village quiet. Me wait. Me watch. Cappie, him sleep plenty hard an' make much snore. No uzzer noize. No sar. No black fella, no bushfeller, no ennysing. Den *Ju-ju* come. Cappie shout out loud. One time, no mo'. Me jump up. T'roat cut an' plenty much blood. *Ju-ju Knife* do um. He leeb fer die right way. Nuzzin' else, only *Ju-ju!*"

"Ju-ju, Hell!" Cassidy ranted impatiently. "Those officers were simply murdered."

Cassidy turned abruptly and left the room. Maga Zanar followed him. Once outside he spoke to the sergeant again.

"Get your man to bring up that machine in the launch. You know the one I mean. The buzz-buzz engine you helped me tinker with when in my company. Bring it up here and set it up in this hut. Then tell my sergeant to bring my equipment up here and make the hut ready for me to live in. I'm sleeping here tonight."

MAGA ZANAR'S old wrinkled face strained fearfully. His wide apart eyes showed horror flashes. His thick lips trembled.

"No, sure. You no sleep, heah, where kill *Ju-ju* come. No, no, not tonight! This the night of plenty big moon. Fetish fella him make big palaver an' *Ju-ju Knife* leap in dark an' you leeb fer die right way."

Captain Cassidy's grim jaw tightened. His eyes flashed.

"Do as I said," he snapped.

Maga Zanar went.

The fiery red rays of the sinking sun, tempered somewhat by the rising mist from the Flinders, were slanting across the sandy stretch in front of the village and merging with the lengthening shadows of the mighty trees behind the huts to announce the sudden coming of the thick tropical night.

From the depths of the forest vague sounds began to issue; low rustlings, faint howlings, hissing. The sky went suddenly black when the sun dived down below the western rim, then gradually it began to lighten again and the forest took on an eerie air, like a monotone etched in indigo, save where the native black's distant cooking fires glowed

and winked before their bee hive huts like the flaming eyes of awakening demons.

Then a shoulder of the full Australian moon thrust up abruptly from the depths of the moaning forest, marbling the white sand of the settlement with delicate tracery like inlaid filigree, while it changed the waters of the rushing Flinders to a winding boulevard of shimmering silver.

From somewhere, far off, in the depths of the darkest shadows, a deep voiced drum began to boom. The blacks in the village moved from their huts, silently and one by one, until all of the men were gathered in a circle around a central fire.

They stood motionless, heads erect, eyes on the central flame, and every time the drum boomed in its slow monotonous cadence they lifted a foot and bowed their heads, only to bring head and foot back to place again, when the rumbling echo of the distant drum had paled away.

Faster now, the distant drum began, and faster were the movements of the dancers around the fire. Faster and faster it boomed and the slow dance of the silent blacks grew into a frantic swirl of frenzied, hectic excitement.

THEN, of a sudden, without warning, the distant booming of the deep throated drum ceased abruptly. The black warriors stopped in their tracks. The circle divided and opened at one end, and every black's eyes were fastened on that opening.

Minutes passed, silent sinister minutes, then the ominous silence was broken abruptly by a resounding shout from the native's throats.

"Konjola...Konjola...Konjola!"

A fantastically garbed figure leaped through the opening into ring, and the circle immediately closed again.

It was the witch doctor—the fetish man of Hughendon, all bedecked in the full trappings of his nefarious and ghastly trade. A girdle of grinning kangaroo skulls encircled his waist. These were interspersed with long dangling bones, human thigh bones, which clattered like castanets as he moved and pirouetted about in his crazy, eccentric dance.

The crown on his head was the empty skull of a river "Croc," and a mangy cloak of feathered pelts hung from his skinny, dirty frame. In one hand he carried a fancy handled knife with a long, narrow double-edged blade. His other hand grasped a spear.

CASSIDY came out of his hut the instant the witch man leaped into the circle of silent men.

"Dem *Ju-ju Knife*," Maga Zanar whispered in a low scared tone. "An' dem fetish fella, him goin' pray right now it leap up an' kill you in middle thees dark night."

"Is that so," Cassidy rasped, and broke through the circle of blacks to where Konjola was whirling and swirling in his mad, eccentric dance. "Let me see that thing," he snapped, as he whipped the knife from the witch doctor's grasp.

Konjola offered up no objections, in fact seemed pleased that Cassidy chose to finger the blade, for his lips upslanted in a confident smirking grin.

Cassidy hefted the blade and examined it carefully, then thrust it back at Konjola contemptuously, with an expression of utter disdain.

"Umph! That you *Ju-ju Knife*," he muttered in mock native dialect. "My *Ju-ju* plenty much better than yours. If this knife come to kill me, I say to my *Ju-ju*, 'Up an' kill Konjola.' My *Ju-ju* plenty much better, so you leave for die right away."

The witch doctor scowled. Cassidy

left him abruptly and returned to his hut, while the blacks in the ring around Konjola looked at him in consternation.

Then there was a silence for a few minutes, but soon the drum began to boom again, and the dance was resumed.

Maga Zanar touched his captain on the shoulder.

"Bad, bad—much bad," he crooned. "Thees just like before wit' Cappie Grant. *Ju-ju Knife* go on spree dees night. You leeb for die den. Me sad—"

Cassidy laughed.

"I've got *Ju-ju* of my own. If Konjola tries to work his *Ju-ju* tonight, you'll have him to take back as a prisoner to Normantown when you go back on the launch tomorrow." Cassidy pointed his finger above the bed of his hut. "See," he said, and at the same moment turned a switch beside him, which caused the room to be immediately flooded with bright, white light. "That is my *Ju-ju*, white *Ju-ju*."

Maga Zanar looked on and gasped. The light from the electric globe dazzled his wide staring eyes. He shook his head in a puzzled manner when Captain Cassidy busied himself in stringing together an intricate assembly of wires and switches.

THE dance of the witch doctor ceased finally, and deep silence hung over the village of Hughendon.

The resident *Hoyas* who had been replaced by the incoming soldiers on sentry patrol, remained behind the walls of their barracks. And the black tribesmen of the native village lay in their huts with their heads covered to keep off the evil spirits.

All was quiet—but Captain Cassidy knew that the unusual quiet only presaged the evil that was to come. Still, he lay in his own bed inside the fatal death hut and grinned confidently. He wasn't even armed and had dismissed Maga and his own sergeant from the hut when he turned out the electric light—yet, he wasn't entirely unprotected, for his right hand grasped the handle of an electric switch he had placed conveniently on one post of his bed.

The climax he was awaiting came even sooner than he expected. There was a spark of flame arced across the poles of the electric switch at his side, accompanied by a slight buzzing sound and then from the sand beneath him a muffled shriek seeped forth. More or less muffled it was in the interior of the hut, but on the outside the very shrillness of death cry caused the ears of the natives to prick up.

THE white man must have been dying hard. For the piercing shrieks changed into low wailing moans and groans, and the natives drawn by the blood fascination which overrode their terror, came flocking out of their huts.

When the *Hoya* sentries outside heard the blood chilling cries, they dropped their arms and ran for cover of the forest.

The blacks paused for a moment in the center of the clearing, then when a crowd had gathered, they rushed for the hut of Captain Cassidy, which was still cloaked in darkness. One curious soul bounded through the door, the others followed. They were brought up quick by the sudden, shouted command of Cassidy.

"Stop!"

He switched on the electric light.

The natives stopped still in their tracks and stared at the apparition before them revealed in the dazzling white glare of the glowing bulb. The man they had thought dying stood before them, poised and smiling, yet from below the sandy floor came the

same muffled moans and groans they had heard before.

The blacks were glued in their places. Astonishment held them. Striding alertly forward, Cassidy grabbed two of the nearest ones and pushed them into the curtained section of the hut where stood his bed, thrusting two shovels into their trembling hands as he did so.

"Now dig! Damn you, dig! I'll show you some real *Ju-ju.*"

THE blacks dug, dug frantically fearful of the man who stood behind them and goaded them on. A few seconds sufficed them to throw the sand aside, thus revealing a tunneled passageway that led beneath the hut, carefully constructed of woven reeds and basket work to keep the loose sand from caving in.

Cassidy shifted the electric globe so that its rays fell on the interior of the tunnel. "Look," he said to the natives that had gathered behind him. "I want you to see what white man's *Ju-ju* does. Konjola's *Ju-ju* is bad *Ju-ju.* My *Ju-ju* is good *Ju-ju.* Good *Ju-ju* always wins. See!"

The sight that met the ignorant black's eyes was enough to daunt the bravest of them, their knowledge of the powers of an electric current being completely nil as it was.

Crouched down low, almost doubled up in the narrow confines of the tunnel was Konjola. One of his naked feet was resting upon a plate of copper which Cassidy had secretly placed there, while his right hand was jerking convulsively as it gripped the fantastically handled *Ju-ju Knife.*

The thin pointed blade was in contact with a wire mesh just beneath the bed. And moaning and groaning as he was and grovelling in pain, he couldn't release himself from the cramped position he was in. The strength of the current held him.

By his own actions he had completed the electric circuit that Cassidy had hooked up in series with an induction coil, and the captain let him suffer now while the blacks looked on.

"What punishment shall I mete out to this faker who has killed three white men so he can sell you fellows off to the Russians in slavery?" Cassidy asked, as Konjola contorted in pain.

The blacks weren't long in making up their minds.

"Death, Death!" they chanted.

Cassidy smiled.

"That's what he'll get when he gets back to Normantown. Go back to your huts in peace now."

The blacks filed out. Maga Zanar and two other *Hoyas* came in. Cassidy turned to the old sergeant.

"Have your men take this man to the barracks. Put him in chains there. He's embarking with you on the launch in the morning. The government will see that he answers with his life. Hughendon is free of bad *Ju-ju now.* The white man's magic wins."

So saying he lifted the switch and turned off the current. Konjola tried to scramble out the tunnel, but the two *Hoyas* leaped in and dragged him out of the hole, almost rended him limb from limb as they carted him back to the barracks.

LATER Captain Cassidy penned off an official letter to the commissioner at Normantown.

It read:

"I've captured the murderer of our three officers and am sending him down to you in chains in custody of the troops I have relieved under Sergeant Maga Zanar. I'll take care of Manuelo and the Russians later.

Carl Cassidy, Captain,
Commanding Hughendon Station
Australian Interior Police."

A Gripping Story of Kwa, Jungle Hero, and

KWA *and the* Walking Moon

A Complete Novelette

By PAUL REGARD

Author of "Kwa of the Jungle," "Kwa and the Beast Men," etc.

CHAPTER I

The Gray Shadow

FOR a long time now the big old elephant had been aware that there were enemies on his trail. He was also aware that these enemies were men. He knew a lot about men. All sorts. Black, brown, white. The whites were bad. They could kill with lightning. And kill they generally did. The death they delivered was apt to be swift.

These weren't white men who were following him now. Nor were they Arabs. These were men of the bush —the sort who'd picked up poison from the snakes, snares from the spider, the stealth and the killing stab of the leopard.

The old elephant stood there in the thick of the jungle. He listened. He remembered. He wondered what he ought to do. Men. These were his only enemies. They'd chased him all over Africa—from Nile to Congo and back again; from Mozambique to Dahomey—until here he was now in a part of the West Coast jungle that he scarcely knew, somewhere close to what was called the Devil Bush, where he'd hoped to find sanctuary.

IT had been a sort of half-hearted try on his part, at that. He'd heard that there was a god of the devil bush—a god named Kwa; a god in the form, at that, of a Utangani, a white man, yet one who was the friend of elephants. Maybe! It might be so! But it didn't sound very convincing.

"Not to me," the old elephant pondered.

There was a sort of despair in his heart. He could remember a hundred—two hundred—times when men

Oshu, the Giant Blind Elephant of the Devil Bush

had pursued him, harried him, wounded him, driven him to the verge of death as these men were doing now.

He had a feeling that this time might be the last.

AS the big old elephant stood there in the deep twilight of the jungle he was more like a specter than he was like some living thing. If he resembled anything of this earth more than what he really was it would be a great boulder of pale granite; gray, and the grayness of it mottled and broken with mosses, stems and fronds; a boulder as big as a house, weighing tons.

To ordinary eyes unrecognizable —invisible, even. His trunk was like the tapering root of some colossal, misplaced tree. His big tusks—coffee-colored, sleek and curving, thick as the leg of a man—might have been pythons or just a couple of smooth lianas.

For a long time he stood where he was as silent—and as motionless it seemed—as a rock. It was a silence that seemed to extend to the world about him. But he could tell. His enemies were surrounding him. He would have to be moving. He put out his trunk and touched the earth in front of him. He deliberately felt of the forest-growth to left and right.

AS he did so, there came to him the old, old memory of the time when a weighted spear—a *hanu*, as they call it—had fallen on his head —it was the usual sort of deadfall used for elephants—and had almost killed him.

It would have been the death of him, eventually, if other elephants hadn't been there to help him.

For the blow had stricken him blind. Blind, he'd staggered away with an elephant brother shouldering him up from either side. They'd brought him to a secret valley high up in the mountains, swampy and lush, where he'd be sure to find plenty of food and water, and there they'd left him.

That must have been all of a hundred years ago. He'd been blind ever since—through a hundred big rains, through five thousand moons.

"Oshu! O Walking Moon!"

Now as the old elephant proceeded on his way, tapping with his trunk a good deal as a blind man taps with his cane, there reached him a thousand voices, all in the silent broadcast of the jungle—and in the silent speech which is the universal speech of the jungle—calling him by name, warning him to be careful, imploring him to wait until his guiding ibis came back.

TRAINED hunters, black and white, had made their way at times through forests like this, and had all but starved to death. No game at all on the jungle floor. None to speak of—a few snakes and pigs, an occasional gorilla, bush-deer, or buffalo; and these generally gone long before the hunter found their spoor.

A haunted and silent solitude, as a rule, the jungle floor—bedded deep with the decay and ruin of a thousand centuries, dark and dank, untouched by the sun, from which the spectral trees pushed up like the underpinning of another world.

It was another world, all right, up there—as different from that of the jungle floor as the surface of a lily-pond is different from the ooze and dark at the bottom of the pond.

Most of the trees—m a h o g a n y, silk-cotton, palisander—went up for from a hundred to a hundred and fifty feet. To an endless city of green domes. Where there was sun and shade and where the air was sweet. A city that swarmed with life—of monkeys and birds, no end, little and big; of snakes and cats, the same—thirty-foot pythons, coiled and padded into themselves and sound asleep for a month at a stretch; stoats, squirrels; Guinea editions of 'possums and 'coons.

And all of this mixed population now awake and alert to the big drama that was developing in the green dark there beneath them.

Perhaps nine-tenths of the tribesmen in these higher levels of the great forest never went down to the ground at all—except in response to an occasional poisoned arrow. But they were all of them alive to what went on down there. Not one, perhaps, but had heard at some time or other, of Oshu, the Walking Moon.

Nor one who didn't know, and dread, those black shadows of the man-tribe who were now closing in on the old blind hermit of the elephant people. The warning was being broadcast in the silent radio of the jungle.

"Oshu! O Walking Moon! Wait for your ibis!"

There would be days and months when Oshu would go about alone and unattended—feeling his way around through grass or bush, quietly feeding, fording streams or swimming them; until, to the casual observer, he didn't appear to be blind at all.

Yet, forever guarded, it seems.

FOR, often, long before others suspected that there was danger about, the white ibis who was the particular friend of Oshu, would appear—generally as if out of nowhere. And the watchers from grass or bush would see her riding on Oshu's head. Or flying high and lighting

again in some near-by tree to chuckle and snap her beak.

It was generally believed in the jungle-world—not only by animals but by men—that Oshu, the Walking Moon, was an elephant-god, or some powerful god that had taken this elephant-shape, and that the white ibis was his *roonda*, his guardian and servant.

There was reason, perhaps, for both beliefs.

There was that about Oshu, the elephant, to stir the ever lively imagination of the jungle people. He appeared to be whiter at night than he did even in the day time—whiter in the dusk of the jungle than he did when he was out in the sun.

HE looked like a walking moon. So they called him Oshu, which meant the Walking Moon. The Moon: the world's most powerful fetish! The most powerful fetish of the African world, at any rate.

Hence Oshu, the elephant, was fetish. Proven by the fact that he had a charmed life. Ever since the jungle could remember—and its memory was long—Oshu had appeared and disappeared and come again like Ilogo, the Moon himself.

As for the ibis, she'd always been a sacred bird—down from the time when all birds and beasts were gods.

The furred and feathered tribesmen of the treetops could now see the black men of the forest floor running—some in the direction of the sun and some away from the sun—in a way they had when they intended to surround a prospective kill. They ran like leopards—as swiftly and silently. And that they intended to kill was evident from the way they were painted and from the arms they carried.

In a little while, Oshu would be surrounded. He was feeling his way through the thick of the jungle and not moving very fast. He seemed to be deaf as well as blind.

Yet he must have known. There was a vibration of murder in the air. For men also cast a sort of radio about them that animals could understand — all animals: snakes, birds, monkeys, lions.

Then two successive radio waves swept over the jungle.

The first was a sort of silent shout that the ibis had returned.

And this was swallowed up by the second. It was the broadcast:

"Kwa! Kwa! Kwa has come!"

CHAPTER II

Leopard Fash

MOST men would have called it just an accident, perhaps—a coincidence—that Kwa should have been in this part of the world at this particular time. Yet he'd been hearing, since a long time, whispers concerning this strange old elephant known to the people of the bush as Oshu, the Walking Moon.

Here of late, he'd heard that Oshu was headed up from the deep Congo forests toward the Devil Bush, and Kwa had started out more or less with the purpose of finding him.

Anyway, there'd been something else to bring him down to the southern rim of the Devil Bush. Ever since his fight with the Sapadi, the Men of the Cloven Feet, he'd been getting hints of another sort of leopard mischief — pure "leopard fash," as it was known in the bush. Down there somewhere in the heart of the Guinea forest there was a leopard who'd set himself up as a king, not of other leopards, but of men—of creatures, at any rate, in the form of men.

There were thousands of stories like that, though, being broadcast over Africa day and night—for those

who knew how to listen and cared to hear. A radio as old as the world—older than human speech; a web of music and talk woven through the etheric silence of the African world compared with which the broadcasts of the white man's world are as a mere beginning.

And in Africa, as in America, you could tune in as you wished—select the programme you preferred. Kwa could, at any rate. And in his selections he wasn't so different from anyone else. Mostly, he chose what was funny or fine, rather than what was depressing or merely morbid: parrots or baboons discussing the nature of the stars, kima monkeys chanting while the sun went down, the talk of lions, elephants, and of drifting *mbuiri*—things that had no names, or bodies either.

BUT the ibis had found him, and almost at the same moment a *ngivo* was thrusting its tan muzzle through a curtain of vines. The ngivo is a hornless deer almost as big as a mule. As for speed, it's as swift as a bird in flight. It had been following Kwa for days—the first white man it had ever seen.

Kwa saw it. He called it in the silent, universal speech.

"Can you carry me?"

"Lie close," it panted, wild with excitement.

Kwa slid to its back and lay close. As usual he was wearing nothing but the twist of vine about his loins such as he'd learned to wear while living among the Mu, the Furry Tribe, the People Who Were Not Yet Men—they that had taught him the ancient, universal speech of the jungle world.

For a time it was as if he'd fastened himself to a falling rock—a rock that jumped and bounced and fell again down a mountainside. For seconds he'd kept his eyes closed, his face buried in the ngivo's musky hair, his arms thrust down to either side of the powerful neck, his knees set in the ngivo's flanks. At any moment he'd expected to be torn by thorns or snatched off bodily by branch or vine.

But nothing like that happened. The ngivo was ghosting through the forest with the ease and speed of a dragon-fly—a lightning dash and a barely perceptible pause, a shorter dash, then a long one.

Kwa saw a flash of white. That was the ibis flying just ahead.

For the first time in his life, Kwa sent out an elephant call, then a leopard call. There'd be no lion—the thought glinted through his mind—within a hundred miles—or he would have called them also.

All this as swift as thought. Yet only a little swifter than the ngivo had run through the thick of the jungle.

Suddenly, almost before he could realize how it had happened, he'd flung himself to the jungle floor and found himself staring up at the great gray shadow that was standing there in front of him. He didn't have to be told.

He was in the presence of Oshu, the Walking Moon—the greatest as well as the oldest elephant he had ever seen—or anyone else had ever seen, his heart was telling him.

AND although he had been prepared for this meeting to some extent, he was still so overwhelmed by this meeting that even his mind—there for an instant—remained blank and silent, with no word forming in it, no thought, nothing but a sort of awe.

It was a flash of red tragedy that brought him back to life.

The white ibis that had come to look for him and that had now showed him the way, had come to

rest on Oshu's head. It had barely lighted. It stood there with its wings still outspread, as if getting its balance, as birds do when ending a sudden flight on some moving rest; yet already giving the gray elephant some beginning of a message.

"Kwa! This is Kwa—"

At that moment an arrow came out of the jungle off somewhere to the left and caught the ibis through the breast. The white bird must have been dead on the instant. But it came down fluttering, sailing a little on its outspread wings and struck the rough and mouldy earth between Kwa and Oshu.

Kwa himself uttered a little cry. The ngivo, from pure reflex, pivoted where it stood, and was out of sight with a single bound.

BUT Oshu had put out his groping trunk. He found the body of the ibis. He touched it delicately, touched the arrow, then was still.

"Kwa," said Oshu, in the elephant whisper, "I die, too."

"Not while I live," said Kwa.

This while that supersensitive tip of Oshu's trunk was still at the breast of the dead bird, and the voice of Oshu was as if echoing back into some inner silence with a note of mourning.

The murder of the ibis had just the opposite effect on Kwa. He'd flamed. He'd suddenly remembered some of those hints he'd got in the North, back there in the Devil Bush, in the cave of the Sapadi, the Cloven Footed Men who'd been as gods to certain of the leopards.

He let out a roar that cracked the silence like a rip of thunder. This was leopard fash—a leopard roar, and the roar was speech.

"Pah! Slaves! Crocodile eggs! Who dares kill in the presence of Kwa!"

He had barely snarled out this challenge when he found himself looking into the mask of a leopard. For size, it was more like the mask of a spotted lion than that of a leopard—a mask that grinned, that stared. The mouth had the typical leopard grin. The black lips were stretched to show a pink and purple mouth armed with fangs that were like gleaming white poniards. The eyes—wide open with a look that combined both admiration and insolence—were mostly yellow, but they were shot with green reflections at the leopard's every slightest move.

The leopard snarled at Kwa.

"You talk Leopard. You gave the Leopard call just now. Is it I you care to see?"

"Come out," Kwa said.

The leopard half turned and purred a command into the surrounding jungle. Kwa watched. He felt a slight spasm of sickness as he saw a number of savage faces appear, bestial but human—daubed and streaked with yellow paint to some rough semblance of a leopard's face.

The leopard was grinning at Kwa again.

"These kill," was the meaning of what he said, "when I command."

"Come out," Kwa said. "You're someone I want to see."

CHAPTER III

Return of the Arrow

THE leopard was out as smooth as a snake—as big as its face had indicated it to be. There was no real clearing here in the jungle. Oshu, Kwa and the leopard, they were all as if in a long green trough—fifty feet long, perhaps, and less than twenty across.

But Oshu had made space by moving back a little into the matted brush and rocking there. Like that he could have disappeared, had he

wanted to. But a whisper had reached Kwa from Oshu:

"Ahway olomay!"

The meaning of this was, literally, "Thou art a man!" But there was more than that implied by what Oshu said—something in Oshu's thought that Kwa gathered.

Had the big leopard understood? He had merely purred in his throat and the green had flashed again in his staring yellow eyes.

"Are you the one who calls himself the Leopard King?" Kwa asked. Again he'd used the leopard tribal speech, and it was in the same language that the leopard replied.

"No, I'm merely his makaga—his fighting chief."

"What are you doing here?"

THE leopard's grin was fixed and hard. He didn't say so in so many words, but the meaning came clear from his brain:

"I and my man-pack are out to make a fetish kill."

A whisper again reached Kwa from Oshu. "Kwa," it said, "I have this leopard's scent and distance. Shall I rush him?"

"Stay!" Kwa told Oshu. "I'll settle this myself."

Oshu gave no sign of having spoken. He had continued to caress the body of the white ibis with the tip of his trunk. As skillfully as the fingers of a surgeon might have done it, he'd pulled out the arrow from the breast of the bird, and not even the feathers were ruffled. All that was left there was a little streak of red.

Many things happening at once, yet which can only be told strung out. At the leopard's mention of the "fetish kill," Kwa had given a glance at the surrounding bush. It was as if the dark jungle had flowered with a bloom of evil faces—as many as a hundred of them, yellow and black, wild-eyed. Liamba smokers, most of them, Kwa guessed—smokers of the African hemp that makes men crazy before it kills them.

Now the owner of one of the faces emerged—a naked Goliah sculptured in oiled ebony. His face was daubed with yellow, like those of the others. But around his face, like a grotesque beard and wig, he wore a circlet of yellow parrot feathers. He carried a short strong bow and a number of arrows in his left hand. In his right he carried a *mapano,* a sort of West Coast tomahawk.

Crazy with hemp, Kwa saw—more dangerous than a cobra at skin-changing time. The painted giant hadn't looked at either Kwa or the big leopard. He'd looked at Oshu, and it was to Oshu he spoke.

"That's my bird," he said in some dialect of the Congo bush. His words were thick but his thought came clear enough. "I killed it."

And already he was snatching at the white feathers of the dead ibis when Oshu, with a swing of his trunk, knocked him back.

All in the same instant and with the same movement Oshu had coiled out to Kwa—groping a little with the tip of his trunk and still caught in the fingers of it the arrow that had killed the bird. There are two fingers on the tip of the African elephant's trunk—not one, as in the case of their cousins of India.

"Yea, settle it yourself, O Kwa!" came Oshu's whisper.

Kwa snatched the arrow. He was just in time. Just as the savage swung his war-hatchet at Oshu's trunk, Kwa struck and grappled.

HE'D driven the arrow, still red with the blood of the ibis, into the soft of the killer's side. With his left he'd seized the wrist of the giant's right arm with its uplifted tomahawk.

At the moment, Kwa realized that he might as well have tried to wrestle with a wounded lion. The very reaction of the painted warrior to that stab in his side had jerked the two of them—locked and writhing—a dozen feet from where the fight began.

This was a jungle-fight. Beginning on the instant—from instant to instant the life period of one or the other or both ticking off with the nervous haste of a stop-watch.

Yet Kwa, with more than a jungle brain, was able to take note of other things even as he concentrated on his immediate battle. He'd caught a flash of the big leopard creeping forward. There'd come to him a familiar chorus from the green shadows overhead.

Up there, Kwa knew, neither leopard nor man had friends. Except one man, himself.

"Otangani angani!"

"White Man of the White Men!"

He knew who was meant, even before he heard the silent shouting of his name:

"Kwa! Kwa!"

THE painted savage had dropped his bow and arrows the moment the arrow Kwa held had touched him. He'd thrown up his left hand now to the support of his right.

He'd clawed at Kwa's grip. The hatchet hand came down. It struck a blow that grazed Kwa's head and face, then nicked his shoulder. It was up again like a flash and ready to strike again, and when it fell this time the blade of the hatchet would find the hated yellow mane of this naked White Man of the White Men.

One of Kwa's bare feet found firm support against a fallen log. On this he raised himself and threw all he had into a flashing effort.

Those who watched saw a white leg flash back of the ebony knees. There was a fling and a thrust and the fighting pair went over together before that deadly hatchet could fall.

For a moment they were buried in the drift of mould that covered the earth. It was like this that leopards fought—over and over, down and down into the smother of the jungle floor. Then a white arm shot out and it was weaponed with the warrior's own hatchet.

The weapon flashed down just once.

There was something about that quick and single blow that a good many of those who saw it would never forget. That was white man fash—like that the white man killed.

AND the instant that Kwa had killed his man, he'd come to his feet with that primitive battle ax still in his hand. There'd been no need just now for a second blow, no time for a second look—not an atom of time to spare.

The big leopard was there. He'd crept forward. Yet not quite sure of himself. After all, you know!

"Otangani angani!"

A White Man of the White Men—and white was strong fetish; aided and abetted by a great blind elephant who himself was so nearly moon-colored that they called him Oshu, the Walking Moon.

Then, all those staring faces—of men who were drunk on hemp and who'd spotted themselves like leopards but who were, just now—the leopard could tell—bragging in their hearts that they were, after all, of the tribe of men.

Should the leopard war-chief give an order? A flight of poisoned arrows, and much would be settled.

It was just then that Kwa faced him.

All who watched could hear that silent challenge.

CHAPTER IV

"Gwamba"

"GO BACK to that king of yours and tell him," Kwa said, "that what I just did to that spotted fool I'll do to him."

For seconds, it seemed, the leopard held his own thought in silence. He was nearly motionless, crouched and ready for a spring, and a slight tremor running through his body. His tail was straight out, almost rigid, and only at the tip of it was the tremor visible again—in a constant twitching from left to right.

Leopards are brave. Leopards are swift. Of all the beasts in Africa —Kwa knew—leopards are the only ones who really hate man. The hate-thought was uppermost in the leopard's mind now.

Kwa got it. So did all the creatures in the branches overhead. A thousand voices were showering warnings about Kwa like a warm rain.

Oshu, blind though he was, could still feel the leopard's flooding hate and catch the current of it better than anyone. The brains of all elephants are marvelous receiving and broadcasting stations. Oshu's hundred years of blindness had developed his brain and nerves beyond that of his tribe in general.

"O Kwa," came Oshu's whisper, "it is thou or he. Shall I aid?"

"No!"

All this in glinting seconds.

There came a curious and terrible diversion—one that threatened to lose Kwa his life there and then.

Like a rising wind in the forest back of him and all around he'd been hearing that word repeated over and over again—not in the silent and universal speech, but aloud:

"Gwamba! Gwamba!"

And suddenly it flashed on Kwa what the meaning was.

Literally, the word meant simply "meat-hunger"—the yearning for meat. But in certain situations—and this was one of them—the word could take on a ghastliness. The old cannibal cry—not just the hunger for any meat but for "the meat of meats," as some tribes still call it—the flesh of human beings.

The painted warriors in the brush were muttering the word. At each repetition the mutter grew more insistent. These men had just seen one of their number killed. This was the meat to which they referred.

Kwa half-turned—sickened, ready to shout some taunt or command. At the instant of his turning, the leopard had slid toward him again at a gliding run, then halted.

It had only halted as Kwa's eyes came back. The movement on each side had been so swift that the leopard's claws were still spread.

DOWN the leaning column of a huge dead tree that slanted through the green twilight just over where Kwa stood, a thirty-foot python slipped as easily and smoothly as a flow of oil. The voice of the python came to Kwa—silent like so many of the voices that were sifting through his brain, yet recognizable, not only by the vibration of it but by the nature of the advice that it had to give.

"Kwa, Kwa, let the two-legged leopards take the body. You'll be rid of them."

"No," said Kwa.

"They are dangerous," came the python whisper.

Kwa raised his flaming thought to the point where all other voices were blanketed.

"Lo," he shouted, "so is my fetish dangerous. I am Kwa!"

The statement, brief as it was, meant many things—Kwa the Golden, White Man of the White Men, the might and the majesty of a conquering race.

He'd been watching his opportunity. It came. At his shout he'd noted that slight shock of recoil that had struck the crouched leopard. Kwa sprang and brought the hatchet down.

Even as he struck, he knew that the blow wasn't final. The leopard had winced. The blow glanced. Then, quick as the movement of the blade, the leopard was on its back, its four feet spread and became a nest of whirring knives.

ONE of those armed paws struck Kwa's weapon and almost snatched it from his grasp. His grip held, but the force of the leopard's blow brought him to one side.

It was one of those atoms of action which so often—far oftener than men imagine, perhaps—dot off the hairline that separate life and death. Anyway, when a man is fighting—or, for that matter, dreaming—all the usual elements of his ordinary life are magnified. Seconds are expanded. A thousand scenes are taken in at once. An instant of action becomes an event in a vast and complicated chain of perfect logic.

It's as if, at such a time, not one life—the present life—is being experienced but all the infinite number of lives which have gone into the making of a man.

In that brief arc of a whirling second as Kwa was snatched aside both by his own momentum and the leopard's stroke, he saw one of the leopard men in the act of drawing his bow—saw the action whole; the bending bow, the barbed head of the arrow, the look on the killer's face.

Almost within reach of his hand.

Before the bow was fully bent, the arrow aimed, Kwa sprang and struck. The bowman lurched and gaped in a mist of blood.

There was a scramble of panic among other leopard warriors who'd been lurking near. Kwa knew this even as he flung himself once more back toward the leopard.

The leopard had rolled over. It was right-side up again—mouth open, claws spread, ears flat against its head and all the hairs of its body standing on end.

In a fight between leopards this might have been a time for parley. But the leopard was spitting the curses of its kind.

Too close for a spring, it reared up and struck with its left paw at Kwa's head with a stroke that would have torn his face away had it reached him. Kwa also struck as he slanted aside.

The leopard's paw had just grazed Kwa's side—three scratches down the pale bronze of his skin that were like three red ribbons. But it looked, for the moment, as if he'd paid back more than he'd received. His hatchet blow had caught the leopard's right shoulder with a crunching impact and the leopard spun.

OUT of the spinning mist of movement, the watchers in the trees saw Kwa's left arm circle the leopard's throat in a strangling hold. They saw Kwa's knee against the leopard's back, the hatchet hovering above the leopard's head.

The blow never fell.

As in a space of time that might have existed between atomic fragments of a second two arrows had struck into the heat of the fight. Wild shots, most likely, badly aimed.

The great python couldn't have

been a target for either of the arrows, yet one had struck it. The other had caught the head of the hatchet and jerked it from Kwa's hand.

All in that blurred fraction of fire-mist time, it seemed, Kwa, the leopard and the python were locked and rolling together in the trampled tangle of the jungle floor.

At the same moment there was the screech of a leopard-call from somewhere off in the jungle:

"Who dares challenge the Leopard King?"

CHAPTER V

Seen and Not Seen

OSHU, the Walking Moon, may have understood that snarling screech better than anyone else who had heard it. Ever since the fight had started—and the time had been brief enough according to a white man's clock—the old elephant had been alive not only to all that was going on about him, but to much that passed and simply *was* in the surrounding jungle as well.

He'd lost his eyes. It was a loss he no longer felt. Perhaps he wouldn't have taken back that earlier gift of sight even if it had been offered him. At any rate, he would probably have been disappointed if, in regaining his ordinary sight, he'd lost those extraordinary powers that had come to him through other channels.

Elephants do not have very good sight anyway. Neither, for that matter, is their hearing anything to brag about. The sense of smell, yes—no finer anywhere.

That was one faculty that old Oshu had kept and developed.

He'd lift his corrugated gray trunk with its delicate fingers raised high above his head. It would be like the head of a periscope raised, not above the sea, but above the deep drift of ground-smells; and he'd get news of all the jungle-world for miles around—not only who were afoot but what they were doing, how they felt, and the sort of humor they were in: elephants and rhinos, hippos and *manga*—the African manatee.

All things—big and little; only, being blind, his ideas of size were not the same as the ideas on that subject held by other creatures, particularly men.

The little Oshingui monkey, for example—one of the smallest monkeys in Africa. The Oshingui were one of the bush people who had definitely accepted Oshu as a god—or, if not a god precisely, at least as a Mbottumu, a messenger or prophet. The Oshingui, since the beginning of the world, just about, had always slept at night in branches overhanging water. They did this because, at night, up from the water came coiling wreaths of mist that the Oshingui regarded as their guardian spirits. It may have been true, at that. In any case, the Oshingui had survived, in a night-world full of menace against which they had no other means of defense.

ANYWAY, the Oshingui had come to associate these globes and coils of gray mist with Oshu, who also was gray and silent and who also often appeared about their sleeping-places at night.

There were perhaps a hundred of the little Oshingui tree-people hovering about Oshu now while the battle was on.

"Go stop that Leopard King," Oshu told them.

"How, O Walking Moon?"

"Quick," he told them. "The fire vine—hanging over the trail by which he comes."

The "fire-vine" was one of the

lianas of the dense jungle—a creeper with flowers that became purple pods. The vine became a solid tangle filled with thousands of pods, old and fresh, and every pod a tear-bomb and something worse. At the slightest touch the pods would fall, explode, and fill the air with burning, itching spores.

The Oshingui saw the point. They swept away like a scurry of birds.

OSHU followed from instant to instant that tragic tangle of leopard, python and man, just there in front of him, as few eyes could have followed it. He did this with faculties that had nothing to do with the ordinary senses—but in terms, so to speak, of feeling—and not his own feelings, at that, but of those who fought.

The python, from the first, had a friendliness for Kwa. When that arrow from the leopard troop had struck it Kwa's battle had become definitely the python's own. The arrow had passed through the muscles of his neck. He may have known from the instant that he was struck, that the arrow was poisoned, that death was certain anyway. But he still had that jungle-fortune of speed and strength—an estate he couldn't bequeath. Spend it now! In one last grand splurge!

Oshu followed all this.

The python had flung a coil about the leopard's neck and shoulder, while still retaining a hold with the tip of his tail on a snag of the tree. It was less than a second after this, that the snag broke and the whole vast length and weight of the big snake was snatched into the fighting vortex by the spring and twist of the clawing, biting, wrestling leopard.

But, even then—Oshu could tell—the leopard himself had a premonition of death. And this premonition, so far as the leopard was concerned, was as if a new antagonist had joined the fight—joined it also on Kwa's side.

Oshu had "seen" the same thing happen a thousand times before in jungle-fights. And he'd never known it to fail. Always, on one side or the other, a spirit came out of the jungle to take one side or the other; and whichever side the spirit chose to help, that side won.

There was very little quarter—very little mercy—in jungle fights. It was either kill or be killed—that, or run away. Sometimes the defeated one ran. Not so very often. Oftener yet it happened that both contestants died—times when it seemed as if death were the deliberate choice. Why not? Death was better than a lot of things.

Oshu thought so. Oshu knew both sides. As Oshu stood there now—rocking, faintly tremulous, eager to help but under orders from the White Man of the White Men not to—he was even more aware to the presence of the so-called "ghosts" of the jungle than he was to the presence of the thousands of creatures now swarming about on the ground, in the ground-growth, in the trees, in the air.

HE could tell—there was a swift flow of all sorts of animals in this direction. Kwa had sent out the call for elephants and leopards—the two fetish chiefs of the animal world—the eaters of grass and the drinkers of blood. They were coming, and all the infinity of those who roughly came under the two headings: Grass and Blood.

In the ghostly world also about Oshu now were those two great divisions—White and Red, Moon and Sun.

The python knew that he was going to die and was lavishing away

all that he had stored up through years of sleep and rich nourishment, of meditation and observation.

He had opened his jaws not in the swallowing but in the biting position and taken a hold on the fur-covered steel of the leopard's throat. The leopard was tearing him to strips, but gradually, swiftly still, the coils that still remained unspoiled tightened—tightened—

Kwa had found himself caught in one of those coils. There for a moment it was as if the weight of the earth itself were pressing him into a clutch of revolving daggers.

But, even then, he'd used his hands to snap the shaft of the arrow in the python's neck. He'd withdrawn the two pieces. With the barbed end he'd once again turned—with every ounce of will and muscle that remained to him—and thrust this into the leopard's heart.

For a suffocating moment a blackness fell upon him.

In that black moment it was as if a human hand had reached down and helped him up—and as if this hand were Oshu's and as if Oshu were a man.

In any case, Oshu's whisper came to him:

"Rise! Rise, O Kwa! You still have work to do!"

CHAPTER VI

White Fetish and Red

AS KWA came staggering up from that strange three-sided struggle—bloody, shaggy with debris, feeling more dead than alive, he still found strength enough to let out an answering call.

"I am Kwa," was what he said. "I am a man. I am the White Man of the White Men!"

And from the thousand voices in the treetops he heard an echo of what he said. From the strength of the chorus, up there, he knew that the gallery had been enormously increased.

Through those arboreal highways so different from the trails that sprawled their thin and broken network over the jungle-floor other apes and monkeys had come on the run—the kooloo-kambays, whose voices are so nearly human; the bald-headed chimps—the *nshiego-mboovay*—who are the only true roof-builders of the bush; a swarm of lesser monkeys; snakes and tree-cats everywhere, and yet no fear.

HERE was Kwa; and where Kwa was, there a truce was proclaimed—a truce for all but Kwa himself.

Birds—a million birds it seemed. And not here either was there any visible fear—pigeons and hawks, eagles and egrets, parrots and owls, a twittering shimmer of smaller birds taking chances with snakes and weasels.

Down that same incline of a dead tree where that other python had flowed like a quick smooth stream of oil a second python came—smoother and more swiftly yet.

"Your mate is dead," said Kwa, and he staggered, he reeled. He was glad to feel a support behind him. It was Oshu's trunk.

Oshu also spoke to the python. "Be comforted. Your mate helped Kwa."

"What comfort is that to me?" the snake-woman asked.

"I've had a vision," said Oshu, the Walking Moon. "Kwa will bring back honor even to the snake people."

The she-python was reared and dancing slightly.

"You are ignorant but kindly, Oshu," she said. "Snakes are more honored right now than any other jungle tribe on earth."

Oshu let her have the last word.

She was a woman. She had just lost her mate.

If there's any impression gathered from all this that there'd been a lull, that time had lagged, nothing could be further from the truth. Jungle-talk, like so much of jungle-action, was a mere flash—as the flash of an eye covers a thousand laborious steps, the flash of a thought covers a thousand words.

REELING, resting, hauling himself together while Oshu, the blind elephant half-supported him in the coil of his trunk, Kwa still listened, looked and thought. Listened to all those multiple voices about him as a trained musician might listen to a massed chorus and orchestra of a thousand performers—distinguishing the different notes, phrases, voices and instruments. Looked with the eyes of the jungle-bred—reading signs in every movement. Thought of the battle yet to come.

Suddenly his strength was back—or, at any rate, his passing weakness was forgotten.

Off to one side there'd loomed a dozen tall shadows. Elephants were there in response to his call.

He looked away and saw a streak of spotted yellow. Leopards were also responding to his call. Or were these the followers of the Leopard King? The *Sango Njego* as his title was—meaning really the Father of Leopards.

Kwa let out a shout and gave a command.

"Ho, none of you spotted men run away!"

He was ready to back up his command by an appeal to the elephants to help him with police-work, should that be necessary. But he found that it wasn't.

Those painted natives who'd followed the leopard war-chief here were suddenly in the midst of a stranger nightmare than any even they had known thus far. This day they'd set out on nothing more dangerous than the slaughter of an old blind elephant.

By order of the Leopard King, Fetish. By eating the brain and perhaps the liver of the Walking Moon, he, the Leopard King, would be enhanced that much more in wisdom and strength. Both, he felt, were something that might come in handy.

A new power—a great new fetish-chief—was rising to power in the North, in the Devil Bush. And his name was Kwa. Sooner or later a clash was inevitable. Now it had come, even sooner than the Leopard King had expected.

He also, the Sango Njego, had been listening to the thousand reports that came singing through the silence of the bush—even as some home-loving city-dweller might, at the turn of a dial listen to any strain of music carried in the silences above New York or Chicago.

Two men killed, the leopard war-chief dead, the jungle going crowded like a trading-center on market-day—the strange white man with eyes like a dead man—gray-blue, that is—had said it:

His fetish was strong!

Kwa had run among these bestial but human followers of the leopard chief and was snatching their arms away from them.

TWO of these weapons he'd kept—a heavy-bladed knife; the blade of it was like that of a spear; and a short and heavy war-club that happened to find a balance in his hand—a *tongo,* as it was called. The knife he'd thrust into his girdle of vine; the club was in his hand.

"Tongo"—the name kept ringing in Kwa's thought; and in a second that other word that resembled it so

closely had rushed as well into his incandescent, battle-drunk brain:

"Bongo!"

It was a word that all the bush-natives of this part of Africa knew and often used. It meant a shift of loyalty—the acceptance of a new master or protector.

He stripped the leopard men of their arms while he held them with his eyes of a dead man. And as he did so he demanded of them if they sought "bongo." If they said they did, he made them kneel and keep their faces to the ground. If they refused or even hesitated, he swung his heavy war-club to their heads with a jolt that brought them down anyway.

His fetish was very strong.

In a general way, he also knew, there were two sorts of fetish in the bush. One was white. The other was red. One was for the vegetarians. One was for the eaters of flesh and drinkers of blood. And Kwa, in his heart, could never believe that one was better than the other.

With leopard, lion, or wolf, the blood-feast was as much of a religion as the flower-dance was with butterflies. Some of the fruit and corn-eaters, for example, could be as cruel as crocodiles—like the baboons, on occasion. But highest of all the fetishes, white or red, he placed that of his own race, naturally—white and red, universal tolerant of all.

THE elephants were closing in. They milled about, already trampling out something like a park-like clearing here in the jungle. And all the time that they were doing this, their whispers, and the whisper of Oshu, the Walking Moon, were concerned with Kwa.

"Ho," Kwa shouted. "The Leopard King has run back to his town. Now, who will follow me there?"

CHAPTER VII

The Lost Village

ONE of the strangest natural phenomena of the great African bush are the open spaces that occur here and there. They are like bits of meadow walled all around by the solid jungle. They are like scattered islands in an unexplored and unsailable sea. They speck the green ocean of the jungle as little, lost oases speck the Sahara. Always with the difference that these little clearings in the jungle are a thousand times more secret, infinitely more difficult to find.

The old Portuguese explorers called them "sernas" — "shut-in places"—and left them alone, as something that couldn't be explained and, therefore, probably haunted.

Right or wrong, there's always been that something of a haunt about them, some way or other—something to scare away both animals and men. But every now and then some remnant of a tribe, mistreated beyond endurance by enemies in the ordinary world and creeping through the high bush—not caring much what happened to them any more, as nothing could be worse than what they'd already suffered—would find one of these sernas and make a sort of "bongo" agreement with the local ghosts.

It was that way with the M'hedji —a name that meant "the Bearded Ones"—who's found a serna not far south of the Devil Bush and decided that they might as well die there as anywhere.

The M'hedji were pigmies. Like the Akas, further east, so close to the apes that they had a lot of ape ways and could understand a lot of the ape speech. In most ways, rather looking up, say, to the gorillas, the snakes and the spiders, with whom

they lived at peace. But fearing leopards as most people used to fear the devil and his imps.

Then, one day, a leopard moved in on the M'hedji.

RIGHT in the heart of the village —or, at any rate—the little cluster of leaf-covered dens where the M'hedji slept—the leopard killed and ate an old woman. He ate her where he had killed her, right at the side of the village fire, in full view of everyone who cared to watch. And, having finished his meal, taking his time about it, he washed himself —taking his time about that also— licking his paws—over and over again—stopping to reflect or to peer at something that only he could see —then, suddenly, as if there was nothing else to think about, licking his breast.

Altogether, the M'hedji, who were keen observers of animals, decided that this was no ordinary leopard. This was a *njego aniemba*—the equivalent of a werwolf—a leopard possessed by a spirit—perhaps by the spirit of old Abambu himself, the head-devil, boss of all the evil spirits that roam the jungle day and night.

The impression gained ground.

The leopard liked fire. He showed no fear of the M'hedji. He certainly had cleaned the surrounding bush of other leopards. The M'hedji men, those whose beards were gray, held a council and decided that the old woman who'd been eaten must have been a witch.

Since that time, the leopard had eaten no other meat than M'hedji. Now an old man. Now an old woman. Occasionally a child. Until the thing became perfectly clear to the M'hedji survivors. They'd become the leopard's flock. He was not only living on them, he was, in a way, trying to conserve them— build up his flock, as a herder might.

In spite of this, it was clear—not only to the M'hedji themselves but, evidently, to the leopard as well— that the Bearded Ones were not increasing fast enough to make up for his demands for food.

This phase merely led to the next one.

The leopard had disappeared for a moon and, during his absence, his place had been taken by another leopard—but one, it appeared, who was not a man-killer. This leopard hung about the serna. Neither was he afraid of fire. He seemed to enjoy human society. But he made his own kills out in the bush.

Then the first leopard returned. And now the M'hedji knew that he was not only a leopard possessed of a spirit, he was the Great Leopard, the Leopard King, the *Sango Njego*, the Father of Leopards—almost, as you might say, the Leopard God.

He'd come back with many tens of prisoners—more than any M'hedji could count: maybe ten-ten, and then ten-ten, and then ten-ten, as they would say. And in charge of these prisoners or slaves, pigmies like themselves, a group of big fighting men who were Leopard Men—who ate what leopards ate and who painted their big black bodies so that they looked like leopards.

ALL through the Black World— the Night Side of Nature, as some people call it—Death is regarded as no stranger than Air. It comes. It goes. It is always there. You do not see it. It is a part of life.

The M'hedji, and now the new members of the Leopard Flock, found life in the Leopard Serna as just about normal.

So old Oshu, the Walking Moon, told Kwa.

They were moving away from the battleground where the leopard

fighting-chief and the python lay coiled together in the mould that had so nearly become a grave for Kwa as well.

WHEN Kwa had come up from his occupation with the last of the Leopard Men with that cry of his for followers, it was Oshu who'd been the first to answer.

"I'll not only follow, I'll carry you there," Oshu had answered in his trumpeting voice.

The other animals applauded.

It was a billow of jungle chorus that went rolling over all the African world—far up into the Sudan, into the hills of Habishland (Abyssinia), down and across Tanganyika, down to the Cape.

Not audibly, yet audible—causing giraffes and zebras, antelope and ostriches to lift their heads and listen; causing lions to start and forget the kill, baboons to fall silent. Elephant herds away up in the Karamoyo Hills stopped and listened—three thousand miles away—and wished that they were nearer; buffalo in Buanji—and they rumbled:

"Shauri Munga!"—meaning "Business caused by God."

This also was part of the constant stream of information that was coming up to Kwa as he sat there on the head of the old blind elephant headed for the attack on the Leopard King's town.

He could have had the whole place blotted out without a fight at all if he'd wanted to.

By this time there must have been as many as a hundred elephants following the lead of Oshu, the Walking Moon, through the jungle.

There may have been as many as two or three hundred leopards—haunted with doubt, fearful of a fetish beyond their own, terrible with courage in any ordinary situation, but feeling now that they were up against that thing for which they had no proper name but which the far-far buffalo herds had referred to:

"Shauri Munga!"

There were times in the High Bush when this thing called "Shauri Munga" was as close, as natural and as visible, as the leaves on a bush; yet as shaking to the nerves of leopards as it was to the nerves of men.

Oshu whispered up a message that was meant for Kwa alone.

"Lo," he said, "O Kwa, now call on thy spirit to meet the Spirit of Death. He awaits your coming. He stands at the haunch of the Leopard King."

CHAPTER VIII

"Shauri Mungo"

KWA had a sense of that when he found himself face to face with that Father of Leopards. It was an overwhelming sense that here and now, of all the swarming millions of creatures in the world, there remained but three. One was himself. One was this spotted sphinx. One—just as real—was that Spirit of Death to whom Oshu had referred.

Kwa had given his orders before reaching the serna. The place could be surrounded. It would be surrounded—from ground to the highest fringe of trees. For that matter, even the air above the serna was already alive with birds—birds that darted, birds that soared.

But Kwa and the Walking Moon would enter the clearing alone.

How much the Leopard King had known of all this it's impossible to say. But not hard, perhaps, to make a likely guess. Leopards also have been great listeners to the silences of the bush—the radio of the wild. All cats are. Leopards have always been able also—if we are to believe the

reports of those who ought to know, and there's no reason why we shouldn't—to see things, even more clearly than other cats, that are invisible to other eyes.

Had the Leopard King also seen that one thing to which Oshu had referred—the Thing which Oshu had said would be now waiting at his flank?

IN any case, Kwa had slipped from Oshu's head and run toward the central fire of the village—there where Oshu had already told him the Father of Leopards would be waiting. It was true. There by the fire stood a leopard twice as large, it seemed, as the one Kwa had already killed.

It stood half-crouched. Its feet were set for the spring.

Kwa had but one fractional moment of hesitation. He used it for a cry. It wasn't a taunt. It wasn't even a challenge. It was a mere statement of fact. But all that waiting, straining multitude of creatures, both human and not-human, heard him.

"Spring!" he said. "But that won't do you any good, O Leopard! You can't spring away from the Spirit of Death!"

To one who has never been there, it may seem hard to explain. But even this whisper of Kwa's now went rolling up and down and out across all the spaces of Africa. Amplified. Nothing so impressive as an old truth declared at a fateful moment.

The leopard had made no answer at all, but instead of springing had backed a little—closer to the fire. Fire! Fire was the great fetish of the world. This the leopard had learned. It was fire that had given Man his power. He backed a little closer to the fire. But no fresh power came to him from it.

It was there at the edge of the fire that Kwa attacked.

Maybe that was it. Fire was Man's fetish—not a leopard's.

But the leopard had learned this too late. Too late it reared and struck. But Kwa, no slower than the leopard's stroke, had thrust one hand under the leopard's yawning mask and with the other had buried his broad knife in the leopards' side.

They gave the Leopard King the funeral rites that might have gone to a king.

They built up the fire to a roaring pyramid, until the flames, swirling up into the night, concealed that bamboo couch at the center of the fire where the body of the *Sango Nejego*—the Father of Leopards—lay.

THIS pleased everyone, especially the leopards themselves. For the leopards were a proud and sensitive people. And it would have been the worst thing in the world—not only for themselves but for other jungle peoples, their neighbors—to have put upon them a sense of shame.

News of the funeral-pyre also went out—into the vast mystery of the African night this time—the time when Africa really lives. And jackals as far away as the Egyptian desert were known this night to have got news of what was doing away down there in the country of the Devil Bush and to have whimpered that cry of—

"Shauri Munga!"

As for the rest, this night it was also decided that it wouldn't be fair to the little black M'hedji people, the Bearded Ones, and all those who had joined them here in the serna, to take one god away from them without giving them another.

"Bongo!"

They had to have someone to whom they could render respect, whom

they could look to for protection. Whatever the price. And Oshu, the Walking Moon, getting too old to walk much more but with a head full of wisdom and a heart full of tolerance, agreed to take over the job.

The M'hedji, naturally, were delighted.

THEIR banana fields were flourishing. This new god of theirs loved bananas. The surrounding forest yielded an unending crop of tender foliage—everything from bamboo-shoots and wild sugar-cane to wild coffee and tobacco, all of which Oshu—like many another old man—found to contribute to the peace of old age.

The M'hedji people brought out their all but forgotten drums.

A night of the great truce—such a truce, so Oshu himself said—as the world hadn't known since trees could talk and all living things were brothers.

All the living things of Africa were there now—all that could travel this far; and those who couldn't travel on the hoof, so to speak, went to sleep, in a way they had, and dreamed that they were there.

It was as if the everlasting forest itself was finally blotted out by living things and the spirits of these—a pale circle of watchful fog that made even the timid little Oshingui people, the smallest monkeys in Africa feel protected and at home.

A great night, set to a pulse of drums, and the strange, plaintive and yet somehow funny tremolos of the pygmies as they squeaked their ancient songs.

AND Kwa danced—a White Man of the White Men. Surely a strange and moving spectacle here in this Black World that white men had long ago forgotten.

A world as unknown to the White Man as the White Man's world was an unknown world to the Devil Bush.

Yet a promise—that dance of Kwa's—to those who watched it—a queer-queer promise. A hint of an old truth in it, yet impressive, as old truths are apt to be when stated in certain conditions.

"Ho!" Kwa chanted. "Sun and Moon. Elephants and Leopards—Snakes, Birds, Monkeys! All ye children of the Day and all ye children of the Night! Ho! We are brothers!"

GAUCHO GUNS

A Gripping Story of the Argentine and a Daring American Who Faces Grim Danger to Avenge His Murdered Father

By GLENN FERRALL

Author of "The Street of Blood," "The Winged Victory," etc.

CLARKE GARROD walked his tired horse along the narrow path, overgrown with tropical brush. On either side the impenetrable forest of the Gran Chaco rose in solid desolation. The deathlike silence vibrated with the dull roar of the distant giant falls. Mist from them dampened the air. Trees and plants were a bilious green, the ground black and boggy, inhabited only by pythons.

Beyond, where no white man had ever penetrated and returned, lived the savage Toba Indians. Fear of them and a superstition of the Chaco kept Clarke's two gauchos waiting for him a quarter of a mile further on, where the forest grew less dense on the opposite shore of a narrow creek, and this tortuous path widened.

Clarke could not blame the simple Argentines from refusing to accompany him further. The dismal waste held perpetually an ominous dusk, no sun penetrating the foliage.

Clarke sagged in his saddle with

relief and exhaustion. He would never have to come here alone again himself. He had fulfilled this much of his obligation to his dead father —that splendid, adventurous spirit whose body had been found by the little creek, his head bashed in by a rock.

He had been childishly eager to develop his Argentine cattle ranch to a scale where his business-man son would be interested in joining him. He had taken this hazardous course, of finding a trail through the Chaco to Uruguay, thus to avoid the expensive shipping to the coast or the more expensive and dangerous drive across the pampas, where he was preyed upon by Perrichon, the lawless cattle baron. And he had just found the trail, so said his two faithful gauchos, when he was killed.

He was riding to El Oasis, to mail his plans of trail construction to an American engineering company in Buenos Ayres. Next day his body was found, and the letter was missing. Perrichon, of course, but to prove it. Fortunately Clarke had kept all his father's letters.

BY piecing all their information together, he rediscovered the trail from his father's descriptions, except for the final opening. Working where his father had written he was working, Clarke completed his two weeks of sombre labor today.

His horse suddenly tossed up his head, nostrils quivering. Clarke's stomach seemed to fall away, and his legs trembled. Raised on an Arizona ranch though he was, years in the city had given him no training for danger. In an inherited instinct, his hand reached for the heavy revolver strapped to his leg. His moist palm slid along the butt, and the cool steel steadied his nerves.

His heart seemed to leap at the sound of a swift *whirr,* like the sudden flight of a bird. A hot sting cut along the side of his neck. It was the blade of a knife, razor sharp. Again inherited action shot him into instinctive movement. The pistol was in his hand, pointing at the brush. His finger was pressing the steel tongue.

Flame belched four times from the barrel, followed by booming reverberations, before Clarke realized he didn't know what he was shooting at.

As he paused, he heard a low moan, then the crashing of a body through the brush. An instant later a second *whirr* froze his blood, and the blade flashed like a streak of light past his eye. It had missed him by an inch. He heard the heavy trampling of a horse turning. He saw the dim outline through the brush.

He pointed the pistol, held it steady. The dim figure leaped forward with a crack of riding whip across the flank of the horse. Clarke squeezed the trigger. On the echo of the roar came a scream. A second later a body crashed to the underbrush.

Clarke waited in the eerie silence. A grateful thought for his father flashed through his mind. He recalled the long afternoons as a boy when his father taught him how to handle a gun, although the lad with financial ambitions protested he would never need one. He wished his father might have seen him—

HE snapped alert as he heard the pounding of hooves coming from the direction where his gauchos waited. Drawing his horse off the trail, he waited, with the single remaining bullet in his revolver. Around the curve they came, wild-eyed, Miguel Bachez, his late father's assistant, and Pedro a gaucho.

"Madre de Dios!" Miguel shouted,

jerking in his small Argentine cow pony. "What did happen?"

"Two men attacked me. They're in the brush. Be careful," as Miguel swung instantly from his horse. "I think I hit them, but they might be playing possum."

MIGUEL scurried through the tangled forest, followed by the gaucho. Clarke waited, in readiness. A few moments and they reappeared. They stared in awe at Clarke. Even their swarthy faces seemed paler. Miguel spoke with awesome deference to the son of the late *estanciero,* his boss.

"They're dead. Both Perrichon's men. You've killed two of Perrichon's men. Oh, senor, flee! Flee while you can. No one has ever dared such an affront to that *diable.* All Argentine will be too small for you both."

Clarke, the economist, the man of the cities, suddenly formed a new decision. "You are right, Miguel," he said slowly. "Argentine is too small for me and my father's murderer. You thought it was he; now I think so, too."

"But you can prove nothing, senor. And up here he owns the law. Think of your poor father—"

"That's what I am thinking of. I didn't like the look in Perrichon's insolent eyes, that day I asked him could he help me bring my father's murderer to justice. He seemed to be secretly laughing at me as he offered his own glib alibi.

"During the time my father was killed, Perrichon was giving a party. He was entertaining a lady in his walled garden, with neither entrance nor exit, he said."

"That is true, senor, it hasn't. That is well known, and it is ten feet high."

"I didn't like the way he stressed that fact, Miguel. And I'd like to know more about this lady he entertained. Rose Lapao, the dancer."

"Yes, senor, she comes often to see Perrichon, all the way from Buenos Ayres she comes."

"The famous dancer, who refuses European contracts and wealthy marriages, must have a great love for this Perrichon. I wonder what she would say if she knew he planned to marry Consuelo Alvarado. Are you sure he does, Miguel?"

"The gossip of the province is never wrong, senor, and it is well known that Perrichon has pressed the old don, her father, until marriage of his beautiful daughter to Perrichon is the only escape for him. Perrichon must want her, else why would he not seize Don Alvarado's land, as he had many others?"

"All right, Miguel. I have a scheme. Do you think I could pass for a gaucho now?"

I THINK yes, senor," the gaucho mumbled uneasily. "Your face is tan now, no more white as when you came with spectacles on it. Those clothes have gone that made you look like a—what you say—scholar? You fit your gaucho clothes like one who belongs. And your brown hair has grown long and sweat gives it a black shine. Yes, senor, I think you could. But why—?"

"Because I'm going to be one. I am going to be one of Perrichon's."

"Senor!" cried the gaucho. "Are you mad thus to place your head in a noose."

"Nothing ventured, nothing gained, is a saying we have in the states. Strike while the iron is hot is another one. I'll venture and strike. Come, Miguel, don't look so frightened. Have you not taught me the thrust and parry of your native weapon, the facon? Was I not a deft pupil?"

"Yes, but, senor, they do not wel-

come strangers in El Oasis. You will never have a chance to use what you have learned. Please, senor—"

"Miguel, we can't wait here and be killed. Tonight we go. Come on, ride back to the *estancia* with me. I'll tell you my plan."

The faithful gaucho, and the other one, slowly mounted, staring incredulously at this young man who had so short a time before been a conservative young business man. Clarke did not blame them. He hardly understood himself. But since he held that gun and fired those shots, something long dormant had awakened in him. He supposed it was not for nothing he was the son of an adventuring father.

THE cantina in El Oasis was thriving with its evening trade. Gauchos packed the place, leaning against the bar, and stretching into the room.

These gauchos in this north province were the last remnants of the fierce and untamed nomads. They looked it, with the matchete-like knives, the facons, swinging from leather pants folded into low boots. Barrel chests swelled their cotton shirts, brightly colored, and ugly wrought leather riding crops swung from their bronzed wrists. They were a murderous-looking lot.

At the tables in the rear, petty *estancieros* talked in low, musical voices. At a large table in the center an estanciero, several gauchos, and a chulo with a few pesos played at a game of cards.

The door swung open and a gaucho stood in the doorway looking around. He was identical with all the gauchos in the room, save that he needed a shave and showed the signs of long riding. He looked around him slowly, at the colored posters announcing the next bull fights and cock fights, at the employment sign for laborers in a near-by province, then at the bartender whose hands were concealed below the bar and who watched him steadily.

The chatter broke off as the men turned around to stare at the stranger. Slowly the hum started again, more subdued, and there was an alertness in it. The stranger walked to the bar and asked for a drink. He took it slowly, turned and leaned his back against the bar, and watched the card game. From the end of the bar a gaucho came forward.

He was taller than the others, sturdy of frame, and in the opening of his shirt a slump of thick black hair was seen. His eyes were cold in appraisal and he said:

"Can I help you—stranger?" It was a challenge.

"Perhaps. I am looking for a job."

"Who are you?"

The talking of the gauchos had ceased, even the game of cards was suspended, and the low hum in the rear paused. Clarke said:

"I am a man from the south, working north, out of the country."

THE tension in the cantina was thick like a vapor. The man said:

"Why do you want to work here, in the country of Perrichon?"

"I know nothing of—Perrichon. I can go no further without work, and this is a long way from where I came. I have heard of a Senor Alvarado. I thought I might work for him."

"No one works for Senor Alvarado any more. He, like all the estancieros in this part of the province, work for Perrichon."

"It is no matter. Where can I see this Perrichon?"

"Tonight you cannot see him. He is busy."

"Ah, the senor makes love."

"You have guessed rightly,

stranger. Now I shall guess about you."

"I have heard of the beautiful daughter of Senor Alvarado. Is it she that Perrichon makes love to?"

THE stir in the room was dark and ominous. The tall man glowered and said:

"You are bold with your questions."

"A thousand pardons, senor. I am a romantic. It seems but right to me that the greatest senor in the province should love the most beautiful senorita. Forgive me if I seem bold. It is my simplicity."

"You are forgiven, senor. It is the senorita whom Perrichon loves. And now about yourself?"

"I am a good workman. Let me work until I see the beautiful wedding. I love fiestas. Will it be soon?"

"As soon as the father consents. And now, no more. Tomorrow I take you to Perrichon."

"My eternal gratitude," the stranger said smoothly. "Tomorrow I shall be here."

"Wait, senor!" It was a command.

Clarke stiffened. Every gaucho was tensed, hands hovering near their facons. The capitaz' eyes narrowed with hard suspicion. His body was arched forward. He snarled:

"You go tonight, senor. We take you there, and wait until the Perrichon returns."

Clarke felt his stomach tighten in emptiness. He had counted on Perrichon being out late. Miguel had carefully watched the baron's movements. He wasn't ready to test his disguise with that shrewd and ruthless baron. He said, casually:

"Of no matter. As you wish. But perhaps it will give the great senor a bad humor to be disturbed so late, and I will not get the job."

"You have talked too much already. You come with us, bad humor or not."

The big capitaz nodded to two gauchos. They sprang forward eagerly. Clarke knew that one move and those facons would flash. They opened the door. He could do nothing but walk up the dark street toward the shadowy house at the end. He whistled for his horse and he followed along.

The flesh rose on Clarke's neck with those men, silent behind him, perhaps ready to ease that cold steel between his shoulders. Still, he must get his message to Miguel. In the narrow lot, black with shadow, between the last two houses, the faithful lurked.

When he reached that, Clarke turned slowly and said:

"A thousand pardons. I must delay. My spur is loose."

HE saw their scowling faces in the darkness. He knelt down, bundled over. As he tinkered with the spur, he drew the ball of paper from his vest pocket. He felt the sweat cold on his forehead. He straightened suddenly, jerking his arm upward quickly. The hand flicked outward in the movement.

He waited tensely, his legs trembling, to see if they had noticed that slight whir of the paper into the dark lot. The capitaz growled:

"Get on with you."

Relief soared back through him. A gaucho with a shiny rifle opened the barred door. With the four men, Clarke waited in a narrow stuffy room. Clarke knew he was playing a big hunch that might cost him his life before he could see if it worked. His trained mind had weaved together all the little threads.

Perrichon had bought off or forced out all the small estancieros save

Garrod and the old don, Alvarado. But the aristocrat had more of pride than resource, and step by step he had yielded until his back was against the wall.

And at each advance, Perrichon had promised him power and riches if he would give his daughter in marriage. The old don was at the point now when he saw no other way out, and received the baron in his home. Clarke was staking everything on Rosa Lapao, the dancer.

Assuming that she knew something, the price of her silence was love. It was known that she was rich in the world's goods, that she had spurned several offers of advantageous marriages, that she stayed this season in South America when she may have been dancing in Paris or Madrid.

IT was for Perrichon. He was the element responsible for her actions. She hoped he would marry her. Perrichon, the great lover. It was to her Clarke had tossed the message to Miguel. Miguel was to ride fifty miles to the nearest telegraph office, where it would be safe to wire Rosa Lapao, saying that Perrichon's engagement to Consuelo Alvarado was announced, and she had better return to protect her interest.

"Wait here," the capitaz said to the gauchos.

They passed down a long narrow hall into a patio which was filling with the shadows of dusk. They crossed this and entered a wide room. Here sat Perrichon, low lights cutting through the semi-darkness. The capitaz said:

"This is the stranger."

Clarke affected a swaggering nonchalance which he little felt. Under lowered brows he glared boldly at the great baron, who now toyed with his mustache and gripped a black cigar.

Clarke felt the eyes boring him. Perrichon said:

"Wait in front, Emilio." After the capitaz had gone, Perrichon said: "Now, young fellow, where have I seen you before?"

Clarke placed his voice deep in his throat, forced the liquid quality into it that he used as a child on the Arizona ranch. "Perhaps you visited the estancia for which I worked, and saw me. Or perhaps you confuse me with someone else."

"I confuse you for some reason with an Americano I saw several days ago. But you couldn't be he?"

"American del Norte? I was never there, senor. I am from the South." Clarke could feel the steady thump of his heart. The sound seemed to fill the room as Perrichon's black eyes stabbed into him.

He said: "You want to work for me, senor?"

"Yes, senor."

There was a malicious glint in Perrichon's eyes. He said smoothly:

"It is dangerous, senor."

"I do not mind danger, senor," Clarke said. His voice sunk lower to hide the excitement pounding upward in his chest.

"So I see, senor. But a brave man must also be a clever man, senor. Are you clever?" A suspicion of a smile hovered about Perrichon's lips.

Clarke's lungs contracted and he knew he was in a bad position. He said, while his brain raced for some means of escape:

"That is for you to decide, senor."

PERRICHON grinned, an evil mocking grin. "You are not very clever, senor, to think you can fool me."

Clarke knew the moment had come. He felt his muscles tauten. He had to get at Perrichon

first, to keep from being between two fires. He managed to say:

"Fool you, senor?"

"Yes. It's amusing that I knew who you were from the moment you came in."

Clarke stepped quickly forward. Perrichon jumped to his feet. His eyes turned as cold as a snake's. He said:

"You fool! Do you think you have a chance? There's four men outside waiting for my—"

Then Clarke leaped. He sprang forward with his right fist chopping down. Perrichon started backward, his hand darting inside his vest The blow glanced off the side of his jaw. It was not a solid blow, but all of Clarke's weight catapulting forward was in it. Perrichon spun around and sprawled. Clarke leaped over him. He pushed open the door behind him.

It was a long dark room. Clarke moved silently forward. When he reached the end of the room, Perrichon's wild yell echoed. Clarke leaped to the door. He jerked frantically with both hands. He saw he would never budge it. He stood back and hurled his weight against it. The solid thickness shook the breath from his body and shot a swift sickening pain down his shoulder.

HE heard the excited yelling of the gauchos in the room with Perrichon. A sudden screech right at him froze his blood. He whirled. A coo-coo was bobbing in and out of its home. Gilt hands on gilt figures pointed to midnight. Clarke heard the gauchos cautiously entering the room at the other end, for at that moment he was silent.

His eyes, focused to the darkness, made out what seemed to be velvet curtains on his right. He tiptoed quickly. He heard the stealthy movements of the gauchos. He ripped aside the curtains. The wooden frame of French windows cut across thick panes of glass.

There was a sudden yelling behind him. Feet trampled. A blade thudded into the window casement and quivered. Clarke hurled his body into the window. He felt himself falling outward, the glass and wood crashing and splintering about him. He tasted the blood on his cheek and felt it wet on his sleeve.

He stumbled to his knees. He was in the garden. This was the place he had wanted to investigate. He wouldn't have much chance. Already the gauchos were piling through the window. He rushed straight down the garden, stumbling over vines, through shrubs, into flower beds.

A stone bench struck his knee and he pitched headlong over it. His shoulder struck heavily against a sharp rock.

TURNING painfully over he saw three figures leap over the stone bench. In the darkness three blades gleamed. He rested one hand on the ground, braced his feet, and heaved himself backward and up. A curving facon ripped the leather of his chaps. His own facon was gripped in his right hand.

He saw Emilio, the capitaz, lunge in that vicious stroke. Clarke wildly flicked up his blade. He felt the contact with bone, heard the low groan of the capitaz, and knew he had found the wrist. The steel of the capitaz had been within a few inches of his heart.

Already the third gaucho was lunging forward. Clarke leaped backward, jerking his facon from the flesh of the capitaz. The downward stroke skimmed down his clothes.

Something native in Clarke shot his left fist forward in a quick jab

and the gaucho stumbled backward. The one who had missed the first stroke had circled and now rushed in. Clarke whirled, bringing up his facon in the parrying stroke he had practiced with Miguel. Steel clanked on steel and the blade of the gaucho slithered harmlessly off Clarke's facon.

Again his left fist jabbed swiftly. It struck even as a hairy hand clasped his throat. The grip relaxed suddenly, and again Clarke leaped back as the first gaucho approached warily.

Clarke backed away from them. They advanced slowly, spreading, until each was on a different side of him. Then a solid substance bumped against him, and he knew his back was against the wall. They rushed. As they came, Clarke formulated his plan. His right hand thrust forward to parry that gaucho's facon. Bracing his back against the wall, he raised his left leg and caught the other gaucho's body against his foot. The down swooping blow fell short.

AS the gaucho hastily raised his facon to jam it into the leg, and the other gaucho curved his arm to bring in an underhand thrust, Clarke shoved out his bent leg. The gaucho stumbled backward.

Clarke felt his brace give way. He felt himself falling backward. He grasped frantically, dropping his facon. He landed flat on his back on a ledge. He wildly threw out his hands. But his body slid over a ledge. He felt himself bumping down a rocky slope. He somersaulted and slid to the bottom of the slope on his stomach. As he stopped he was already looking upward.

The two gauchos were staring down from the top. Over their heads, he saw the opening in the wall that was "without entrance or exit." He scrambled to his feet and ran up the ravine he was in. They charged down the rocky slope to head him off. One lost his footing and came rolling down. The other slowed down cautiously, and when he reached the bottom, Clarke had passed him, running and stumbling up the ravine.

It ended several yards out from the wall. Clarke ran along the side of the wall, in its shadow. His horse was in front. He dashed out from the side and ran to his horse. Cries resounded through the house. He jumped on the animal and a pistol shot rang out, and another. The whizzing was inches in front of his face.

He pulled the beast on its haunches, turning it around. A fusilade of bullets swept around him. The horse came down, facing the direction from which Clarke had come.

His late pursuer was directly in his path. Clarke spurred the animal and the gaucho leaped aside. Where the wall ended, Clarke turned the horse into the ravine. Back of the center of the town the ravine leveled off, where a beaten track on the pampas crossed it. That track led from town to Garrod's ranch. Clarke turned his horse's nose down this track and put the spurs to it. Soon he heard the thud of hoof-beats behind him.

HE was halfway home and the thudding sounded steadily in his ears. Occasionally a shot rang out. His horse stumbled down a declivity.

Clarke remembered this intersecting decline led toward the Chaco. He had taken this way once with Miguel. He pulled his horse into it and again flicked its flanks with the spurs. This was a hard, smooth-bottomed ravine that went for per-

haps a mile. As he came out on the pampas ground at the other end, he heard the ominous echo of the hoof-beats thundering in the ravine.

He would have to hide in the Chaco. Across the pampas he rushed, and into the uneven country, sprinkled with brush and trees as he approached the outskirts of the Chaco. His horse slowed down a declivity and waded through a creek. Clarke recognized the creek. Further up, where there were no trees, in a crescent of dry beach, was the spot where his father's body had been found.

CLARKE pushed the horse up the creek. This may throw his pursuers off for a few minutes, and when he reached that open spot he knew the way into the Chaco—the way his father had found. Now his horse seemed to be limping. He had gone not more than a hundred yards when he heard the fierce riding gauchos splash through the creek and up the other side. A few more yards and the desolate spot of tragedy was around him.

He halted his horse. In the silent, weird shadowed wood there was no sound save his own heavy breathing. He felt the animal beneath him expanding and contracting. The greasy sweat dripped stickily into his brow. Far ahead, those hard-riding gauchos were searching aimlessly in the outskirts of the Chaco. Clarke decided to double back.

He turned the horse's nose out of the water. As it went up the incline it limped badly. Clarke dropped from the saddle. With shaky hands he examined each hoof. His fingers tightened fearfully on the loose shoe. He looked around for a rock.

He searched feverishly. There seemed nothing but this unvarying soft earth. He felt panic shooting nervous tremors through him. The gauchos would be back at any minute. He rushed about wildly. The man of method was no more. Primitive man, gripped with fear, tore and kicked at the earth. Nothing, nothing but soft dirt. A sob escaped him.

The remnants of his logical brain warned him to gain control. He forced his brain to a rigid calm. Then he seemed to stop breathing. His eyes widened in the dark woods.

No rocks!

He remembered in all the three days he was searching for clues around this spot, he had never seen a rock. That was strange—yet here his father had died by a jagged stone. Then—he knew!

His father had been killed near El Oasis and his body brought here. He recalled the jagged rock on which he fell in the garden. Then he saw again the gilt hands pointing to the gilt letters on the coo-coo clock to midnight. He pulled back his sleeve and looked at his wrist watch. It was quarter after one.

COMING down the ravine back of Perrichon's garden, to Garrod's track across the pampas, thence at right angles to the Chaco, he had obviously come a quicker route than the roadway. It was the route the killer had used. An hour here and an hour back. His hunch about Perrichon, proven almost futile, sprang back to life.

He had subconsciously felt that the answer to the mystery lay in El Oasis, in the walled garden. Now—a great fury surged through Clarke. He forgot safety, he forgot everything but a desire to get at Perrichon. Rushing back to his horse, he jerked off his own boot, and as best he could hammered away at the shoe.

With the first stroke, he heard the

distant noise of the gauchos. He worked with feverish haste. He knew his evidence was only circumstantial, would never convince even an impartial court.

What if Perrichon *could* have left his garden, with a rock, carried the body to the Chaco and return in two hours, to enter the ballroom; that did not prove that he *had* done it. But to Clarke it proved it. And Clarke was going to make Perrichon meet him as the avenging hand. Gone was logic. Passion ruled.

THE sounds of crashing were growing nearer. The gauchos were trotting their horses. Their eyes and ears were probably alert for the slightest sound. Clarke made a last short stroke. The shoe would last a while. He climbed into the saddle, and raked the animal. It shot forward.

He crashed through the thickets and brush. The gauchos heard and answered with scattered shots and loud cries. Clarke heard them splash through the creek. Then he was out on the level pampas. He turned the horse slightly to the left to pick up the solid track on which he had come.

The wind whistled past him as he leaned over the galloping animal. He found the harder track and went into it. The hoof-beats thudded behind him. Shots rang out. Clarke was riding with the wind across the great plain, a part of the night and the animal.

His horse stumbled when it struck the incline that marked Garrod's hard track to El Oasis. Clarke turned the horse toward his estanciero. At once he saw the shoe was beginning to bother the horse again. And his heart sank as he saw the gauchos stringing out across the pampas, leaving the track to head him off.

With the condition of his horse, it would be a hopeless race. To go into El Oasis would be suicide. Suddenly he had a wild hope. The white-haired aristocrat, Don Alvarado! He wanted to save himself, and his daughter. Already, Clarke was turning his horse's nose across the dark expanse.

He rode low over the saddle, like a jockey. The panting horse was beginning to limp. Clarke had to press him on. This was a hundred to one shot. But Americans are good at playing long chances. For a long time now he heard no sounds from the gauchos. He wondered if there would be a fight at his estancia. No, they wouldn't attack his ten gauchos, headed by Miguel.

Then he saw the faint outlines of the don's estancia etched against the sky. In the distance now he heard the gauchos hoof-beats thudding on the hard track.

They must have turned and were heading toward El Oasis. His course led off to the left of the hard track. His moist hands clutched the leather bridle, in his frenzied hopes that they would not hear him. He grew so nervous as the steady pounding echoed nearer and nearer, that he dismounted. He walked his badly limping horse.

THE hoof-beats were opposite him now. Then they grew fainter again, as the gauchos lashed the horses on to the town. A dark figure arose out of the night in front of Clarke. He saw the gleam of the steel. Clarke panted out:

"Take me to Don Alvarado. It is life or death."

The man walked behind him, saying: "Walk straight ahead."

An enormous butler, wrapped in a dressing gown, cracked the door at the guard's summons. "No," he

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growled, "you can't see the master at this hour."

"It is life or death," Clarke said. "Tell him it is Senor Garrod's son."

The aristocratic old gentleman appeared in a silk dressing robe. He looked very severe, and Clarke felt that he had come out on a wild goose chase. He said:

"A thousand pardons, senor, but I've heard you are the friend of my father. Is that true?"

The patrician nodded.

Clarke said: "Then if you want to continue your loyalty, I think I can save you. I have the following proof that Perrichon is my father's murderer." He outlined his facts and his manner of piecing them together. He said: "The only fact that I lack is if my father actually came to El Oasis."

DON ALVARADO stared at him piercingly. Unexpectedly he said:

"I can furnish you that. I passed your father on my way home that night. It was near town."

"Oh, senor! Now I have him. But why didn't you tell?"

"Who could I tell? And, who can you tell now?"

"I'm going to take justice into my own hands."

"And Perrichon's men will enact their farcical justice on you."

"No." Clarke smiled confidently. "Before I acted, I received a code dispatch that soldiers from the capital are on the way here to investigate."

"But to an American, senor?" Don Alvarado smiled bitterly. "You will have a chance in a hundred."

"I took that chance in coming here. If you'll hide me until I'm ready, I'll take the next one."

"My house is yours, son of my friend, and my protection, such as it is."

For two days, Clarke rested in the peaceful calm of the ancient home. It was now time for the arrival of Rosa Lapao. Leaving the estancia by a circuitous route, Clarke jogged into El Oasis by way of the dilapidated railroad station.

Again he wore his city clothes. But he was not the same man now, with his dark skin and clear eyes and lithe body. The chulos stirred uneasily and exchanged glances. They fastened hostile glances on him, but none approached. For none knew who he was.

He looked somewhat like the son of El Senor Garrod, but that fellow wore glasses and was pale. He also resembled the strange gaucho, but he had disappeared and it was rumored that he was dead. And there he stood, feet wide apart, and meeting every stare. Then the train came puffing in.

ONLY one passenger alighted from the train, and the chulos and the agent and the estanciero stared at her. Rosa Lapao. She seemed a little nervous as she ordered her soulkee. No, she had no trunks, which was very odd, for before she had three; and now she had only a little overnight bag. She directed to be driven to Perrichon's

As the soulkee went down the center of the street, the strange young man who must be the younger Senor Garrod and yet looked unlike him, followed. He walked swiftly down the middle of the dirt street.

The door of Perrichon's was opened slightly. The senorita argued briefly, then she was admitted. As the door was being closed again, the strange young man thrust his polished shoe in the crack. There was another argument. The young man

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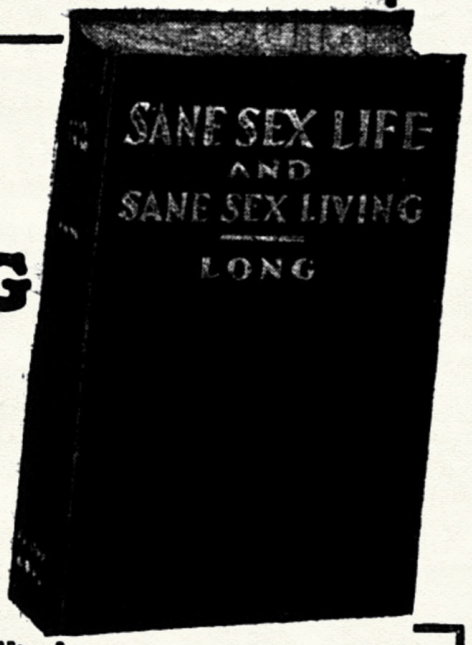

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seemed to have something in his hand.

But then he disappeared inside and the door closed on him. Several gauchos, whose attention had been attracted by the chulos, cast meaning glances at each other, hitched at their belts, and started walking slowly toward Perrichon's house.

Inside, the huge doorkeeper looked with squinted eyes at the automatic in Clarke's hand.

"Turn around," Clarke said.

The man turned slowly, his body tense. Hardly had he completed his turn when the barrel of the pistol smashed against his skull. Clarke caught his bulk as he fell, and laid him quietly down. With his pistol thrust forward, he tiptoed back into the house. He heard the sound of a servant in a side room. Across the patio. He listened at the door to Perrichon's room.

"But tell me why you came," he heard Perrichon's angry voice.

Clarke shoved the automatic back in the arm holster. He stepped into the room.

"We meet again, senor."

Swiftly Perrichon's eyes widened and his hand moved. But his hand stopped and his eyes narrowed. Clarke could see his body stiffen as he leaned forward. "What do you want?"

CLARKE looked toward Rosa Lapao. Her face had drained white, and she had recoiled. Clarke smiled and said:

"To tell you why this charming young lady came back. Senorita Lapao has told us how you left her in the garden while you sneaked out with a rock, and rode the dead body of my father through a short cut to the Chaco, and returned, and entered the ballroom together.

"You should have waited before

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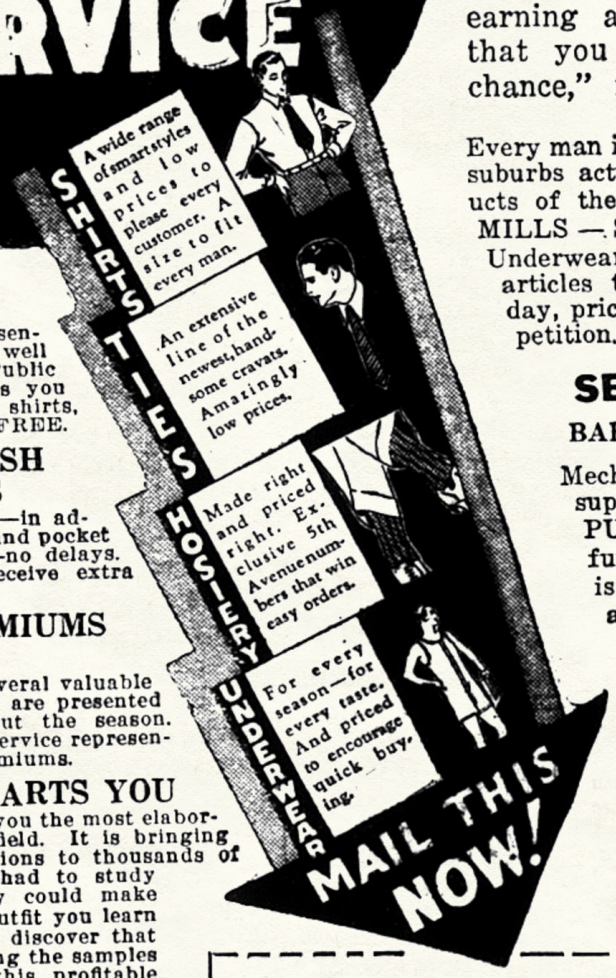

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you attempted to capture Senorita Alvarado. You know the old saying about the woman scorned."

Rosa's hand jerked to her throat. She fell back. "No! No!" she cried. Clarke felt his heart go. It had worked—a hunch—but it had worked!

THE dancer did know that, and she feared that Perrichon would believe she had betrayed him. Before she could deny it, Perrichon, accepting her fear for betrayal, whirled upon her:

"You dirty little double-crosser!" His dark face was livid now, and the veins stood out in his neck, as he rose out of his chair.

Rosa Lapao shrank against the wall. "No, no!" Her eyes were glazed with terror.

Perrichon suddenly whirled to face Clarke:

"All right. What good will your knowledge do you? You'll never leave this house alive to tell it."

Clarke saw the triumph in Perrichon's eyes and he knew that the slight scraping sound he heard in the patio was Perrichon's gauchos, and Perrichon knew they were there. Clarke said:

"Maybe not, but I'll kill you first."

He jerked the heavy automatic from its shoulder holster. In one wide movement Perrichon swept the cringing girl in front of him. His right hand dug in his back pocket and Clarke saw the glitter of the blue steel, even while he tried to aim. The girl completely covered Perrichon. Clarke heard the sound of the gauchos on the other side of the door against which he stood.

He fired swiftly, tilting the barrel of the pistol. The light blazed out and the room was in heavy dark-

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ness. Three spurts of flame stabbed into the darkness as Perrichon's pistol barked. Clarke hurled himself to the floor along the wall with his shot. The door burst open. A dark figure filled it for a moment. Perrichon fired twice again. The figure slumped in the doorway. Three figures crowded in, the flashes of their pistols jabbing into the room.

Perrichon cried out something. Somebody said:

"Strike a match." Clarke huddled behind a chair and saw three gauchos look over the body of Perrichon. They gasped. One of them blundered around for a lamp. Its flickering light embraced the three tense figures, the girl crouched against the wall, and the inert body.

From the semi-darkness beyond the lamp's radius, came Clarke's voice:

"Up with your hands, high!"

They stood like that until the police arrived. Clarke said:

"You will examine my pistol and see that one bullet has been fired. You will find that in the lamp. You will find the dead body of Senor Perrichon containing bullets from his gauchos. You may arrest them for his murder."

"We will be needing you as a witness. Where will we find you?"

"Either at my estancia, or at that of Don Alvarado." He breathed a slow, deep breath. "I've got to make up for the living I've missed all these years."

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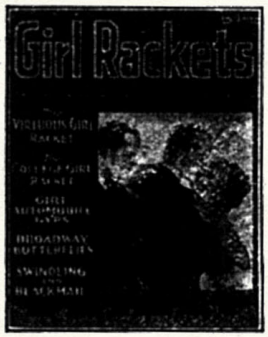

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SEVERAL readers have asked for the definition and significance of the Chinese phrase, "I Ho Huan," which appeared in Perley Poore Sheehan's series of Captain Trouble stories in THRILLING ADVENTURES.

"I Ho Huan," which means "The Fist of Righteous Harmony," was a motto of the Boxers, the members of a Chinese militant religious society which led the anti-Christian movement from 1899 to 1902.

Another reader asks that we furnish the ideograph, or symbol suggestive of an idea, employed in China to designate this phrase. The ideograph for "I Ho Huan," however, varies so greatly in different parts of China that no representative symbol can be given.

The Chinese alphabet is so large that linotypes and typewriters in Chinese are, up to the present time, impossible. Every word has its own distinct symbol.

Chinese typesetters must do between 36 and 40 miles of walking in order to collect the type required for a single issue of a newspaper.

Important, late news items are written in ink with a brush on a bulletin which is pasted on the wall of a building — bringing out an "extra" is too arduous.

China is now, however, moving toward a simpler written language. A Chinese youth educated in America has devised an alphabet similar to the one employed in writing English.

In banks and telegraph offices, particularly, the new alphabet is being utilized. For the first time in history it has become possible to send telegrams and cables in Chinese, thanks to the efforts toward simplifying the language, which, however, have not yet found universal favor.

We're always glad to answer questions of this sort—if any foreign phrase or custom puzzles you, write us. Our letter box yielded many interesting missives lately—and we're going to pass a few of them on to you. From Harold Rowland, of Cleveland, Ohio, we hear the following:

> Here I come busting into your office with a few words of praise and a few kicks about your magazine. It sure can't be beat for it lives up to its name, THRILLING ADVENTURES.
>
> Now for a few kicks: It should be published more than once a month, in fact, I could stand one every week! And let's have some adventures of the good old U. S. Navy!

We get the hint, old chap — so don't be surprised if you find a first-rate Navy story in THRILLING ADVENTURES soon.

From John L. Banta, of Green Bay, Wis.:

> I am a steady fan of THRILLING ADVENTURES. I was born in Texas right down on the Border and have mixed in a few arguments, and carry some scars, so I certainly enjoy your true-to-life stories!

Miss Georgia Cowgill, of Lexington, Ky., sent us the following enthusiastic note:

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Victor Maynar, of Mammoth, W. Va., has these words of praise for THRILLING ADVENTURES:

I haven't traveled much, and I live in a small town. I spend many evenings reading, and best of all I like THRILLING ADVENTURES, in which I have read some of the finest and most interesting stories I ever came across.

This magazine drives away the blues—banishes boredom and fascinates me.

Next month's featured story will be PEARLS OF PERIL, a complete book-length novel of the South Seas by Jackson Cole, which will hold you breathless from start to finish.

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A great number—that May issue. So long, adventurers—see you next month!—THE EDITOR.

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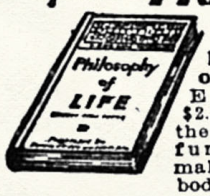

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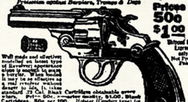

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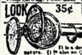

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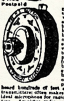

You can easily make a highly sensitive detectophone by using this Transmitter Button to collect the sound waves. You can build your own outfit without buying expensive equipment. It is simple and inexpensive. You can install an outfit in your home and hear conversations being held all over the house. You can connect up different rooms of a hotel. This outfit was used by secret service operatives during the war. It is being used on the stage. It is ultra-sensitive and is the greatest invention in microphones. You can mount the button almost anywhere—card board boxes, stove pipes, stiff calendars, on the wall behind a picture frame, etc. Button is so light and small it cannot be detected. Persons can be overheard without suspecting it. You can listen in on conversations in another room. A deaf person in the audience can hear the speaker. Connected to phonograph, piano or other musical instrument, music can be heard hundreds of feet away. Button may be used to renew telephone transmitters; often makes an old line "talk up" when nothing else will. The ideal microphone for radio use; carries heavy current and is extremely sensitive. Amplifies radio signals. Countless other similar uses will suggest themselves. Experimenters find the button useful for hundreds of experiments along the lines of telephones, amplifiers, loud speakers, etc. Many fascinating stunts may be devised, such as holding the button against the throat or chest to reproduce speech without sound waves. PRICE $1.00.

Little Wonder Crystal Radio Receiver $1

Say what you will about Electrical and Battery Sets, a CRYSTAL set has them all beat for simplicity and clearness of tone. There is absolutely no noise and no distortion—no batteries to buy—no tubes to wear out—no maintenance expense whatsoever. Cost nothing to operate and will last indefinitely. Reception is loud and clear. This Receiver is guaranteed to work equal to the most expensive Crystal Set you can buy. Has a receiving radius of over 25 miles, or under favorable conditions up to 100 miles. Constructed of the finest materials throughout, including supersensitive crystal, assuring quick results. PRICE of Receiver only $1.00 postpaid. Or complete with Ear Phone and Aerial Kit—everything all complete—nothing more to buy, $2.95 postpaid. Johnson Smith & Co., Dept. 926 Racine, Wis.

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Shoots B. B. Shots

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COMBINES ALL THE POWER AND DEFINITION OF THE MORE EXPENSIVE MICROSCOPE
SURPRISINGLY GREAT MAGNIFYING POWER
EXAMINE GERMS IN WATER, CHEESE, SUGAR, ETC.

There are few things so interesting and valuable as a Microscope. It enables you to minutely examine mineral, animal and vegetable specimens, to test cotton, wool, silk, seeds, water, flour, cheese, milk, and in fact nearly all articles of food. Unwholesome meat can be readily detected and ferments can be closely watched. It is exceedingly interesting to examine the spores of ferns, soda, sugar, salt, alum and other crystals, the dust (scales) from moth and butterfly wings, human hairs, flies and insects, while the animalculae in water are a never-failing source of wonder. Most interesting experiments can be performed with an instrument such as this. Place a small piece of cheese in a box and allow insects to feed on it for a day or two. Then examine a tiny portion of the cheese under the Microscope and you will see little animals, magnified to the size of large beetles; you can count their legs and the joints in them, the talons or claws upon each foot, also the hair or bristles upon their bodies. Or, obtain some stagnant water; deposit a small portion of scum upon the object glass of the Microscope with a pin's head, and you will see beautiful animalculae swimming about with as much freedom as though they were fish in the boundless ocean. It is a truly wonderful sight and an endless source of interest and enjoyment for everybody. The Microscope is made of brass and is capable of magnifying 150 areas, and although small and compact, it will cover a very wide range of microscopic research. PRICE ONLY 50c Postpaid.

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A Real Telephone. Works Indoors or Outdoors. Though this is merely a very clever toy, it is quite as serviceable for short distances as the most elaborate apparatus made and it is much less liable to get out of order or to need adjustment; in fact it cannot be rendered inefficient unless roughly handled. No troublesome battery, no intricate "hook-up." Can be put to practical use from one room to another, up or down stairs, around corners, etc. The patented sounding discs transmit and receive the voice perfectly, making it a really practical talking telephone. Set consists of two phones, transmission cord and full instructions. Price only 65c per set postpaid.

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A wonderful little instrument producing optical illusions both surprising and startling. With it you can see what is apparently the bones of your fingers, the lead in a lead pencil, the interior opening in a pipe stem, and many other similar illusions. Price 10c, 3 for 25c.

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10c

More fun than fighting with your wife. They look just like ordinary matches but explode with a loud bang when lit. 12 matches to a box. PRICE 10c per box, 3 boxes 25c, or 75c per doz. boxes. Not mailable. Shipped by Express. Not Prepaid.

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This is another good practical joke; the intense discomfiture of your victims to everyone but themselves is thoroughly enjoyable. All that is necessary to start the ball rolling is to deposit a little of the powder on a person's hand and the powder can be relied upon to do the rest. The result is a vigorous scratch, then some more scratch, and still some more. 10c box, 3 boxes for 25c or 75c per dozen. Shipped by Express.

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One of these glass vials dropped in a room full of people will cause more consternation than a limburger cheese. The smell entirely disappears in a short time. 10c per Box, 3 Boxes for 25c., 75c per doz. Boxes, or $7.20 per gross Boxes. Shipped by Express. Not Prepaid.

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Place a very small amount of this powder on the back of your hand and blow it into the air, and watch them sneeze without knowing the reason why. It is most amazing to hear their remarks, as they never suspect the real source, but think they have caught it one from each other. Between the laughing and sneezing you yourself will be having the time of your life. For parties, political meetings, car rides, or any place at all where there is a gathering of people, it is the greatest joke out. PRICE 10c, 3 for 25c, 75c per dozen. Shipped by Express. Not Prepaid.

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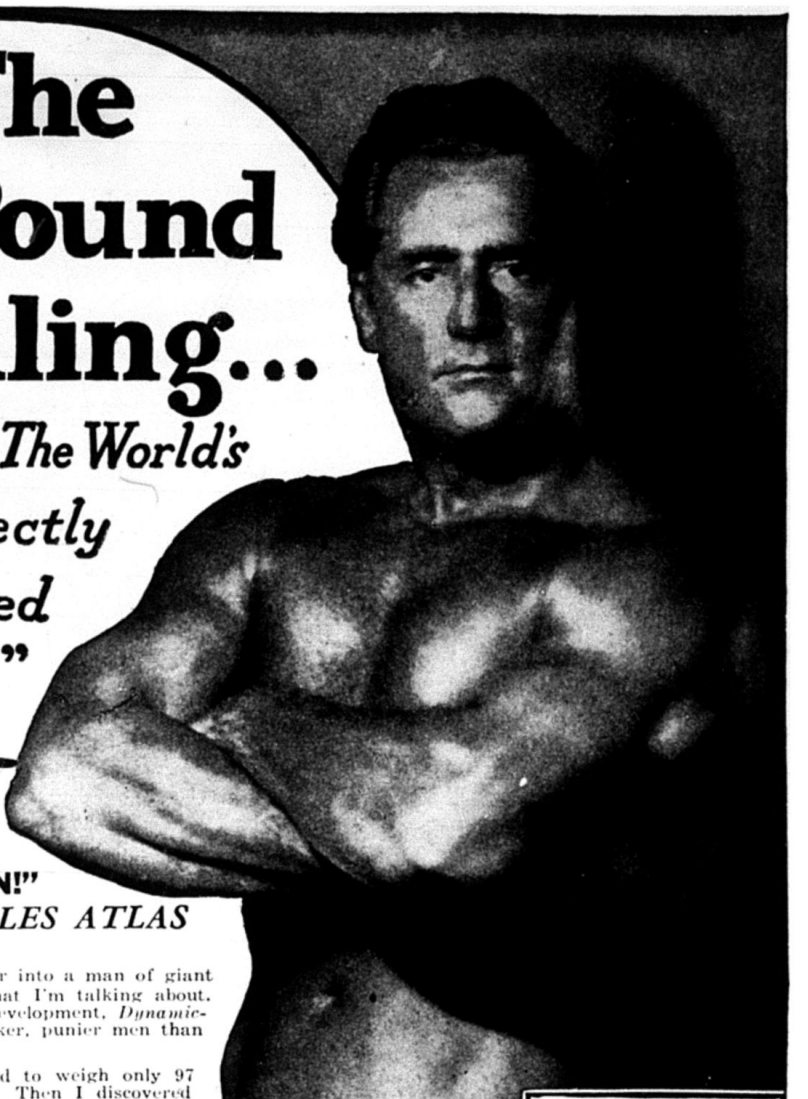
The 97-Pound Weakling...

who became "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man"



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WHEN I say I can make you over into a man of giant power and energy, I know what I'm talking about. I've seen my new system of body development, *Dynamic-Tension*, transform hundreds of weaker, punier men than you into Atlas Champions.

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BEAUTIFUL NEW AUBURN "12" SEDAN AND $2,000.00

I WILL PAY

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FOR THE WINNING ANSWER

Check your choice on the coupon below. Do this right away, then in 20 words or less tell me why you prefer $3,500.00 or the Auburn 12 Sedan and $2,000.00 Cash besides. I am going to give a big, new Auburn 12 Sedan and $2,000.00 in Cash, or $3,500.00 All Cash, to some deserving man or woman who answers my announcements. You may be the one to get it. But before I give it to someone I would like to know which you would prefer and why. I'll pay $250.00 Cash for winning answer. Use the coupon below or write a letter or use a one-cent postal for your answer.

WHICH *do you prefer—why?*

WIN $3,500.00 OR BIG AUBURN "12" SEDAN AND $2,000.00

We will distribute more than **$6,000.00 in Grand Prizes** in a plan which is entirely separate from the Cash Prize of $250.00 which I am giving for the prize winning answer to my question, "Which Do You Prefer and Why?" **Picture for yourself what $3,500.00 would mean to you.** Yours to spend as you like—for education, home, furniture, clothes, to pay old debts or mortgages, or a small fortune for the rainy days . . . Worries quickly forgotten. Carefree, happy days yours again!

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READ THESE RULES:

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TOM WOOD, *Manager*
Dept. G-704-D
H-O Building, Cincinnati, Ohio

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H-O Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio.

MY CHOICE IS:

☐ Auburn "12" Sedan and $2,000.00 Cash

☐ $3,500.00 All Cash

I have checked my choice and here's my answer to "Which Do You Prefer . . . Why?" (Write your answer plainly —in 20 words or less.)

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NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

TOWN ..... STATE.....