

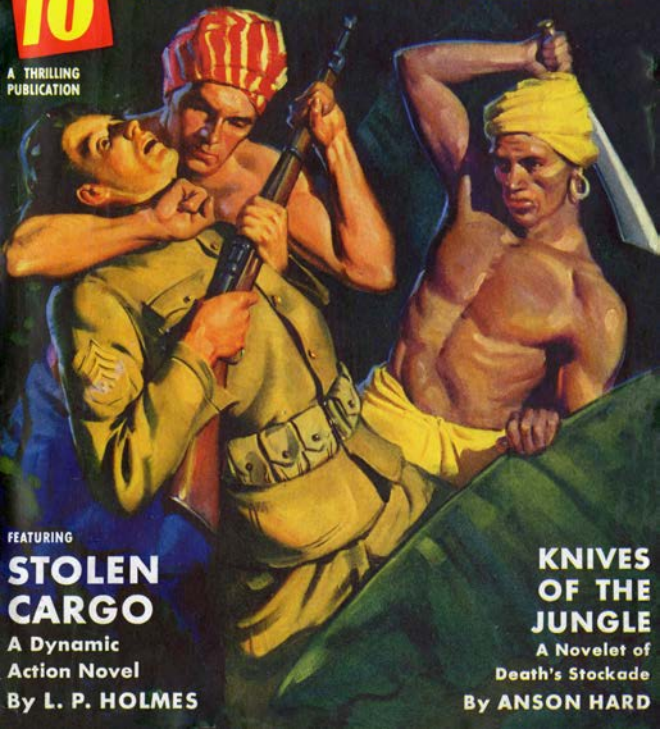
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Vol. XXX, No. 3

J. S. WILLIAMS, Editor

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Radio is young—yet it's one of our large industries. More than 28,000,000 homes have one or more Radios. There are more Radios than telephones. Every year millions of Radios get out of date and are replaced. Millions more need new tubes, repairs. Over \$50,000,000 are spent every year for Radio repairs alone. Over 5,000,000 auto Radios are in use; more are being sold every day, offering more profit-making opportunities for Radio experts. And RADIO IS STILL YOUNG, GROWING, expanding into new fields. The few hundred \$30, \$40, \$50 a week jobs of 20 years ago have grown to thousands. Yes, Radio offers opportunities—now and for the future!

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Washington, D. C.

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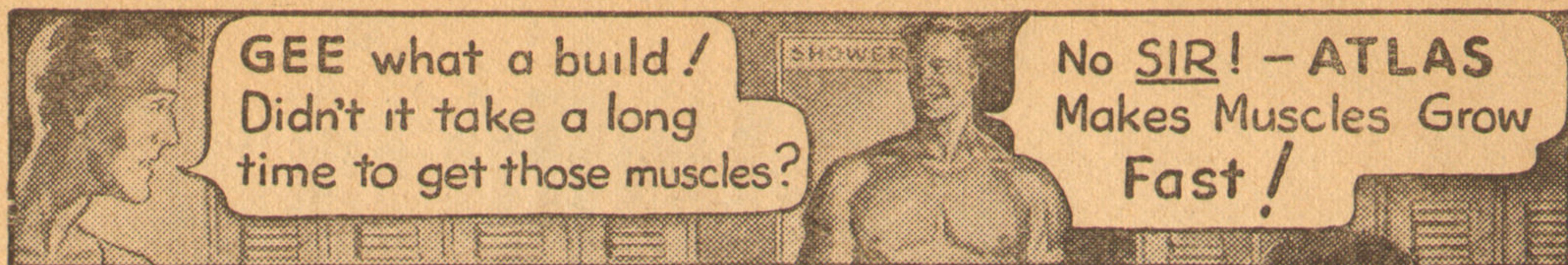
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National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me, send "Rich Rewards in Radio," which points out the spare time and full time opportunities in Radio and explains your 50-50 method of training men at home in spare time to become Radio Experts. (Please Write Plainly.)

NAME..... AGE.....

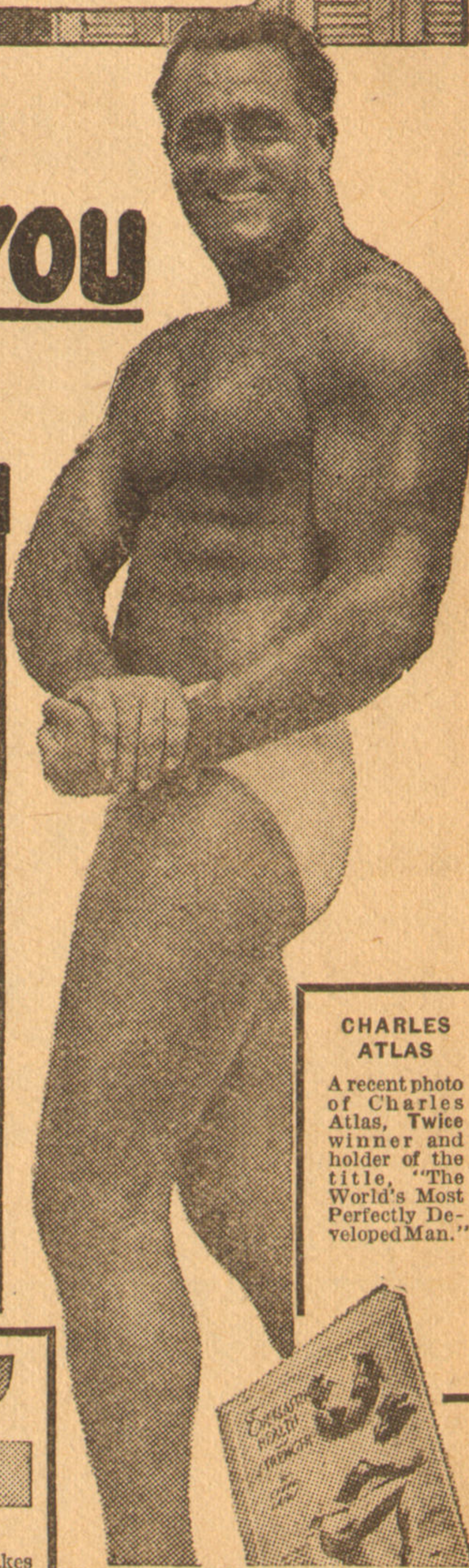
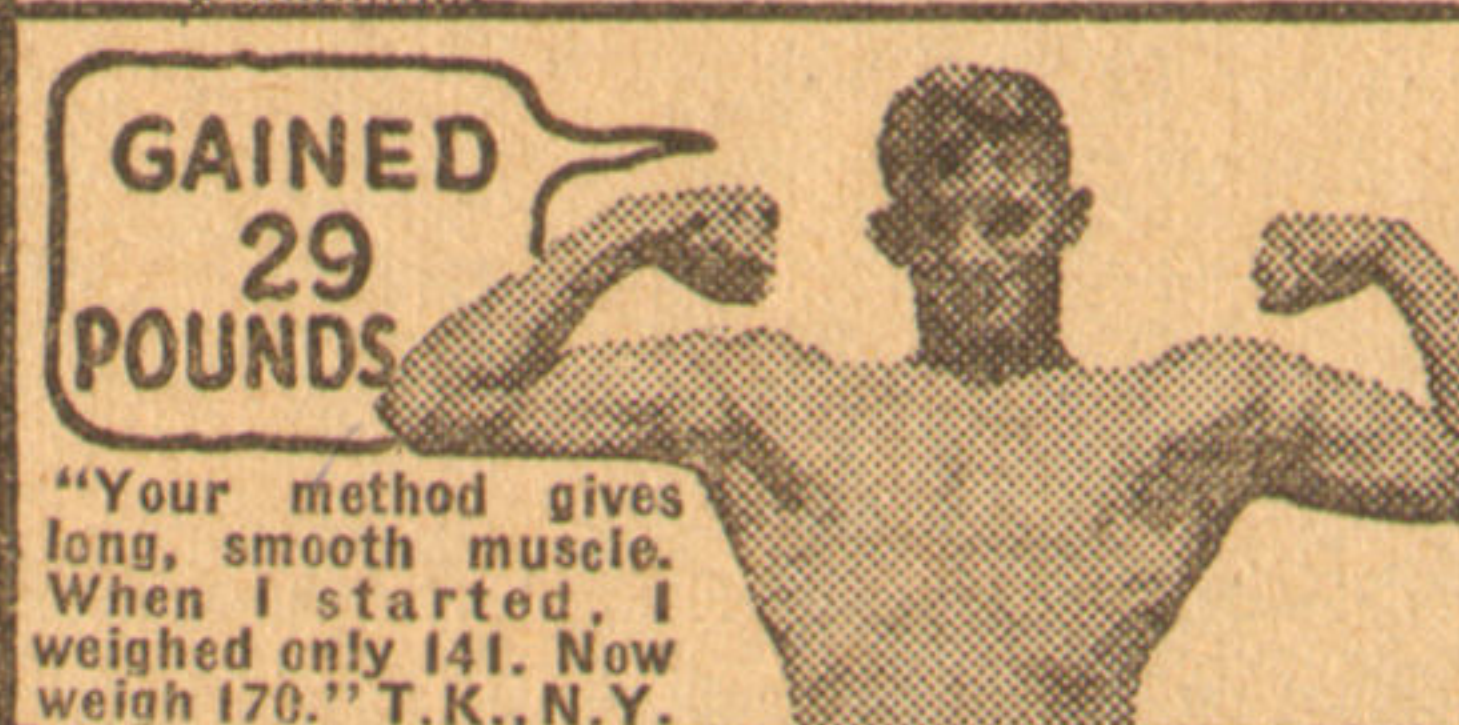
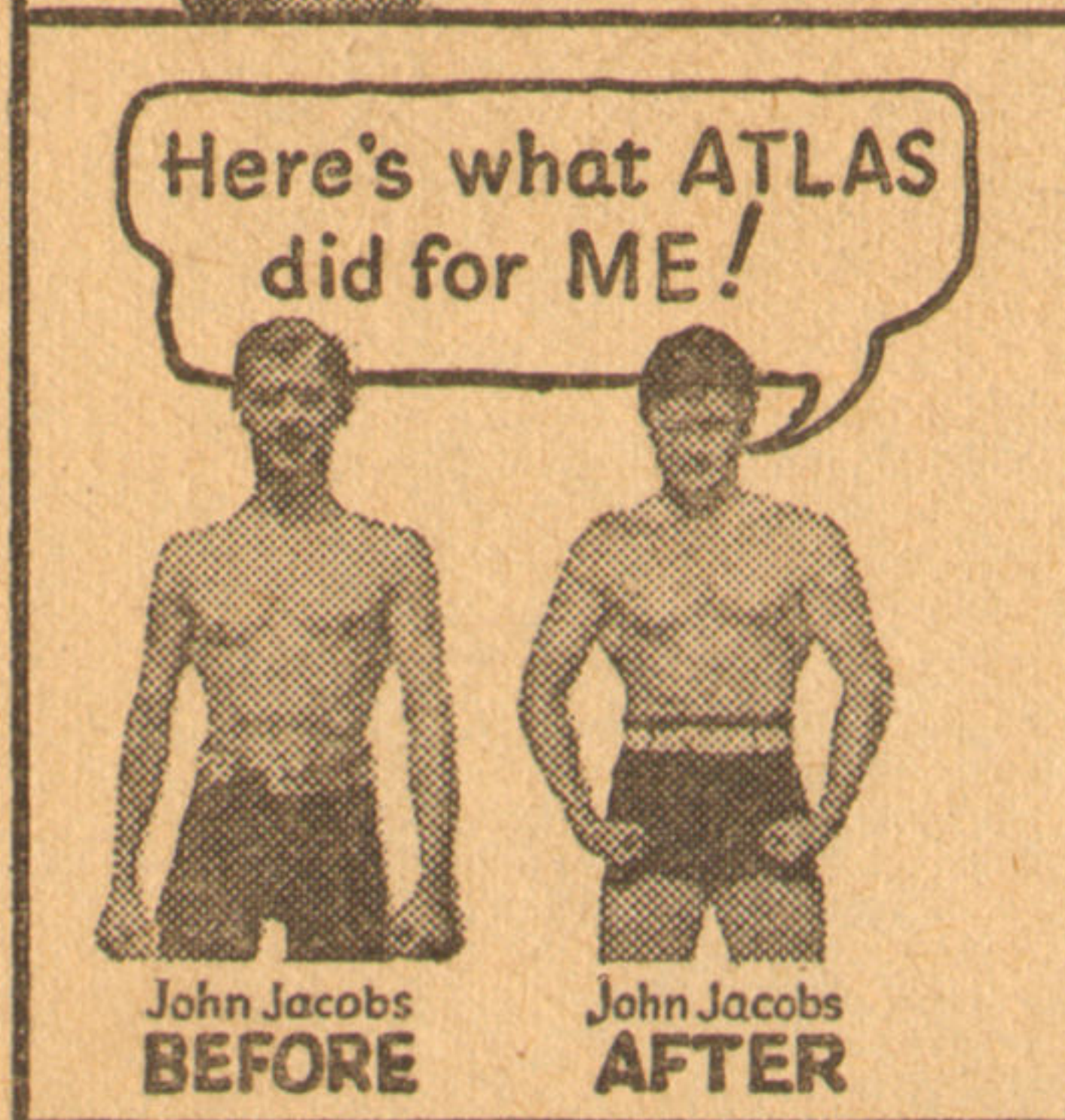
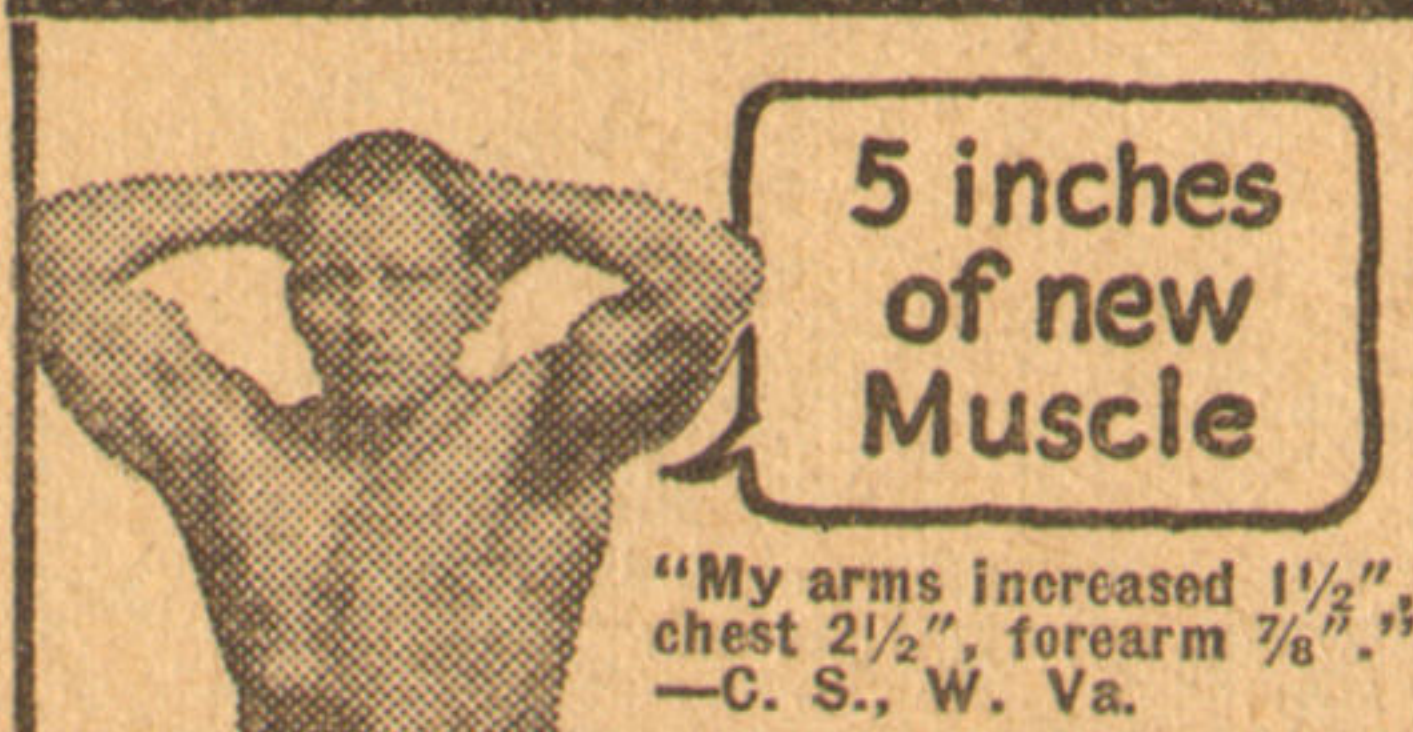
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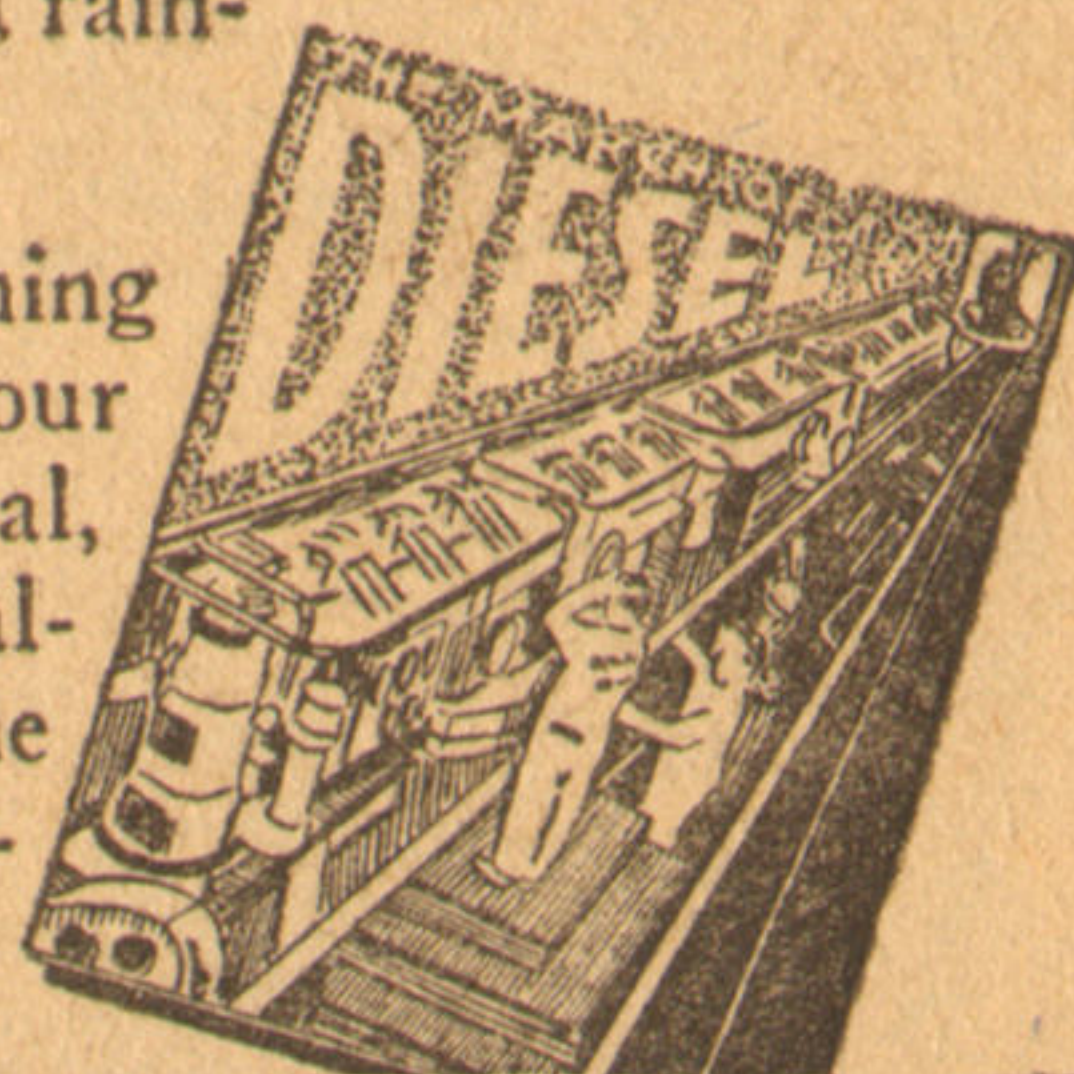
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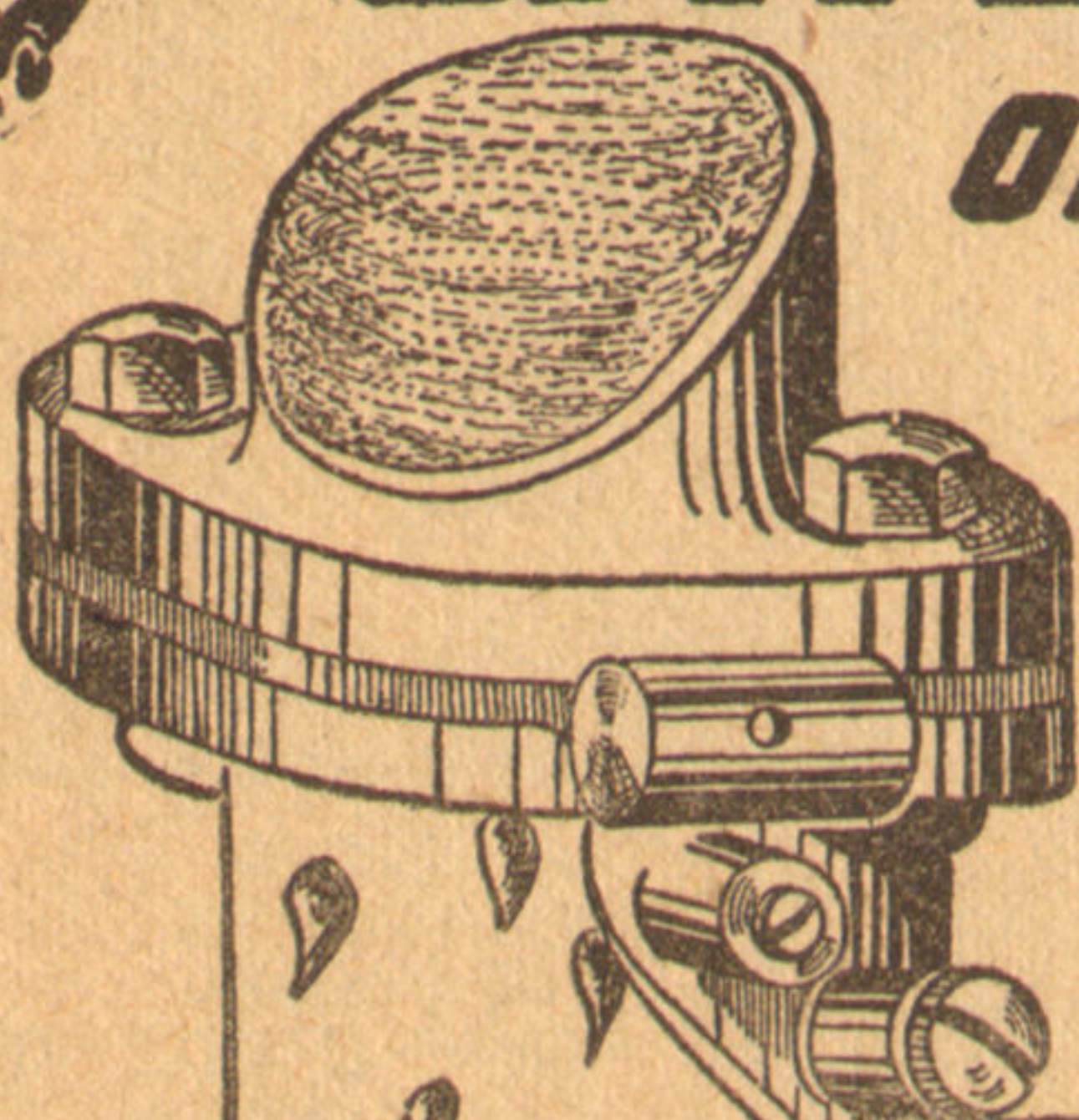
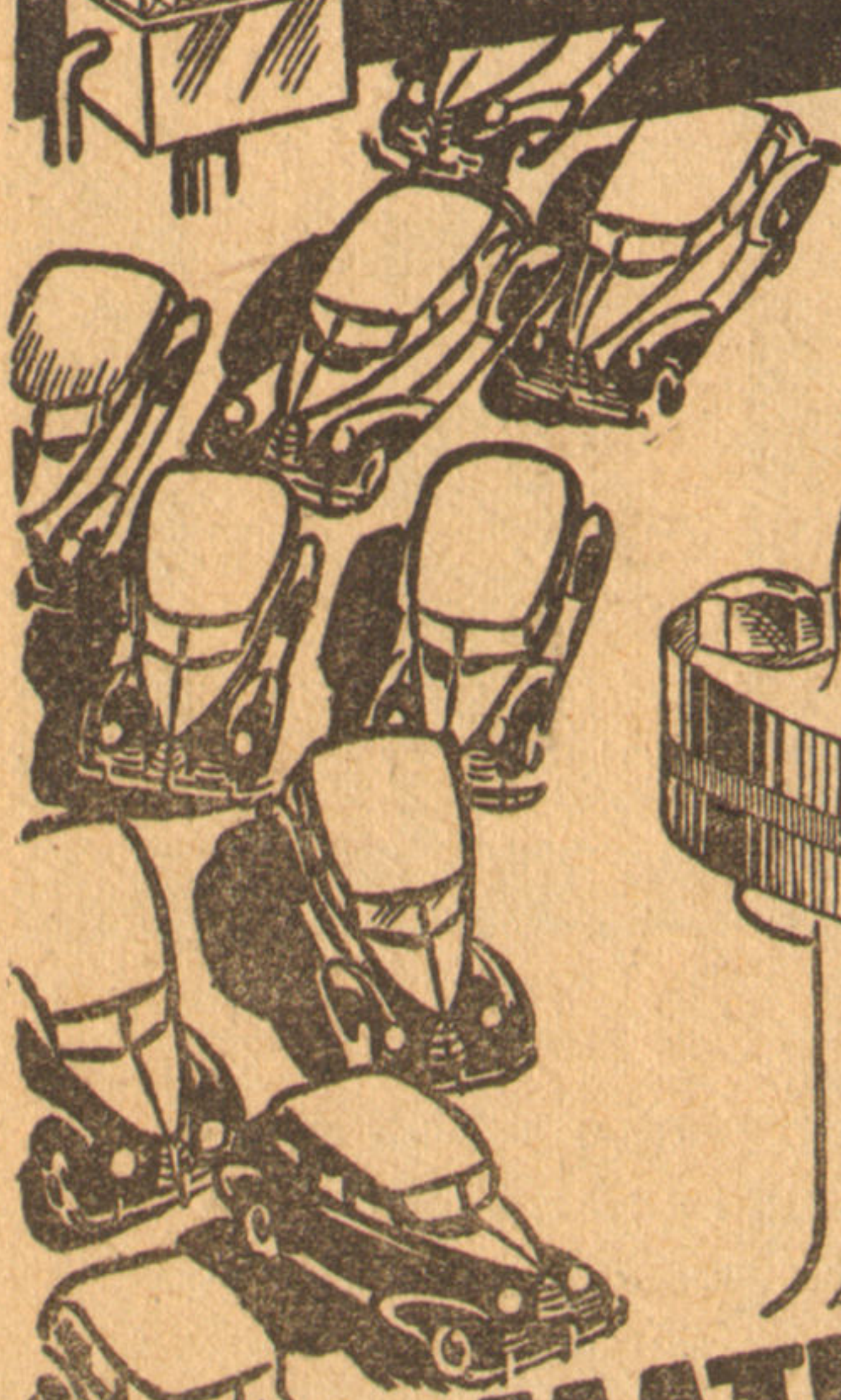
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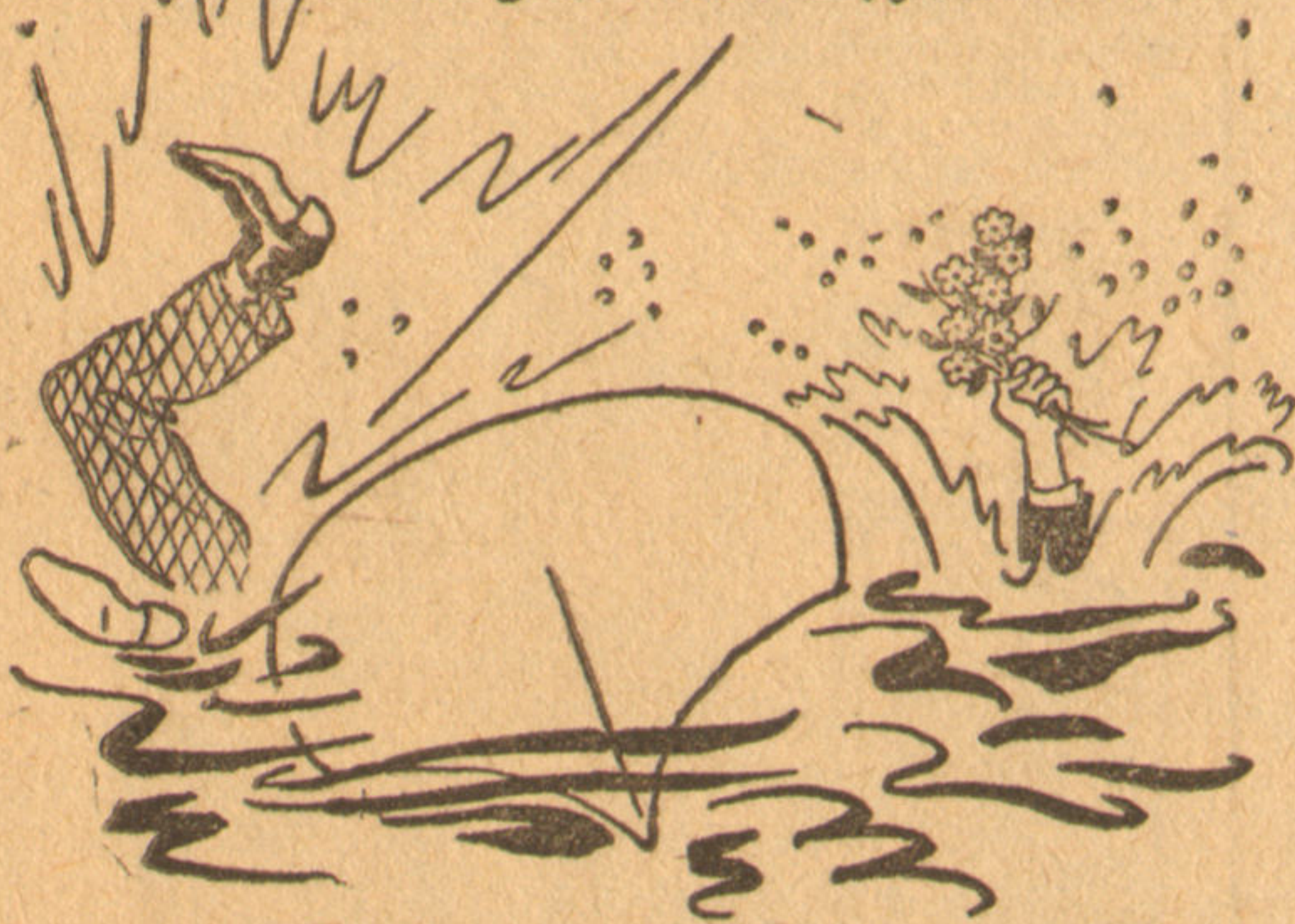
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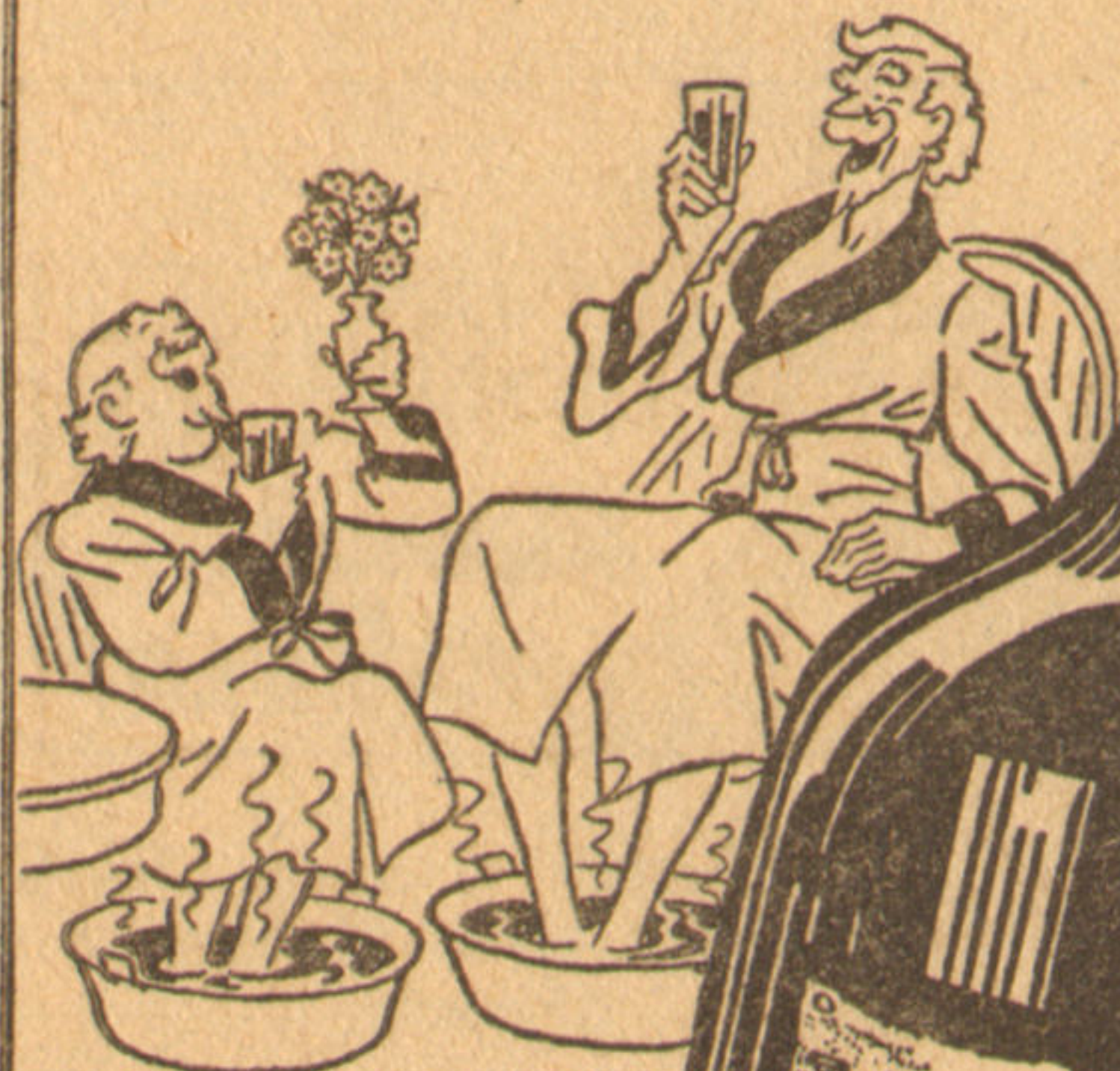
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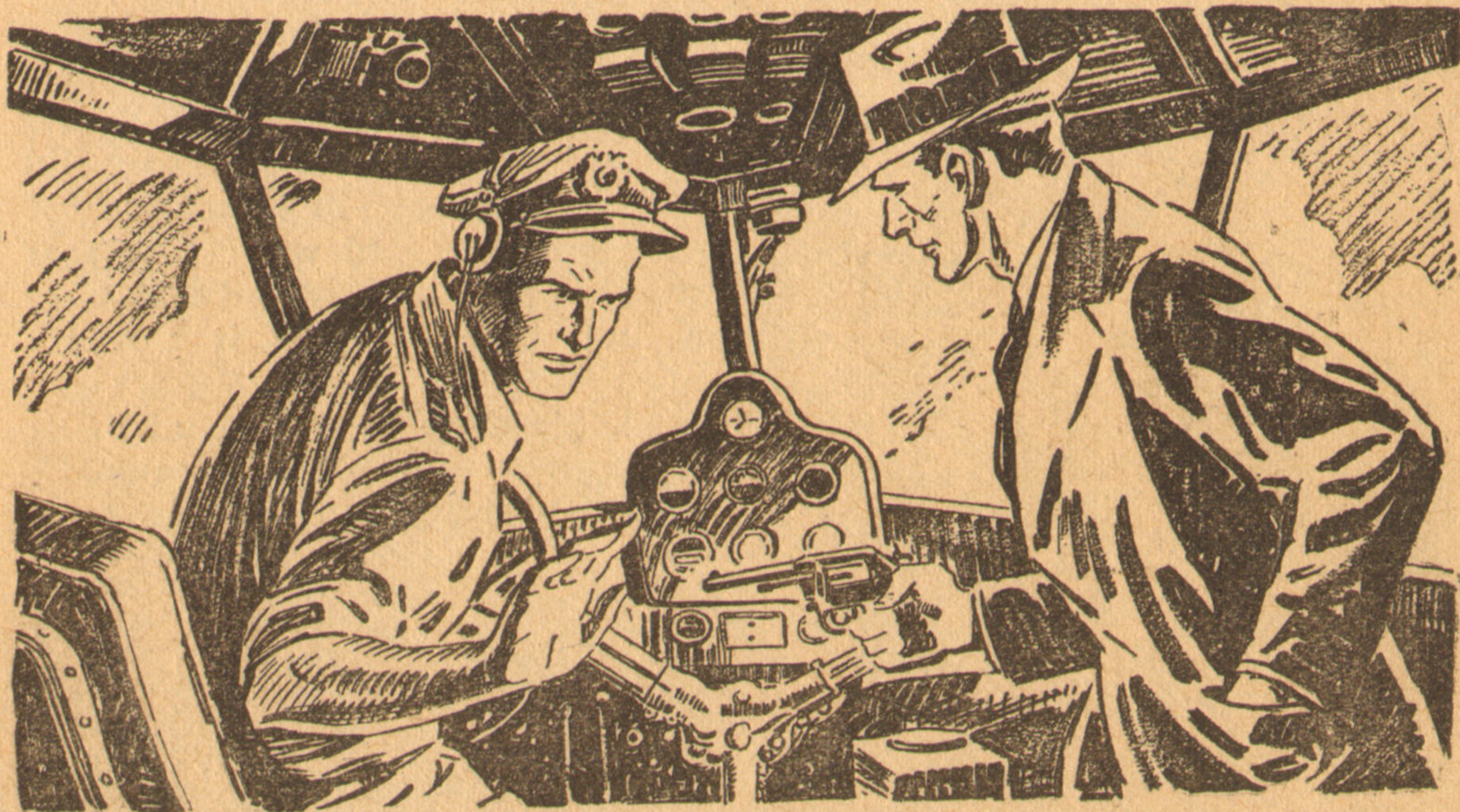
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Steve Colfax, Free Lance Flier, is Suddenly Plunged into
a Grim Maelstrom of Danger!



"That's better," snapped Wolfinger as Colfax brought the amphibian
back on the original course

Stolen Cargo

By L. P. HOLMES

Author of "Rubber Comes High," "Guns Across the Border," etc.

CHAPTER I

The Roughneck

THE night was a brisk one for a Florida beach, and Steve Colfax was glad he had worn his topcoat. He had supped well at Franchi's, with the rather boyish satisfaction of knowing that his tuxedo was worn just as impeccably as that of any other man in the place. It

pleased Colfax to put on a little front once in a while, just as mild proof that a roughneck could still be a gentleman. And there was an added kick in knowing that the generous width of his shoulders was honest muscle, not tailor's padding.

He thrust his hands deep in the pockets of his coat as he swung along the promenade of Curlew Beach, mentally tabulating the fact that Franchi's

A COMPLETE ACTION NOVEL

A Simple Airplane Elopement Develops

perfectos were worth every cent of the quarter they cost. Nothing like spotless apparel, a good meal and a fragrant cigar to fill a man with a sense of the well being of life, even if he was a self-styled roughneck.

There were a few other strollers out besides himself, but they were thinning fast. The dance floors and

The beach road began to curve here, and he soon found himself alone. Which was satisfactory as he liked isolation. It gave him a chance to expand, to push out his elbows, to fill his lungs and think of distant horizons.

The lights of a car swung into view, approaching from the north. At its heels came a second. They slid along like twin pairs of gleaming eyes, strung on a greased wire. The rear car picked up speed, flashed even with the first, then crowded it abruptly against the curb. Dark figures appeared, blending in a haze of swift movement. A woman's voice sounded, frightened—indignant.



bright lights of various hotels and resorts were calling.

Over on the east the white riders of the Atlantic came rushing in, to pound themselves to foaming fragments on the dripping sands. Far out, Colfax could see the lights of a steamer, beating south.

As Saunders swung his rifle Colfax's

Fighting Comes Natural to this Roughneck

into a Deadly Game of Financial Intrigue!

Colfax did not hesitate. He was that way. A roughneck with certain old-fashioned ideas about women. In ten quick, running steps he became one of the rapidly shuffling figures.

A snarling curse met him and he ducked just in time to get under a whistling fist. His own aim was better, and his knuckles bit savagely into a pallid face. The face disappeared with startling swiftness. But another took its place, and Colfax swung and hooked with a sort of ferocious determination. Returning blows bounced off his own features and he knew the taste of his own blood. Which did not exactly daunt him. He had tasted it before.

There was a lot of dynamite in

Steve Colfax's hundred and seventy pounds. He turned it all loose in that sudden, wild orgy of battle. Twice he was battered to his knees, but each time he struggled up to give as good as he received.

The wail of a siren cut the air. Something of numbing heaviness smacked Colfax across the back of the head. He subsided in a dazed stupor on the running-board of one of the two machines. A motor rumbled, gears clashed, and the other car jerked into



leap was that of a beast of prey

movement, speeding away up the drive.

A motorcycle came snarling up. Colfax dimly heard the interplay of excited voices. Then the motorcycle

Who Faces Heavy Odds with a Grin!

went yapping off. Colfax held his head in his hands, trying hard to get a distant arc light centralized and focused in the midst of an irritating pyrotechnic display of flashes of red, green, and violent yellow.

HANDS settled upon his shoulders, soft, firm hands. An equally soft and melodious voice urged him to move. He did so, obeying with a docile, stumbling clumsiness.

The deep, restful cushions of a car seat enveloped him.

Something hard clicked against his teeth, and the tang of good whiskey drifted under his instantly appreciative nostrils.

"Drink!" commanded the voice.

Colfax obeyed, and immediately felt better.

The green and red flares subsided. In their place shone the faint yellow luminosity of a dashlight.

"Someone," declared Colfax ponderously, "someone hit me."

"Someone did," agreed the voice. "I might add that you did a little hitting, yourself. Relax now while I drive around a bit. The night air will soon clear your head."

The car glided forward in luxurious smoothness. They turned a corner and picked up speed. The crisp air whistled about his face and things became vastly better. He was completely oriented at last. He glanced at his companion. The dashlight etched her features faintly. He got the impression of a round, but determined chin, a soft red mouth and a slightly tip-tilted nose. Her eyes were shadowy.

"What was it all about?" he asked.

"Your guess is as good as mine," she shrugged. "Robbery, I suppose—or worse. Anyway, thanks to you, it was quite a flop. Of course, I'm ever so much obliged. Where did you learn to fight that way?"

"I'm a roughneck," he said frankly. "Fighting comes natural to me. Where are you taking me?"

"Home. You're rather gory, you know. You can clean up a bit, and then I'll drive you to your hotel."

Colfax did not argue. His battered head had begun to throb miserably. It certainly was a flossy roadster he was riding in.

Money here—and class.

The road fled backward, a white, winding ribbon. They plunged through a black tunnel of trees, spun sharply to the right, and ran up a slightly sloping driveway.

Abruptly the lights of a house burst upon them.

The roadster slid to a halt. The girl jumped out and ran up some low, stone steps. A moment later she returned with an ebony, shiny-eyed servant. "George," she ordered, "take this gentleman upstairs and give him access to hot water. He's a friend of mine."

George did as he was told, ushering Colfax over carpets deep and soft and rich.

Then there was the ivory and silver of a dazzling bathroom.

"Here yo' are, suh," said George. "Make yo'se'f at home, suh. Kin Ah he'p yo', suh?"

Colfax grinned painfully. "A good tall whiskey would do me a lot of good, George."

George's eyes shone and rolled and his white teeth gleamed in a stupendous grin. "Yassuh, right away, suh."

Colfax now took stock in a huge mirror. He did look a trifle disreputable, even for a roughneck. His lips were puffed and his chin a smear of dried blood. There was a decided mouse under his left eye. By turning sideward and batting his eyes, he could make out a very discernible bump on the back of his head.

"Must have tagged me with a blackjack," he muttered, as water gushed into a spotless basin.

BY THE time George returned, Colfax had removed all signs of conflict that were removable. His lips were still puffed, however, and the

left eye was darkening steadily. The bump on his head throbbed.

"Dat musta been quite a ruckus, suh," observed George. "Missy Elsa say yo'all fit like a whole swarm o' wild cats, suh."

Colfax drained the glass the servant had brought, then grinned wryly. "Things did sort of happen for a moment or two. Thanks, I'm feeling a lot better now."

George led the way downstairs. The girl was waiting in the hall. For the first time Colfax got a good look at her.

He found that her eyes were a deep, smoky blue, her hair a crown of sheenful auburn. She was slim and rounded and graceful. She smiled cheerfully.

"That's going to be a beautiful black eye," she said critically. "And your poor lips—"

With an impulsive, unaffected gesture, she laid her fingertips on them.

Colfax grinned down at her. "They're cured now, thanks. But I've been enough of a bother to you. You were heading to some engagement, I suppose, when that fuss happened. You had better hurry along or you'll be late."

She nodded and reached for her coat, a lustrous, furry thing of which Colfax could only guess at the value. He held it for her and found that the top of her shining head reached just to his chin.

There was a delicate perfume about her, subtle, refined.

Once more in the roadster, she drove slowly.

"You also were going somewhere, perhaps?" she asked. "I'll drop you there if you wish."

He shook his head. "I was just out for a little exercise after dinner. I'm staying at The Palms. But you needn't go out of your way. Just drop me off anywhere and I'll hoof it home."

"No. I'll take you to your hotel. Really, you're acting unusual. Or

don't you go much for this hero stuff?"

"That's laying it on," chuckled Colfax. "I'm a poor hero. I'm just a roughneck."

She flashed him a veiled glance as she tooled the car expertly along.

"I fail to see the barnacles," was her crisp retort. "You keep the rough edges pretty well covered up."

He subsided. It was amazingly pleasant to glide thus through the night, under the guidance of so charming a chauffeur. After all, being a roughneck was a lonesome job at times. He liked this girl—a lot. She was obviously of a wealthy family and she possessed a refinement and yet a total lack of pretense that was agreeably genuine.

"Still at a loss to explain that mix-up?" he asked presently.

She shrugged. "I might have ideas. But they don't matter."

THE roadster glided to a halt. Colfax looked around to see the modest outlines of his rather obscure hotel. As he started to get out, she laid a hand on his arm. Her voice was soft.

"Seriously, I'm obliged—a lot. You've been—well, rather splendid. I've a totally new conception of roughnecks. I'll have to cultivate their acquaintance more."

He smiled. "That ought to be easy. You can practice on me. I've got to hop down to Havana tomorrow. But I'll be back the next day. How about day after tomorrow evening? Will you be home?"

"I shouldn't wonder." The swift radiance of her smile made him a trifle dizzy. For a moment her hand lay in his, slim, soft, and warm. "Until then—bye."

And it wasn't until she had gone that Steve realized he had not only forgotten to find out her name, but also he had not given his own.

"That was smart," he murmured ruefully. "She must think a lot of my manners."

CHAPTER II

Duped!

EARLY the following morning Colfax stood on the landing stage beside which his big Sikorsky amphibian plane was moored. His evening apparel of the night before was

replaced with khaki and puttees. These were his working clothes. He glanced at his wristwatch. Five-twenty. His fares were due to arrive any moment.

A taxi came whirling down the coral-white roadway above the beach, pulling to a halt opposite the landing stage. A slender, dapper, rather swarthy man jumped out and, drawing his light topcoat about him, hurried down to the landing stage.

"Good morning, Colfax," he greeted crisply. "Right on time, I see. Well, we got away all right so far. Linda's father was just turning in when we slipped away. The party lasted rather late, as I expected." He smiled, showing even, white teeth. "Oh, yes," he added; "at the last moment, Linda insisted on bringing her maid along. No objections, I hope."

"None at all, Mr. Wolfinger," Colfax said. "One passenger more or less cuts no ice. Plenty of room. Hope you've brought along some robes, though. We'll be flying high enough to get the chill this early in the day."

"I've got robes," nodded Wolfinger, "but, by Jove, there's something I did forget. We haven't had any breakfast. Wonder if you could get us a few sandwiches and a jug of coffee at that stand up the beach? Here's five dollars. We'll get aboard while you're gone."

Colfax took the money and hurried off. When he returned, the taxi had left and the passengers were in the plane, the two women muffled to the eyes in robes, Wolfinger smoking a

cigarette. The man was undeniably nervous.

Colfax grinned. Wolfinger had a right to be. Any one with nerve enough to elope with the daughter of J. Hampstead Freeman, could not be blamed for being a little on edge about it.

The pilot cast off the mooring lines and stepped aboard. The big amphibian rose and fell to the rhythmic cushioning of the ground swell. Colfax eased in before the instruments. The starters growled, the props ticked over, and then both of the big motors rumbled into life. He warmed them carefully, his ear cocked to their song of power.

Presently he nodded, swung the plane about and taxied toward the open sea. Momentarily the surge of the water still swayed the ship. Then the ship was free and climbing. Colfax glanced at Wolfinger, who grinned, nodded and shook his clasped hands. At least, the elopement was off to an auspicious start.

At eight thousand feet, Colfax leveled off and set his course. He had tooled his ship to Havana several times before that season, carrying parties of wealthy folk for whom the gambling parlors and race tracks of Havana held a lure. Colfax bothered little about the private business of any of his fares. He was a taxi driver of the air and as such, earned his money and minded his own business, even though he had often thought that if many of these various pleasure seekers had less money and more brains they would be infinitely better off.

Far down across the everglade wastes to the west, the gleaming expanse of Lake Okeechobee lay liquid silver in the dawning of the new day. To the east the Atlantic ran away to leaden-hued infinity, while almost directly underneath, long stretches of coral reefs and keys were furred with snowy breaker foam.

Wolfinger brought him a cup of coffee and, when Colfax had downed

it, pointed to the air speed indicator.

"Can you get a few more miles out of the ship?" he asked. "The quicker Linda and I get to Havana, the less chance old man Freeman will have of gumming the works. That old devil wields a lot of power, one way and another, and the Lord only knows what strings he may try and pull."

Colfax nodded and inched the throttles ahead.

"You should be there and married before he even realizes you're gone. I don't see how he can stop you now," he said above the increasing drone of the motors.

Wolfinger smiled tightly. "Maybe not, but I'm taking nothing for granted. If you knew Freeman as well as I know him, you'd figure that anything might happen."

Wolfinger went back to the women. Staring ahead, Colfax's brow was wrinkled, his eyes puckered. A slight distaste for this thing came over him. Maybe old man Freeman was right in this thing. Maybe he knew something about Wolfinger that made the latter very undesirable as a son-in-law.

Colfax was old-fashioned enough to feel that the institution of marriage was a pretty sacred affair. But he also knew that a lot of social butterflies did not regard it as such. According to the papers a lot of hasty marriages among them were followed by equally hasty divorces. He had been hauling these same society folk hither and yon in his plane for the past several seasons and he had never been able to understand them.

However, his plane and himself were for hire. And money seemed no object to these rich idiots who played the seasons away along the various resort beaches. Therefore, when Wolfinger had approached him with an offer of five thousand dollars to transport himself and his run-away bride to Havana, Colfax was but little surprised.

True, the fare was top-heavy, but



The 'chute bloomed above them

Colfax felt he could not afford to pass it up. After all, young folks had been eloping from the beginning of time. It was none of his business if they were running away from an irate parent. Wolfinger had even presented Linda Freeman to him, a svelte, petite blonde who was obviously of age and seemed to know her own mind. And so, it had all seemed regular enough at first.

But now Colfax felt there was something a little off-color about it. He knew that he could not be held to any accounting by old man Freeman. He was just a licensed pilot earning a fare. But—oh, well. . . .

Colfax looked down and saw that they were over the Santaren Channel. A couple of steamers on the Havana-New York sailing lane were visible, tiny and toylike, the fan of their progress spreading prettily behind them. Glancing at the compass, he began banking to the southwest, where the bulk of Cuba lay long and dark against the sea.

And then he stiffened, and a ripple of startled amazement rolled over him. A round, hard, cold object was jammed against the back of his neck. Wolfinger's voice came, sardonic and mocking.

"It's really a gun, and I'll use it in a hurry if I have to, Colfax. We're not going exactly to Havana."

The roughneck twisted his head slightly and looked up into Wolfinger's sneering features.

"I don't get this," he said quietly. "And I don't like it. I hope you realize what you're doing."

Wolfinger laughed, his lips drawn back. "What I do is no concern of yours. But what you do will be mighty important to you. Do as you're told and you'll come out of this in good shape. If you don't—"

COLFAX maneuvered the controls, and the big amphibian began to swing in a wide circle.

"We're going right back where we

started from," he said coolly. "All along something told me this was off-color, but that five thousand dollar fare blinded me, I guess. My eyes are open now."

The gun muzzle dug deeper against his neck.

"You haven't got long," purred Wolfinger. "Put this crate back on the original course. Make no mistake, Colfax. I mean business. I've flown a few land jobs myself and I'll take the chance that I can fly this, if I have to. You've got ten seconds to do as you're told. Otherwise, I finish you here and now and take over the controls myself."

Colfax flashed a glance at the altimeter. Between nine and ten thousand feet. No question, Wolfinger held the whip hand. He would have plenty of time to bump his pilot off, drag him clear, and take over the ship. And something in the fellow's tone told Colfax that he would try exactly what he said. There was absolute ruthlessness and conviction in the man's words and attitude.

Colfax saw quickly that getting killed at this stage of the game would be idiotic. Later, perhaps—the set-up might be a little more favorable. He brought the amphibian back on the original course.

"That's better," snapped Wolfinger. "You realize that I'm not bluffing. Do you know where the Dog Rocks are?"

Colfax nodded silently.

"Good. So do I. Head for them."

Colfax unrolled a tiny map, made a few mental calculations, then changed the course a trifle.

"I hope," he said grimly, "the time comes when I can get a clear swing at you, Wolfinger. So help me, you'll wish you'd never tried this on me. What kind of crookedness are you up to?"

Wolfinger cursed. "Shut up! You'll talk yourself into a quick grave if you aren't careful. Gun a few more revs out of those motors."

At near maximum speed the am-

phibian thundered along, boring almost due south. Dog Rocks rose out of the sea ahead, rugged, foam-washed. Beyond showed the bulk of Damas Keys. Between them lay a small, angle-shaped key, plastered green with tropical foliage.

"That's our destination," rasped Wolfinger, pointing with his free hand. "Down we go. Land in that little bay in the angle. And, remember—no tricks!"

Colfax put the nose over and throttled down. Elevation fell away, and soon the Sikorsky was whistling along, scarcely two hundred feet above the water. For a moment Colfax considered the idea of calling Wolfinger's hand again, and turning back. Wolfinger would not dare to shoot now, for the ship would certainly crash if he did. He would not have time to get at the controls and avert it.

But Colfax put the thought aside. If the ship did go into the water there were two women who would have to pay, and the idea of them being caught like rats in a trap was not appealing. Also, the big ship represented a small fortune in itself. Every cent Colfax had in the world was tied up in it. On top of that, he wasn't an old man himself—and life was sweet.

OBVIOUSLY, he had let himself in for something. This thing was crooked somewhere. But the damage was done now. He saw that the sensible thing to do was to play the string out and watch who he hired out to in the future. So he crossed the key to the lee side, banked into the wind and dipped down to the water. For a moment his eyes were busy with the landing, but as soon as the ship was safely bobbing on the sea, he looked around.

The island seemed completely bulwarked with sharp, sea-worn rocks, while beyond this protecting barrier, low, dense vegetation gleamed in the sun. Wolfinger pointed to where the spine of rocks curved inward.

"Taxi up," he ordered curtly.

Colfax edged the plane toward the point indicated and, as they came abreast of it, he saw that it was an inlet, ending in a tiny bay, hardly more than a hundred yards across. A rickety jetty stuck out into the bay, and tied beside it was a long, powerful sea-going launch. Beyond, jutting from the trees, was the corner of a palm-thatched hut, with a wireless aerial reaching above it.

Two men were visible on the deck of the launch and, as the plane surged slowly in, motors drumming as Colfax jazzed and cut them, three others appeared. Under Wolfinger's directions, the tricked pilot laid the Sikorsky beside the launch and cut the ignition. Then he turned, to find Wolfinger waiting, gun trained steadily at him.

"Just hold it," ordered Wolfinger. "You'll be taken care of in a minute or so."

Colfax said nothing, lighting a cigarette. Two of the men pushed a dinghy from the launch and put mooring lines on the plane. Then they sculled the little boat to the cabin door, which Wolfinger opened.

"Okay, boys," he greeted. "We got her." He turned to the petite blonde whom he had introduced to Colfax on their first meeting as Linda Freeman. "Out you go, kid."

The blonde gave Colfax an amused glance as she passed him and climbed down into the dinghy. Wolfinger called one of the men in, a huge, black Haitian Negro. He nodded toward the other woman, the one he had represented as the blonde's maid. She still sat erect and stiff, still swathed to the eyes in robes.

As the Negro stepped over to her and loosened the rugs, Colfax saw something that made his eyes start and sent the surging crimson of fury through his veins. That slim figure was tightly bound and gagged with a strip of adhesive tape across her mouth. As the amazed pilot looked, he

met a pair of terrified eyes, eyes of an intense, smoky blue. A knitted toque fell aside to disclose a crown of shining auburn hair.

Something clicked in Colfax's brain. Recognition battered for utterance. He had seen such eyes and hair somewhere before. Last night! Great God! That was it—this was the girl of last night!

FOR a moment he was too dazed and stunned to move. The Negro lifted the slim figure in his gorilla arms. He passed close to Colfax with his burden, and those blue eyes sought those of the self-styled roughneck again, full of a tragic plea. He didn't know what it was all about, but he knew that he had to rescue this girl again.

A wild, red haze flooded his brain. He took a long, deliberate drag on his cigarette, then flipped it straight into Wolfinger's face. And with the same move he launched himself forward in a low, hard dive.

Wolfinger's gun roared, and glass tinkled as the slug tore through a cabin window and plowed into the water. Colfax knew a savage joy as his hunched shoulders slugged against Wolfinger's knees, cutting the fellow's feet cleanly from under him and bringing him down with a crash.

Almost as Wolfinger hit the floor of the cabin, Colfax was scrambling over him to get the gun. Wolfinger lunged up, snarling like a wild cat. Colfax smashed him in the face with a short hook, and Wolfinger went limp. The victor knew a surge of satisfaction as his hand closed on the gun. He would cut the odds down now.

He heard a muttered, feral sort of noise, and turned to see the big Negro clambering back into the cabin. He twisted, flipping up the gun. As he did so, he saw the Negro make a throwing motion toward him. There was a flicker of naked steel in the air, and it seemed that a red-hot iron had been drawn across his gun hand. Instinc-

tively he flinched and his shot went wild. Before he could shoot again, the Negro was upon him in a headlong leap that had the impact of a battering ram.

The big black was muscled like a tiger, and his steely grip twisted the gun free. Twice he slammed it at Colfax's head. The second blow landed, and it seemed to the white as if he had been tossed into the heart of a great, roaring, yellow flame, where he hovered for a moment before dropping far down into darkness and silence.

CHAPTER III

Death Sentence



A SORT of accumulated punishment of scorching thirst and fiendishly throbbing head brought Steve Colfax back to consciousness. It required distinct ef-

fort to open his aching and blood shot eyes.

He stared up at a thatched roof. Walking along it, upside down, was a big, blue lizard. Colfax watched the reptile suddenly while he tried to collect his thoughts. Where the dickens was he, anyway? He tried to lift a hand to his head and found that his hands and arms would not function. He realized then that he was bound hand and foot. And, of a sudden, he remembered everything.

He closed his eyes again as his mind went over the startling events of the past sixteen or eighteen hours. Methodically he laid the events in a line and in their proper sequence.

First, Wolfinger had approached him with the story of the intended elopement and his proposition of hiring the services of the free-lance pilot and his plane. Then there was that ruckus along the promenade at Curlew Beach; that had brought about his meeting with the girl of the smoky blue eyes. And he knew now that this

whole thing was a kidnaping. It was quite plain in view of subsequent events.

Unconsciously he had frustrated the first attempt. And just as ignorantly he had aided in the final success of the thing. He groaned slightly. What an ass a man could be when his eyes were blinded by money!

Sure it was a kidnaping. That blonde whom Wolfinger had introduced as Linda Freeman was no more the genuine article than Colfax was a Chinaman. She was part of the front—part of the scheme. And how easily he had fallen for the “maid” story. He had even fallen for the dodge of going for coffee and sandwiches so Wolfinger and the taxi-driver could carry the pseudo maid into the ship where, bound and gagged and shrouded with robes, she had been unable to warn Colfax of what was going on. Oh, yes, indeed—Mister Steve Colfax had been a sucker of the first fish.

It was characteristic of Colfax, however, that he did not call the game finished here. The string wasn't played out yet. He began to work methodically at his bonds. It seemed a hopeless struggle. For a long time he made no progress whatever. Those tightly drawn ropes resisted every effort and his right hand, where the Negro's thrown knife had struck, smarted and ached.

From time to time he relaxed, then renewed his efforts. Gradually, it seemed, he gained a little. Realization of this spurred him to more furious efforts. He rolled from side to side on the earthen floor, panting and straining. Sweat gathered on his face and streamed into his eyes. And the blue lizard on the thatch ceiling watched him in wonderment.

He rested again, his wrists on fire. The exertion had set his heart to pounding and his damaged head suffered in proportion. Once or twice he gave way to a volley of cursing. But the knots held. He relaxed helplessly. And then he noticed that the stricture

of his wrists seemed slightly lessened. He tried once more, but left his muscles flat and soft, instead of swelling them in effort. And now he found that in this manner he could slide his right hand an inch or two up and down.

Abruptly he quieted. Voices sounded outside the hut, along with the muffled thump of approaching footsteps. He lay back with closed eyes. He began moaning slightly, as though just recovering consciousness.

SOMEONE fumbled at the door, then swung it back. Wolfinger came in, followed by the big Negro and another white man, a burly, heavy-shouldered, hard-faced individual, who had the breath of the sea breezing out all over him. Wolfinger carried his automatic and held it ready for use.

Colfax moaned again and rolled his head slightly.

“Water,” he muttered. “Water.”

Wolfinger laughed harshly. “He seems to be coming back. I thought for a while, Jase, you'd swung a little too hard with that clout you gave him. Let him have that water.”

The Negro padded out, to soon return with an earthen jug. He lifted the prisoner's head with one hand and held the jug to his lips with the other. Colfax drank with real appreciation. Thirst had been torturing him.

Then he cunningly simulated returning consciousness. He opened his eyes in a vague, puzzled manner. He saw Wolfinger bending over him.

“Know what happened and where you are?” demanded Wolfinger.

Colfax stared, let his eyes clear slightly, then nodded. “It's coming back to me—now,” he muttered.

“You're lucky. An ounce more on that wallop by Jase, and you'd have been through for good. You've been out several hours, Colfax. And after I warned you, too!”

“How long were you out?” blurted Colfax.

“Long enough to take a good count,”

admitted Wolfinger, red lights flickering in his dark eyes. "I owe you one for that, and I generally pay my debts—especially that kind."

"What are you going to do with me?" Colfax demanded bluntly, indifferent to the implied threat.

"We've been talking that over, Captain Stover and I. We can't seem to agree. Can you suggest anything?"

"Nothing, except that you'd better go slow. It happens that I've a few friends back in the States. If I don't show up, there will be inquiries."

Wolfinger laughed sardonically. "There have been so many fliers who start out over water and don't come back these days your disappearance won't call for a great deal of excitement. Missing airmen have become a drug on the market, pal. Think of something else."

The man designated as Captain Stover had been looking the prisoner over carefully.

"My first suggestion is the best one, Wolfinger," he bit out with sudden harshness. "The quicker the sharks get hold of this fellow, the better for all concerned. Now that we can't get word through Nassau, we don't know what might happen. And he's too dangerous to keep hanging around. You don't dare let him go, knowing what he does, and we can't afford to have him on our hands too long."

Despite himself a shiver went up and down Colfax's spine. Sharks! There were plenty of the brutes in these southern waters. Wolfinger seemed to sense his thoughts, and he smiled, a cold, slightly gloating smile.

"I'm thinking of that strongly," he nodded.

Colfax met Wolfinger's eyes. "What are you going to do with that girl you packed off, Wolfinger?" he asked. "Kidnaping is a pretty stiff offense, you know. And, by the way, what is your real name? All crooks have aliases, I understand."

This got a rise out of Wolfinger. His eyes burned red again.

"You fool," he burst out. "If you had minded your own business and played sensible from the start of this thing, I'd have given you a break. But Stover is right. You know too much and you're one of those birds who shoot off their mouth if they get the chance. So the sharks will feed. Jase, as soon as it gets dark, take him out to the rocks and do the job. This is no time for squeamishness. Make it sure, Jase."

THE Negro's eyes rolled and his teeth flashed as he grinned acknowledgment of the order. They went out and barred the door. Colfax waited only until the sound of footsteps died away before he was working feverishly at his bonds. He had until dark, which, by the rapidly fading dusk, could not have been more than half an hour away. Sharks, was it? His face set in rugged lines. Did Wolfinger think he had a soft playboy or squeamish pacifist to contend with?

Back and forth he slid his right hand in the slight slack he had originally gained. Bit by bit he worked the rope down his right wrist until it brought up against his slashed knuckles. He could feel the warm stickiness of renewed bleeding coating his hands. But he only gritted his teeth as he dragged the open wound against the rope, twisting the hand from side to side.

The maneuver cost him plenty in pure, unadulterated pain, but the agony of desperation overrode that of the physical. The harsh, roughened hemp gouged deep, but did not deter him. A final, painful jerk and his hand slid free.

For a moment he lay quiet, resting and sucking at his raw, bleeding wrist and knuckles. Then he freed his ankles and struggled to his feet. While the circulation was returning, he examined his prison. The hut was not over ten feet square, built of logs driven upright into the earth, with cracks between them that admitted

light and air. He tried the door cautiously, but could not budge it. That thatched roof was his only hope.

There were cross braces on the door, and by pulling himself up on these, Colfax found he could reach the roof. He began tearing at the thatch. It was a fight against time, and time was short.

The material of the thatch smelled musty. Swarms of spiders and other queer looking bugs showed up as he dug deeper and deeper, tearing out handful after handful of the stuff. Abruptly his hand went through, into the open.

He worked feverishly. As the hole enlarged, he could see how dusky it was getting outside. He pulled himself up higher, forgetting his tortured and aching muscles and equally thundering head. The hole widened. He got his head through, then his shoulders. A last lift, and he was completely through.

For a moment he lay flat on the low slope of the roof, getting back his breath and strength. Below him he could see a trail winding out toward the open sea and that first hut beside the jetty.

Colfax slid to the earth and tried to plan a definite and sensible course of action. With only himself to consider, he might have made a break for the depths of the jungle and taken his chances on hiding out until an opportunity of escape offered. But there was the girl to think of, and somehow he felt a moral responsibility for her predicament and her safety. He'd see her through or go down fighting. He knew what his own end was to be if he were captured again, but that was a chance he had to take.

AS HE stood there, his problem literally jumped up and hit him in the face. He glimpsed a huge figure come swinging down the trail through the murk. It was Jase, the Negro, come to execute him.

Colfax slipped softly from sight

around the angle of the hut. Jase would be armed without doubt, either with knife or gun, while Colfax had nothing but his bare fists, plus the hot and surging anger that had been building up in him steadily since regaining consciousness.

At first Colfax considered letting the Negro enter the hut, then slamming the door and barring it. But he realized immediately that this would not do. Jase was sure to set up a roar that would arouse the entire island. There remained only the desperate expedient of getting the giant black brute, man to man, and silencing him. Colfax's only chance for the future lay in stealth and undiscovered freedom now.

He watched the Negro come on and halt at the door. Jase jerked loose the bars, swung back the door and ducked his head to enter. As he did so, Colfax saw the pale gleam of a naked dirk in the black's huge paw. Sight of that bared steel set queer, feral fires flaming in the erstwhile prisoner. Ruthlessness incarnate was in that black, prowling form. Colfax slid up to the side of the door and crouched there, drawing his feet well beneath him, tensing his arm and shoulder for a supreme effort.

There came a guttural exclamation of surprise and alarm, and the Negro lumbered out, bewildered and confused at the disappearance of the prisoner. Colfax marked the side of the black neck and swung, putting every ounce of power he had into the punch. He aimed for just below the ear and his fist *thocked* home to that exact spot.

The Negro's knees caved and, with a kind of instinctive, sideward twist, he went down, falling away from the blow. Colfax caught another gleam of that bared knife and he dived forward on top of the fellow, grabbing for the steel. But Jase pulled his arms beneath him as he fell, and Colfax's grab at the weapon failed.

He immediately switched his tac-

tics, aiming another punch at the bullet head. Before it could land, the black gave a long, gurgling sigh, shuddered, then collapsed, his body strangely shrunken, his muscles limp. Colfax knew that his first punch had been a wicked one; yet the Negro was so huge, so uncouthly powerful, it did not seem possible that any single blow could have put him out cold. But cold he was, so Colfax rolled him over. And then he understood. Jase had fallen on the naked knife and was stabbed to the heart!

CHAPTER IV

Desperate Tactics



COLFAX was a little stunned, but he wasted no time in regrets. This was a desperate game. That knife had been meant for him. Ruthlessness begets ruthlessness, and Colfax

made the most of this break of luck.

He knew he had to get rid of the Negro somehow, so he swung the limp figure over his shoulder and stalked off into the night. He knew also that when Jase failed to return, Wolfinger would become alarmed and start a search. The body had to be disposed of—and quickly.

With the pound of the surf to guide him, Colfax pushed through a strip of jungle and came out on a narrow expanse of spray-swept beach, beyond which the breakers tossed and heaved and roared against the protecting rock rim. Above a swirling, foam-creamed pocket in the rocks, Colfax stopped and lowered his limp burden. His eyes were hard and his lips a narrow grim line as he recovered the knife and wiped it clean on the Negro's singlet. Then, with a push, he consigned the body to the waves.

By this time he had pretty well located himself, so he cut back at an angle toward the little bay where the

launch and plane had been left. He soon came upon it and, from the shelter of the undergrowth, studied the layout. Both launch and plane were still there, rising and falling lazily to the swell that came in from the outer sea.

There were lights on the launch, and he could make out the dim figure of a man on deck. He saw no other signs of life. A slender sickle of a moon gleamed in the western sky, throwing a pale, eerie light that seemed to deepen rather than penetrate the shadows.

Obviously, the first consideration was to locate the girl. His mind was definitely made up on that score. The problem of ultimate and complete escape loomed as a staggering task, but he felt honor bound to do his best by her.

There were just two places she could be—either on the launch or in the hut that showed from the bay. He decided to have a look at the hut first. Keeping just within the shelter of the jungle, he made his way around the curve of the bay.

Presently Colfax spied the pale yellow radiance of a light, framed in a small window. Very stealthily he moved forward, every sense alert. The wall of the hut loomed up, throwing a deep shadow into which he crept.

He edged up to the window and caught the drone of voices. Listening intently, he identified those of Wolfinger and Stover. Presently he heard the blonde, whose presence in the scheme of things he had almost forgotten.

Straightening up, he found that he had a good view of the interior of the hut. Seated around a crude table were Wolfinger, Stover, and the blonde. A couple of half-used candles, stuck in the necks of bottles, gave the only light. The three were arguing fitfully, and something in their expression showed that a back-fire in their scheme had occurred.

Stover alone seemed stolid and un-

concerned. Wolfinger's dark eyes were gleaming hotly and his swarthy features pulled into a scowl. The blonde was plainly frightened, or at least very nervous, for her face was wan and pale in the guttering light. Stover was speaking in a growl.

"No use getting all upset. Byers will have something through to us pretty quick. We're safe enough here. Dog Rocks are off the main sailing lanes. They would never think of looking here for us. If they should, we can make a run for it in either the plane or launch. And," he added, a wicked leer gleaming in his deep-set, murky eyes, "we can always get rid of the evidence, if necessary. Eh, Maude?"

Colfax distinctly saw the blonde shiver, and the look she turned on Stover was one of loathing. As for Wolfinger, he shook his head sharply.

"Nothing like that, Stover. I renege when it comes to murder."

Stover laughed nastily. "Since when?" he sneered. "You just sent Jase to slit the throat of that aviator. You're getting damned virtuous all of a sudden. No use pulling that line on Maude Findlay and me."

"The flyer was a different proposition," Wolfinger said coldly. "He won't be missed particularly. But any time you talk of doing away with the main stockholder in a twenty-million-dollar corporation, you're crazy. Elsa Sparling is *somebody*, back in the States."

Colfax went cold all over. Elsa Sparling! He remembered how the Negro servant, George, had called her Missy Elsa. Elsa Sparling! He was astounded. This girl whom chance had thrown him in contact with twenty-four hours previous, and the one he had unwittingly helped to kidnap, was Elsa Sparling! The papers had been full of Elsa Sparling not so very long ago, when, on the death of her father, she had advanced to the control of the Sparling Oil Company.

Big money was behind this whole

thing. Wolfinger was a cold-blooded individual, but hardly a complete fool. He was gambling now, but for mighty stakes apparently. This information made him doubly dangerous and reckless.

"**D**AMN it," went on Wolfinger, "I wish I knew what had gone wrong. I wish I'd sent Byers down with the girl and stayed to supervise things there myself. I don't see what can be holding him up. The directors' meeting was to be held in New York at eleven today. Old man Ransome was ready to vote the girl's proxy on the right side. Byers was to be right with him all the time to make sure he didn't change his mind."

"Maybe they found out that the girl's proxy was a forgery," suggested the blonde.

"I've thought of that," nodded Wolfinger sourly. "But it is hardly possible. It was too well done."

"If that's the case, why worry?" yawned Stover. "We'll get word before long."

"But we're losing time," growled Wolfinger. "And we can't afford that. If everything had gone off without a hitch, we'd have the girl back on the mainland by this time. She'd have put up a roar, of course, but it wouldn't do her much good. There's been too many men gunning for the Sparling interests—men with money and legal backing. Old John Sparling used to lick 'em at every turn of the road, and they haven't forgotten."

"As for the press and public, they'd laugh off her story. A lot of celebrities have put up a kidnaping yarn to cover some little personal escapade. Yet, if we keep her here any length of time, the case becomes self-evident. We'll be in for trouble—lots of it."

"Oh, I don't know," grinned Stover. The man seemed hard as nails. "We're not so awful far from South America, and if we have to make a run for it, we can hole up there somewhere and thumb our nose at Uncle Sam."

Wolfinger looked at him pityingly. "Extradition has a long arm in this day and age. And don't you fool yourself. We're in this thing up to our necks, what with running off with Elsa Sparling and bumping off that fool aviator, and—by the way, Jase ought to be back by this time." He frowned. "Wonder what's keeping him. Better go and see, Stover."

From his position at the window, Colfax had been taking stock of the hut. There were evidently two rooms to the place, with the plotters in the front one. A barred door showed at the inner wall. And Colfax felt certain that behind that door was Elsa Sparling.

Stover, with a grunt of assent to Wolfinger's suggestion, got to his feet. But just at this moment there came the sound of running feet, off to the right. Colfax flattened in the shadows as one of the crew of the launch came panting up. The fellow went into the hut, a tall, stooped, cadaverous sort in singlet and dungarees.

Wolfinger looked up eagerly. "Any word, Saunders?"

Saunders shook his head. "Nothing, except that one of the boys picked up the drone of an airplane motor just now. It seems to be coming closer all the time."

Wolfinger lunged to his feet, his features desperate and hunted. Stover, phlegmatic as usual, seemed unaffected by the news. But the blonde turned pale as a ghost and began to whimper. Lacking her usual set smile, she looked old and worn.

"If that plane comes in here it means one of two things," snapped Wolfinger. "Either someone has squealed and a patrol is out after us, or Byers is sending in some message from Nassau that he couldn't get out over the air. Let's hope to God it's the last. Come on, Stover—we've got to see about this."

As he and Stover started for the door, the blonde got to her feet.

"Don't—don't leave me here alone," she whimpered.

"Shut up!" Wolfinger rasped. "And quit that everlasting whining, Maude. You stay here. If anything happens, yell."

The three men disappeared at a run, and the blonde, dabbing at her eyes with a crumpled wad of linen, began pacing the floor nervously.

Colfax's mind was racing. Now if ever was his chance to free Elsa Sparling. The whole of a long, dark night lay ahead, and once he got her back in the jungle-covered interior of the island, they could at least remain hidden until daylight. And by that time much might happen.

Colfax felt he had a pretty good idea of the temper of this gang now. For all Wolfinger's flat refusal of Stover's evil suggestion concerning Elsa Sparling, Colfax knew that the man, if cornered, would prove as ruthless to the girl as a striking snake. Where his own absolute safety was concerned, he would do away with all living evidence without the slightest compunction. The future was indeed a desperate one.

Colfax edged around to the door of the hut. Now he also caught the hum of the motor of that approaching plane. It rose and fell in intensity, ululating before the fitful pressure of the wind. His ears, trained for years to the song of a motor, told him it was coming directly toward the island—and coming fast. It would serve to keep Wolfinger and the rest occupied for a few minutes at least.

COLFAX waited no longer. Brandishing the knife he had taken from Jase, the Negro, he leaped into the room. At the moment he was a mighty tough customer. He was tousled and disheveled; his clothes torn and stained with the blood of the dead man he had carried to the sea. Most potent of all was that gleaming blade he flourished.

Maude Findlay seemed literally pet-

rified as he sprang toward her. It was something of a play on Colfax's part. He didn't intend to hurt this pallid thing, but he knew that if necessary to keep her quiet, he would use her somewhat roughly. Luckily, he didn't even have to touch her.

Her mouth opened, as though to scream, but she did not make a sound. Instead, she caught her hands at her throat, took a backward step, then slid to the floor, her eyelids fluttering. She had fainted dead away.

Colfax never gave her a second glance. He leaped to the inner door, wrenching the bars aside. The room beyond was black dark.

"Miss Sparling," he called softly. "Elsa Sparling—where are you?"

Something seemed to scuffle slightly, something which thumped on the floor. He felt his way across the room. Soon he found her. And when he did so, his throat tightened and a red mist swam before his eyes. She was still trussed up like a mummy. He ungagged her first, then cut loose her hands and feet.

"Can you walk?" he murmured solicitously.

She tried to get erect, but couldn't make it. Her limbs were numb from the stricture of the bonds. She gave a hopeless little moan. Without further hesitation, Colfax caught her in his arms and turned to leave. But just before he reached the door it closed with a crash, plunging him into Stygian blackness.

Surprise froze him for a moment. Then, because he was playing a desperate game to a final showdown and because a red, fighting fury had built up in him, he drove forward against the door, his left shoulder hunched low for the shock, and every ounce of weight and power in him put to the effort.

There was a splintering sound, and the door crashed open again. The blonde, who had come out of her faint, had been in the act of dropping the first bar into place again. The impact

of Colfax's berserk charge smashed the door against her, flinging her headlong across the room, where she brought up with a thump against the far wall. Colfax saw her head bang heavily, and she slid down in a limp heap. He knew she was out this time for a long count.

In the yellow light of the candles, he flashed a look down at the face of Elsa Sparling, where it cradled against his shoulder. It was white and wan, and those great, smoky blue eyes were filled with the tragedy of pain and fright. But as she caught his glance, she smiled.

"Knew—you'd come," she whispered. "I'm not afraid—now."

Something caught at Colfax's throat and his eyelids stung. His grasp around her tightened. Then he was out into the night, and the tangle of the jungle had enveloped them.

CHAPTER V

Dirty Business



STEVE COLFAX carried Elsa Sparling a long way south into the island before he set her down in a small opening in the undergrowth. It was dark there, though

not to that inky consistency where everything is subdued and hidden completely. The combined light of the stars and the far sunken moon filtered down, aiding, but not disclosing.

So far, aside from those first whispered words, neither of them had spoken. But now Colfax got down on his knees beside her and, taking one of her wrists in his hands, began rubbing it gently to restore circulation again.

"Is there any strength in it at all?" he asked gruffly.

"Full of needles—and so are my

ankles," she replied. "Do you think—those men will find us?"

"Not for a while," he said sturdily. "Not before daylight, at least. And by that time a lot of things can happen. We won't go down without a good fight. I got you into this and I'll get you out—somehow."

A shadowy smile twitched at her lips. "Still a pretty capable rough-neck, aren't you? But don't blame yourself in any way for this. I've heard enough talk to know how they tricked you. It isn't your fault."

"I'll always feel it is. Lord—how dumb a man can be sometimes, when his eyes are blinded by gold."

"I—I was horribly frightened—once." Her voice shook and thickened a trifle. "That was when I heard Wolfinger tell that Negro to go and finish you off. But somehow—something told me—you'd beat them at their own game. What—what became of the Negro?"

"He went to the same fate they picked for me. He won't come back," Colfax answered tersely.

He switched his rubbing to her slender ankles. She watched him with inscrutable eyes, her lips tightening at the exquisite torture of returning circulation.

"Mind telling me something of what is behind all this?" he asked.

"An attempt at one of those pieces of business brigandage that slick lawyers manage to justify so often," she obliged. "But it won't work this time. They need my vote at the director's board. They've been after me for months, trying to influence me. I've objected flatly, and they've grown desperate, it seems."

"I heard some talk of a forged proxy," said Colfax.

She nodded. "I anticipated a move of that sort quite a while ago. I've taken care of that. My real proxy is in the hands of a man I know I can trust. At the proper time, he'll use it. They'll all be hung in their own crooked ropes."

"That mixup on the drive at Curlew Beach had something to do with this, I suppose?"

"Yes. It was their second attempt at getting me out of the way long enough to do their crooked manipulation. This is the third and successful one, to their way of thinking. But they are doomed to failure."

"How did they get hold of you?"

ELSA told him fully.

"You recall I told you of a party I had to attend. When I came to leave, my car would not start. They had tinkered with it somehow, I expect. I had a taxi called, which was stepping right into their trap. At one place on the road home the taxi slowed down suddenly and two men leaped in, one from either side.

"I could do nothing. They tied me up and gagged me, and the taxi drove out to a lonely spot and stopped there until early morning. Just before daylight, Wolfinger came along. His real name by the way, is really Frank Andrews, former secretary of my father. Dad discharged him some three months before his death for crookedness. Anyway, Wolfinger whom you know, and that blonde woman whom I never saw before, came to the taxi and took charge.

"They wrapped me up in robes, so on careless scrutiny I did not appear to be a prisoner. Then they had the taxi driven down to your plane. I heard them discussing the ruse they would use to move you out of the way long enough to get me into the plane, passing me off as the blonde's maid. They hit upon the idea of sending you for some coffee."

"I fell for the whole thing, like a fool," growled Colfax in disgust. "I'd qualify for a booth in a nut factory, one thousand percent. Better try and walk around a little. They'll discover your disappearance any minute now, and we may have to do a lot of running and dodging."

In that tiny cathedral of the jungle,

Elsa Sparling started pacing to and fro.

At first her movements were just a painful wobble. Her rescuer had to walk with her, supporting her with one arm about her shoulders. He knew that she was suffering, for several times she caught her breath in a little gasp. But she was a Spartan and kept on moving. After a time she grew stronger and pulled quietly away from him, going about her exercising alone.

It was about then that Colfax heard what he had been listening for.

A long, wailing shout of alarm echoed down the wind. There was a raging threat in it somehow. The girl heard that yell and instinctively she came close to Colfax, her face white in the furtive light of the stars.

"I—heard wolves howl one time—when I was up in Canada on a fishing trip with my father," she said unsteadily. "That reminds me of the wolf cry. This is desperate, Steve Colfax."

He nodded. "No use trying to kid ourselves. We're up against it—bad. In the light of what you've told me, I can guess the news that plane brought to Wolfinger. They know the game is up and they know they've got to silence both of us. Yes, we're up against a tough proposition. But," and here his jaw set grimly, "we're a long way from being licked."

"Isn't there some place we can hide—some place where they cannot reach us? Surely in this jungle—"

"Not a place—after daylight comes," Colfax answered honestly. "Until daylight we can elude them. After that it is only a matter of time. But I've been thinking. There's a chance for us if we can get back to the Sikorsky. Of course, they'll have someone guarding it. But I'll take care of one guard—or two for that matter if I get half a chance. If we can make the plane, we stand a chance at escape, although it will be a long gamble.

"Alone, I'd try it without hesita-

tion. But I hate to think of asking you to share the risk. There is a chance of outside help showing by daylight. Your disappearance must have been noted at home. A search is sure to be going on. But whether it will reach this far south—in time—is problematical. And unless it does reach here by daylight—well, I don't like to think just what the finish may be."

SHE caught his arm, strongly, fiercely. "Then we'll try for the plane. We'll try for the plane, Steve Colfax."

He looked down at her, his heart surging. "You're a thoroughbred, Elsa Sparling. Come on."

Hand in hand they stole through the murk of the jungle, guiding their steps by the pound of the breakers. The girl was still dressed in the evening gown she had worn to the party, but it was sadly bedraggled, torn and soiled by this time. Yet it was a subdued shade and blended as well to the dark as did Colfax's disheveled, service-worn khaki.

Presently the narrow beach lay ahead. Colfax took a swift survey up and down it, then led the way across until they were crouched below the rock rim. Hearing no sound of outcry, he began working stealthily north.

It was nerve-racking business. His eyes ached with the strain of trying to pierce the gloom of the night. The wind, driving in from the sea, was not particularly cold, but it picked the spume tips from the breakers and drove the wetness about them in thick clouds of spray.

They were soon drenched to the skin but the excitement and nervous tension kept them from even thinking of chill.

Abruptly something moved in the night ahead, a hunched, gangling form picking a way along the edge of the rocks. Into a tiny, black crevice Colfax pulled his companion, his hand

on her shoulder forcing her to crouch low.

Beside her he poised, motionless, staring.

The dark figure came closer. It was a seaman, carrying a long object on which the starlight glinted faintly. A rifle! Very softly, grimly, Colfax drew his knife from his belt. He didn't relish the thought of using cold steel on one of his own kind, but so desperate was their position, he was thankful for possession of any weapon.

Discovery was certain. The man was currying the rocks thoroughly. Colfax bent his head until his lips were close to Elsa Sparling's ear, and the faint perfume of her hair was in his nostrils.

"No matter what happens, don't scream," he breathed. "And if I lose, run for the jungle. And I mean run. Quiet now."

Her reply was, to him, an amazing thing. She turned her head suddenly upward.

Her lips, moist and warm and sweet, pressed his.

A great livid flame surged through Steve Colfax. His blood was fired by it.

A ripple of steely resolve swelled and towered in him. He gathered his feet beneath him and waited.

THE searcher was close, just beyond the corner of the rock behind which they crouched. Then he appeared, looking straight down into Colfax's set face and gleaming eyes. And in that fractional second the aviator recognized him.

It was the nondescript and ugly Saunders.

Saunders threw back his head, his mouth opening for a shout of alarm. At the same time he swung his rifle toward them.

Colfax's leap was that of a pouncing beast of prey. He drove his lean, long body out and upward, the bared knife whistling with the stroke. For

one awful second Saunders' eyes were wide and staring.

Then the knife *thocked* home in his throat, cutting off life and sound at the same moment.

Colfax was sick and nauseated as he floundered off along the drenched sand, and the girl who clung to his arm was sobbing. But the knowledge that what he had done had been stark necessity kept them both from a kind of insane revulsion.

"Dirty business," he choked. "Dirty business!"

Across the narrow stretch of the bay loomed the bulk of the Sikorsky plane and beyond it the launch. Also, pulled well up at the very head of the bay was the other plane, a small and speedy biplane equipped with floats.

Colfax crouched low, studying the layout. The plan he had formulated was daring and mad enough, but he was going to gamble that the very audacity of it would make it successful. It was hardly probable that Wolfinger would expect him to try for a getaway in his own ship, and under their very noses. Which was why Colfax intended to try it. Yet such a little thing could upset the whole scheme, that even now Steve was very doubtful of success. Desperate as it was, however, it was the only feasible course.

Elsa Sparling crouched beside him, saying nothing. Her sobs over that ghastly business along the beach had ceased now.

She was putting full trust in his judgment.

He turned to her. "You can swim?" She nodded.

"Very well. We head straight for the Sikorsky. You know what silence means. When we reach the plane I'll help you through a cabin window on this side. I don't think any one will be in it. Then I'll circle it and cut the mooring ropes. Once away in the ship, they can whistle for us and we'll take a long time answering."

CHAPTER VI

Flight

UNLACING his puttees, Colfax then took off his shoes. He wanted to conserve every ounce of energy possible. He could only guess what they might bump into at the launch. And it took energy to fight with.

Elsa Sparling did not hesitate. She kicked off her battered pumps, made a few quick passes with her hands, and stepped out of her dress to stand slim and straight in silken underthings. Colfax made another mental credit in her favor. No damn false prudery about this girl. Desperate chances were ahead, with life and death in the balance, and a dragging, water-soaked dress might prove just the difference between success or failure.

Side by side they slipped into the dark depths of the bay. It seemed almost pleasantly warm and restful in the water after the driving wind and whipped spume of the rocks and beach.

Shoulder to shoulder they drove along, swimming silently. Colfax had always believed himself pretty good in the water, but the girl amazed him. Her little head bobbed along beside him as she swam with such smooth, easy grace that not a ripple was left to mark her course. And once, as her face turned toward him, he could have sworn that she smiled!

As the shadow of the big amphibian plane grew above them, Colfax moved with increasing caution. Treading water, he listened. There was not a sound except the dim song of the wind and the slow creak of restlessly moving hulls. Easing himself along the floating cabin of the Sikorsky, he pulled himself up and tried the windows.

He knew a quick thrill when one of

them gave. Quietly he slid it open, then lowered himself back into the water. He faced the girl and beckoned her to him. She slid in close, deft as an eel. He wrapped one arm about her waist and lifted her as high as he could. She caught the edge of the window and began to struggle upward.

He cupped his hands and cradled both of her slim little feet in them. She seemed to lift with the supple grace and ease of a shadow. A moment her glistening outline hovered there against the dark bulk of the plane. Then she slid from sight through the window.

Colfax felt at his waist band and drew out the knife that had already drunk of the blood of two men in the past few hours. He edged his way to the opposite side of the plane. Here lay a narrow space, black and unfathomable, for the high wing of the Sikorsky swept clear above the launch and the two crafts had been drawn close together until hardly a foot of space remained between the hulls. Swinging across this space were the two mooring lines.

Purely by feel, Colfax found the first line and severed it. He found the second. It was tough, seasoned, and water-soaked hemp which defied momentarily the knife edge. Impatient, Colfax doubled a bight of it against the hull of the launch and began sawing at it. It severed finally and, for the first time, Colfax felt that his efforts at a daring escape might be destined to success.

He slipped the knife back in his belt, caught the edge of the launch and began pulling himself up. At that moment, noiseless in rubber-soled sneaks, a shadowy bulk came in sight on the deck of the boat.

Deep, consuming hatred brings a strange sense of recognition. From the first, Colfax had hated the callous brutality of the man, Stover. And now he recognized him, thick and powerful.

Stover, taking in the situation in a glance, caught up a handy oar and struck. Colfax jerked his head aside as the oar flashed downward, but he was not quick enough to come wholly clear. True, the stout ash splintered to a stump in Stover's hands as it struck the gunwale of the launch, but that broken end whipped on and caromed cruelly against the side of Colfax's head.

He went under, deep and far, into those murky, black depths. Before his agonized eyes flame was spangling the turgid waters. And his senses seemed almost gone. Yet he did not go completely out. Strange thoughts whirled crazily through his brain. But out of them came a clear cut image of Elsa Sparling's face, softly smiling. It was like a beacon light to Colfax, leading him up and on.

He struggled back to the surface, felt his tortured head strike the rounded bottom of the launch. Then he broke clear of the water, where he could gulp the precious air for which his stricken lungs were crying. Stover was still there, looming above him, brutal, merciless, and as intent on hunting him down as a cat after a mouse.

It was only the man's sadistic brutality that saved Colfax. Had Stover struck again it would have been the end. But so sure was he of his mastery, he reverted to savage torture. As Colfax's left hand reached for and found the gunwale, Stover stepped on it, mashing and numbing those desperate fingers. And with a low, jeering laugh, he placed the end of the oar-stump against the other's chest and shoved him back and under water again.

Steve Colfax had already discovered that the bright vision of Elsa Sparling's face was a force which could spur him on to almost super-human effort. He now found that pure, blind, insensate rage could do much the same. Hardly realizing his move, he caught the stump of the oar

and jerked on it with all his weight and strength.

This move caught Stover off balance and pulled him to his knees, one arm sagging above the water. And before he could draw back, Colfax shifted his grip from the oar stump to the big brute's wrist.

Snarling with fury, Stover braced himself, lunging back and up. The man's strength was enormous, beast-like. He hauled Colfax clear of the water with no more apparent effort than if he had been a dangling herring. Colfax's knees struck the gunwale of the launch as he was dragged aboard. He lurched to his feet, still clinging to that hairy wrist.

With his free hand, Stover now drove a smashing blow at the face of his leech. Colfax whipped under it and lashed out with his own right fist. The blow caught Stover full in the mouth, staggering him backward. With both hands pumping blows, Colfax bored in, his lips peeled back in a snarl.

Jarred and befuddled by that first punch, Stover swung wildly. Realizing that the battle he had begun with such confidence was getting away from him, Stover turned his head and sent a wild yell pealing forth. His turned jaw made a full, open target, and Colfax hit that jaw as he had never hit a man before.

The blow spun Stover completely around and dropped him, half out of the launch. A moment the inert figure seemed to balance. Then, before the spent Colfax could move, it slithered silently into the depths of the bay.

THE succeeding moments were somewhat of a nightmare to Steve Colfax. As he watched Stover's body slip limply away, a great deal of his own strength seemed to pour out of him. He had been long hours without food, hours filled with nerve strain and terrific physical effort. He had battled ferociously. His head had been

cruelly clubbed—once by a gun in the hands of the Negro, once by the oar in the hands of Stover.

Only at the cost of tremendous vital force had he come this far. Little wonder that he now tottered, weaving back and forth on the deck of the launch, while the dark world spun crazily about him and every atom of his being cried for rest—rest!

And then his name was called softly and vibrantly.

"Steve—hurry!"

It was Elsa Sparling's voice, and he turned. The Sikorsky had drifted several yards from the launch. Steve shook his head and dived into the bay. In a few strokes he pulled even with the door of the plane's cabin, and Elsa leaned from it and caught his hand. He struggled through and lay panting, while she shut the door.

Then she turned and dropped on her knees beside him. "Steve," she whispered. "Oh—Steve, darling!"

He gave her a twisted grin and fumbled his way to his feet and then to the controls. With movements purely automatic he switched on the dashlight and clicked on the ignition. As the starters began to grind, he glanced over the instrument board. He thought of how helpless he and Elsa still were, if the motors refused to catch.

But the thought was an injustice, for the eighteen faithful cylinders snorted, spat, then caught—settling down to a cacophony of sound that washed back in roaring encouragement. Six hundred horse-power lay in the throats of those cylinders, and they were his, to answer to his touch.

With a queer, waspish snap, something lashed through both sides of the cabin, not a foot from Colfax's head. Instantly he understood. Someone was shooting at them. Evidently that last wild yell of Stover's had brought some of the gang back to the landing, and the thunder of the motors had warned of escape.

Instantly Colfax jazzed the right

motor and gave hard left rudder. The big plane scuttled around, skimming like a frightened water bird. He pointed the nose at the open sea, warming the motors desperately. Not a miss in their smooth song, and he exulted in them, blessing the honest craftsmen who had built them.

At the mouth of the bay he gave the plane a lift and it came up, lightly, easily, taking off like a teal into the wind-swept night. He watched the altimeter needle as it crept upward to a thousand, two thousand—five thousand feet. He banked to the north and leveled out. And as the Sikorsky settled to its course, Colfax looked out and back.

Far below and back, he caught sight of twin jets of pale, blue flame, and the vague shadow of a racing biplane against the subdued silver of the sea. That other ship was after them. Colfax shrugged. No doubt they had the speed on him, but he couldn't see how they could stop him.

ELSA SPARLING had crept up behind him, and he looked at her. Even in the sick agony of his own worn and beaten self, he found time to marvel at the uncrushable sweetness of her. She had unearthed a robe that had been left in the plane and had swathed herself in it until only face and tousled auburn head were visible. He smiled at her and saw her catch her breath. A dawning, lovely smile answered him. Then one slim white arm came out and rested across his shoulders.

Mindful of the pursuit, Colfax sent the Sikorsky towering. Seven thousand, then eight, nine—and finally ten thousand feet. They had climbed to a strange, dark world. The dashlight hung thin, jagged shadows about the cabin, etching strange outlines.

Queer, he thought, the sense of comfort and safety that single tiny spark of light gave, there in that towering altitude. Yet below, lay only a vast emptiness that reached down and

ever down to the wind-whipped sea. They were alone, deliciously but terribly alone. And roaring up behind, coming closer all the time, was the biplane.

As Colfax remembered it from the quick survey he had made in the dusk, the biplane was a two-place job. No doubt there would be a gunman in one of the cockpits. That sailor along the beach had carried a rifle, and a rifle had been fired at them just before the take-off.

Yet, shooting from one plane at another was not the easiest thing in the world to do, despite the size of the plane shot at. Of course, there was always the chance of a hit, in some vital part of the amphibian's mechanism. So he nodded toward the rear of the cabin.

"In that rear locker," he told Elsa. "A seat pack 'chute. Get it and put it on."

She nodded and left him. Soon she was back, lugging the 'chute. But she made no move to get into it.

"Put it on," he ordered again, a trifle sharply.

She shook her head. "No. If there was another for you, I would. But I won't leave you, no matter what happens. Now don't shout at me. It won't do any good."

Colfax cursed without knowing it. "All the effort that has gone before will be wasted if you get stubborn now, Elsa Sparling," he growled. "Put it on, I say."

"No." She smiled gently, but there was no mistaking her stubborn determination. "I've a better idea. You put it on. If—if we have to leap, we'll do it together. And the one 'chute will have to carry both of us."

He shrugged helplessly. "The 'chute and harness would hold us, but our speed of fall would be dangerous."

"There is water beneath us," she reminded.

Colfax knew that he wouldn't leave the plane unless something made bailing out absolutely necessary. That

they might have to jump was a long chance, anyhow. So he nodded and stood up, crouching over the controls.

"Strap it on me, then," he snapped.

CHAPTER VII

The Long Leap



WITH the 'chute in place, Colfax resumed his seat.

"In that same locker there are some rope ends," he said. "Bring a couple of the longest and keep them handy."

As he spoke these words a metallic hornet ripped suddenly through the cabin, crashing at an oblique angle into the instrument board before him. He flashed a swift glance around and saw the biplane, almost even with them and slightly above. And it was close, but short yards away! Even as he looked, he saw a pencil of flame lick out, mushrooming slightly. There was a jar and a tinkling sound, and his altimeter was a welter of shattered glass and metal.

Colfax threw the amphibian down into a long side-slip, wobbling it slightly as though almost out of control. But this maneuver did not fool his pursuer, for the biplane followed closely, a dim, dark shape, streaming the red and blue fires of exhaust.

Colfax let the big ship down still more, in a whistling, ponderous slide that tossed off thousands of feet of altitude. Elsa was beside him again, her arm once more across his shoulders. A wave of emotion gripped Steve Colfax, swelling his throat. She was superb! And how he adored her!

He felt no amazement at this discovery. It seemed quite natural that his roughneck, lone wolf, heart-free life was over. This slim, brave thoroughbred had just cupped his heart in her hands and taken it from him. He reached up one grimy paw, raw

and red and scarred from the wound across his knuckles, and patted her hand. Her arm tightened convulsively about his shoulders.

Another bullet snapped against the cabin wall. And Elsa Sparling flinched and cried out softly. He turned his head. The robe had slid away from her right shoulder slightly, and there on the point of her shoulder was a red, angry slash from which the carmine was already welling.

Colfax gave a queer, husky moan and rocked from side to side in his seat. He went berserk. He looked and saw the biplane in close again. He side-slipped once more, grudgingly—a feint. This time the biplane rose to the bait like a bloodmad wolf. It started an angling dive after its quarry again. Colfax's thin, cold smile was a grimace, far removed from anything resembling mirth. He pulled the Sikorsky into a stiff bank, slashed across intervening space, then leveled out and zoomed sharply.

The biplane, caught cold in front of him, tried a diving bank. But it wasn't quite fast enough. Colfax saw the shadow of that upraised wing dead before the cabin prow. Then he was into it.

A bedlam of rippling and crashing buffeted through above the roar of the motors. The Sikorsky wallowed, like an over-loaded boat in a heavy sea. But it struggled clear, wobbling dangerously. He fought it to an even keel and looked down.

There a dark, whirling blot was dropping away. A lop-sided, stricken blot that was tumbling crazily. And of a sudden it seemed to split still further asunder. Colfax knew what had happened. The impact had ripped off one wing, and now the hurtling biplane had shucked the other. The fuselage, with motor and human freight, was gone like a plummet. This was as bloody and gory as war.

Elsa had him by the arm, shaking him.

"Look!" she gasped. "Fire!"

Colfax looked, and his heart contracted. His right-hand motor was a mass of greenish gasoline fire, the forward movement of the plane sweeping those licking banners of hell back across the fabric of the wing.

AUTOMATICALLY he reached for the landing flare release. Pale arcs of fire began dropping down. Colfax held the controls hard over, dropping the Sikorsky off in a slide to the left, sending that deadly fire streaming out along the right wing tip. It was tough, losing out at this point, just when they had cleared the last obstacle. He stood up, holding the controls over.

"Elsa," he said, his voice tense but quiet, "we've got to jump, dear. Loop that rope about your waist and mine. Tie it—tight."

Fumbling slightly, she obeyed. His free arm went about her.

"Remember, no matter what happens, I worship your very shadow. I had to tell you that—now. And there is still a chance. Those flares—and a passing ship. Afraid?"

She pulled his head down and kissed him.

"Not now," she murmured.

The Sikorsky was wobbling dangerously, fighting to lurch out of the slide. Colfax let go of the controls, lifted the girl against him and stepped to the cabin door. He kicked it wide. A gust of choking fumes struck his nostrils and flame lanced and leered back at them. His right arm tightened about his precious burden, his left hand pushed between their bodies and locked on the ring of the rip cord. One long look he took into her upturned face. Then he dived out into space.

A slow count to ten to let that flaming plane slip well away from them before he pulled the rip cord. And so, for several seconds they were uncontrollable atoms in a vast and foreign element. Then, at Colfax's quick movement, the spring mechanism as-

sented itself. The 'chute snaked out above them like a column of smoke, and then bloomed magically. The risers snapped tight, and the jerk spun them upright and around and around. But their fall was checked, and they began floating down into nothingness.

They saw the amphibian fall away, spinning now in an inferno of flame, the left motor still screaming a wild, uncontrolled song of death. It was soon gone—dwindling, dwindling, until it struck the waves with a thunderous impact that carried back in a rumbling echo. Then it was gone completely.

The ensuing quiet was almost painful. Below, a wide area of water gleamed, queer and ghastly, under the radiance of the landing flares. And as Colfax looked down, his heart beat hopefully once more. Across that sea of radiance bobbed a small vessel, with green and red riding lights like pinpricked eyes.

Colfax found that his cheek was pressed tightly against an auburn crown of hair. He spoke evenly, calmly.

"There's a boat down there, Elsa. We've got a real chance. But I've got to slip the 'chute—drift as close as possible to the boat before we hit the water. I need both hands. Wrap your arms around me below my armpits, and hold tight, dearest—hold tight."

Her arms gripped him convulsively. Colfax reached upward, gathering the shrouds in his hands, pulling hard. The 'chute slipped off rapidly, fighting the wind. The sea rose to meet them. The first flare had struck the water and guttered out. The others were desperately close. And Colfax knew that he needed that remaining light.

It was only a case of moments, but they were untold ages to the aviator. Another flare went out. The circle of radiance dimmed, but he saw dark figures racing about the boat. Then the water had them, with a dragging,

strangling impact that gulped and smothered. The shrouds and the 'chute fabric settled about them, tangling and clutching.

Colfax fought for air, fought to keep above the surface. The choking water filled his throat. Agonized lights flashed before his eyes. Then a deep, restful silence seemed to envelope him. He drifted down, down, down— Here was rest at last.

STEVE COLFAX awoke from a tremendous sleep. He felt as though he had slept for a month. He seemed stupid and befogged, and still tired. So he lay with his eyes closed, his mind fuddled. Gradually he became aware of a smooth, measured rise and dip, almost as though he was being rocked in a cradle. This, he reasoned wearily, was queer. He wasn't an infant any longer and there was no cause for anyone to rock him.

His mind cleared presently and he opened his eyes to look around. He found to his astonishment that he lay in a narrow bunk against a wall. Above him were open portholes, through which sunshine and crisp salt air poured. The ceiling above him was stoutly beamed, and across a narrow space on the far wall, two other bunks were racked, both empty. Suspended above him was a ship's lantern.

The narrow door at the end of the cabin opened, and through it came one of the most immense men he had ever seen. The gigantic fellow had to stoop to enter, and he gave the impression of coming in sideward, as though his great shoulders were too wide for the door. The newcomer was swarthy, with a bristling black beard and a great unruly mane of curly black hair. At sight of Colfax's open and inquiring eyes, the giant exclaimed in satisfaction.

"Hah! *M'sieu* is wake up at last, eh?" he rumbled. "*Sacre bleu!* Dat is good. For sure Pierre LeDouc is frighten. You sleep and sleep lak'

bear in winter tam, *M'sieu*. How you feel now?"

Colfax yawned. "Something like Rip Van Winkle must have felt. What's it all about, anyhow? And where am I?"

"You are aboard the good fishing boat, *La Belle France*, *M'sieu*. You come down from sky at night—lak wounded bird. Don' you remember, *M'sieu*?"

Colfax remembered and came upright with a jerk.

"Elsa!" he exclaimed. "Miss Sparling—the girl with me—where is she?"

The giant put forth a great paw and pushed him back down on the berth firmly.

"*Mam'selle* is on deck, sitting in the sun, *M'sieu*. For her have no fear. You are the one who has frighten us, but you are bettair now. Perhaps you lak for eat somet'ing, no?"

As the flood tide of his relief passed Colfax realized that he did feel quite famished. He grinned weakly.

"That is a real idea, my good friend," he said gratefully. "I am starving. But what has happened since I passed out?"

"All in good time, *M'sieu*," said the huge Pierre sympathetically. He stuck his head out of the cabin door and let out a roar that could have been heard a mile away. "Emil! Make hurry with dat food. Our guest is hongry lak wolf in winter."

There came an answering bellow from the tiny galley and very shortly a second mammoth fisherman crowded into the little cabin, bearing a tray of steaming dishes. He was younger than the first, but there was a close resemblance. His face was clean-shaven and wreathed in a friendly grin.

"Bacon and eggs and coffee, *M'sieu*," he rumbled. "Just lak hotel on shore."

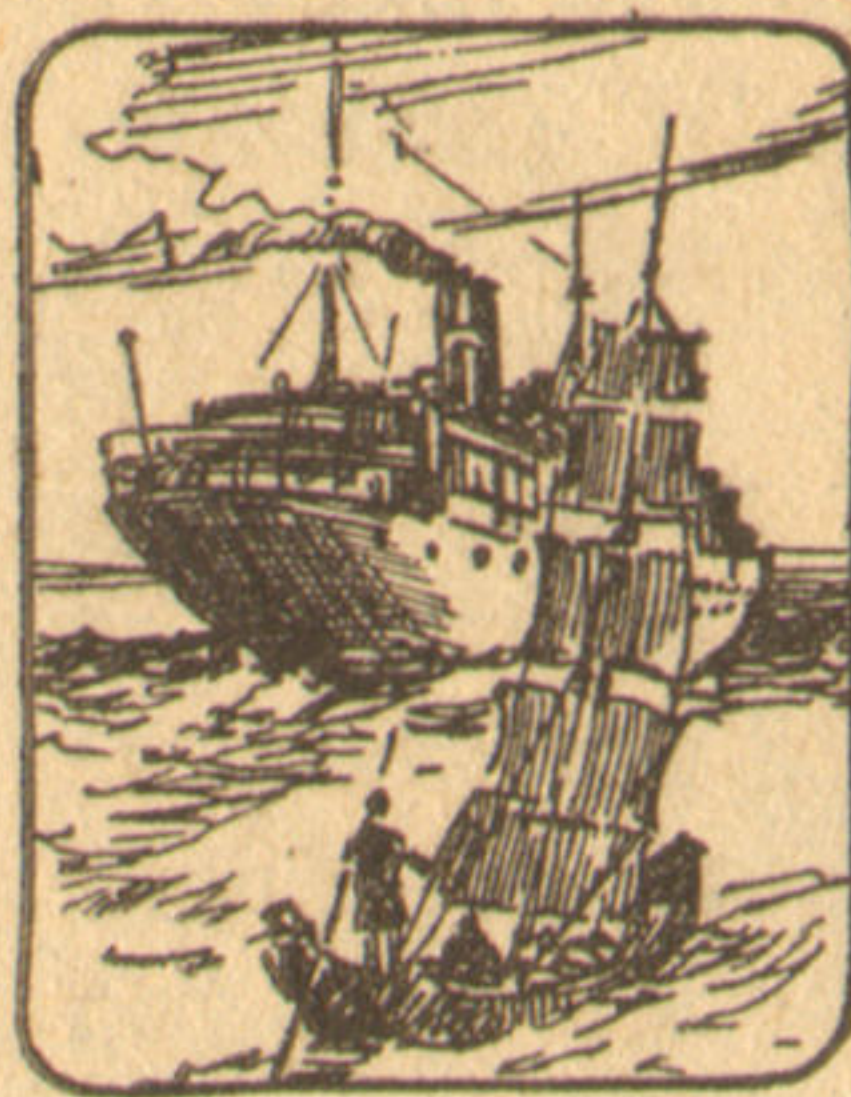
Grinning like a pair of delighted children, the two fishermen watched their guest clean his plate and drain the last drop of his coffee. When he

looked up pleadingly, the elder Le-Douc shook his head.

"No, *M'sieu*. You are still hongry, yes, but it is not well dat you eat too much at first. Now I t'ink dat Emil help you dress, and you go up on deck for talk with *Mam'selle*. She have plenty for speak with you."

CHAPTER VIII

Final Adjustments



FINDING that he was pretty weak and shaky, Colfax was glad to accept the aid of the LeDoucs in scrubbing himself and putting antiseptic and adhesive and gauze dressing on his wounds and scratches. Then he struggled into his clothes which, to his surprise, had been washed and dried for him.

Next, he felt of his bristling chin and was surprised again to note the length of the stubble. He looked at Emil's smoothly shaven face enviously. The other grinned and nodded. He went out, to return shortly with razor, soap, and hot water. There was a small, battered mirror on the wall, so Colfax managed a fair job of shaving.

Elsa was waiting anxiously when he went on deck. At her Colfax stared in amazement. She was dressed, rather, she was swallowed in a huge flannel shirt and a pair of equally large dungarees, faded from many salt water washings. There were numerous tucks and folds and rolls in the voluminous garments to make them fit her slim form, but even then they did not conceal or mar her loveliness.

Under her feet the dull gray of a fishing smack, behind her the sparkling green waters of the dancing sea. A breeze, crisp and fresh from the east, was tangled in the meshes of her

auburn hair, and her sweet face was looking bravely at him.

She was smiling, and a great ache filled Colfax's throat and spread downward to his heart. He thought he had never seen anything so brave, so sweet, so beautiful—and so unattainable.

"Hello, Steve," she greeted him tenderly. "I began to think you'd never wake up, but Captain LeDouc reassured me."

"Never wake up?" he repeated, glancing swiftly about at the deserted expanse of peaceful, sunlit, shimmering sea. "What—how long—I mean, just what has—"

"You've been out for nearly forty-eight hours, Steve," she informed as he floundered and groped for comprehension. "I—I rather went to pieces myself. After the LeDoucs dragged us aboard I sort of had hysterics. I'm not exactly used to—to parachute jumps in the middle of the night."

"Forty-eight hours!" he exclaimed incredulously. "We've got to get busy. We must notify the police—send a force to Dog Rocks—get you back to the mainland—this boat isn't moving, Elsa! Why aren't we back in port by now? What—"

"Why?" she asked calmly. "What is there to notify the police about? You cleaned up everything and everybody at Dog Rocks except the woman. I don't have to get back home in a hurry because Gregory Lyons will vote my proxy as I want it voted. And the boat isn't moving because the motor's broken down. There! Have I answered all your questions satisfactorily?"

Colfax stared at her, and his own excitement died down beneath her cool and calm attitude. He became his old level-headed and reliant self.

"What the heck's the matter with you?" he growled, eying her thoughtfully. Then he turned about and yelled for Pierre LeDouc.

The old man came running.

"Show me the motor," Colfax

ordered. "I know something about engines."

"*Oui, M'sieu,*" agreed LeDouc, glancing at the girl.

He led Colfax below where Henri, his second son, labored with the cranky engine. Colfax got to work immediately. It didn't take him thirty minutes to put the partly dismantled motor back together and learn that part of the distributor was missing. When the big Henri looked blank, Colfax immediately sought out Elsa Sparling grimly.

"Where's that part of the electrical gadget you stole off the motor?" he demanded sternly.

Before his uncompromising demeanor she flushed. She did not speak as she dug the missing part out of one of the big pockets of her borrowed garb and handed it to him. He took it without a word and returned to the engine. In ten minutes the motor was roaring smoothly, and Colfax ordered a course set for Dog Rocks at once.

"Do as he says, Pierre," agreed Elsa Sparling as the huge Captain LeDouc looked at her in interrogation.

SHRUGGING his shoulders and shaking his head in bewilderment, Pierre complied. When they were well on their way, Colfax found time to speak to the girl.

"Why?" he asked. "Why did you do it?"

"The crisis was over, and you were worn out," she answered defensively. "Why shouldn't I have done it?"

Worn out! That was true. Colfax had been just about finished when he made that parachute jump. Now he was finished. He realized suddenly that he was back where he had started years ago. He didn't have a thing in the world save the clothes he stood in. With the loss of his plane, he had lost the last bit of tangible property he had possessed, and also his means of earning a livelihood. Of course, there'd be a reward of some kind for Elsa Sparling, but he couldn't take it.

He didn't want any money for what he had done. He wasn't sure that he would even let her replace his lost plane. All he knew was that he loved her with all of his heart, and she was as unattainable as the stars.

"I guess you were right," he said gruffly. "Thanks."

He turned and went back toward the stern. Elsa stared after him, biting her nether lip angrily.

"You proud and stubborn idiot," she whispered under her breath. "I could box your ears until they would ring like a fire alarm. What do you expect me to do—go down on my knees to you?"

The fishing smack didn't make it to Dog Rocks. Before the sun set Emil, at the port gunwale, gave a shout and pointed off to the southeast. There, resplendent in the setting sun, was a pure white yacht heading for them gracefully.

The two boats covered the intervening water rapidly, and a tall man in whites with the gold bars of a captain on his shoulders hailed them from the bridge of the pleasure craft.

"Ahoy!" he shouted as both vessels cut off power. "Can you give us any word of— Great Scott! It—can that be you yourself, Miss Sparling?"

IT DIDN'T take long to bring both crafts to rest and establish contact. The yacht captain himself came aboard the *La Belle France*. He doffed his cap and wrung Elsa's hand heartily.

"Miss Sparling—thank God!" he ejaculated. "When you weren't on the island, and the woman we picked up there by the name of Findlay told us of your escape and Andrews' pursuit, we thought—we thought—"

"I know, Captain Jenkins," Elsa said, her own voice quivering slightly in recollection. "I've been very lucky. This is the embodiment of my good fortune—Mr. Steve Colfax. I want you to meet my protector and savior. Steve, this is the captain of my yacht,

and an old, old friend—Captain Jenkins."

The two men shook hands.

"You've been to Dog Rocks and picked up Maude Findlay?" Colfax asked.

"Yes," said Jenkins. "She was the sole survivor. She has confessed the whole thing, and I want to thank you deeply for your splendid rescue of Miss Sparling. I will ask you later for the details."

"How did you happen to go to Dog Rocks?" asked Elsa.

"When Mr. Lyons appeared at the directors' meeting to vote your proxy, the forged proxy was revealed," Jenkins explained. "Byers broke down and confessed, and we've been combing this area in search of you ever since. And now may I conduct you aboard your own vessel?"

"Yes, thank you, Captain," said Elsa sweetly. "Will you please take care of Pierre LeDouc for me. Come on, Steve."

As Jenkins drew a heavy wallet from his pocket and went over to engage in conversation with the owner of the fishing smack, Colfax drew closer to Elsa Sparling.

"I guess this had better be good-by right here, Elsa," he murmured. "Your lawyers can get in touch with me if my testimony is needed at the trial. I'll stay with the LeDoucs and work my way back to port."

"Steve Colfax, are you crazy?" she demanded incredulously.

"I don't think so," he answered curtly.

"Then stop acting like a child. Come, lower me into the yacht's gig."

"Certainly," he said. "But I'm telling you good-by now. Elsa—"

"You mean you are not going back on my yacht with me?" she demanded flatly.

"Well—no," he growled.

"All right," she said, nodding. "We won't use the yacht. I'm staying with you. What's good enough for you, is good enough for me."

"Elsa!" he groaned.

She came so close that her head rested against his chest.

"Do you or don't you love me, Steve Colfax?" she asked frankly. "Did you mean what you said just before we made that parachute jump, or didn't you?"

"Elsa!" he repeated, and his voice trembled. "That was when I thought we were going to die, and it wouldn't make any difference what I said. Of course I meant every word."

"And now that we're going to live, it makes a difference?" she persisted.

"You know it does. I'm broke—penniless—a roughneck. Things just wouldn't work out for us, Elsa. I just can't—"

"Steve Colfax, look at me!" she commanded, reaching up and pulling at his chin. "Didn't I tell you that I wanted to learn more about rough-necks? And who's going to look after

my interests, now that Andrews and Byers turned crooked? Is everybody going to desert me?"

"But I've nothing to offer you, Elsa—" he began.

"You are rich in the things that count, Steve Colfax," she said. "Courage, faith, honor. All I have to offer you is money. And I—I want—I need you so desperately, Steve. We've looked on danger and disaster side by side. With our arms about each other, we looked on the face of death—and leaped. Surely we are not afraid to face life—and live. And—oh, damn it, Steve Colfax, are you going to make me propose to you?"

"No!" he roared, sweeping her up in his arms in a mighty embrace that made the huge LeDoucs and the crew of the yacht stare wide-eyed in amazement. "At least, I can do that much for myself."

And he did so quite satisfactorily.

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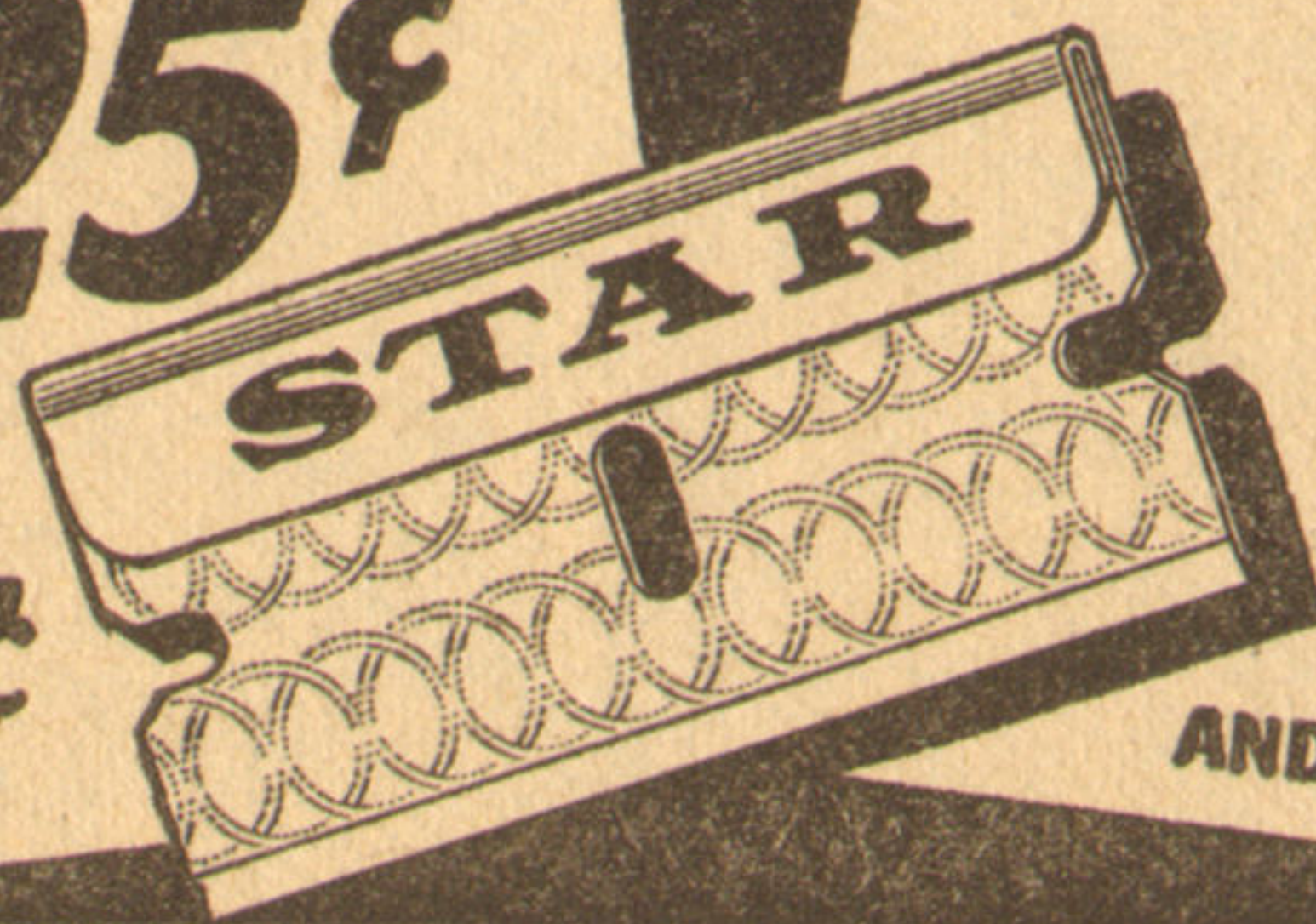
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Beast of Batu



The lash cut into Hedges' body

A Beachcomber Hurls His Defi at the Brutal White King of a South Sea Island!

By **JOHNSTON McCULLEY**

Author of "Trailed by Two," "Speared," etc.

THE tumbling sea was deep blue, the isle of Batu was emerald green with a border of golden strand, and the coral reefs were pink and white. But the sky was a dirty saffron, so Cap'n Bill Clarn drove his schooner *Rover* toward the protected lagoon with her sails bellying and her bow lifting over the rolling seas.

"She's fixin' to blow plenty," Clarn said to Dave Gordon. "We'll have to weigh anchor."

"Yes, she'll blow plenty," Gordon agreed, glancing at the threatening sky.

"We'll weather it here at Batu," Clarn decided. "The lagoon is well protected and there's a good holdin' bottom. A visit to Batu may be an

interestin' experience for you, too. It's Luke Hedges' place."

"I've heard of him."

"Double what you've heard, and then you won't have the half of it." Clarn looked at the saffron sky and spat over the rail into the boiling sea. "I've been playing around the islands all my life. I had my boyhood in the Singapore dives. I've seen plenty of hard men, but Luke Hedges is the worst."

"Sort of island king?" Gordon asked.

"More like an island devil runnin' his own private hell on earth. Hedges spends half his time thinkin' up ways to make the natives cringe and shiver."

"Why don't they leave him?"

"Can't. No boats, and Batu is a distance from other islands. Hedges keeps 'em marooned. Won't even let 'em have a fishin' canoe."

"The authorities—"

"They don't bother. Batu is small and off the beaten track. No official complaints, I suppose. Hedges goes his own way, wolfen' down food and soakin' in gin, stackin' his copra and shell. Now and then a tradin' schooner puts in and buys his stuff and leaves supplies. Hedges doesn't seem to care about gettin' rich. Never leaves the island. Sits in his bungalow, or prowls around with a whip in his hand and plays king."

"It's a wonder somebody doesn't slip a knife between his ribs," Gordon said.

"A native tried that once when Hedges ordered the wrong girl to move into his bungalow. Oh, yes, he's that sort. He chooses a new 'queen' ever so often. What Hedges did to that native was a lesson the others haven't forgotten. The man's a devil. Wait till you see him. We'll go ashore soon as we anchor."

THE schooner was driving in toward the mouth of the lagoon, and Clarn gave his attention to his ship. Gordon watched the island. Hedges'

bungalow could be seen a distance back from the beach with a winding path leading to it. Apart from the bungalow was a small warehouse.

No native craft was drawn up on the shingle. Nobody was in sight. The palms were commencing to sway wildly in the wind, but nobody was making preparations against the coming storm.

The Rover scudded into the lagoon like a gull riding with the wind. Clarn barked orders and canvas ran down and the anchor splashed. The Kanaka crew worked swiftly, expertly making everything shipshape for the blow. Clarn gave orders to his Kanaka mate, and a skiff was dropped.

"We'll go ashore, Gordon," Clarn said. "If the blow is bad, we'll stay the night."

Clarn oared the light skiff and Gordon watched the beach. Still he saw no sign of life. It was uncanny. For a schooner to put in at a place like this, where craft seldom touched, generally was enough to bring all the natives tumbling down to the water's edge. But Batu looked deserted.

The skiff touched shore, and Gordon helped Clarn pull it far up on the shingle. They started up the winding path.

A few feet ahead of them, somebody suddenly broke through the jungle growth and stumbled into the path. They saw it was a human being of some sort, with rags for clothes, half his body bare and filthy. He had a scraggly beard, and his eyes burned. He lumbered toward them. Gordon slipped his hand into his coat pocket and gripped the stubby automatic he had there.

They made out that the creature before them was a white man. He straightened his body as he came on toward them, and they could see he had a huge frame, but with little meat on it. He held out his hands to them imploringly.

"Take me away from here!" he begged. "Take me away!"

Before Gordon or Clarn could speak a roar came from the bungalow, a hoarse human voice bellowing above the rush of the wind and the smashing of breakers on the reefs.

"Slimy! Get away from there!"

The man in the path flinched at sound of the voice. He glanced toward the bungalow and plunged back into the jungle growth.

A man appeared on the veranda of the bungalow. He stood with his feet planted far apart, swaying drunkenly. He wore clean whites, but his feet were bare and his shirt was open in front down to his belt. A stubble of dark beard covered his face, and his mass of bushy black hair was unkempt.

"This way, gentlemen!" he called. "Welcome to Batu!"

"That's Luke Hedges," Clarn whispered to Gordon.

HEDGES waited on the top step to greet them. They saw he was short and thick in body, but he did not give the impression of having great physical strength. He looked like a man of whom dissipation had taken heavy toll.

"My old friend, Cap'n Bill Clarn!" Hedges greeted. "Come to trade?"

"Haven't anything with me to trade," Clarn replied. "I happened to be in these seas and saw a blow comin', so thought I'd anchor in your lagoon and give you a visit."

"You're more'n welcome. Your friend?"

"He's Dave Gordon. He's thinkin' of goin' into trade and is makin' a trip with me to get acquainted."

"Come in," Hedges urged. "I'd have shaved and put on my shoes if I'd known you were comin'."

He chuckled and waddled across the veranda to hold open the screened door of the bungalow. Clarn and Gordon went up the steps and entered. They found the spacious living room clean and comfortably furnished. A large round table was in the center

of the room with easy chairs around it. A bottle of gin and glasses were ready. They took the customary drink of welcome and sprawled in the easy chairs.

"Excuse me a minute," Hedges said. He got up and strode out on the veranda and struck a huge gong which hung near the railing, and the wind carried the reverberating deep tone. "That's to let my people know they can come out of hidin' and go about their business," he explained as he returned to the table. "When I see a ship puttin' in, I hit the gong and they hide themselves. They stay hidden till I know who's comin'. I don't want strangers to spoil 'em."

"We noticed a white man in the path," Clarn said.

"Yes, I suppose you might call him a white man," Hedges replied. "That's Slimy."

"Friend of yours?"

Hedges glowered at him. "I don't make friends of beachcombers, Cap'n. Slimy showed up here about a year ago. Got kicked off some tradin' schooner, or jumped overboard and swam ashore. I never did learn the truth of it—I was drunk at the time. I've made him useful. Named him 'Slimy' because that's the way he looks."

"Doesn't he want to get away?" Clarn asked.

"Possibly, but I need him here," Hedges replied. "There was a time when white men walked on me. So I came here, where I could walk on natives. And along comes Slimy, uninvited, who's a white man in a manner of speakin', and it's my pleasure to walk on him. Squarin' accounts. Slimy never did me a wrong, but he's a sort of symbol of men who did."

"Is that justice, Hedges?" Clarn asked.

"On the island of Batu, Cap'n, justice is what I make it," Hedges replied. "Let's change the subject. Drink up! I hope you'll stay the night."

Hedges clapped his hands and a native houseboy came into the room.

"Two guests for dinner and to spend the night," Hedges told him. "We want a good dinner. Fix up the guest cots."

THE native boy lit the oil lamps, bowed and disappeared. Hedges poured fresh drinks. It grew darker. The velocity of the wind increased. Clarn stepped out on the veranda and saw that his schooner had her riding lights burning. He could trust his Kanaka mate and crew. He returned to the table.

"I have an idea for a good joke," Clarn overheard Gordon saying to Hedges. "This man Slimy—I wonder how he'd act if he was one of us for the evening?"

Hedges bent forward. "How do you mean?"

"Make him bathe and shave, and toss him some clean clothes. Let him be one of us for a few hours. We may get a good laugh out of him trying to act like a gentleman."

"That would be rich!" Hedges roared. "Slimy, a perfect gentleman for one evenin'. A lousy beach-comber!"

"He'd probably make a lot of funny blunders," Gordon continued. "I remember hearing how 'Bully' Tarvish played a trick like that. You've heard of him?"

"Who hasn't heard of Bully Tarvish?" Hedges said. "What a trader! He knew how to handle natives. He disappeared a few years ago after sellin' out. Some say he went to Europe to live like a king."

"It may interest you to know," Clarn put in, "that my schooner belonged to Bully Tarvish. I bought her from the man who got her from Bully."

"My stepfather knew Tarvish well," Gordon added. "My stepfather was Sam Mannering."

Hedges looked at him with sudden respect. "Mannering was before my

time, but I've heard of him. Made a fortune in trade, didn't he?"

"Yes. He told me many yarns about Bully Tarvish. Once, when a Chink ran amuck with a knife. Tarvish saved my stepfather's life."

"I can't see a man like Tarvish goin' to Europe and livin' soft," Clarn declared. "Be like a fish out of water. A man used to roarin' around, sailin' his own ship, bossin' natives and makin' his own deals—"

"He didn't go to Europe," Gordon said. "He went back to the States where he was born. I had a line on him a couple of years ago."

"That joke of yours, Mr. Gordon—let's not forget that," Hedges put in. "We'll do it."

He got up and waddled out on the veranda again, struck the gong twice and waited at the top of the steps.

Clarn glanced at Gordon swiftly. "What's the idea behind this joke business?" he whispered.

"Careful!" Gordon warned, glancing toward Hedges. "It's just a little experiment. Watch me and follow my lead."

They saw "Slimy" come up to the bottom of the steps through the gathering gloom, summoned by the gong. The lantern swinging in the doorway revealed his face to them clearly, a countenance in which hate and fear were blended.

"Get inside, Slimy," Hedges ordered. "Take a bath and shave and make yourself decent. Tell the houseboy to give you an old suit of my clothes. You're to eat and drink with white men for a change. Get in there!"

LOOKING bewildered, Slimy shuffled past him and into the living room. He glanced at Gordon and Clarn, but did not speak. He went to the rear of the house, and Hedges laughed and returned to the table.

After quite a time, Slimy returned. His beard was gone, and his face was chalky white where the

beard had been. He stood erect in a clean suit of whites, and had put on a pair of old shoes. His shirt was buttoned up to the throat, not wide open like Hedges!

"Good evenin', Mr. Slimy," Hedges greeted, sarcastically. "You're lookin' fine and prosperous. Sit down and join us in a drink. Help yourself to a cheroot, too."

Slimy swallowed hard and sat down. He started to slump in the chair, then suddenly straightened. He did not speak. Gordon expected him to gulp his drink greedily, but he sipped it, then put the glass on the table and lit a cheroot. The flare from the match emphasized the cadaverous appearance of his face.

"Mr. Slimy hasn't had alcohol or tobacco these last few months," Hedges said. "Bein' considerate of his health, I've forbidden it. But you can have all you want now, Mr. Slimy."

Slimy did not answer. They waited for some time for dinner. When it came, Hedges ate like a hog, bending over the table and shoveling food into his enormous mouth, washing it down with gin and soda. Gordon and Clarn hid their disgust with difficulty. They watched Slimy, who ate like a gentleman. Finally, sated with food and drink, they relaxed in the easy chairs.

It was Hedges, perhaps as a thrust at Slimy, who turned the conversation to failures and beachcombers.

"When a man gets down, he never gets up again," Hedges declared.

"I don't agree with you," Gordon said. "A man may slip down the social scale for some reason, but a little thing may bring him up with a jerk, give him new life. Perhaps a situation where he's called on to show himself a man by helping others."

"Once down-and-out and always down-and-out," Hedges said. "Take Slimy here. Don't know what he ever was, but it's plain what he is now—a lousy beachcomber!"

Slimy's face turned whiter and his eyes glistened, but he did not reply.

"We've made him clean up and sit at table with us," Hedges went on. "Think that'll reform him? Tomorrow he'll start goin' to seed again."

Hedges refilled the glasses. He spilled the gin, and was unable to get out of his chair. His voice was thick when he howled for the houseboy to fetch a fresh bottle.

Outside, the wind was screeching across Batu and the seas were pounding the reefs. Clarn went to the veranda once to make sure the *Rover* was all right.

"Gen'men, I'm gettin' drunk," Hedges said. "My boy'll take care of me and show you to your cots. But stay up and drink as long as you like. You, Slimy! You can get out now. Back to your hut! You haven't been a damned bit of fun."

Slimy stood erect and bowed to Gordon and Clarn. He had not been drinking much and was cold sober.

"GENTLEMEN, the master of the island speaks, and I must obey," Slimy said. "If I can go with you when you leave, work my passage—"

"None of that!" Hedges snarled. "You'll stay on Batu, Slimy. Cap'n Clarn, if you want to keep friendly with me, you won't take him."

Hedges put his arms on the table and dropped his head upon them and gave a snore. Gordon's eyes met Slimy's squarely. Clarn watched them. Sure that Hedges was dead to the world, Gordon reached into his coat pocket, took out his automatic and slipped it to Slimy.

"Not to be used for revenge," Gordon whispered.

Slimy stuffed the gun out of sight quickly. "Good night, gentlemen."

Slimy hurried from the room and disappeared. The houseboy and another native came in, lifted Hedges and carried him away. The houseboy returned and conducted Gordon and Clarn to another room where guest cots were ready.

"Storm'll pass by mornin'," Clarn said, as they undressed. "I think you were a fool to give Slimy that gun."

Gordon smiled as he blew out the lamp. . . .

Slimy slipped and staggered through the jungle growth until he came to a cluster of huts beneath swaying coco palms. Some of the natives were awake and watching the storm. Slimy spoke to several, and they ran to other huts.

An hour later, all gathered on the beach at a spot where they could not be seen from the bungalow if lightning flared in the sky. They grouped around Slimy to hear what he said.

Heavy swells entered the lagoon and rolled across it, but the smashing seas were outside battering at the reefs. The schooner rose and fell, rolled and tipped. Slimy spoke rapidly, then went to where Clarn's skiff rested on the shingle.

They launched the skiff, and three men got into it with Slimy. They pulled laboriously toward the schooner, making slow progress against the force of the wind. Behind the skiff and on either side of it were the swimmers.

Men and women and children, the natives of Batu were swimming out to the schooner, following the skiff. Slimy had guessed there would be no lookout on such a night. The skiff was made fast to a line at the stern. The natives swam around the vessel. Slimy and two others gained the deck and worked rapidly in the darkness, dropping lines. The natives swarmed aboard.

Slimy howled. Yellowish light gleamed as the door of the forec's'l was opened. The Kanaka mate rushed out with the few members of the crew. He found Slimy confronting him, a stern figure in drenched whites with automatic held ready.

"Up sail!" Slimy ordered.

The Kanaka mate howled at his men and charged. Slimy chopped with the gun and the mate sprawled on the deck.

"Up sail!" he barked at the Kanakas. "We're goin' out. The wind's right and I can take the ship through the reefs."

He drove them to it. They were frightened of the storm, afraid to handle the schooner in it, but were more afraid of Slimy and the gun he held.

CCHECKED and accounted for, the natives of Batu huddled where they could. At the wheel, Slimy watched a white, frothing line of breakers. His voice cracked above the roar of the storms as he howled orders intermittently.

The Kanakas were used to obeying, and they obeyed Slimy. Conscious again, the mate crawled back to the wheel, and Slimy bent over him.

"Sorry I had to smash you," he said. "I'm takin' the *Rover* out. Tell you about it later. Get as many of these folks under cover as you can—women and children. The men can shift for themselves."

Under shortened sail, the schooner plunged at the mouth of the lagoon. Her bow dipped under and reared sickeningly. She lurched and righted, ran before the wind like a wild thing, with her rail awash half the time.

Then she was out and free, a prey of the tumbling seas and pounding waves. She seemed to spring from sea to sea as she went through the black night with Slimy fighting the wheel. The Kanakas were quiet. The Batu natives looked to Slimy to win through.

So the *Rover* traveled through the night and out of the direct path of the storm. The raging wind lessened, but the great seas remained as an aftermath of the blow. Slimy had speech with the Kanaka mate and seemed to satisfy him on several points.

He was a different Slimy. The air of command was about him. His voice had a sharp bark when there were orders to give. His emaciated body was erect, and he gripped the wheel

with such force that his knuckles were white.

The gray dawn found the schooner plunging on.

Back at Batu, the same dawn found Clarn and Gordon springing off their cots as they heard Hedges bellowing and smashing at the gong on the veranda. They dressed and hurried out. Hedges was raving.

"Not a damned native around the house!" he cried. "I'll skin 'em alive. Thought I'd sleep till noon."

Clarn and Gordon went out on the veranda. Clarn's first glance was toward where his schooner should have been riding. When he found the vessel gone, his wild cry made Gordon snap around.

Clarn ran down the steps and along the path to the beach with Gordon at his heels. Hedges remained on the veranda.

"Skiff's gone, too," Clarn howled. "What—"

"I imagine you'll find every native on the island gone," Gordon said. "Slimy has removed them from Hedges' brutality."

"Slimy? You think he took the schooner out?"

"That's what I think."

"Then she's lost," Clarn said. "I wouldn't have taken her out myself in that blow."

Hedges had charged through the jungle growth howling like a madman, and now came rushing back.

"Every lousy son of'm is gone!" he bellowed. "They took your schooner, Clarn. They're all shark meat now, and serve 'em right!"

FOUR days later, early in the morning, a sail appeared. Clarn saw it first, and his cry brought Gordon and Hedges.

Hedges was a sodden wreck. He had been drinking heavily during the four days. Clarn and Gordon had cooked the meals and kept the bungalow clean.

"She's puttin' in," Hedges said.

"Hope it's some trader I know well. I'll have him get me natives." He waddled away.

"Anyhow, we'll have a chance to get away from this rotten Hedges," Clarn growled. "Wonder if I'll ever find any trace of the *Rover*?"

"If you don't, I'll fit you out with a new schooner," Gordon said. "I feel a sort of responsibility."

Hedges called to them, and they went into the bungalow. In his drunken stupor, Hedges had some idea of preparing to greet guests, and he begged Gordon and Clarn to help him put the house to rights.

Out on the veranda a few minutes later, Clarn gave a wild cry as he looked at the approaching craft. She tacked, and Clarn recognized her instantly.

"It's the *Rover*!" he shouted. "Can't fool me about my own ship. She's lived to come back."

The schooner was charging straight at the mouth of the lagoon. Clarn and Gordon started down the winding path, and Hedges followed slowly. The schooner entered the lagoon, and they could hear a hoarse voice bellowing orders. Sails ran down and the anchor was dropped. The skiff was put over-side.

Two Kanakas jumped into the skiff and were followed by a white man. The skiff came toward shore. The white man in the stern was wearing an old captain's cap.

"It's Slimy!" Clarn roared.

"Slimy?" Hedges thundered. "I'll skin him alive! I'll tear his back to pieces with my whip!" He was holding the whip he so often had used on his natives.

Clarn's face was a blank as the skiff touched shore and the Kanakas pulled it up on the shingle. Slimy strode toward them with the Kanakas behind him. As the three neared those ashore, the Kanaka mate began shouting at Clarn, defending himself, saying he had been made to do what he had done. Clarn howled for him to be silent.

Slimy stopped a few feet in front of them.

"Cap'n Clarn, don't blame your mate or men," he said. "I seized your schooner the other night—an act of piracy, I suppose. But I brought her back in good condition. I could have jumped her, you know."

"I'm waitin' to hear what you did," Clarn said.

"I was on Batu almost a year," Slimy explained. "I'd gone down the social scale. Had a lot of money once, and clever folks got it away from me. Tried to mix with those not my kind, and paid for it. Lost my grip and couldn't seem to find it again."

"Well?" Clarn questioned.

"I was on a tradin' schooner that went past Batu, and went overside and swam ashore. Didn't know there was a trader here. I'd been here before and knew there were fine natives. Intended to live here till I got the liquor out of my system, to straighten up and make a fresh start. And I found Hedges here."

"You rat!" Hedges howled.

"**I** SAW how Hedges was mistreatin' the natives, but I couldn't do anything to help 'em. Inside a week, I wanted to kill Hedges. But he had me. I couldn't get off the island. I had to take his abuse. If I'd killed him, the first schooner that put in— Well, they'd have taken me away to swing, and I didn't intend to swing for a swine like Hedges. He did me one favor, though, when he denied me liquor. My health improved and my strength came back."

"About the schooner?" Clarn suggested.

"Simple enough, Cap'n. I got all the natives aboard, held a gun on your mate, made the crew get up sail and went out of the lagoon. I sailed to another island, near enough for all the natives to jump overboard and swim ashore to tell the story. I told 'em how to make complaints about Hedges, and there'll soon be a gunboat drop-

pin' in here to see about it. Then I brought the schooner back."

"Piracy!" Clarn declared. "But you—you sailed her out into that storm and got her through. That's some sailin', mister."

Hedges charged forward suddenly, his whip uplifted.

"You lousy beachcomber!" he screeched. "Take my natives away and cause me trouble, will you?"

The lash sang through the air, but the blow did not fall. Slimy sidestepped neatly and caught Hedges' descending arm. He tore the whip from Hedges' grasp, and the lash sang again and descended and cut into Hedges' hoglike body.

Clarn and Gordon stood aside. Slimy struck repeatedly, while Hedges cringed and howled and tried to wrap his arms around his head. Finally, he stumbled to his knees and then sprawled in the sand. Slimy stepped back.

"That wasn't for the things you've done to me," he said. "That was for what you did to the natives, you scum! Now, you can stay here alone on Batu till the gunboat comes. They'll take you away fast enough."

He tossed the whip out into the water and faced Clarn again.

"I suppose you want to get aboard, Cap'n, you and Mr. Gordon," he said. "I'll go along and take what you want to hand me. It'll be worth it."

They left the sobbing Hedges sprawled in the sand and walked slowly down to the skiff. The Kanaka mate and the man with him waded out and started swimming to the schooner. Without speaking, the three white men got into the skiff, and Clarn picked up the oars.

"Stealin' a schooner at the point of a gun is somethin' serious," Clarn said, as he rowed methodically. "I can't deny that I'm in sympathy with why you did it. And you sure showed good seamanship takin' her through that storm."

"She's a fine schooner," Slimy com-

plimented. "And when a man knows a ship—"

"You know the *Rover*?" Clarn broke in.

"I know her well. Know every inch of her. She was my ship once. I'm Bully Tarvish."

"You're Tarvish?" Clarn howled, his eyes widening.

"THAT'S right. I cashed in and went back to the States some years ago. Then went on to Europe and let myself get swindled out of all I had. Lost faith in human nature, too, on account of a worthless woman. Worked my way back to the Islands, but kept away from my friends. Went down the social scale. And now I'll take what you want to hand me, Cap'n, for seizin' your schooner. But I'll be decent after the law's done with me."

"You're doin' yourself no good if you start a long term in jail," Clarn replied, his eyes twinkling. "We'll just say that you'd been named my mate before you took the schooner out. That'll make it simple."

"I guessed you were Tarvish," Gordon said. "I saw you once when I was

a boy. My stepfather made me promise, as he was dying, that I'd always be ready to do you any favor I could, because you saved his life once. Wanted to be sure, so I coaxed Hedges into making you shave and clean up and sit at table with us. It was the shave I wanted particularly. With your face shaved, I knew you were Tarvish."

"So that was it!" Clarn said.

"I knew Bully Tarvish wouldn't stay a beachcomber if he had a chance to get away from it. The new trading schooner I'm having built— I'll be glad if you'll operate her for me, Cap'n Tarvish. And I think I can buy Hedges' concession at Batu, so you can put the natives back on their home island. We'll put some good man in charge of the place."

They reached the schooner and went aboard. Tarvish, his eyes gleaming, patted the rail lovingly.

"If you could make the deal, Mr. Gordon," he said, "I wish you'd let Cap'n Clarn have the new schooner and arrange for me to handle the *Rover*. I was a fool ever to sell her. A man gets attached to a ship."

NEXT MONTH FOUND IN FAR PLACES

A River of Death Story
By JOHNSTON McCULLEY

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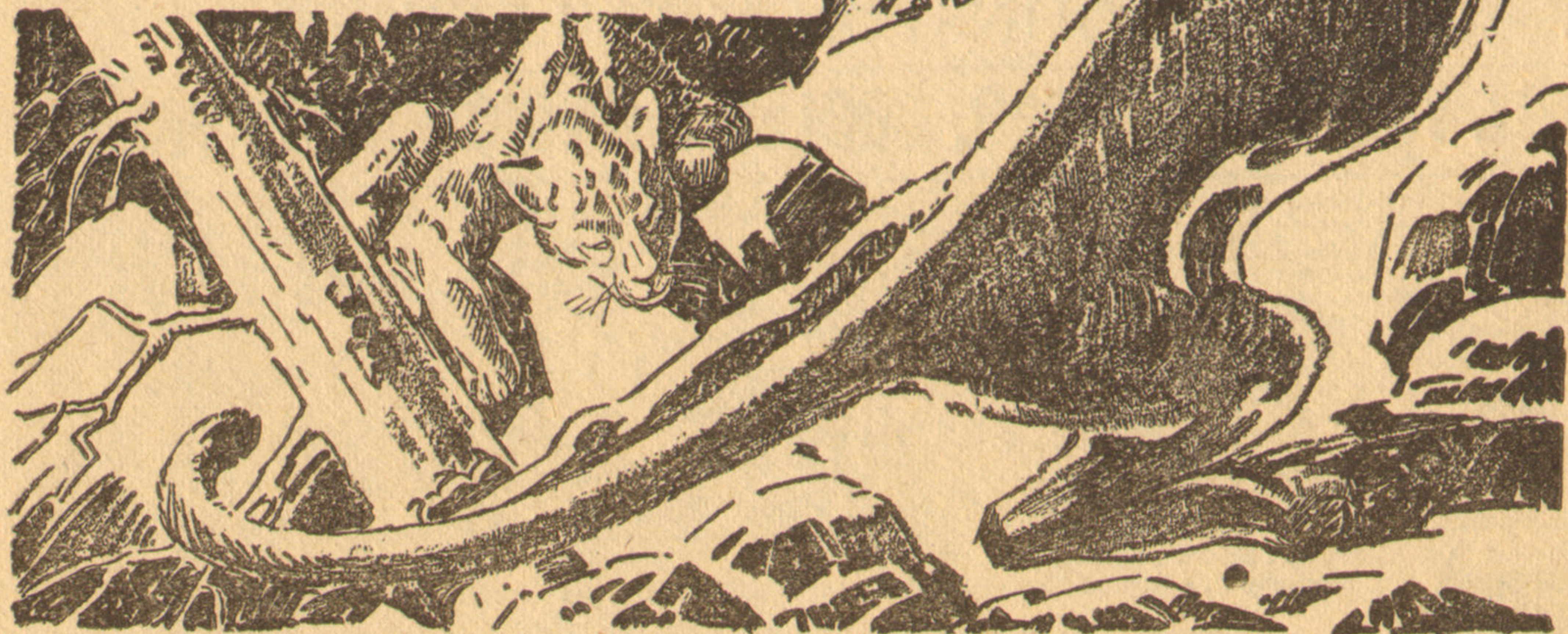
A She-Cougar Fights for Life and Safety in the Untracked Wilds!

By HAROLD F. CRUICKSHANK

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EVERY nerve fiber, every muscle in the long, sinuous body of the she-cougar rippled with pleasure. Under one of her huge forepaws was a squirming, spotted kitten, a vigorous little male. Although his teeth were scarcely cut, he put up a stout fight against these persistent, routine ablutions.

Otan, the mother, had a litter of



Yeepek's curved talons sank into the tender back of a female kitten

three. This was practically their first day outside the cave lair and at once Otan's troubles had begun. She had nursed her brood and then had begun their ablutions. The other two were close by—rolling, tumbling, snarling as they played. At least Otan was sure they had been close to her.

It was the sudden *soosh* of rushing wings that gave her warning to the contrary. With a snarl she whirled and leaped, all in one motion.

Out of a lazy blue sky had plummeted Yeepek, a great bald eagle. His curved talons were already spread and sinking into the tender back of a little female kitten.

Otan struck swiftly. She leaped high as Yeepek attempted to zoom off with that wriggling, spotted shape securely clamped in his talons.

Otan struck through feathers to flesh. Yeepek shrieked with pain and in anger. His talons opened and the cougar kitten crashed heavily to the rock.

Swiftly Otan struck again, but Yeepek had recovered poise and balance. He was dripping blood and went zooming off to the upper craglands, there to scream his wrath and hatred of the great tawny one below.

In spite of Otan's tender ministrations, the little spotted one died.

The struggle for the life and safety of her young had begun for Otan. It was such incidents as this that made her a killer; that roused her savagery to a point where she became ruthless. Otan knew only one code—the law of propagation of her kind and their protection.

In all the wilderness there was no more devoted mother than Otan. Likewise, there was none whose enemies were so numerous.

Now her blood burned through her veins. She quickly cached her remaining kittens in the den, while she stole out to pad back and forth in a slinking patrol, as she gasped low throat sounds of hatred of all creatures of the hinterland. . . .

ANOTHER day. Otan stretched on the very edge of a promontory, watching the antics of a pair of big-horn lambs.

She licked her chops. Up there in the higher levels was a good source of food, but a source well guarded.

Otan lifted her gaze to include the stout form of Chag, a huge ram whose massive curved horns were a deadly threat to all predatory hunters. The sight of them sent a shudder rippling along Otan's spine. Twice in her career she had been struck by the horns of Chag. This old chieftain seemed always alert. His large eyes gushed flame at the slightest sign of danger to his ewes or their young. But this morning, old Chag was not in position to see Otan.

The she-cougar must have food. It was drawing close to the time when she must teach her kittens about game flesh and bone. So far, they had thrived solely by nursing. They were not yet old enough to cut up and masticate meat for themselves. That would come later, as their teeth strengthened. But Otan knew the value of green bone for those young teeth.

She slid along a few feet with snakelike grace, watching the effect of her stealthy movements on the big-horn creatures above. Satisfied that she had not been detected, she commenced her sinuous stalk of death, gliding off right to a spot where the chasm between her and the lambs was narrower. There she bunched herself, ready for the leap, but suddenly her body stiffened. A fresher, stronger sheep scent assailed her nostrils.

Her tail twitching, Otan slowly turned her head.

Down on a lower level, almost directly beneath her where, near a gushing spring, the grass was lush, grazed a lone, yearling ram. Otan slid a moist tongue over her chops. She bellied down, catlike, to watch the young ram's movements. Soon, she knew, he would grow sluggish from his gorge of grass.

There, he was blowing now! His sides were distended, and he was making ready to flop to rest.

Slowly, Otan rose to a crouch. She shifted on her toes, making sure of her foothold.

She was about to spring when a clutter of loose rock on the north slope precipitated a small slide, a slide which brought the ram snorting to his feet. Out of the shadows of a craggy cleft emerged a squat, silver-tipped shape.

Otan suppressed a deep snarl as she glimpsed the form of her greatest enemy. The newcomer was Mishi, a sour-tempered old barren she-grizzly, a killer if there ever was one. Something had gone wrong with the grizzly's footing to have caused that small slide.

The young ram spun. He was ready to leap to safety, when Otan sprang. She struck, but missed.

Mishi and she-cougar met in a mad flurry of threshing bodies. Two of the most hated rivals in all the wilds had come face to face, fang to fang, talon to talon.

Twice in the career of her motherhood, Otan had been forced to give battle to Mishi. What Mishi lacked in weight—she was smaller than the average of her kind—she made up for with speed and savagery. Twice she had attacked the young of Otan. And Otan never forgot.

LIKE a tawny flurry of savage fury, the she-cougar struck, roweling the grizzly's near flank with her talons. Blood gushed.

A horrible "Woof" of anger and pain exploded from Mishi's gaping jaws. With a speed belying her bulk, she whirled and charged. Otan rocked back, but lashed out as she coiled, with four sets of fiendish talons.

Mishi was torn across one eye. Belowing her wrath she was forced back and commenced to sway about Otan in a circle. Bloody froth flecked from her great tusks.

Again they came together, but Otan was smashed back with a terrific paw stroke to the shoulder.

From the higher levels, where Chag snorted and stamped his warning to his kindred, frightened eyes popped as they watched the grim drama below. Chag was sending his flock leaping to the higher ridges; vertical leaps which could only be emulated by the white goat and his kind.

Below, with a great advantage of weight, Mishi swayed back and forth, content to wait for an opening. She had one other great advantage. Otan was an active mother, gaunt from her devoted care of her young. Her underparts were tender.

But Otan lacked none of her usual fortitude. Time and again she threatened, making swift ten-foot leaps, only missing her objective, Mishi's squat back, by a scant hair.

She bled from a gash in her right flank. The scent of her own blood warned her of Mishi's speed and power. But she realized that a fight to the death was inevitable. There was no place in this range for herself and Mishi, the plunderer.

But her young must for the time being remain her chief thought. Wisely, honorably, she started to withdraw. Head lowered, slobbering her anger, Mishi followed, blinking red flame from her piggy eyes, chortling deep snarls as she watched the tawny one glide backward toward the edge of a crevasse.

Otan knew of that crevasse. When sufficiently close to its edge, she would whirl and leap. Such was her intention. But all at once one of her hind paws slipped over the edge. She lost her balance, and in that brief split second, Mishi charged.

With a smashing right blow to the shoulder, she broke Otan's precarious hold on the slippery rock. One stifled scream, and the tawny one spun into space, to crash heavily on the rocks below; a drop of nearly twenty-five feet.

Blackness at once engulfed Otan, but quickly her brain partially cleared. She uttered a piteous throat sound, almost a hollow groan as she sagged limply down.

Above, Mishi swayed back and forth, "woofing" her calls of victory and further challenge. Dimly, Otan heard. She stirred and stretched her aching body to all fours, but straightway sagged back again. A sharp spinal pain assailed her. Time and again she struggled to regain her equilibrium; again and again she helplessly flopped back.

THE day dragged on, and to Otan's tortured mind came the thought of her young. True, her kittens could not alone make their way from the den, but there were many lurking beasts which could gain an entrance. For example, there was Tarat, the wolverine; and in all the wilds there was none as ruthless as he.

Such thoughts helped retrieve more and more of Otan's fighting spirit.

Nearby, a tiny spring of icy water gushed through a rocky fissure. Slowly, in great pain, she dragged her form to the water. There she drank thirstily, and laved her throbbing wounds. Then gallantly she dragged herself back to the lair.

From time to time she picked up the dread scent of Mishi. Fierce snarls escaped her, proclaiming an even greater hatred, and as this passionate heat of anger and hatred flushed her bloodstream, it brought her strength. One day, when her kittens were sufficiently strong, and her own normal strength regained, Otan would haunt the trail of the silver-tip and then there would be no mistake in her timing.

A low "Meow-w-w" escaped her as she caught the faint whimpers of her kittens. She clawed her way on—on, until at last she dropped limply into her den, to nurse her ravenous brood.

For many days Otan, the tawny one, lay deep in her cave. Her throat was

parched, her body burning with a terrific fire. Save for a small quantity of snow which had dropped down a vent into the cave, she had not touched her tongue to water; nor had she eaten any food, save the scraps of an old cache which was buried in a deeper recess of her lair.

More than once as she throbbed through a night vigil, she heard the scrape of claws, the claws of a venturesome predatory animal outside her cave. She sniffed the nauseous scent of Tarat, the wolverine who, like a slinking devil, prowled just outside waiting—waiting until his keen nose told him that Otan had weakened to a point where it would be safe to enter and put an end to her.

But Otan refused to die. Her body wasted, for her kittens exacted a heavy toll as they vigorously punched her as they greedily nursed, several times a day. Faithfully, Otan fed them and although her efforts were puny, she also attempted their daily ablutions.

This evening, just at dusk, she pricked up her ears. Out of the lower slopes had come a long, defiant call—a shrill bugle.

Otan licked her chops. She recognized that familiar call. It was the shrill call of Naiak, the wild stallion. Each year at this time of early spring, he led his band of shaggy mares and their progeny to the wind- and sun-swept slopes where they found the first grazing. Naiak's movements were as regular as those of the migratory caribou in the far northern latitudes.

Otan was stirred. In all the wilderness there was no flesh so succulent as that of young horseflesh. But one other relished this flesh as much as Otan. That other was Mishi, who wreaked havoc with the mustang band each spring.

NOW Naiak's call was closer and more challenging. Otan shuddered. She knew the power of the gray one's lightning hoofs. He was

swift with his pivots and attacks. Otan knew. More than once he had broken up one of her attacks on his band. Once, at this season of the year, he had battered to a pulp one of Otan's mates.

But the calls of Naiak brought new life to Otan. She pushed a kitten from her and stretched her wasted form. By sheer fortitude alone, she dragged herself to the cave's opening. There she paused, panting.

She sniffed the soft, aromatic odors of balsam and pine which floated down on a gentle night wind; and from every quarter came the stirrings of many small creatures. Nearby a spring of fresh water gushed out of a fissure to cascade musically to the lower levels. Otan's whole being burned for want of a drink.

Whimpering softly to her young, she forced herself to all fours. Her limbs buckled beneath her. But she persisted and for a long moment swayed unsteadily, but upright.

Now she moved forward a pace or two. Her right side threatened to give, but she struggled on, cautiously, carefully. All at once, her hair bristled. Half turning, she uttered a savage snarl.

Tarat, the slinking killer, rocked back, to coil on his back, his deadly claws lashing at empty air. But Otan knew better than to attempt an attack, in her condition. She advanced a faltering, threatening pace or two, pouring snarls of warning from her throat.

Tarat at last withdrew. Cheated of a kill, he sprayed the zone with his nauseating musk, and went scampering off. In his wake slunk Otan, headed for the nearest water.

Belly down the tawny one advanced on the pool with the utmost stealth. Ahead, not only was there water, but a creature of flesh and blood.

Wah, a male marten, was crouched there, waiting until some lesser creature came down to drink.

With the wind in her favor, Otan slit her eyes, so that their glare

would not give her away. But now she was forced to practice all her stealth. She was in no condition for one of her long, accurate death leaps. She was obliged to steal in to within a yard or so of the marten. And then she must be deadly accurate, for Wah was one of the swiftest creatures of the whole hinterland. Slowly, scarcely breathing, the cougar moved forward a few inches at a time, her gaunt, sinuous form writhing like that of a python.

Wah stirred. He cocked his head sharply, turning his snakelike neck, searching for warning scents. Suddenly he made a sharp clacking noise with his teeth. Otan's nerve fibres reacted. She knew that Wah's prey was approaching—some small creature which would arrest the marten's full attention.

She watched him stretch his neck forward, toward a dark, narrow cleft. It was her cue. She moved in and suddenly laced out with a lightning-like stroke of a forepaw.

Wah was pinned. He shrilled a sharp cry of pain, and swiftly coiled his neck about as Otan struck down with her fangs.

TWO sharp needle points impaled the cougar's tender nose. For his size, Wah's jaws were powerful. He clamped on a terrific hold, in his extremity.

Otan gurgled a rasping snarl and with her free forepaw went into action. With a fierce one-way slash of her fierce claws, Wah was disemboweled. For the first time in many days, Otan tasted fresh blood. But water was her first thought. She laid the dead marten to one side until she had quenched her thirst, and laved her burning body so that the incessant throbbing ceased. Then turning, she crunched soft bone and flesh, and quickly there was no scrap left save a small tuft of hair.

As she moved on back to her lair, Otan paused, her nose wrinkling with

a great pleasure, for the night wind in a fickle change had brought her the scent of Naiak and his kindred.

But all at once, the tawny one stiffened. Mingled with that horse scent was the dread scent of Mishi, the silver-tip.

Otan's lips peeled back. Her soft whispers turned to long caterwauling screams of rage. Almost before Naiak and his band had become established at the lower plateau, Mishi would scatter them, perhaps driving them off entirely.

For upward of two hours, Otan stood poised on the very edge of her rimrock, listening, sniffing. And with each sound and scent from below, there came to her a new strength.

From below came a sudden stamped-ing sound of drumming hoofs; the hated scent of Mishi again, and then a long, grim silence. Otan's form twitched and rippled with a consuming anger. Soon she would have to meet that silver-tipped plunderer. But not until she had regained full strength; not until her kittens were able to move swiftly and accurately.

Otan padded back to the lair and for the first time since her battering and fall, she slept long and soundly, awakening only when with the coming of a new day, the kittens voraciously demanded their dawn feed. . . .

Spring came with its riot of sound and full color. First a whirring rush of bird life.

Otan had not recovered quickly from her fight with Mishi. Festering claw wounds had bothered her, making her nervous about venturing from the lair zone. In the great wisdom of her motherhood, she had contented herself with hunting only small bird and rodent life.

Now she listened to the gabble of newly arrived waterfowl on a nearby creek. From a distant lake came the long, eerie, ghostlike wail of Moakwa, the loon sentinel, a call which was caught and flung back in weird echoes by the foothills.

Day followed night in regular sequence. Otan continued to build up her strength, while her young grew swiftly to a point where now they demanded meat. It was not, however, until near the end of June that Otan felt strong enough to venture forth in search of a big kill.

For many long hours that first day out she had scouted the hills for sign of a nomadic bighorn. But these mountain sheep were the crafty ones, well guarded by the old rams and ewes whose watchful eyes were hawk-like.

BUT there was, in spite of this vigilance, always a wanderer—usually a venturesome young ram who, flushed with the first yearnings of his growth, had shifted off in quest of a mate. It was such a youngster that Otan now stalked, as the first purpled grays of dusk softly draped the heights.

Otan lay belly down in a shallow draw, sniffing strong scent of sheep. This was a spot recently evacuated by a small band of ewes. Above her, a young ram was making methodical, vertical drops from ledge to ledge.

As he reached the bottom of the draw, the youngster snorted his contempt and disgust. He commenced to paw at the mossy turf. Shaking his head and immature horns, he proclaimed a fierce, passionate anger.

Slowly a semblance of composure returned and he minced off toward the small waterhole, nothing more than a spongy seepage. There he blew into the soggy moss before starting to slake his thirst by sucking the water through grass and moss.

Like a bolt of forked lightning, Otan sprang. Her timing was unerring. She landed squarely along the back of her prey, but the youngster was strong. For a moment he held up her weight, whirling in an attempt to throw her clear, but Otan was not to be cheated of this kill. Her terrible fangs were cutting their way down

through his hair and tallow to the spinal cord.

From a nearby scrub pine, old Ah-Hoo, the great horned owl denizen, poured out his deep, eerie wail of death. The ram suddenly burbled a rattling throat sound and slumped limp and lifeless to the turf.

Swift as a rapier thrust, Otan tapped the ram's jugular and drank eagerly of warm, fresh blood.

For a long moment, when her desire for blood had at last been sated, she padded about her kill, voicing low throat sounds—the proclamation of possession. Then suddenly she leaped away and bounded to her lair.

One by one, in her mouth, she carried her kittens to the kill, careful each time to make sure there was no plunderer nearby.

She chewed from the sheep carcass a slab of mutton. This she tossed to the young. And while she herself fed, she listened to the snarls of the kittens as they had a tug-of-war with their first fresh meat.

They were unable to do more than worry off small fragments of mutton, but this had been their first lesson at a kill. From now on, their education would be extended. Otan would even lead them short distances, allowing them to watch as she struck down some lesser hinterland creature. They would learn the value of quiet, of discretion and patience. . . .

Late September brought the first frosts, when the hinterland was quickly changed from a place of varying greens to a riot of multi-tinted foliage and mosses.

Otan's young were now more than half grown—two sleek youngsters now able to accompany her down to the low rangeland draws. It was here she searched for fresh sign of Naiak and his band, but she was soon aware of the fact that the horse creatures had left. By now they were far to the south, in the meadow flats where the wild mint flavored the lush, succulent grasses.

Today, Otan's young trailed her as she stole up on the tracks of a young spike mule-deer buck. For two miles she patiently loped, or trotted on in the deer's wake, now and then having to back-track, to cuff her young which were often intrigued by soft stirrings in the thickets. They were flushed with the urge to hunt out a rabbit, or grouse for themselves.

Now Otan came to a sharp halt in a scant poplar glade. It was here that Utik, the buck, had stopped dead in his tracks. He stood quivering in every limb, every muscle, as though instinctively scenting danger, yet not knowing exactly where to locate it.

Otan's every nerve fiber grew suddenly taut. She, too, was all at once aware of a menace. Her nose wrinkled and she peeled back her lips.

One of her young ones whimpered—a scarcely audible note, yet one heard by Utik, the buck. His great ears pricked sharply up, and forward, and he snorted wildly.

Otan shifted on her toes, testing her footing before she leaped. Fully tensed, and set, her body rippled a brief moment. Then, like an arrow, she sprang.

Utik buckled at the knees. He was down with the first smashing impact of the cougar attack. He recovered and attempted to run, but only stumbled a few paces when suddenly all was black. Otan's fangs had done their grim work.

Quickly the cougar whirled, to cut the jugular, when a warning scream reached her. She whirled, a hideous half-snarl, half-scream escaping her as she glimpsed the terrible form of Mishi, the silver-tip.

Mishi's great jaws were closing on the back of a kitten! Mishi had ambled along against the wind scenting both the odor of Utik, and the scent of the cougar family.

Otan issued a strange sound for one of her kind—a sound of piteous appeal, and yet it registered only her burning anger.

At Otan's charge, Mishi flung her massive head, tossing the dead young cougar from her. Her tusks were dripping red slaver as she rushed to meet Otan's attack. Grizzly and she-cougar went down together in a rolling mass of furry hellishness. Fangs and talons lanced and slashed in a mad fury of the devil's designing.

At last Otan's claws found an opening. She struck savagely downward with her left rear paw, opening a terrible gash along Mishi's belly.

With a bellow of pain and rage, Mishi relinquished a tusk hold on one of the cougar's forepaws. She whirled away, a grotesque, bleeding shape.

Back at a discreet distance, crouched young Yik, Otan's sole remaining youngster. Yik had always been the most vigorous of her brood. He had always demanded—and got—the biggest share of the food from the first day of his birth. Yik, by his own power, had already killed a woodchuck and two squirrels.

FOR a long moment he shuddered and whimpered with a great fear, but now as he watched his mother whirl again to attack, a new feeling manifested itself. It was an instinctive fighting courage—the heritage of his great sire, a male of over two-hundred-and-forty pounds weight.

Shaking the last vestige of his early fear from him, Yik, although little more than half grown, stretched himself. His tail began to twitch. He began to circle back, crouching every so often to watch the progress of the battle.

Now he watched Mishi whirl like lightning on her haunches, to smash a battering blow to Otan's near shoulder. Otan was down, but quickly she coiled as Mishi charged. First her left and then her right paw raked the big one's jowls, bringing more gouts of blood.

Piggy eyes flashing, Mishi backed off a pace or two. Shoulders well humped, her huge head swaying, she

mouthed her anger and hatred. She was giving her entire attention to the bellied-down shape of the tawny one, Otan.

Otan knew the value of playing possum, feigning semi-helplessness. She was gasping, her sides bellowing as though almost completely winded. But although her slitted eyes seemed to be focused directly on Mishi, Otan was looking beyond, to that sleek, slinking shape of young Yik.

Otan wanted to call a warning, but she realized that it might be fatal to her son. Yik was bunching. Otan stirred as she watched him shift from one set of toes to the other, as he had seen her do, as instinctively he tested his footing.

As his back undulated in a ripple of movement, Otan half rose. This slight move on her part brought immediate action from the silver-tip. Head down, Mishi was ready to strike.

In that moment, Yik leaped. This was his first death leap, and his timing was excellent.

Mishi reared, bellowing her wrath. Shocked by the surprise rear attack she was, however, only momentarily thrown into a near panic. As she reared, she whirled in an effort to dislodge that cougar shape, but Yik had a deep claw hold and steadily he was chewing his way through that thick mass of grizzly hair.

He was not mature enough to effect a kill, but he had given Otan a respite, a chance.

The she-cougar rushed, but was met by two lightning forepaw smashes. Fortunately for Otan, she was ready, and took only part of the force of those blows. She took them going away in a graceful, sideward flirt of her lithe form.

Again and again she rushed the silver-tip, hoping to hold Mishi on her hindquarters, trying to keep her from flopping to her back, when Yik wouldn't have a chance beneath that five-hundred-pound bulk. Time and again she threatened the old she-bear.

Had Otan been in Yik's position, Mishi's last breath would long since have left her great body.

It was fear for her son that held Otan. She had taken a savage battering from those forepaws. Now she knew that there was only one move left to Mishi. She waited for that sudden backward drop.

IT CAME. With a wild "*Woof*," as she felt those immature fangs at last find a danger spot near her spinal cord, Mishi went over backward, but like a flash Otan was in at her throat. Mishi was forced to roll before her weight could possibly crush out the life of Yik.

In a mad flurry Mishi lashed out with her massive forearms, pounding, clawing, battering.

Otan sprang clear. She called swiftly to young Yik who, unhurt, save for a bruise or two, leaped to safety. The young one slunk carefully to his mother's side, and received a flick of her warm tongue, while Mishi swayed back and forth on her broad pads, whipping herself into a frothy temper as she bled profusely from many claw wounds over her body.

It was now that Otan realized she must practice all the instinctive wiles of her sex. Mishi was too great an adversary for her in open battle; but Mishi must go.

Small creatures of the wilderness were drawing in close, attracted by the strong scents of the kills, and of fresh blood of the belligerents. Into the gathering dusk came the gleam of many sets of inquisitive eyes.

Otan suddenly called sharply to Yik, a cry which sent him bounding off toward the hill country. She half turned and commenced to stagger away. She seemed to drag along a helpless hindquarter.

Mishi raised her bulk to her hind paws and commenced to flail the empty air, grandiosely proclaiming a victory. To her, the fight was won.

There remained only the *coup de grace* and that would shortly come.

Head down, she commenced to trail the dragging she-cougar.

Otan moved sluggishly along, up one slope and then another, getting deeper and deeper into the forbidding shadows. Yik was nowhere in sight.

Mishi came to a sudden halt. There was no further sign of the tawny one. Otan had mysteriously vanished from the ledge rock trail. The she-grizzly snarled and continued on in the trail of Yik, a trail which followed a tortuous shelf of rock.

Again the silver-tip halted, to sniff sharply.

Above, on the next rock level, crouched Otan. Like many another wilderness mother in a crisis, she had simulated helplessness, to good purpose, with grim design. Her eyes gleamed fiercely as she watched the swaying movement of that hulking menace below. Now, like a shot, she sprang.

A bellowed "*Woof*" boomed from Mishi's throat as Otan's weight crashed to her back. She reared and attempted to whirl so that she could crush that clinging shape against the sheer wall. But there was no room for such maneuver.

No longer was there a set of puny, immature fangs and claws at her back and neck, but cutters which were swiftly sinking to a death stroke.

There was but one move left to Mishi—a suicidal move, an outward leap which would take her and that clinging cougar shape down to certain death together.

But Otan was prepared. As her fangs struck the great spinal cord, and Mishi whirled to leap, Otan's agile form flung off the she-bear's lacerated back.

MISHI toppled backward and tumbled in a grotesque mass to death on the jagged rocks nearly fifty feet below. But Otan dropped not too heavily onto a slab of rock not more

than ten feet down. She was uninjured in the fall.

For a long moment she listened for sign of life from that pulped mass beneath her, then slowly, cautiously, she began a skillful descent of the cragland.

At the death site, Otan sniffed sharply at the dead form of her most hated rival. No longer would there be anything to fear from the smashing paws and terrible tusks of the silver-tip she-bear.

Otan leaped to a large boulder and poured out a call to Yik. She called again and again, until at last his answer reached her, shrill and clear in the night air.

In a few moments he was down at her flank, muzzling her, running his sleek young shape the full length of hers, making soft throaty sounds of pleasure.

Together they moved back toward the poplar glade, where Utik, the buck lay stiff and stark. As they neared the kill, Otan leaped forward, snarling fiercely. She scattered a half score of small rodents and creatures filled with blood lust.

Circling the buck a time or two, listening for sign of any greater menace, she at last whimpered to Yik, who bounded forward. Swiftly the she-cougar clawed out a large slab of warm flesh for Yik. She tossed this back to him and whispered a husky gasp of contentment as she heard his young fangs slosh into its succulence. Then, and only then, did she begin her own feast.

Otan and her son ate their fill. Young Yik wanted to slink away to the thicket and lie down, so full was his greedy belly. But there was another lesson to be learned. Otan instructed him in the art of burying, or concealing the remains of the deer carcass—a cache of food for another meal. It was routine work for the she-cougar, albeit other lesser or even greater animals might find and clean up the carcass in the meantime.

Satisfied, gasping her complete contentment, Otan at last called to her son, and led him back to the lair where as the grim wilderness throbbed throughout another night of many tragedies, she and Yik slept a long sound sleep.

COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE



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Wrong Way Amundsen

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Explorer, Traveler and Historian—Author of "Campbell of the Black Watch," "Washington's First Railroad," etc.

A YEAR ago a young Irishman set the world by the ears when he started in a plane for Los Angeles, and landed in Ireland—

"Wrong-Way" Corrigan, they called him.

Twenty-eight years ago, a young Norwegian performed a feat of circumambulation that makes Corrigan's flight of something over twenty-five hundred miles in the wrong direction look like a week-end picnic drive along a flowery parkway—"Non-Stop" Amundsen, he could well be called. He headed for the North Pole and ended up by discovering the South Pole—and never even stopped for water.

But there was this fine distinction between the two exploits. Amundsen deliberately went in the direction opposite that for which he started. He admitted it explaining that there was method in the madness that landed him at the bottom of the world when he had started for the top.

The events leading up to that momentous episode of over a quarter of a century ago began in the Norwegian Sea, off the west coast of Norway, between that half of the Scandinavian

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SERIES OF THRILLING
ADVENTURES FROM THE
PAGES OF HISTORY



Amundsen in outfit employed for his dash to the South Pole

A Lion of the North Heads South and Makes Polar History Do a Tailspin!

Peninsula and Iceland. A steamer with white smoke wreaths billowing above it, lifted to the rise and fall of the dark green waves of the icy treacherous sea.

Striding its deck was Captain Roald Amundsen, the intrepid Norwegian explorer who already had made a name for himself that was envied by land-lubbers who only read of his exploits on the bounding main and in the icy wastes of the Arctic. For already he had spent four years in the polar regions of snow and ice and darkness, of glittering Arctic lights, with the six men who had earlier been his companions aboard the small sealing vessel *Gjoa*.

During the course of the *Gjoa* expedition, Amundsen had journeyed from Christiania (now Oslo), Norway, on June 17, 1903, and ultimately arrived in the Bering Sea, off the Alaskan coast of North America on July 11, 1906. The world had hailed him as the *Gjoa's* commander, and the small sealer itself as the first craft to journey from ocean to ocean north of Patagonia.

In Nansen's Wake

Back in Norway, finally, Amundsen made preparation to return to northern Canadian waters, this time better equipped. He organized a new expedition to set out aboard the world-famous vessel, *Fram*. Adventure was in the very name of the ship on which he now sailed, for the *Fram* was the well-known polar ship in which Fridtjof Nansen and Otto Sverdrup had made the great historical "drift" through the north polar regions seventeen years before, in 1893.

The *Fram* was particularly adapted for Amundsen's requirements, because of its peculiar construction. When the exploring vessel was built, Nansen had planned so that it would



Roald Amundsen

be ice resisting. To that end the hull had been built so that the ship would be lifted up on top of the floes when ice formed, instead of being crushed between them.

Nansen had been inordinately proud of that exploration vessel. Even when he had temporarily given up exploring and had retired to his home in Christiania, he ever held a soft spot in his heart for the *Fram*. His villa overlooked the waterfront because he always got a big kick out of seeing the lifeblood of Norway's commerce, and the ships of the country's explorers moving in and out.

It was from the windows of his home that he watched the *Fram* put out to sea, with Captain Roald Amundsen on her deck, and Captain Amundsen's eyes set ahead for the frozen Northern wastes beyond Icelandic waters. Fridtjof Nansen would have given a great deal, Amundsen himself later told me, to have been a member of that exploration party of 1910.

A Change in Plans

It was off the coast of Scotland, when the *Fram* dropped anchor before starting on the long journey across the Atlantic and Arctic oceans, that exciting news reached the expedition. It was news that instantly changed the plans of the young, hardy, determined commander—and changed some potential pages of history, as well as the course of the lives of many courageous men.

That news was that Captain R. F. Scott had departed from England for the South Pole to carry on his own explorations and those of another Englishman, Ernest Shackleton. News had already reached Norway of the discovery of the North Pole during the previous spring, by Commander Robert E. Peary, of the United States.

The rugged-jawed Amundsen called his crew about him.

"Peary has beaten us to the North Pole," he said, "and Scott is heading

southward. Which way do we head?"

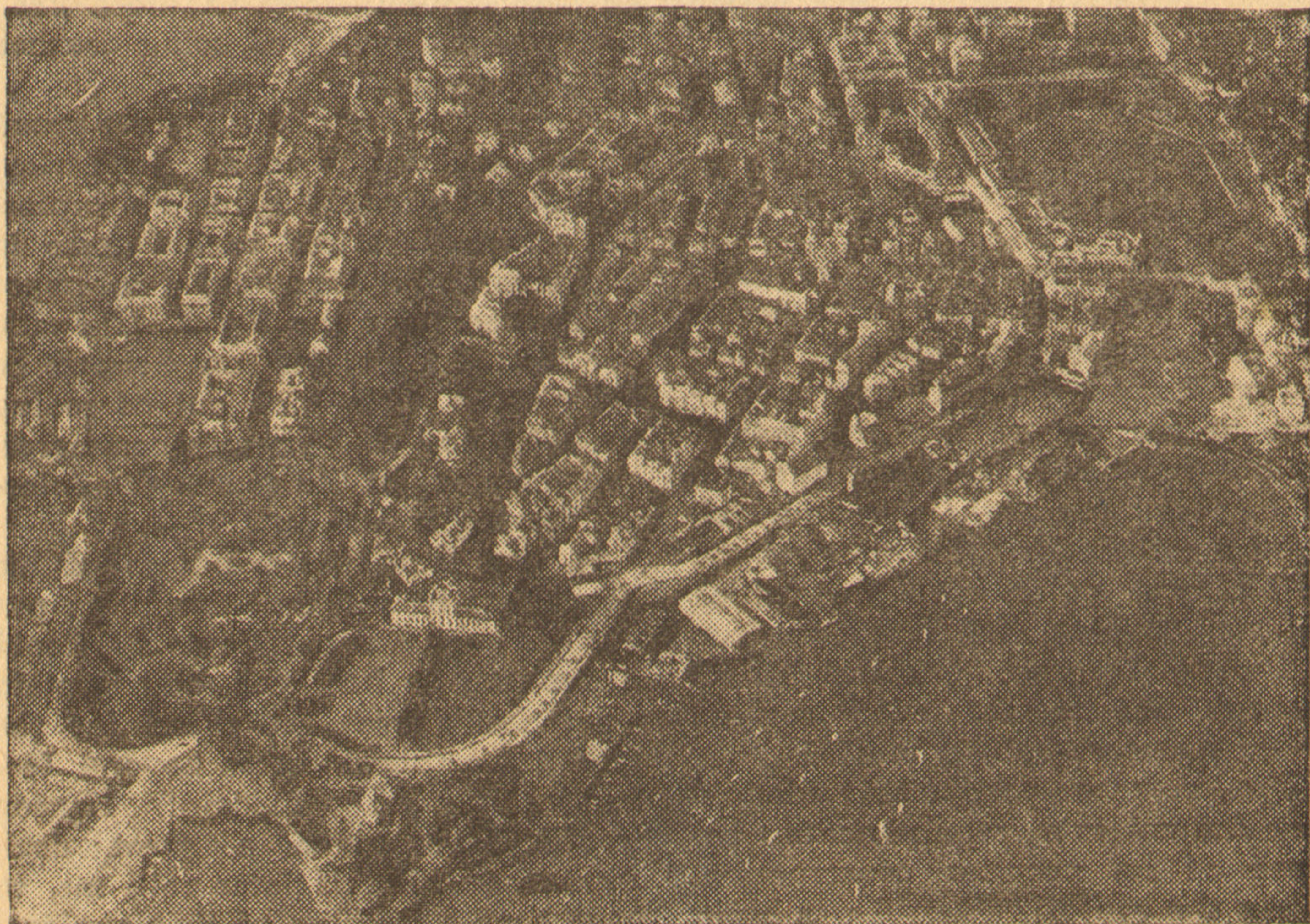
The eyes of the Scandinavians who made up the majority of his crew brightened at the prospect of a dash for the South Pole in friendly competition with their English rivals. There was scarcely need to question what their decision would be.

Captain Amundsen straightened, head up, eyes seeing across the thousands of miles of icy and of tropic seas.

"The *Fram* goes southward," he said. "We will race Captain Scott to the South Pole."

And with that weighty snap decision began one of the longest "wrong-way" non-stop journeys in exploration history.

Captain Amundsen changed his course, and the expedition whose members, as well as those who had wished them God-speed, had believed them heading for the comparatively near north polar regions, turned its



Area on shores of Bergensfjord to be occupied by the International Exhibition of Polar Exploration

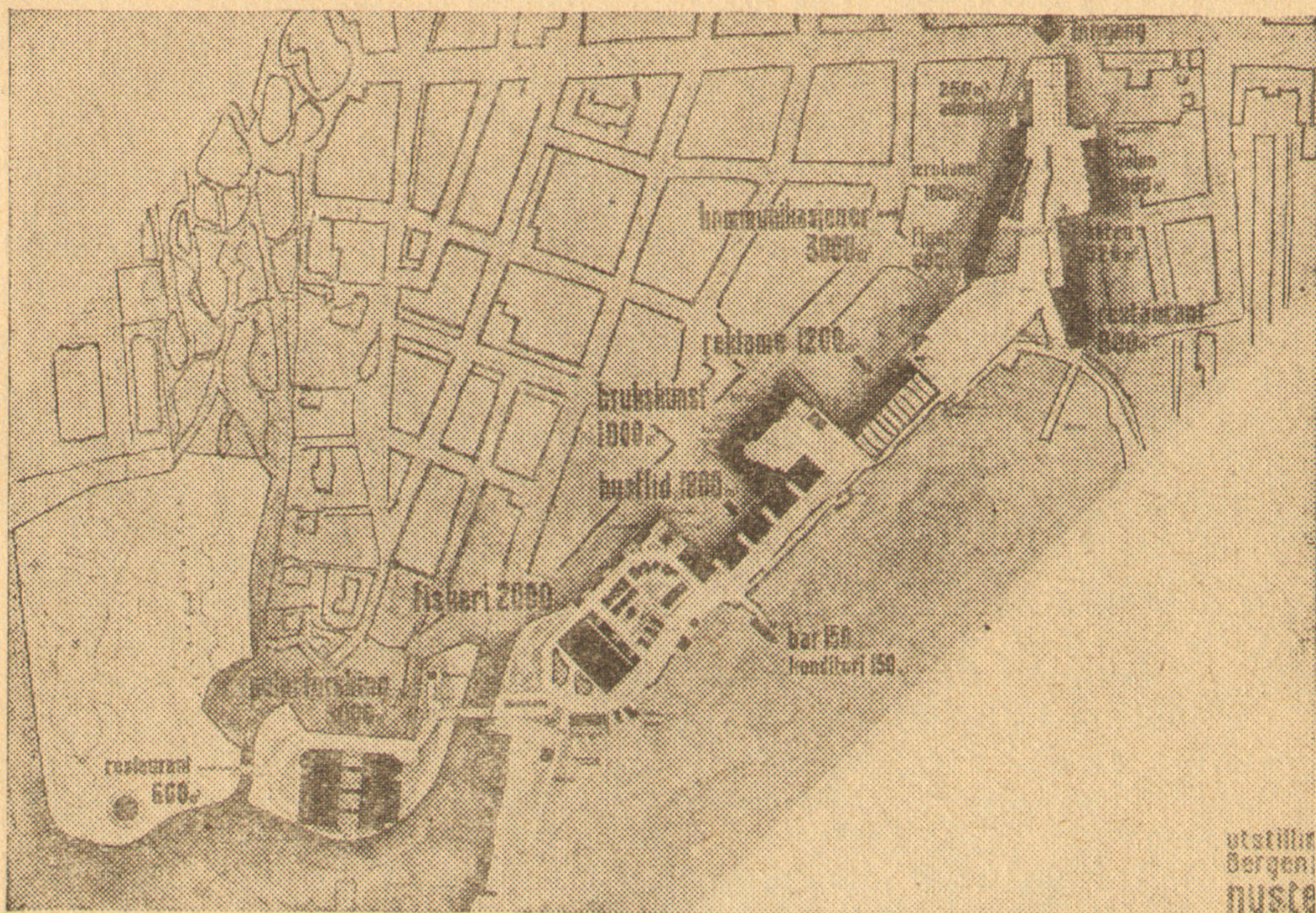


Chart of Exhibit Area—The International Exhibition of Polar Exploration, Bergen, Norway

LEGEND:

polarforsking—polar exploration
fiskeri—fisheries
brukskunst—industrial arts and crafts
kommunikasjoner—communications
veien—highways and transportation
konditori—restaurant and confectionery

husflid—home industries and handicrafts
reklame—advertising and publicity
jernbanen—railways
baten—boats
inngang—entrance
flyet—aircraft

prow into the long ocean path that would lead to the Antarctic.

The *Fram* put in at Madeira, off the coast of Morocco, for outfitting with additional supplies. Then the ship set out, full steam ahead, on the eleven-thousand-mile journey to the Ross Sea.

A Polar Region Veteran

Roald Amundsen's sudden determination to head for the South Pole instead of the North Pole, in order to be the first one there, might have seemed a foolhardy venture to some. But they would not have known the man.

In any exploration venture Roald Amundsen was always careful of his

men—and of himself. Besides, the Antarctic was not entirely unfamiliar to him. He had served as first mate under Captain Adrien de Gerlache, organizer and leader of the Belgian Expedition to the South Pole in 1895-98. The *Belgica*, expedition craft of the Gerlache party, reached seventy-one degrees, thirty minutes south, and while this was no record at the time, they did make valuable scientific discoveries.

Amundsen was determined now, though, that the *Fram's* exploration party should reach the South Pole itself.

Nothing less would satisfy either him or his men.

Naturally, since communication was

not nearly so advanced as it is now, Captain Scott knew nothing of Amundsen's abrupt plan to compete with him for the glory of discovery. The last he had heard, before sailing from England, was that Amundsen was on his way to the north of Canada, probably to explore around King William Land and the Arctic Islands thereabouts.

The Race Is On!

On his arrival in Antarctic waters aboard the *Terra Nova*, Captain Scott ordered anchor dropped on the west side of Ross Island, between the winter quarters he had established on a previous visit in the *Discovery*, from 1901 to 1904, and Cape Royd. The *Terra Nova* carried a capable crew, and aboard was also an extensive scientific staff as aides to Scott.

The Ross Ice Shelf, with its greenish-blue cliffs and its crackling barrier ice formed a formidable backdrop. But to the intrepid explorers, this was only a part of the adventure.

Landing parties were organized immediately. Captain Scott divided the members of his expedition into two parts. One went ashore with Scott himself in charge, while Lieutenant Campbell, with a skeleton crew of six men, was detailed to sail the *Terra Nova* eastward, down along the line of mountains that extend toward the part of the Antarctic Continent below New Zealand, and establish a base on King Edward Land. The *Terra Nova* was skirting in and out of coves on a survey expedition while en route when the Norwegian ship *Fram* was discovered in one of the bays.

It was the surprise of a lifetime for Lieutenant Campbell and his crew, and the young lieutenant expressed that when he and his crew went aboard the Norwegian vessel. With twinkling eyes Amundsen made formal inquiry about Scott and his party—but Englishmen and Norwegians alike knew one indisputable fact, though no word of it was spoken.

The race for the Pole was on!

Both the Amundsen and Scott parties camped on the edge of the Ross Ice Barrier. Amundsen ordered the *Fram* to Buenos Aires, to remain there for the winter. Scott sent the *Terra Nova* to the winter base at Cape Adare, just inside the Antarctic Circle.

Different Methods

British and Norwegian commanders each had definite ideas about the best methods to be employed in the forthcoming attempt at conquest of the ice-bound South Pole. And it was the difference in these methods that eventually was the difference between success and failure.

Scott's polar party started from Cape Evans on October 24, 1911, in three groups, to act independently of each other, with the expectation that at least one party would get through. One group headed into the bitter sub-zero temperatures on motor-sledges, another rode shaggy ponies inured to cold, and the third carried its duffle on dog sledges.

Captain Amundsen, hardy Norseman that he was, followed an entirely different procedure. Captain Scott had reached the Barrier ahead of him, and the British expedition was more highly organized and better equipped. But that, the Norwegians grimly determined, should prove no handicap for them.

They went about their preparations for their dash to the Pole with deliberation. Carefully they cached their supplies, parceling out what was deemed necessary for each man's requirements during the trek. These supplies were carried by the fifty-two dogs they had brought along, when at last they were set to go—four days before Captain Scott left his base!

Discovery!

There were no motor-sledges; no ponies. Instead, when the members of Captain Roald Amundsen's explo-

ration party set out, each man was on skis—the traditional method of winter locomotion in Norway. A much smaller party than Scott's, also; for there were only four men besides the determined leader.

They cut inland around the Ross Shelf ice, and moved across one side of Queen Maud's Range, until they reached the Axel Heiberg glacier at eighty-five degrees, south latitude. Here Amundsen and his men scaled the glacier and pointed for the Pole. Moving steadily along, their goal was in sight—was reached!—on December 14, 1911.

As casually as though he had merely reached a proposed picnic spot, Amundsen erected a tent and spent the next three days at the Pole. That, he was certain, should satisfy anyone of his claim to squatter rights for Norway on the southernmost tip of the earth. Satisfied himself, then, and well rested, he and his four men set out on the return trip to the coast—a trip that took only five weeks. And when he arrived he still had twelve dogs left and ample food supplies for some time more in the frozen wastes.

Scott Against Odds

In the meantime, the members of Scott's three divisions of explorers had known a heartbreaking six weeks after they had turned their eyes toward the same goal. The motor-sledge expedition bogged down almost before it got started. The last of the ponies was shot when the expedition had pushed well up into the shadow of Mount Markham, at eighty-three degrees, thirty minutes south.

It was here that the mournful realization came to the fagged adventurers that it would also be best to send the dog teams back.

"We'll make it, though—we've got to!" Captain Scott insisted, with jaws set tight and teeth gritted in determination. "We have not come this far, only to fail. We've only six and a half

degrees to go before we reach the Pole! We've got to get there!"

And he tried—tried courageously and heartbreakingly—with eleven members of his original party and three hand-drawn sledges. Eleven, because others, disheartened by their grueling experience in the bitterness of this Antarctic December, had already turned back.

Desperate as they were all becoming, though, the spirits of the scattered remnants of the Scott expedition lifted when on the morning of December 10 they reached the foot of the Beardmore Glacier, a natural pathway to the Pole. Clear sailing now, it looked—and not much further!

Too Late

Unaware that Roald Amundsen had already reached the Pole, Scott's party plodded ahead through the wind-blown ice particles, and over the frozen surface of the Beardmore Glacier. On December 21, four members of the party, with one of the sledges, were sent back, after having reached eighty-five degrees, seven minutes south latitude. The rest moved ahead for another ten days, when finally supplies began running so low that with sinking spirits once more Scott realized there would not be enough to keep alive even the small group of men left with him.

Therefore, when they had reached eighty-six degrees, fifty-six minutes, a little more than three degrees from the Pole, Lieutenant E. R. G. R. Evans turned back with two of his companions. They had already suffered untold hardships, and before they finished the terrific trip back to the coast they almost died of scurvy, brought on by malnutrition.

Remaining with Scott were Captain Oates, Petty-Officer Edgar Evans, Dr. E. A. Wilson, and Lieutenant Bowers. With one sledge, and equipment originally designed for four men they pushed ahead. They reached the Pole—brought up to the goal of their de-

sires for which they had suffered agonies—on January 18, 1912, a month after Amundsen's departure.

But even before they put foot on the spot that is the southernmost extremity of the world's axis, they knew they were too late. Amundsen had been there before them. Amundsen had left proof!

Antarctic Tragedy

Dully they gazed at the tent, flying the flag of Norway, in this wild, cold spot so far from the world they knew, a sight so incongruous here. And their hearts sank below the sub-zero of the air they breathed. Too late! The Norwegian had won. This tent of his, the records of discovery he had left, were proof positive. For eighty-seven days they had been searching for this historic spot—only to be forestalled by Amundsen and his valiant Norsemen.

Even this distressing disappointment, however, was not the last burden that Scott and his party had to bear. They encountered bad weather on the way back. One disaster after another befell the party. Petty-Officer Edgar Evans collapsed on the Beardmore Glacier after one day's weary march shoreward, and died on February 17, 1912. Captain Oates shortly afterward found himself at the end of his strength and, not wishing to be a burden to the other suffering members of the party, crawled away from the tent unseen one night, staggered to his feet, and plunged off into the blizzard. He was never heard from after that grim St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 1912.

The three survivors heroically struggled on for another ten miles, and finally pitched their tent halfway between two supply bases. The next morning, when they were preparing to go on, they were hemmed in by a blizzard that raged over the Antarctic Ice Cap for nine days. It was the end for Scott and the two men who had fought to a desperately bitter finish.

They did not have the strength to go on. . . .

Amundsen's Greatest Regret

Knowing nothing whatever of the trials that were befalling his friendly rival, Amundsen completed his work on the Ice Barrier, awaited the return of the *Fram* from Buenos Aires, and sailed for Norway in the spring of 1912, arriving home early in 1913. Not until then did he know that the Scott expedition had not been heard from—and no one better than he, who knew the terrors of that icy Antarctic land, could guess what had befallen it in that merciless land.

Later events proved his surmise correct. Search parties were sent out during the summer and fall of 1912, but it was not until November 12, 1912, that a party under the leadership of Dr. Atkinson finally stumbled upon the tent, located the frozen bodies, and found the record of their last harrowing experiences during the grim blizzard.

I met Roald Amundsen several times in Oslo, Bergen and Spitsbergen. He spoke often of the North Pole Expedition that went to the South Pole. And one of the bitter regrets of his life was that he had not known of Scott's distress so that he could have gone to his aid. He would have gone, too, if it had meant his own life, for in Roald Amundsen was the stuff of which heroes are made, the self-sacrificing instinct that makes a man lay down his life, not only for a friend, but for any human being who is a victim of adversity.

In the end, he did give his life—gladly—for another man, when he set out to search for General Umberto Nobile, commander of the ill-fated dirigible *Italia*. No one who was in Norway at that time, as I was, will ever forget the despair over the loss of this hero. For the Amundsen Rescue Expedition was lost in the Arctic—and Roald Amundsen never came back.

The Pride of Norway

Norway is proud, not only of its own Arctic and Antarctic heroes, but also pays homage to the heroes of all lands. The monument to Captain Robert Scott on one of the heights on the mountain railway route between Bergen and Oslo is testimony to that. The country has been host to Ellsworth, Byrd, Sir Hubert Wilkins, and many other English, American, and European explorers who have gone into the ice-covered regions. The Norwegians made them heartily welcome and sent them on their way with fervent God-speeds.

During a dinner at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, on his visit to the United States, at which I was a guest, Crown Prince Olav called my attention to the fact that besides his present activity in connection with the Norwegian Pavilion at the New York World's Fair, he is also serving as Honorary President of the International Exhibition of Polar Exploration to be held at Bergen, Norway, in 1940.

Curiosity, and a deep interest in this subject, prompted me to go further into this matter. I discovered that many interesting plans are being made for this festival to commemorate the activities of Nansen, Amundsen, Sverdrup, Scott, Shackleton, Byrd, Weddell, Balchen, Bennett and all those other famous and even the little known men who have pushed the frontiers of the world to the northward and to the southward despite adversities.

A Triple Feature

The committee, organized in 1936, has spent the past three years completing plans, and has finally assembled a triple feature that will encompass most of the modern knowledge concerning the polar regions. The exploration section will include three sub-divisions:

a. Voyages of Exploration: Charts showing routes of expeditions, models of

vessels, airships and airplanes, instruments, equipment (clothing, tents, charts, etc.), diaries, photographs, original and printed charts.

b. Permanent Stations: Meteorological and other bases. Maps showing the position of stations; photographs and information about the stations' activities and their personnel.

c. Special scientific studies.

A second section will be devoted to presentation of natural conditions in the areas such as the Arctic Ocean, Greenland, Jan Mayen Land, Spitsbergen, Franz Josef Land, Novaya Zemlya, the Arctic Archipelagoes of Asia and America, the Asiatic and American mainlands bordering on the Arctic Ocean, and the Antarctic Continent with its surrounding seas and islands.

The third division will be in two sections, under the general heading of "Inhabitants of the Polar Regions." They will be:

a. The peoples of the Polar Regions; archeological and ethnographical material, charts and diagrams showing density of population, as well as civilizing efforts and economic and hygienic progress among the Arctic peoples.

b. The economic exploitation of the polar regions by civilized man: including whaling, sealing, trapping, fishing, industrial development, communications, tourist traffic and administration.

The Exhibition's grounds, located along Bergen's Waterfront, will cover an area of thirty or more acres, and will be accessible to visitors by steamer, railway, airplane and car. It will run from May to September, 1940.

Here, indeed, will be a wealth of Arctic and Antarctic treasure, gathered at the expense of the lives of real heroes; at the ready disposal now of anyone who loves the breath of adventure.

NOTE: Photos in this feature are used by courtesy of Norwegian Government Railways.

Ace Jordanan

By
BOB
MACKAY

REPORTS OF A SERIOUS
CRISIS IN SOUTH AMERICA RE-
SULTED IN MY ASSIGNMENT TO
INVESTIGATE THE SITUATION.
I WAS JOINED BY A BRAZILIAN
OPERATIVE, DONNA
INCALLA

IT WAS THE YEAR 2239. IN
AN ANCIENT INCA CITY A
WHITE MAN, KNOWN AS THE
EQUATOR, HAD ESTABLISHED
A GOVERNMENT AND WAS AT-
TEMPTING TO INFLICT HIS NEW
STATE, A KIND OF SUPER-
COMMUNISM WHICH HE CALLED
EQUATISM, UPON THE WORLD.
ALREADY HE HAD OVERCOME
THE NATIVE INCAS AND MADE
THEM HIS SLAVES.

AFTER AN INCREDIBLE
SERIES OF ADVENTURES, DONNA
AND I HAD BLOWN UP THE LOST
INCA GOLD MINE. WITH THIS GOLD
THE EQUATOR WAS FLOODING
THE WORLD, DISRUPTING INTER-
NATIONAL MONETARY SYSTEMS.

HOWEVER, IN THE EX-
PLOSION, A FAULTY ROCK
FORMATION BEHIND US SLIPPED,
BLOCKING A TUNNEL, AND
WE WERE BURIED ALIVE.

IT BECAME SO HOT AND STUFFY WE DISCARD-
ED OUR GLASS UNIFORMS

WELL, THIS IS CERTAINLY
THE END, DONNA!

YES-- BUT, TELL
ME, WHAT HAS
HAPPENED SINCE I
WAS DRUGGED BY THE
HIGH PRIEST? I CAN'T
REMEMBER A THING!

I RECOUNTED THE ADVENTURES WE HAD
PASSED THROUGH, THE NEW RAY-GUN PER-
FECTED BY THE EQUATOR, AND WHAT
I BELIEVED TO BE HIS PLANS, WHEN
SUDDENLY I WAS STRUCK BY AN IDEA

SAY-- HAD THERE BEEN NO
FRESH AIR HERE, WE WOULD
HAVE SUFFOCATED LONG AGO!
LET'S INVESTIGATE!

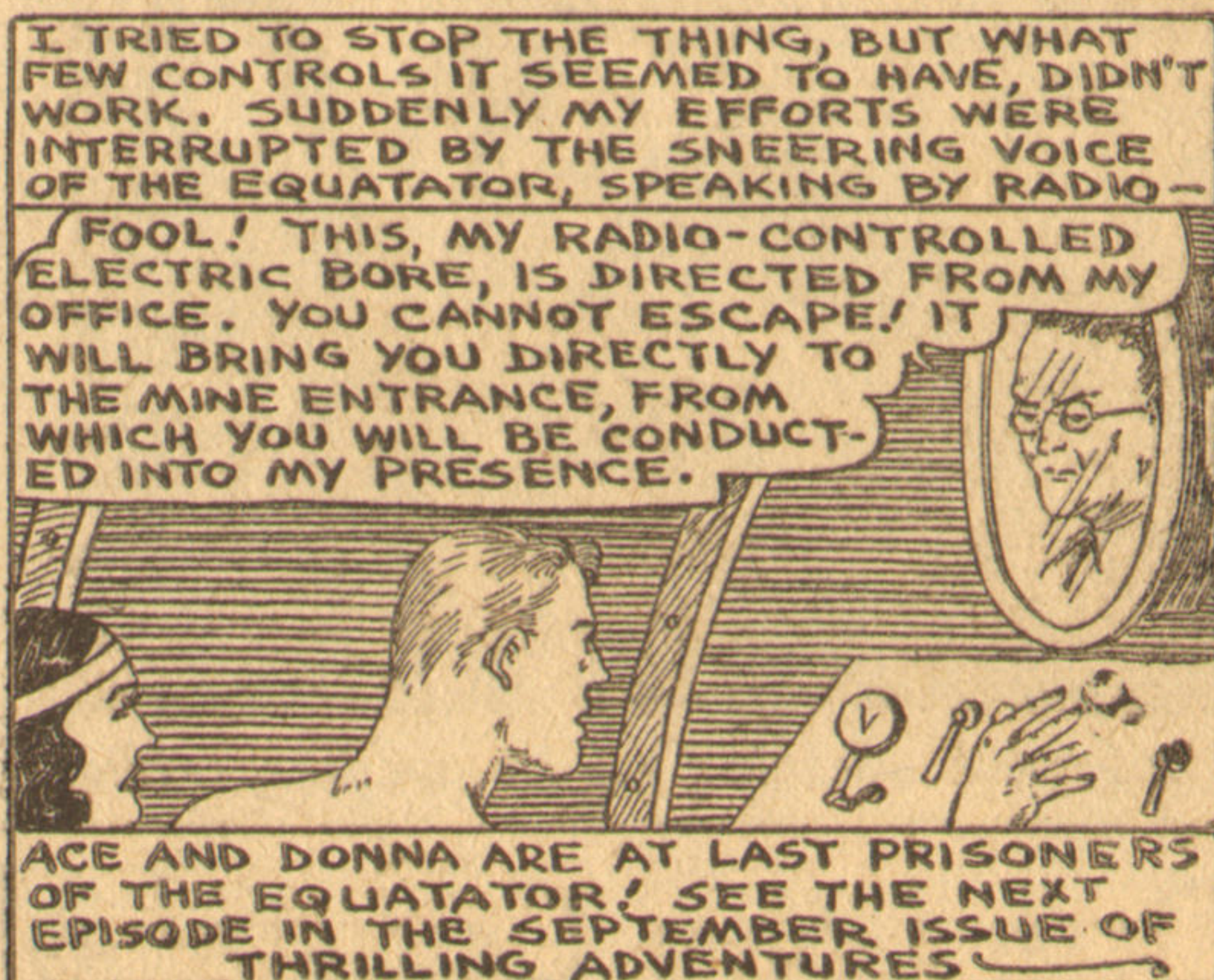
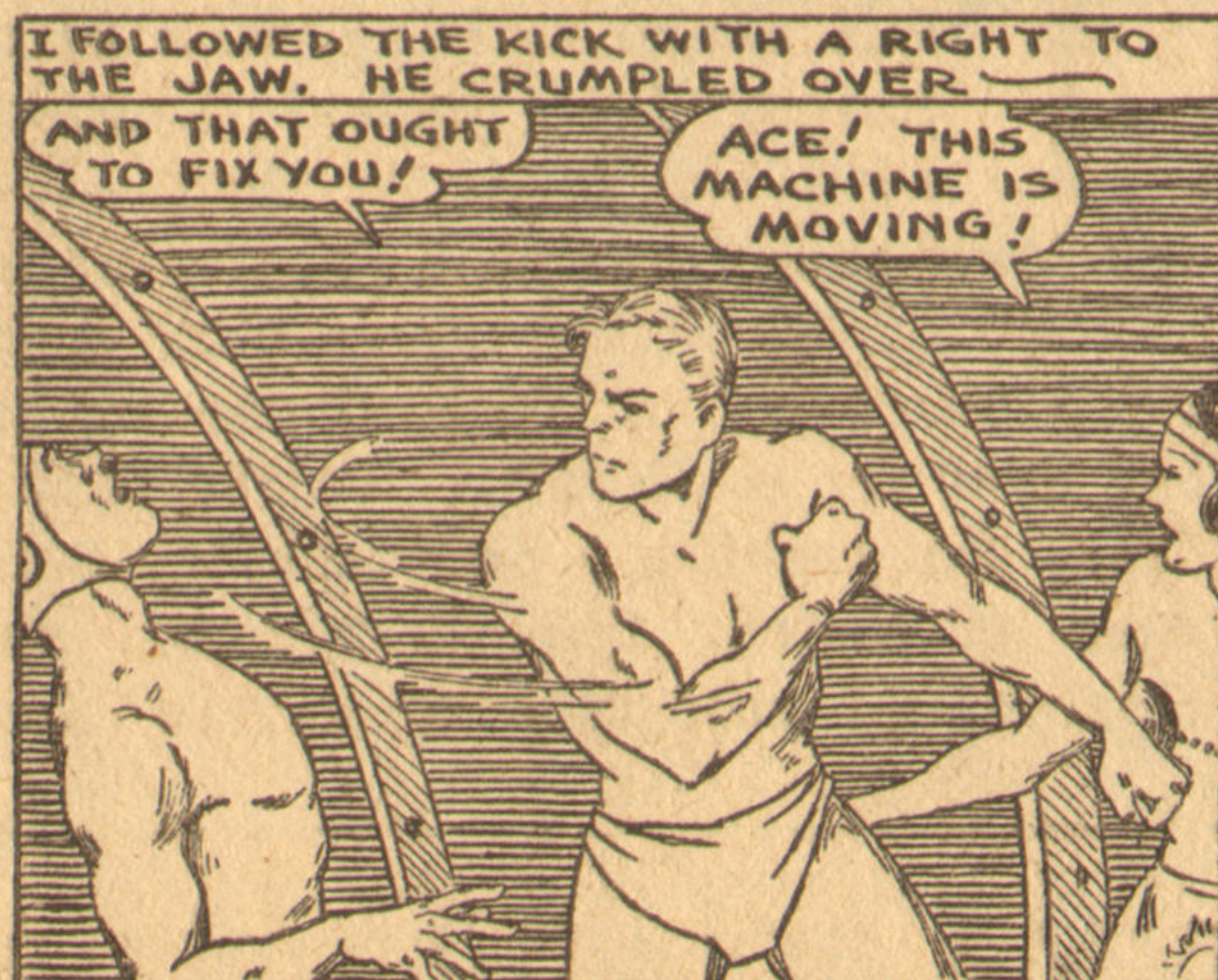
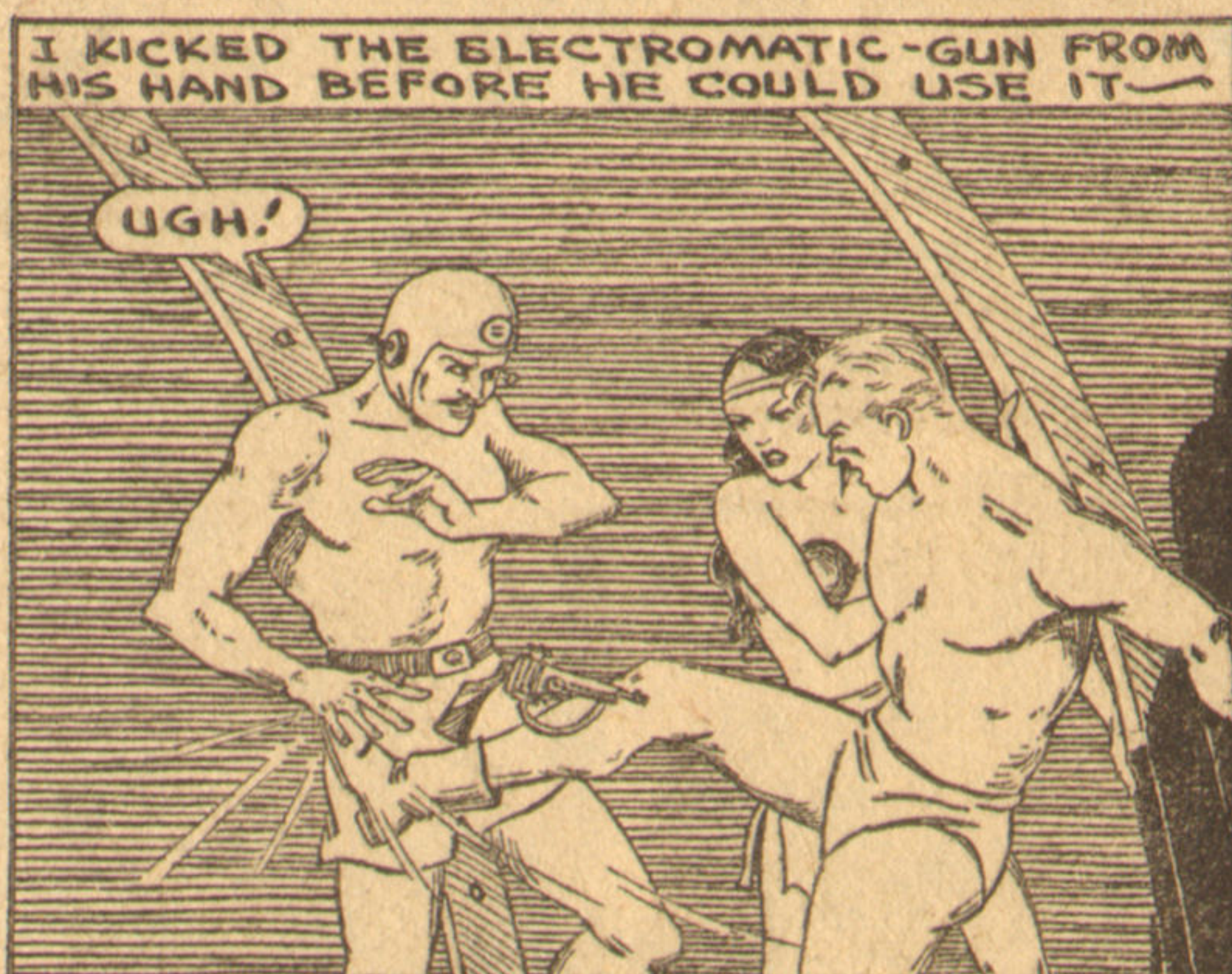
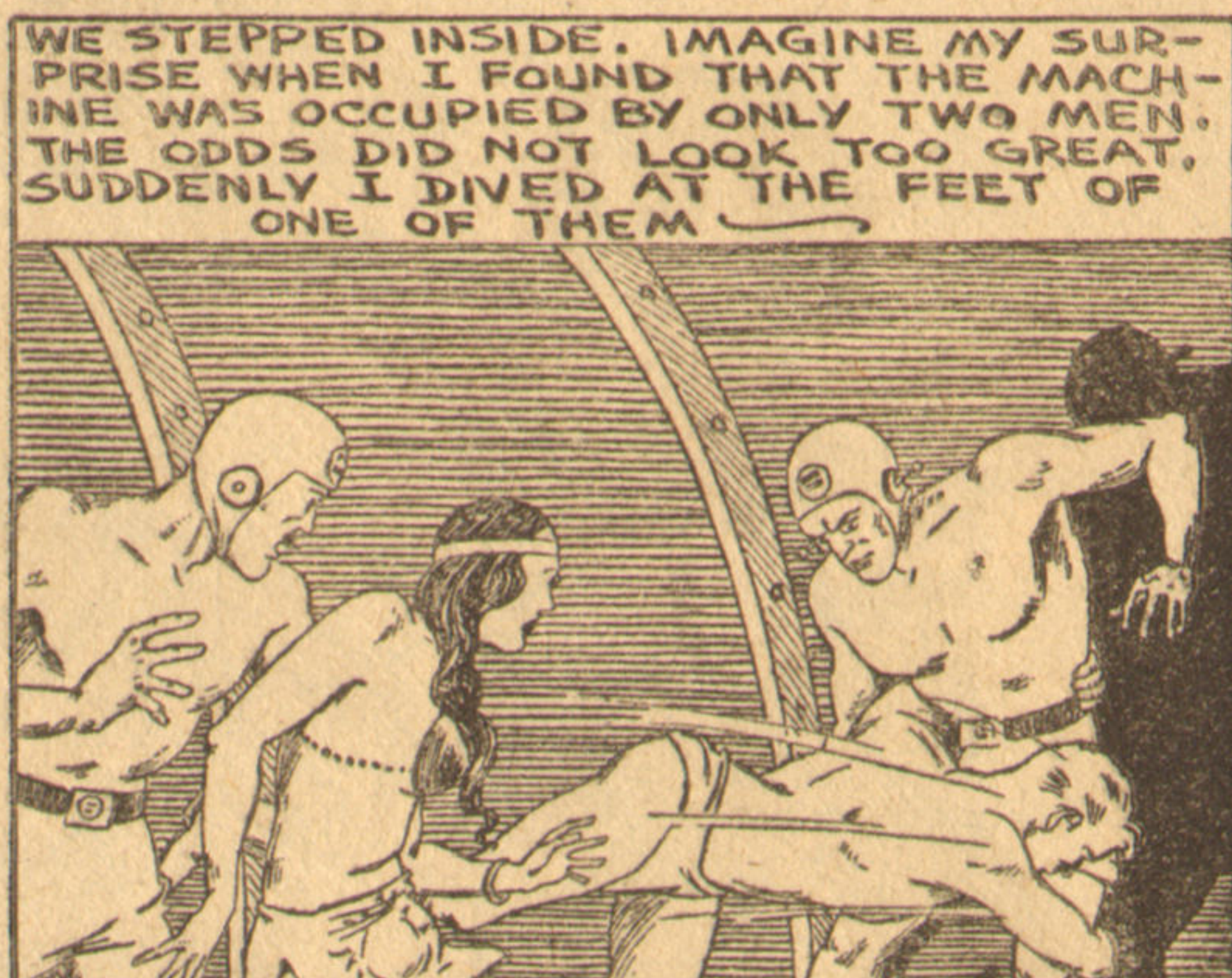
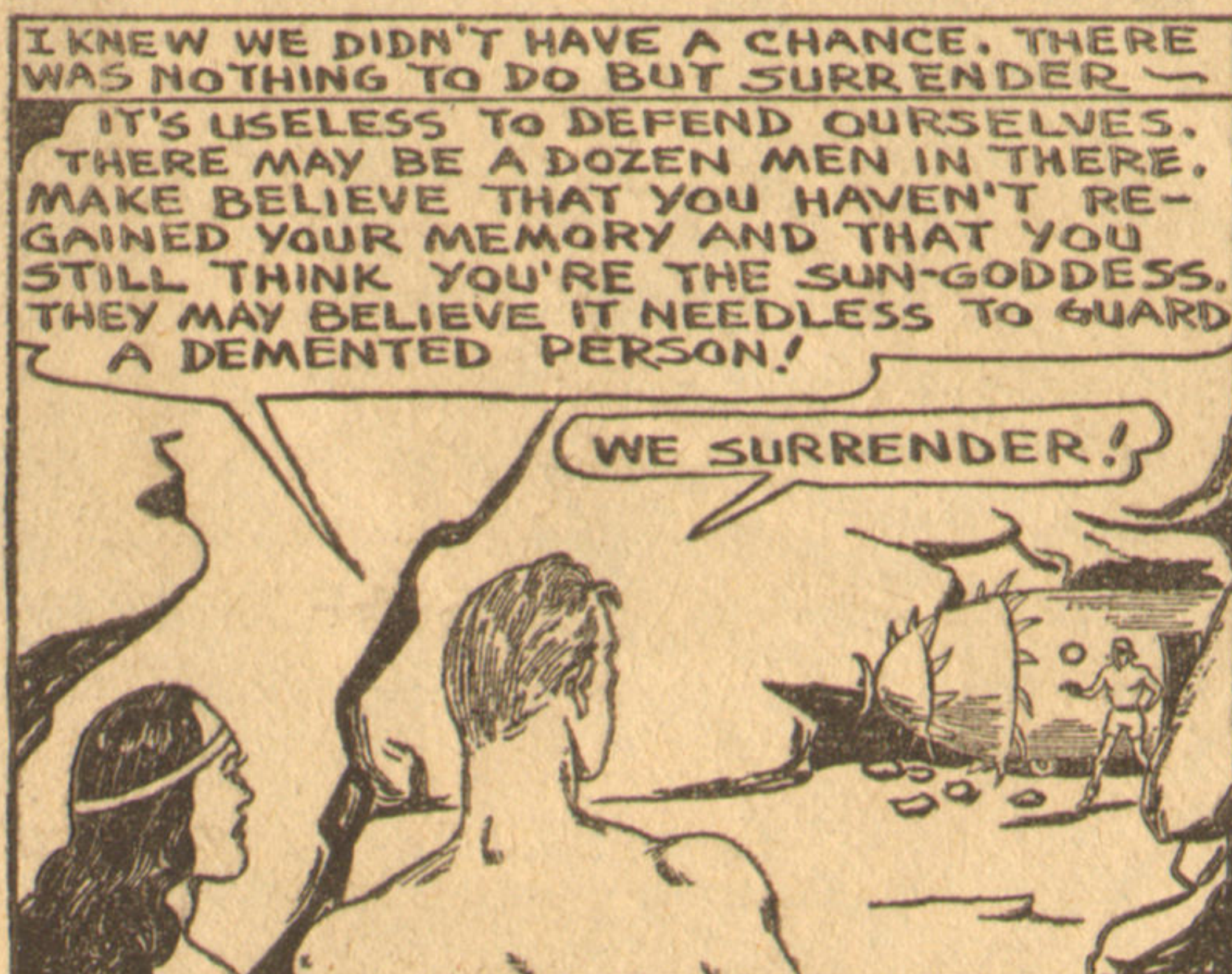
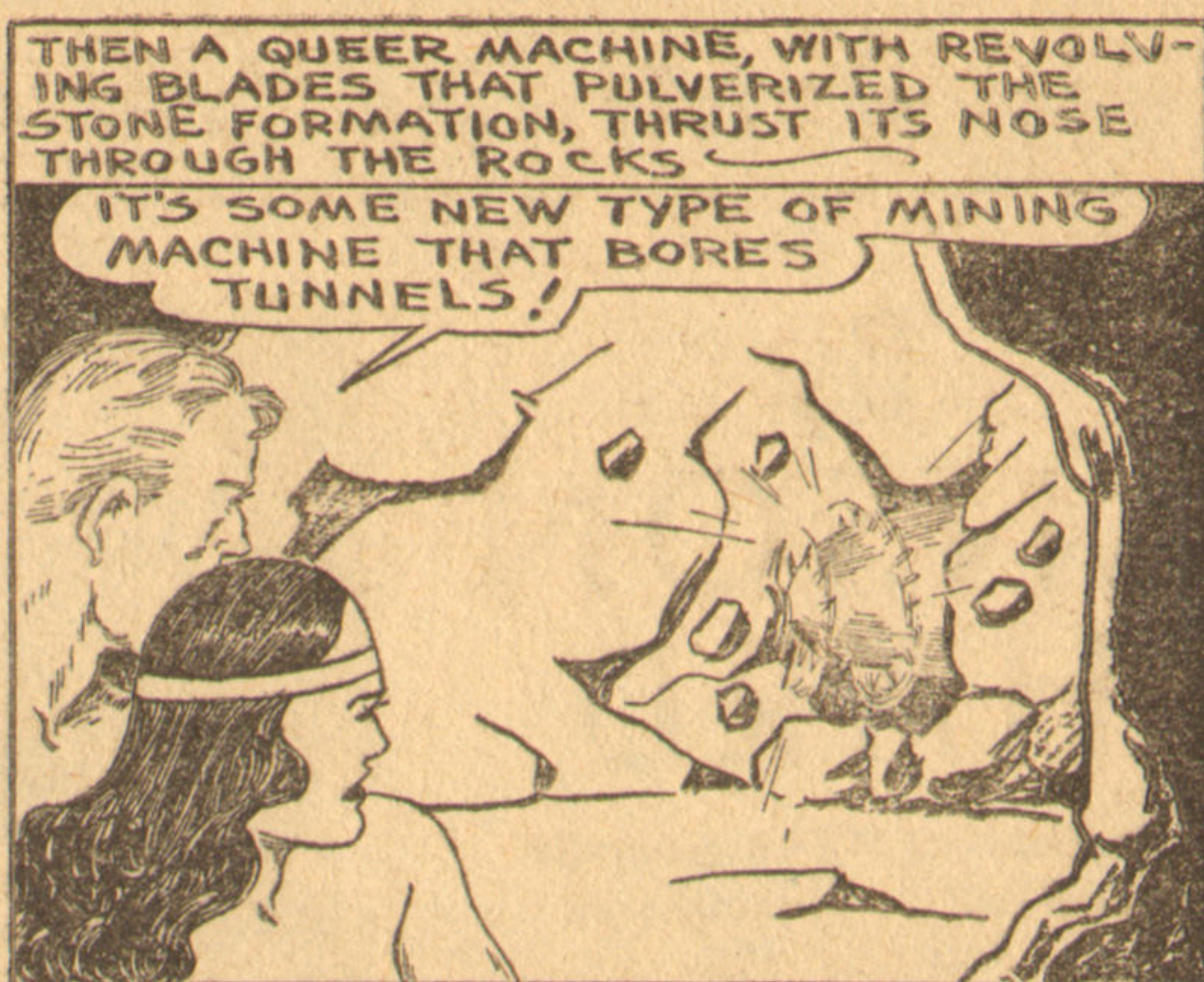
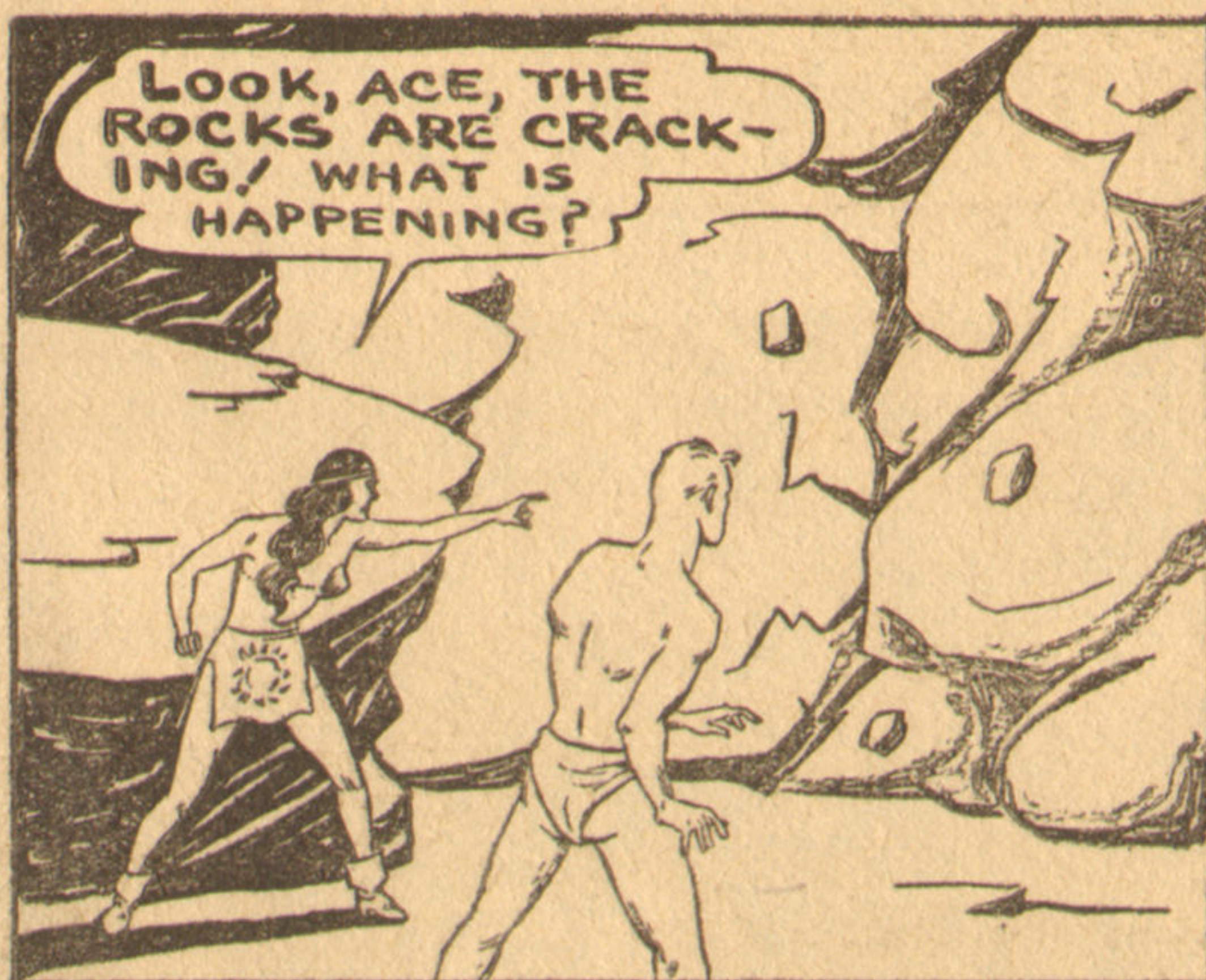
THAT'S
RIGHT!

HERE'S THE PLACE. FRESH
AIR COMING IN-- ENOUGH
TO KEEP US ALIVE,
ANYWAY!

BUT THAT CREVICE DOES US
LITTLE GOOD. IT WILL KEEP US
ALIVE-- SO THAT WE MAY DIE
OF THIRST AND STARVATION!
WE HAVE NOTHING WITH WHICH
TO TRY AND DIG OUR WAY OUT!

LISTEN, ACE! HEAR THAT RUMBLING IN
THE EARTH? IS IT AN EARTHQUAKE?

NO-- IT CAN'T BE. IT'S TOO
STEADY A RUMBLE--
TOO CONTINUOUS
IN VOLUME!



Fierce Moros Infest the Hill Country,

By
**ANSON
HARD**

Author of "The League
of Fear," "Slaughter
Island," etc.



They were pressing on Logan like terriers

Knives

CHAPTER I

In the Dark

THE sharp rattling bark of a jungle deer jerked Captain Phil Logan from sleep. He lay for seconds staring up at the black canopy of *luan* trees above him. The deep obscurity of a Mindanao night lay over the trail camp. Thirty paces from the captain a constabulary soldier crouched, the muzzle of his Springfield rifle making a thin line

One Lone Constabulary Captain Fights a

Exacting a Terrible Toll of Death!

A Complete
Novelet



of the Jungle

above his shoulder in the shadows.

"What is it, Augusto?"

The soldier held his left hand out, palm down, a universal signal for quiet.

"I do not know, sir. I think I hear someone coming, but now all is still. *Magahats*, perhaps Datu Inda. The bark of the deer so late in the night—"

Datu Inda!

Phil Logan scrambled up, reaching for his service automatic. If the moun-

tain *magahats*, or raiders, were about, those *krismen* meant trouble.

Datu Inda—the thorn in the side of the Philippine Constabulary. For five years this mountain chief had evaded capture, raiding and pillaging from Agusan to Cotabato. His men with *barongs* and *krises* and crude pipe guns were a scourge. An Inda had the cunning of a fox.

That was why Logan was here. A detachment of constabulary soldiers under Lieutenant Mata had been sent

Bitter Battle Against Heavy Bandit Odds!

northward from Davao to war against this crafty *magahat*. Inda, outgeneralizing the inexperienced Mata, had penned the detachment in a mud fort on the Pulangi River. Logan, with the reputation of a scrapper, had been ordered south from Misamis to take charge of the detachment.

"Wake up Pena," he ordered calmly. "If Inda's men are prowling around we'll be ready."

His eyes made a quick survey of his own camp. Beside the bundles of baggage two *cargadores*, or porters, were curled like cats. A little farther from the fire two other men lay, Steve Govern and a native named Nicanor Alvaro.

Logan stepped lightly past the fire and touched Govern on the leg. The big white man's unshaved face was churlish in repose, and he threw out an arm fretfully against his tormentor.

LOGAN wished he did not have Govern and that ugly native, Alvaro, on his hands. He had encountered them that afternoon, lost—or so they said. Govern was a scout for a rubber company, and had come into central Mindanao searching for plantation sites. He and his native helper had been traveling in circles in the jungle. An altogether possible story, yet—

Govern came abruptly awake. His lips curled in a snarl.

"Whata you want?"

Logan would like to have told him to jump in the Pulangi, but he spoke calmly.

"There may be a little trouble. You better get ready. Got a gun with you?"

Govern snapped erect.

"Gun? Hell, no! The damn constabulary in Malabang wouldn't let me carry one. Whata you mean, trouble?"

Alvaro rose to a squat. His dark face with the coal-black hair above it looked like an ape's in the firelight. Logan would not have trusted him as

a guide or anything else, but he was a fit partner for Govern.

Logan barked orders to the *cargadores* to pile wood on the fire. Pena, the other constabulary soldier, had already slipped to the far side of the camp and crouched, listening.

A heavy hand fell on Logan's shoulder and swung him around. Steve Govern's glowering face was inches from his own.

"Don't build up the fire, you fool! You'll draw them damn bolo slingers right on us."

Logan struck down the hand. "And have no light to sight a rifle? Darkness is just what those *barong* men want."

"I say take to the brush—scatter—"

"Listen, buddy." Logan's voice was hard and cold. "If you've got no use for your head, just try that. Inda's men would slice your head loose in five minutes."

Augusto suddenly whipped up his rifle and called a sharp command. His Springfield spat with startling vehemence. A scream went up from the blackness of the mountainside.

Then hell exploded about the camp.

The rustling of brush was like the downwhip of a mountain blast. A terrific "A-ah-e-e!", the Moro battle call, tore through the *luan* trees. Shifting, bare-torsoed men leaped into the outer circle of light. Reflected flames ran like runnels of molten metal along bare blades.

Pena's rifle opened with a throaty roar. Augusto fired again and a plunging Moro wilted in midair. The two *cargadores* threw themselves flat, babbling.

Logan's voice rose above the hubbub.

"Back, Pena—Augusto! Make a close circle around the fire. Make every shot count!"

His own automatic was spitting. He saw one jerking dervish of a fellow go down, then another. The on-plunging Moros scattered and fell back. He caught another rag-turbaned Moro be-

low the shoulder and saw him knocked flat by the slug as he took more flash shots at the shifting figures. Pena raced back and squatted, back toward the captain, his rifle clearing the brush on that side. With Augusto to close in the circle they could give these devils the bellyful they asked for.

A SCREAM lifted from the left. Logan whirled to see three krismen close upon Augusto as he retreated. The constabulary soldier dropped one not two yards in front of the Springfield, then swung his empty rifle like a flail.

"Watch close, Pena!" Logan yelled, and leaped toward Augusto.

One of the attackers faced the oncoming officer, drew back his arm. Logan let him have it without taking time to aim. The wavy blade of a kris flashed above Logan's head.

For one stilling instant Logan's blood went cold at the sight of bare steel—then he was plunging downward.

The blade went over his shoulder, carried by its own weight. Something gnawed at the heel of Logan's boot. He was in a welter of arms and legs. A gloating cry lifted. He swept his assailant clear and half rose. His automatic had been knocked from his hand. His hat was gone. A ring of krismen was closing like hunters on the kill. Half turned, he saw Augusto go down, his rifle slithering out in front of him.

Logan's fingers closed upon the barrel of the Springfield. With one hand he swept it about him even before he rose, and heard the crunch of wood on bone. Then he was on his feet, beating at the ghoulis faces. From far away, it seemed, Pena's rifle kept up an intermittent fire.

Logan struck down the nearest head, wondering what had become of Steve Govern. He felt the responsibility of letting an American—an unarmed one—fall beneath the knives of Inda's devils.

They were pressing on Phil Logan now like terriers on a wolfhound. Rag turbans were bobbing, *barongs* flashing. He struck and struck again at the circle of dark visages.

His breath was a fire in his throat. His lungs were tightening as if pressed by iron bands. The stock of the rifle was nicked and splintered by blades. He swept it about him again and again as despair crept into his brain.

Slowly, irresistibly Captain Phil Logan was shoved back. Inch by inch, yard by yard, he was forced farther from the fire. The half-wrecked Springfield was growing heavy in his hands.

Brush broke away behind him. Across those turbaned heads the fire was no longer visible. Only the starlight and the shifting movements of his assailants. He gave one more full-armed blow, stepped back, and the earth dropped from beneath his foot.

He seemed to totter on the brink of nothingness. In that second of wavering balance the fact shot home to him that the barking of Pena's Springfield was stilled. They must have got him!

A lean, corded hand seized the stock of the rifle as Logan, unbalanced, aimed one last futile blow. The ring of gaping faces was like a cordon of gargoyles. He was dropping, falling.

One wild thought split the American captain's mind. Was this the end? No pain—just falling, falling.

He struck heavily, seemed to pause on a shelving grade and then rolled on. The mountainside tore loose all about him. He heard the tear and grind of caving earth and rock as, half buried, he was carried along in an avalanche of falling earth.

A stone leaped from the pitch darkness to meet him, and after that total blackness and quiet. . . .

CAPTAIN PHIL LOGAN groped his way back to consciousness with a splitting head. His body was enveloped in tons of weight. He could

not move his legs, and pain racked every muscle.

If the darkness of the mountainside had been dense before, it was an impenetrable pit now. He tried to turn his head, but everywhere that oppressive inkiness baffled him. It took minutes to realize that he was half buried in stones and dirt. With his left arm, all of his body that was free, he began to shove away the fallen mass.

With each movement, pain lifted scaldingly from the calves of his legs. Yet action alone brought clarity to his throbbing head.

He did not know how long he had been out. An ominous silence hung everywhere, yet he could not be a hundred yards from the mountain camp. Had the murderous hillmen left? Why hadn't they finished him while he lay helpless? What had happened to the others?

His right arm was free now, and he sat up. With a last effort he pulled his legs free. Above, the stars gleamed in a narrowed circle; but walls of blackness hemmed him in.

He hobbled forward only to run into the sheer, smooth wall of a cliff. This must be the bank down which he had stumbled. He began to move to the left, feeling along the vertical wall, stumbling over boulders and accumulated detritus. Brush tore at him. At times he could mount for several yards, but always the straight cliff reared up to block him like a prison wall.

Panic came to Logan. He stumbled on regardless of the pain in his legs. Hot physical combat, man against man, he could understand; but to be a rat in an unknown well was different.

Action was the only remedy for his shaken nerves. Always his right hand felt along that wall, his feet stumbling on a path he could not see. One hour, two hours—his time sense refused to function—and he was again at the droppings of the avalanche where he had dug free.

He had made the circuit of the valley and there was no ascent!

A hot imprecation rose to his lips. No wonder the hill krismen had not followed him. He had heard of these sunken valleys, age-old craters, remnants of the era when volcanic forces had lifted the mountains of Mindanao. But to be imprisoned alive in one—

Somewhere, over on the Pulangi, Lieutenant Mata waited for a man who could lead the war against Inda. And old Inda, the mountain fox, had hamstrung his enemies by removing Captain Phil Logan!

CHAPTER II

Shoulder Bars



DAWN crept toward the zenith in a slow sheet of gray, blanking the stars. Logan waited with an impatience that was galling. The night hum of the jungle, the chorus of lizards, toads, and flying insects died to almost complete silence. The sun reflected in yellow radiance on the peaks to the west before Logan could see across his imprisoning valley.

At sight of the old crater, his despair increased. The cupped depression was not deep, but twelve to twenty feet of straight wall was as unscalable as a thousand. No man alive could pull himself up those sheer acclivities unaided.

Logan again began the circuit of the valley, searching for a possible slant or break that had escaped him in the darkness. He stumbled across the remains of a deer, skin taut over a protruding skeleton. Dead of starvation or age, and not even a wild hog to tear the carcass.

Not until he was halfway around did a backward glance reveal to him a possibility. Above the detritus of the avalanche he had brought down, a thin

fissure showed, no wider than a man's body. It lifted jaggedly to the valley's rim. He turned and raced back across the crater floor.

It was almost inviting death to creep into that fissure with the loose earth and stones ready to cave and bury him. Ticklish work, but desperation gave him nerve. He plowed up the slant of fallen earth and worked shoulders and legs into the fissure. By pressing outward with his feet he made purchase. Inch by inch he edged upward. Once a small section caved and fell over him. He shook the clayey mass from head and shoulders and proceeded more carefully. His heart was hammering fitfully when he made the top.

He crawled out, concealed in the brush, and lay flat, drawing deep breaths. Minutes he waited to see if the night attackers were about; but lack of movements assured him they were not. With fitful forebodings he walked toward the camp.

He was sickened the moment he arrived. Augusto's body lay stripped, a mass of purpled blood and wounds. Pena and the two *cargadores* had been hacked with savage cruelty. Guns, uniforms, and equipment were gone, as were all Logan's personal belongings; spare uniform, boots.

And of Steve Govern and Nicanor, no sign remained!

Had they taken to the brush, hidden? Impossible. They could not have run into the brush unseen. They would have been caught.

Logan began a widening circle about the dead fire, his sickened eyes ferreting every clump of brush. When an hour's search brought no reward, Logan had grown suspicious of this disappearance. No white man could evade the cat eyes of the Moros. And Inda didn't take prisoners!

But even with this mystery facing him, Phil Logan could not hang around any longer. Over on the Pulangi Lieutenant Mata waited.

With his pocket-knife the constabu-

lary captain sliced down a runner of green rattan. The juice that dripped from it was almost pure water. He cooled his parched throat and, tightening his belt, struck eastward toward the next low range of hills.

Logan reached the muddy Pulangi in four hours. Twice he caught glimpses of men in the brush, and once he lay hidden behind a *molave* log while half a score of *barong* men passed. As he drew nearer his destination the feeling of peril increased.

THE sight of Mata's temporary fort brought relief. A sentry paced before a gate in the mud walls as Logan strode forward.

The constabulary guard snapped his rifle from right shoulder to port arms, then dropped it to a readier position.

"Halt! Who's there?"

Logan jerked to a stop. "Commanding Officer."

The sentry's eyes went wide at the mud-spattered, ragged American before him.

"Didn't you hear?" snapped Logan. "I said, 'Commanding Officer.' Call out your guard. Don't you know your orders?"

The swarthy soldier's eyes held Logan's unblinkingly. "Stand where you are." Over his shoulder he called, "Corporal of the Guard, Post Number One."

A chevroned officer came running through the gate in the mud wall. Logan announced himself more severely. The corporal stared, barked an order. Four riflemen came out and fell in about Logan.

"You wish to see the commanding officer," said the corporal mildly. "Very well, I take you to him. Forward, march."

Logan grinned sourly. He didn't know Mata personally nor any of these men. But this was a laugh—if last night's business had not removed all traces of humor from him.

Into the squared inclosure of the fort they marched. They proceeded to

a *swali* shack with a low stoop, and the corporal entered. Seconds later he called to the riflemen, and Logan was marched in.

Phil Logan thought his eyes must be deceiving him. For, seated behind a table, an array of papers before him, sat a man in uniform, a captain's twin bars of silver decorating each shoulder.

That man was Steve Govern!

Logan thrust aside the rifleman nearest him. Blood rushed to his head in a torrent, blinding him. He barely noted the native, Nicanor, squatting back in a corner.

"What the hell are you doing here?" he demanded.

Govern's heavy face did not change expression.

"I'm Captain Phil Logan," he rumbled. "Did you want to see me?"

Logan almost choked.

"Why, you damned impostor! That's my uniform you're wearing. You can't get by with this. You'll get a stretch in Bilibid Prison. You snake, you must have engineered that attack on the camp last night!"

Govern sprang to his feet, his face purple with wrath.

"Corporal, get this insane man out of here!"

Logan took one step forward, his hands gripping the table edge.

"Crazy, am I? You'll find out how crazy I am. If you're Captain Logan, how do you account for that partner you got over there in the corner?"

Govern chuckled mirthlessly.

"Him? Why, he's my personal servant, my Number One boy. Nicanor, what the hell you loafing here for? Snap out of it and clean up my quarters!"

Alvaro gaped for an instant, then his face went livid. Anger flashed in his jetty eyes, rebellion at being ordered like a dog.

Logan's gripping hands snapped the light table away. The pent feelings of the past few hours exploded in action. He did not know Govern's scheme, but

what he did know was damnable. This surly Govern was leagued with the krismen, and those hacked bodies—

THE corporal's guard sprang forward—too late. Logan drove across the yard of intervening space, and his right fist crashed toward the heavy jaw. A slight filtering of dust rose when Steve Govern's back hit the bamboo flooring.

A startled "Ah" rose from the lips of the Filipino lieutenant, who had been standing behind the bogus officer—Mata, of course, Logan instantly decided he was. Nicanor half lifted from his squatting position, his fingers fumbling at his belt. Black hate burned in his slitted eyes.

Something hard bored into Phil Logan's back.

"Do not move," growled the corporal, "or my men shoot!"

A momentary impulse came to Logan to defy that order. That Govern should expect to get away with this was beyond reason. How would the surly devil profit by such a hoax? The set-up was screwy, and Logan was in no mood for puzzles.

Yet he had common sense enough not to argue against a gun. The corporal and his men were not to be blamed. He watched Steve Govern get slowly to his feet, and thought he saw momentary alarm glint in the big man's eyes.

Craft replaced that look of fear.

"By George, Lieutenant, this man is crazy," he mumbled. "Where did he come from, anyway?"

"Without doubt, yes, crazy," Mata quickly agreed. "Perhaps the fever. We had best lock him up until we discover his identity."

"You fool!" Logan roared. "Will you let yourself be duped by this imposter? You'll get a court-martial yourself—"

"Get him out of here, Corporal!" Govern's braying voice bellowed. "Lock him up under guard!"

A more extended survey of the fort

did not cool Logan's mind as they marched him across the parade ground formed by the inclosing walls. This must have been an abandoned village. Signs of wanton destruction and fire were evident. Inda's work, likely. Some of the shacks had been temporarily repaired with unbarked branches and spit bamboo. On some of them *cogon* thatch had not been replaced.

Bamboo poles and lopped off branches lay about the inclosure. The mud walls were scarcely breast high, and in some places had been piled against the backs of the huts. A lot of work needed to be done immediately to make this fortress impregnable against the hill Moros.

The lack of military alertness irked Logan. Half the detachment were lolling about. The few on guard were keeping half-hearted watch. And all the time, Phil Logan knew, sharp eyes were watching from the forest. The fools! Datu Inda with a score of men could scale the walls if he dared attempt it. Or was he too much of a fox for that?

Logan glowered. He had come to the Pulangi to get Inda. Now he was marching with a gun in his back. A devil of a mess! Well, whatever Govern's scheme was he would run into a dead end before long. Phil Logan rubbed his knuckles thoughtfully. That fist hadn't finished its job yet.

At the guardhouse the corporal turned the prisoner over to a sergeant, whom he addressed as Gimenez, and repeated Govern's orders.

SERGEANT GIMENEZ searched Phil, removing his pocket-knife and wallet. He spread the billfold and seemed concerned that there was no name there, as he motioned to an adjoining shack. The intelligent face of the sergeant impressed Logan favorably.

"Sergeant, you're making a mistake."

"I but follow orders," returned the warrant officer. "You get in there. I

post a guard before the door. I warn you to make no attempt to escape."

"Listen, you look like a smart soldier. Tell Lieutenant Mata I want to see him, but say nothing to the—er—captain."

"No doubt the lieutenant will question you in time. Get in there. I shall have a man bring food."

"You get Mata or I'll rip those chevrons off you, bust you so damn quick—"

Gimenez turned away with a shrug. He, too, thought this strange white man crazy. "*Loco Americano!*"

The *swali* shack held no furniture. Gecko lizards croaked discordantly in the *cogon* thatch. Through the interlaced bamboo that made the *swali* siding, a murky light filtered. A door and window opened toward the inclosure, but both were closed and latched.

The slow tramping of a guard came to Logan's ears. A prisoner!

Slowly his rage settled to cooler reasoning. The ever present menace of Inda's men forced him to think. The whole detachment in its present state was not worth a squad of seasoned and alert regulars. Yet they were the soldiers to whom he had been sent to subdue the mountain chieftain.

Damn the pillaging Inda! If he, Logan, could just get Inda and his men face to face with spitting Springfields it would be another story. Inda had never met the constabulary in a pitched fight. Too crafty for that.

Govern was mixed in with Inda somehow—but how? Logan would have to settle with this big scoundrel before he could get to Inda. There must be a way.

Logan had just finished eating the food brought him when from far out in the jungle a drum began to thump, faintly, pulsingly, like the dance of savage feet.

Soldiers came and went across the little parade ground. The guard was changed. A game of *sipa* was started by a half dozen of the enlisted men. Through a crack in the *swali* siding

Logan saw Govern and Nicanor Alvaro in earnest conversation beside the Headquarters Building.

Logan stiffened as he noted it was Nicanor who was doing the talking. Phil Logan would have given a month's pay to have heard what the two conspirators were saying. He saw Govern seemingly protest, and at one time strike down Nicanor's gesturing hand. At last the bogus officer nodded reluctantly, and Logan saw him stare after the smaller brown man questioningly as Nicanor walked away.

Logan remembered Nicanor's fury at being called a personal servant. He knew the inordinate pride of the natives. A break between those two might mean a chance.

There was a rustle among the men in the adjoining guardhouse.

"Never mind the guard," a sharp voice called.

The door of Logan's shack opened and Lieutenant Mata entered.

CHAPTER III

Prisoners



MATA was trim and neat, but there was indecision in the native officer's eyes. His gaze darted left and right fearfully.

"Don't get the jitters," Logan advised. "Don't you

recognize a soldier when you see one? Does that big hombre act like a captain of the constabulary?"

Mata nodded uneasily. "Never have I seen Captain Logan before, but I have heard of him. Who has not? He is famous in the constabulary. I am very happy he has come. Yet—"

"Yet you're not damn sure of him, isn't that it? I know he's brought written orders. He's got my papers. But—can he tell you names of all the officers in the Mindanao Department? I'll bet a cocked hat he can't. *I* can. Not only that, I can name every offi-

cer and every unit in the Philippine Islands."

Mata smiled knowingly. "A clever man might get the list and memorize. Still... Well, Captain Logan does not know how to write a military letter. He began one, 'Dear Sir'—"

"That's a point that would trick anyone not a soldier—"

A thick form darkened the doorway. Steve Govern stood there glowering, his knotted brows beetling over narrowed eyes.

"Lieutenant Mata, inspect all quarters," he snapped. "Then call assembly. I'm personally inspecting all equipment. This unit must be put in fighting trim."

The stern, quick commands counteracted Mata's indecision. He saluted snappily.

"Yes, sir."

Govern watched the junior officer stride away, then he swung toward Logan.

"So you're trying to get next to that coconut lieutenant, eh? Think you're a tough guy, tin soldier. Well, you played hell with your prospects when you slugged me in the office."

Logan faced him defiantly. "Take that gun off your hip and I'll try it again. You haven't got the nerve, you yellow snake!"

Govern's smile was vicious. "I'm backing this deal and you're out. How the hell you managed to get here alive beats me. But you're sure goin' to help my scheme. It'll work slick now. Haw!"

"I'll get you in the end, you renegade!"

"You won't get nothin'." Suddenly Govern snapped his automatic from its sheath. "Guard!" he yelled. "Bring in that raw abacá. Tie up this man! He's trying to attack me again."

Under the muzzle of Govern's gun Logan could do nothing but submit. The raw hemp strands bit into his arms and wrists. Even when drawn across his booted ankles, the steel-like strands bit keenly.

"That'll do, guard. Get out."

Govern holstered his gun, a cruel glint dancing in his eyes.

"So you would slug me, tough egg? Your blabbing mouth's talking too much. You'll wish to hell you never had got here—"

Straight and hard he hit Phil Logan in the mouth.

The bound man was hurtled back against the wall. He felt the hot taste of blood from his crushed lips. His arms tugged at the biting hemp futilely. Govern's fist landed again and again.

Phil Logan's jaws clenched, a red haze danced before his eyes. The sickening jolts fogged his brain. Govern's face was like a man bereft of reason as his pummeling fists crashed home.

Logan stood until his knees buckled beneath him, and when he was down Steve Govern kicked with the full power of his legs. Before the last kick landed Phil Logan was out. . . .

DARKNESS was thick again before Logan regained his senses. He could not move, and it was minutes before he remembered he was a prisoner at the mercy of Steve Govern.

Every nerve in his body seemed hammered into raw ends. Efforts to think made his head throb. His recovering thoughts ran in circles, and those circles were orbits of hate against Steve Govern.

Quick steps sounded outside the prison shack. There were words in dialect. Over the rumble, Govern's words sounded.

"Throw him in there and post a double guard. The devil was trying to signal the Moros. We'll settle his goose tomorrow."

The door swung open. Logan saw the grayed rectangle as a man was hurtled into the room, propelled by a boot.

In that second the door was open Logan got a clear view of the man.

The new prisoner was Nicanor Alvaro!

An indefinable menace seemed everywhere now. The entrance of the new prisoner could scarcely account for it. Logan's brain, jerking out of the haze of unconsciousness, was a throbbing blur of agony and hate. The torture of his body fought coherent thought. One fact alone was clear. There must have been a final break between Nicanor and Govern—a chance for Phil Logan!

Through the murky darkness he saw Nicanor squatting against the wall, a single blacker blot in the deep shadows.

"Hist," he called, "come here. Untie me."

Nicanor didn't move at first. He was like some crouching beast, cowering, cornered, ready to lash with tooth and claw.

"Can't you understand me?" Logan tried again. "I'm tied up."

He heard a low, guttural throat sound. Nicanor was moving closer.

"I am no man's servant," the brown man muttered.

So he was still smarting under the appellation given him by Steve Govern. But Logan knew the colossal vanity of the Philippine Islander. Once a native considered himself above menial tasks, he was insulted to the quick if given an order.

The brown man continued moving toward him. Then Logan saw, with dilated eyes, the knife in Alvaro's hand. The guard must have tossed the fellow in without searching him. Nicanor was lifting the knife slowly. Was the enraged native, furious at Govern, venting his rage at all white men?

"Hell's bells, Nicanor, knifing me won't get you anywhere! Listen!" Logan's mind was stabbing wildly for a plan. "I can get you out of here."

"You white devils are all liars!" Nicanor spat.

The knife drew back a little. Logan grabbed courage from the slight movement.

"I mean what I say. What did Govern put you in here for anyway?"

Nicanor cursed in guttural dialect. "He say I signal the Moros."

"Moros?"

"Ah, *si*. The warriors of the great datu are all about us waiting. The black-hearted devil betray me. Now I shall be killed with all the rest. He is cheating me of my pay."

THERE was deep vibrance in Nicanor's words, yet they scarcely made sense.

"What do you mean, pay?" Logan demanded.

"Faugh, a child could see it! That man is selling the soldiers' lives for pay, for the gold and plunder that Datu Inda promised us."

The import of those words was astounding. The detachment was to be turned over to the natives of Inda's krismen! That was the reason for Govern's attack on the night camp to get the uniform, the papers to impersonate Logan. Human lives for pay, death for the gold of Datu Inda! Black as Govern's heart must be, the thing sounded incredible.

"No white man would do that," declared Logan.

"Do I not know? Was I not to share with him? Every man shall be killed. The warriors of Inda shall whet their knives in human flesh. Even you and I, Senor, shall be dead before morning."

Phil Logan stiffened in his bonds. This thing must be stopped, and there was not a moment to lose!

"Listen, Nicanor, you know I'm Captain Logan. We've got to block Govern. The lives of all these men depend on it. You're in this deep, a conspirator with Govern. But if you help me, maybe I can get you off. If you don't help me you'll be hacked to pieces with *barongs*, chopped into mincemeat. I'll get you out of here, give you a chance to wipe your slate clean. What do you say?"

Phil had never pleaded like this with a native before. But the brown man *had* to help him! Alvaro sat like

a carved Buddha in the gloom, seeming to absorb the words slowly.

Again the knife shifted forward. "You will do this? You do not lie? To escape past the guard is impossible."

"I have a scheme. Cut me loose."

The knife snicked through the bonds.

Relief flooded Logan and with it weakness. His cramped muscles at first refused to function. The flow of blood into stopped veins was like a thousand needles. He pulled himself to a sitting position and began slowly to massage his wrists and ankles.

The terrific responsibility of his position shook him. This was his detachment. His men had to be saved. Saved from massacre! For back of the treacherous Govern waited Inda, the robber, the killer.

And there was more! Half a hundred rifles would fall into the datu's hands. The weapons would make him formidable, cost a long and bloody war to get him. Blood and fire all over the center of the island unless he was stopped now.

Nicanor was hovering near, expectant.

"Listen, Nicanor," Logan said. "You're going to Malabang, see? If you take off your shirt, tie a rag around your head, you can slip through Inda's men all right. Once in Malabang you give the word and they'll send us reinforcements. Understand?"

"I can get through, I think. But you, Senor?"

"I'll stick with the detachment. In some way I'll block Govern, hold the detachment here until help comes. Once I convince Lieutenant Mata—"

NICANOR stopped him impatiently. "But to get out, you do not say—"

"Simple. Listen. These shacks are tied together with *bejuco*, not a nail in them. The mud wall backs against this shack. You can snick that rattan with your knife. Lay the sections of

swali back and you're over the wall. Savvy?"

"But the guard—he will hear. It is the rifle bullet that stops us."

"Be as quiet as you can. But if the guard comes snooping in, I'll manage him. Are you game for the try?"

"A man tries anything for his life, Senor."

It was risky. The guard was pacing the soft earth not a yard in front of the door. A whisper of a sound could reach him. His orders were to shoot at any attempt to escape. Nicanor could hardly hope to remove that *swali* siding without noise.

But Logan must get word to Malabang! The detachment must be saved.

Nicanor slipped out of his shirt and wrapped a torn section of it around his head. His knife was softly working in the taut rattan lacings that held the shack together. He eased loose a crossbrace and laid it on the floor. Now for the corners and sides—

A few seconds more.

CHAPTER IV

Attack



LOGAN heard the pacing outside stop, the guard muttering something. Would he investigate or shout to the sergeant? Logan then pressed against the wall, flat beside the

door. He was still groggy, weak from the punishment of Govern's fists. His legs and arms throbbed.

The guard came to the closed door, kicked it open with his foot. Already the back wall of the hut was a dim rectangle of gray as Nicanor eased the *swali* siding around. The squeak of twisted wythes raked the nerves.

"Silence!" commanded the guard. "What you do there?" The muzzle of his rifle poked into the shack.

Nicanor pushed the last section of *swali* back.

The guard's rifle snapped to ready, pointing in the direction of the sound.

"Ah, you break out! I shoot—"

Logan's right hand closed upon the lock of the rifle, his forefinger looping the small knob of the hammer. The surprised guard gave a stuttered exclamation as he squeezed the trigger.

Phil's finger seemed scraped of skin and tissue as the released bolt drove toward the firing pin. A numbing pain laced his hand; but he held, pulling the weapon inward with a heave. The guard clung to the rifle as his body slanted through the doorway. Phil's left arm slipped around the head and his hand closed over the man's mouth.

"Run, Nicanor, quick!"

The half-naked man went over the mud wall like a springing cat.

Logan must keep the guard quiet, give Nicanor time. The constabulary soldier struggled like a wiry ape. The two fought and twisted into the center of the hut, falling into a tangled heap. The rifle was knocked from their grasp.

Sheer necessity drove Logan. Every second gave Nicanor a better chance to get through to the settlements.

Logan's left hand closed upon the throat of the guard, gripping into the corded neck. Behind the kicking soldier, the open door of the hut stood out in sharper gray. The quick tropic dawn had come.

Phil Logan hurled the man toward the doorway. The guard shot outward like a tossed sack, landing heavily. For seconds he was too shocked to yell. Logan scooped up the fallen rifle. He stood for an instant uncertain. He couldn't use a Springfield against his own men. Better to have no weapon lest the devil of necessity tempt him. He tossed it out after the fallen soldier.

A couple of sleepy heads came poking out of the guard shack. There would be hell to pay in a moment. Logan pulled the door around lest one of these volatile men fire on him with-

out question. As he closed the portal the first rosiness of dawn was pinking the sky above the *luans* and *molaves*. In minutes it would be broad daylight.

Something suddenly caught Logan with an invisible grip of fear. He was not psychic, but the nearness of peril warned him. Almost as if a voice shouted in his ear, the warning came. He glanced around just in time to see a glitter of steel whip into the opened side of the shack.

He dropped flat as if smitten by a trip-hammer. A heavy blade made a singsong noise over his head and buried itself hilt-deep through the thin paneling of the door.

LOGAN saw a bare-torsoed form appear over the low mud wall, and then another. The very opening Nicanor had made to escape now provided a doorway for the Moros!

Datu Inda, the fox, had smelled out that hole with the first gray of the dawning. If that hurled *barong* had not missed Logan, the entry would have been perfect. The charging Moros would have poured through the shack, fallen upon the drowsy guard, murdered the soldiers in their blankets.

Logan whirled to hands and knees. His hands gripped the crossbar that Nicanor had laid down so carefully. Couching it like a lance he drove for the foremost of the Moros.

He struck the fellow squarely in the chest. With a grunted "Ugh!", the turbaned man fell back. Logan parried the blade of the next attacker with the blunt end of the pole. The razor-edged *barong* went deep into the wood. The gaping Moro tugged for his weapon as Logan drew back again and drove for the betel-stained mouth.

Logan's shout rang like a clarion call through the mud fort.

"Turn out the guard! Every man up! Datu Inda!"

As the second knifeman went back with a crunching of his filed teeth

shouts lifted from the guardhouse. The clicking of rifle bolts snapped through the clamor. Men were running along the sides of the house. Toward the jungle were a score of bobbing heads, racing for the opened side of the shack. They were piling over their fallen comrades, a column of dark-skinned men. In a moment they would be at Phil Logan.

A ringing "A-a-ah-ee-e!" came from the rim of the forest.

The door behind Logan was torn open. There was the bark of an automatic. A Moro wilted and fell. From the corners of the shack Logan heard men pawing at *swali*.

The automatic spat again. Logan could feel the windwhip of the bullet as he drove again at the mob of grim-faced krismen.

Lieutenant Mata drew alongside him. Coolly, deliberately, the officer worked his automatic. In the pinch of emergency Mata had the stuff. He was feeding the devils lead like a veteran. If he could hold out, there was a chance.

The pushed-out *swali* at the shack corners was being battered down by rifle barrels. Sergeant Gimenez was urging his men. Once the *swali* was out of the way a crossfire could be poured upon the howling, charging column.

From the edge of the forest a Springfield opened and then another. The pillaged guns of Augusto and Pena! A crude pipe gun thundered like a charge of blasting powder. Slugs tore into the *cogon* thatch. A steel-jacketed slug whined lower. If the brown gunner learned to hold the front sight down—

Steve Govern's voice bellowed from the parade ground, above the clamor of fighting.

"Back, you fools! Back, Sergeant! Form a hollow square in the parade ground!"

Lieutenant Mata cursed in Tagalog, in his excitement dropping to his native speech. "If we retreat we are

lost. Sergeant, I am commanding. Hold the corners of the house!"

The obstructing *swali* went down. Springfields spat into the flanks of Inda's men. As suddenly as the attack began, it melted. The *barong* men whirled and raced for the forest. Sergeant Gimenez' men fired after them.

LIEUTENANT MATA, still dapper in his khaki and red uniform, snapped his right hand to a perfect salute.

"Captain Logan, sir, I admit my mistake. His ordering the men back proves he is a traitor. Now, I await your orders."

Logan dropped the pole. A great feeling of relief filled him, not only at the repulse of the Moros but also because Mata had come through. With a scrapping subaltern like this he could snap the detachment into shape, wage a campaign that would be decisive.

He wondered if Inda had been in that charging column. Not likely. The crafty *magahat* did not endanger himself. But there still was Govern.

Logan returned the lieutenant's salute. His blue eyes met and held those of the junior officer. They understood one another.

"You made a natural mistake," he said brusquely. "Though Govern would have exposed himself sooner or later."

"Then permit me the privilege," requested Mata, "of arresting that renegade."

"And how!" ejaculated Logan.

Mata stiffened as a Springfield cracked from the rim of the forest. The lieutenant's eyes went wide, unblinking. A hole no larger than a cigarette appeared in his temple. Blood welled outward and trickled down his cheek. Mata wove upon his knees, his head falling back.

Logan caught the officer before he fell. In one cold appalling moment he realized that the last chance shot from the forest had found a target. Mata,

the one man convinced of Phil's identity, was gone!

Steve Govern's hulking form filled the doorway, his automatic boring inward to cover Logan. His eyes burned like flames through smoked glass.

"Hold it!" he ordered. "Don't move or I'll blast you down!" He took a step into the room. "Sergeant," he belted, "come here!"

Gimenez crowded in behind Govern. His eyes went wide at the sight of Mata.

"Take that man prisoner," commanded Govern. "Keep him under a gun's muzzle every minute. He opened up the fort to the Moros, the damn dirty traitor! I ought to stand him against a wall and have him shot!"

Gimenez looked hard at Logan. His first friendly look changed to one of hostility. Govern was playing his hand well to deceive the men.

Logan eased Mata's body to the floor. Damn the breaks of luck! Only the luck of that last shot had saved Govern from exposure. But common sense saved Logan from rash action. There was the detachment to be saved, Inda captured. He dared not rush Govern now, and go down. His lips pulled tight across his teeth.

"If you want to wipe me out so damn bad, why don't you shoot?" he defied.

The challenge was like a red flag to Govern's bull temper. The hand holding the automatic twitched. Hate blazed from his eyes. Logan expected leaden death, yet somehow had a hunch that Govern was bluffing.

The silence in the shack pressed on Logan's ears like a tangible force.

"Why don't you shoot?" he repeated.

THE blood drained from Govern's cheeks. White spots chalked his mouth corners. His eyes narrowed to slits. As abruptly as his fury had risen, it died. The automatic sank.

"Take him, Sergeant," he said huskily. "We don't shoot men down in

the constabulary. We give 'em a trial. Remember that, Sergeant. If you let him loose, I'll court-martial you."

Govern whirled and stumbled from the shack. Logan stared after him. Why hadn't he shot? Did he lack the nerve? Hardly. Any man who could have engineered that attack upon the camp had no qualms at murder. Govern could have killed him at that moment with all the mad joy of stamping a rattler's neck. Yet—

Why hadn't Govern shot?

The question loomed larger in Logan's mind. He did not have the answer.

Shouted orders came from the parade ground. There was a sound of grounding arms and men falling into line. Then Govern's voice was calling orders to the warrant officers.

Gimenez motioned Phil with the muzzle of his gun.

"I have my orders," he stated tersely. "March."

"Oh, yes, sure," Logan answered, barely conscious that he spoke. He moved through the door to see the detachment drawn up in company front.

Two men were removing the barricaded gate. The detachment counted off with a rattling click of syllables.

"Squads right, march!"

Rifles snapped to right shoulders as the squads pivoted.

"Company, halt!"

Logan stared, dumfounded. Was Govern marching out? Had he some other ace in the hole, some other pre-arranged scheme with Datu Inda? To march out now was taking a perilous chance of marching into ambush. Even if there were no ambush, there could be constant sniping from the brush. Was that what Govern wanted?

Somewhere Nicanor was racing for the settlements. Could help come in time? Despair settled on Logan. Slim chance. In an hour's time the detachment might be fighting its last fight. Another victory for Inda. Damn the conniving *magahat*!

Yet, why hadn't Govern shot, got it over with?

The front squads were ordered ahead, and Logan was marched into the break. Gimenez detailed a soldier to guard him, the throat-blackened man Logan had tossed out of the shack. No chance of eluding this fellow. He would love to shoot. Phil Logan's lips twisted grimly.

The detachment plunged into the jungle, dropped to double file and at last to single. Quick step changed to rout-step. The morning sun broke through the foliage above them.

Steve Govern led the way, ten paces ahead, without looking back.

CHAPTER V

Datu Inda



PHIL LOGAN paid scant heed to the details of that march. They crossed the first hills, plowed through a valley, and came again into the edge of the mountains. At times brown-torsoed men fled before them

and at sight of the fleeing Moros, murmurs ran along the line of riflemen. To them, the great Captain Logan had Inda on the run.

The march slowed as the elevation increased. Brush and trees made a barrier through which the men fought their way. Logan guessed them to be in the vicinity of his tragic night camp. A break to the left showed the craterlike valley. The line swung in, almost to its brim.

Logan did not see the weapon, but he heard a zipping sound. A startled cry came from the van.

"Captain Logan!"

Steve Govern had disappeared as if swept away by a broom.

On the right flank what looked like a thousand devils leaped from the brush.

"Inda! Inda! A-ah-e-e! Inda!"

The surprised detachment, caught hard upon the flank, went over the cliff like driven sheep, with scarcely a gun fired in self-defense. Logan heard men clawing, scrambling, guns rattling down. A hooting krisman was almost on top of him. His own guard had jumped in panic with the rest. Logan dropped over the rim, feet first.

The moment he landed, his eyes searched for the fissure he had previously climbed. It had been blocked securely with stones and dirt. The detachment was trapped in the little valley!

The triumphant, guttural yells of the Moros swelled along the rim. *Barongs* and spears hurtled down. One soldier, too shocked from his fall to move, was impaled where he lay. The remainder dived back, hugging close against the base of the cliff.

So this was the trick. Govern had led the detachment to the cliff where they could be swept by surprise into the valley. Now it would be slaughter. They could be picked off one at a time by hurled steel or pipe guns. No chance to use the Springfields!

Phil Logan crouched against the wall. Zipping steel was coming closer now. A second soldier was badly sliced upon the arm. Several limped from twisted ankles. Above, throaty yells of victory were a death chant.

What matter if Nicanor reached Malabang now—a futile gesture, meaningless. Ice settled about Logan's heart.

Out of his chilling thought he suddenly realized why Govern had let him live. His body must be found with the rest of the detachment! The massacre was bound to be investigated, and it would be assumed that Logan himself had led the troops here; that he had been outgeneraled, trapped, wiped out by Inda. No clue would point to an impostor. Govern could come and go as he liked, unsuspected.

Logan's fighting spirit rose. He would not die like a fly pinned against

a wall. The straight face of the cliff was no more than fifteen feet up. With a platoon of trained regulars he could scale it in minutes. These troops were not regulars, but it had to be done.

HE CREPT to the side of Gimenez. "Sergeant, you must have heard the talk between me and Lieutenant Mata. You know I'm Captain Logan."

"Captain Logan has been killed," replied Gimenez doggedly. "The men saw him fall."

"Killed? More likely he ran out on you. If you don't believe I'm Captain Logan, at least you saw me fight the Moros on the wall."

"Ah, *si*, you are brave—"

"Never mind that. We've got to get out of here."

"Are we birds to fly over the cliff?" Oriental fatalism engulfed Gimenez.

"That's no way for a soldier to talk. Snap out of it, Sergeant. Listen, if you take orders from me, the rest of the men will. Are you going to die like a stabbed pig?"

"I would try anything to save the men."

"That's the spirit. Now, get this. Take a squad of your best marksmen and run to the center of the valley. Open fire on the rim just above us here. Clear a space ten yards wide. The Moros will draw back, but keep plugging anyway."

"But you—"

"I'll get the men up. Pass the word along to obey me. Move!"

Gimenez leaped to the task with alacrity. A hoot went up from the Moros as the squad raced for the center of the hollow. A hurled spear sliced the sergeant's legging, but he made it and threw his men down behind protecting boulders. The Springfields opened in a concerted blast.

Logan's first orders were drowned in the clamor. It was tough to make these Filipino soldiers understand, but at last he lined three along the cliff and mounted two more upon their

shoulders. A second pair crouched to give him a stepping start. He slung the Springfield over his shoulder.

"Hang tight! I'm coming!"

Gimenez and his men were working the bolts of their rifles rapid fire, whipping the rim brush with lead. Logan stepped on the crouching men, got a grip on the next shoulders, and went up.

The Moros sighted the maneuver and shouts went up. Rag-turbaned men were gathering in a knot, close under a spur of a mountain. A pipe gun exploded viciously, but the slugs fell short. Hoots of bafflement followed the report.

The second tier of men wavered when Logan's weight pulled at them, but they held. He reached, got hold of the rim, and kicked upward. Sweat stood on his brow. But he swung sideward and rolled onto the level. The barrage of steel-jacketed lead was just above him. He had to risk that. He unslung the rifle and lowered it to the next man who was scrambling up.

They were getting the trick of it now, mounting the wall like monkeys. The slugs sung higher as Gimenez' squad lifted the sights. Logan deployed the first half dozen men in a skirmish line to keep back any immediate attack. He signaled the sergeant, and the squad raced for the wall and mounted. They were all up now but the three men left at the base. Logan ordered shirts off and knotted into a rope. The last of the detachment finally reached the rim.

The Moros became ominously silent, a mass of still bodies and lowered weapons. More rag-turbaned men were racing in from the brush. The detachment was outnumbered, three to one. But the Moros were caught on three sides. The valley to their right; the spur behind them; the detachment in front. At last Inda would have to meet the government troops face to face.

A single Moro, clad in tight blue trousers and yellow jacket, was

mounted on the spur behind the warriors. A white rag of turban bound his head. His arm was thrown out as he harangued the krismen. A brain-shattering shout followed his words.

"Inda, Inda, a-ah-ee, Inda!"

Logan swung out his men in a broad skirmish line. No time to fall in, maneuver for a better position. Attack was the best defense. Hit them before they expected it. Give the hooting devils hell!

"Forward! Fifty yards! Drop to one knee! Fire!"

The blast of concerted lead wilted the front rank of the Moros. Again and yet again the Springfields belched. The Moros wavered, faltering.

"Fix bayonets! Charge!"

LOGAN was six paces ahead of his line. He had the rifle he'd taken up the cliff, but no bayonet. No matter. Inda's men were milling, shifting, incapable of forming a solid front. Logan was plunging at them, whipping the army gun like a quarter stave.

He downed the nearest man as a *barong* point touched his arm. A second tried in vain to reach him. The hard gunstock crunched upon a skull. They were scrambling, stepping sideward now, getting clear of this *diablo Americano*. A third went down with a reverse lunge of the gun butt. He heard the queer crash of steel and human bodies as his own line struck.

The impetus of his charge carried him through the turbaned ranks. Warriors were streaming to their left, forming on the detachment's flank. He heard the crack of Springfields as the right of the line doubled to meet this menace.

Where was Inda? He had him trapped at last. The man in the blue trousers and yellow jacket must not get away. Logan began to run forward, circling around the spur. One sight of that garish jacket was all he wanted. He must be captured or killed now, lest he escape and form his raiders anew.

A figure shot upward from behind a rock. The yellow jacket was almost in Logan's face. A stolen Springfield bored at the American's stomach.

"Stop!" a high-pitched voice demanded.

Logan stopped in complete surprise, frozen to the spot. His own gun slipped from startled fingers. Almost his hands went up.

The face above that yellow jacket was Nicanor Alvaro's!

Time stopped in one appalling second. Logan's mind went blank. Nicanor here? Incredible. Then like wind rushing into a vacuum, the truth came. Nicanor Alvaro and Datu Inda were one and the same person!

He had helped to escape the very man he wanted! It had been a trick, that pretending Nicanor was a prisoner. A scheme to get Logan to help open a way into the fort without the soldiers realizing it. The audacity of this mountain fox was amazing.

Things Logan had not understood before now became clear. Nicanor had been his real enemy all along, not Govern. Steve Govern was but a hireling, a tool; and in the end had been paid off in traitor's coin—a foot of steel in the back. Inda had wiped out his white partner as he would wipe out all the others. And now he stood with a Springfield boring at Logan's waist.

"You will order your men to cease firing, Captain Logan. At once! I shall not wait to pull this trigger long."

I NDA'S ugly face was taut as an iron mask. Murder gleamed in his deep black eyes.

"And if I don't?"

"I cannot miss at six feet. *Speak!*"

To order the detachment to lay down its arms meant massacre. That Inda would let Logan live if he obeyed was asking too much. But could Gimenez carry through to victory if Phil Logan went down? Either way he turned, Inda won. He had

fought through to this—to galling defeat, death.

A strange calmness of futility possessed Logan. There was a hint of amusement in his tone when he spoke.

"You won't shoot me until you pull that bolt back. You've got to ram a cartridge into the barrel. You don't know army guns, Datu Inda."

Would the trick work? Could he make Inda hesitate a moment?

Indecision flashed in the brown man's eyes as they dropped for one split second toward his weapon.

Logan acted. He plunged at the trousered legs like a football tackle.

A report nearly deafened him. The muzzle blast burned his cheek like a driven flame. But his arms went around Inda's knees, his head drove like a ram into his stomach. Inda went over like a toppled linesman.

Logan was up first. He kicked at the Moro's arm, saw the rifle plunge away. Inda sprang upright like a cat, but he was between Logan and the mountain spur. He tried to paw into his sash, but Logan was at him, hammering, slugging.

With cold steel Inda might work. But against American fists he had no defense. Logan's hard knuckles crashed into him again and again.

Inda squirmed and ducked, but he could not evade the barrage of shattering blows. He clawed, bit, but Logan straightened him up with stiff jabs. His first look of fury changed to amazement and then to stupefied confusion. He tried to whirl away, leaving his chin uncovered.

Logan's right knuckles drove hard and true.

"That for Augusto and Pena!"

Inda wilted like an emptied sack.

Logan rubbed his bruised knuckles. Could that limp form be Datu Inda, the killer? Just a bundle of yellow jacket and blue pants? He had expected to get this mountain *magahat* with whining lead, but it had not worked out that way. Just hard

(Concluded on page 113)

Dawn of Reason

By
HAROLD DE POLO

*Author of "Racketeer Retired,"
"Busted in Barabadoes," etc.*

SPRINGTIME bathed the prehistoric world in all its glory—springtime and mating time, for that was what it meant. On the huge, towering cliff that reared high into the air, score upon score of cave people squatted or stood or lay flat on their stomachs on the ledges that seemed piled one on top of the other along the face of the great stone.

All eyes, narrow, under low, receding foreheads, were fastened intently on the scene that was being enacted

*Brute Force and Animal
Cunning are Pitted Against
the Birth of Thought as
Primitive Men Battle!*



*Great Jaw grasped Long Hair and
held her to him*

below them. Occasionally they would emit weird, harrowing sounds, the female voices high and piercing, in joy or despair; the males' low and guttural, in satisfaction or anger.

Beneath them, on the grassy plain, many of their fellows were clustered about in a wide, uneven ring. In the center of it the excitement of the moment prevailed, for there it was that the battles to determine superiority were taking place, according to custom.

A male, choosing the maiden that suited him best, would step proudly forth into the center of the ring and proclaim to the tribe that he was there to fight for his choice. Then, if any other wished the maiden for his own, he too would strut forth, uttering weird, unintelligible gibberish, and give the first one battle.

Sometimes the frays were of long duration; sometimes they were speedily finished. The short battles were the more cruel, for before they were over death had usually intervened. The longer ones were more humane, for they generally ended when one of the combatants was unable to continue through sheer lack of breath. Then the victor, who had fought his battle with his bare hands alone, would march off triumphantly with his mate to a cave in the steep cliff-side. Unless, of course, another wished to give him battle. This was seldom, for the males and the females were fairly evenly divided.

The noise among the watchers broke out with renewed vigor as young Slim Hips stepped forward. He was almost strikingly different from any of the tribe. He carried himself more upright; he had not so much hair on his body; his arms did not hang so far below the knees in that loose manner that suggested the gorilla. Also, his forehead seemed to be higher and broader than those of the others, while the eyes under it were larger and occasionally had an odd gleam in them—a gleam that savored of intel-

ligence. His chin and jaw, too, were not so incongruously prominent.

Slim Hips he was called because of the thinness of his body, particularly about the loins.

STRAIGHT and slim and proud he stepped out into the midst of the circle, his head high, his eyes flashing. He pointed silently to a maiden who stood on the inner edge of the crowd, a lithe, graceful creature with soft eyes and hair that reached below her knees; hair so long that she was called Long Hair. She was looking at her suitor with an expression of fear in her eyes for his safety.

It was no surprise to the tribe when a huge, strapping fellow lurched forward into the circle, his eyes ablaze, his great hands clenching and unclenching as they hung down almost to his ankles. The race for the girl had narrowed down to these two—to the strong, powerful monster of a man, and the straight, wiry stripling of a lad who was barely twenty. It surely looked like an uneven battle, and those who favored Slim Hips groaned. The girl was among that number.

Action soon came. Big Hands, the other suitor, believed in the power of aggressiveness. With a bestial snarl, he made a rush for Slim Hips with murder in his heart. The stripling held his ground until the last moment. Then, as his huge antagonist launched out for him, he deftly stepped to the side and quickly put out his foot, sending his opponent crashing to the ground in a tangled heap. Instantly he was on top of the fellow, raining blow after blow to his face with quick, jolting jabs.

But as the fallen one regained his breath and roared out his anger, Slim Hips gracefully sprang away, ran to a spot perhaps thirty feet or so to the side, and again stood his ground. The cheers of his sympathizers split the air in a confused babel of sound.

Once more Big Hands hurled him-

self fiercely at his adversary; and once more he found himself sprawling on the ground with Slim Hips immediately on top of him and pounding with all his might and main.

For a long, long time this continued. Slim Hips would stand his ground until the last moment, skip to the side, trip his aggressor, and again fall on him with all the strength and fury he possessed. All about the huge ring the fight went, the lad sometimes darting in and out among the watchers with almost incredible speed and agility. It was speed and dexterity and brain pitted against sheer brute force without intelligence.

And speed and brain, and not strength alone, triumphed. After a long, weary hour or more had gone by, Big Hands was at last subdued, glad to be able to lift his head from the earth and to crawl silently away with life still coursing through his body.

Cheer after cheer—weird cheers—broke out as the visitor stepped forth to claim the object of the fray. The lad was well liked. Few, though, even his closest sympathizers, had deemed it possible for the stripling with the slim body to actually best the great and powerful male with the huge hands. And yet he had done so—with the one weapon the others did not possess; superior intelligence.

Proudly and with head erect Slim Hips walked quickly over to the side of the maiden for whom he had fought his valiant battle. Coyly she came toward him, her head lowered, her eyes looking up into his from beneath lowered lashes. But then, as he was about to grasp her hand and lead her to the cave he had picked out, a sudden shout of crazed fear broke from the audience. Slim Hips turned about with a start, instinctively sensing trouble.

THERE was good reason for the shout of frightened alarm. Coming from the woods on a slow, lumber-

ing trot was Great Jaw, the tallest and strongest and most feared male the tribe had ever known. He stood fully six feet seven inches; and had he carried himself erectly, would surely have been over seven feet. Every muscle and limb was built on colossal proportions, while he had a face that would truly strike terror into the heart of the bravest.

His forehead was smaller and more receding than that of any other male of the tribe. His small eyes gleamed with a reddish, cruel light. But the most noticeable thing about him was his jaw. It stuck far out over his chest, and his lips always seemed to be open in a diabolical, fearsome sort of grin.

He chose to have his home on the other side of the cliff away from the tribe, and yet he practically ruled them with an iron hand. He obeyed none of their crude, yet fairly just, laws; when he wanted a thing he took it, no matter to whom it belonged. He had the strength with which to do it and none could gainsay him, for brute force ruled.

From the baleful glitter in his eyes, all knew that he was up to some villainy now. And so they knew what the brute was after. His small, burning eyes fell upon what he apparently sought—the comely Long Hair. With wild, guttural shouts, he split his huge mouth in a leer of desire and rushed for her.

Slim Hips was quick to act. He knew well, knew for a certainty, that he had not the atom of a chance of standing against this fearful giant. Here, unfortunately, his speed and superior intelligence would avail him naught. Therefore, thinking quickly, he suddenly grasped Long Hair by the hand and darted swiftly off through the crowd, making for the woods that loomed up before him, with all the speed of his supple legs. With a harrowing roar, Great Jaw burst through the scattering tribe and followed, like some superhuman creature who would

wreak devastation upon the whole world.

Slim Hips was well aware that the prospect before him was far from pleasant. It simply meant pitting his own and the maiden's fleetness against the almost unbeatable speed and endurance of the dreaded Great Jaw.

Like two flashing deer, the lad and the maiden made their way into the thickest part of the woods where the traveling would be harder for their monstrous pursuer. Through vines they crashed, over big fallen logs, across dangerous swamps, all over the most intricate places they could find. Yet always, with mighty roars of anger, Great Jaw's stupendous bulk would come tearing after them, hurling through vine and swamp and underbrush on his maddened chase, utterly oblivious to thorny bushes.

Finally the two pursued ones had to take to the trees. There they thought they would have Great Jaw at disadvantage. But though that might have been true under ordinary circumstances and they might have beaten him, today he seemed fired with an ability that would not allow them to best him. He climbed huge trunks, swung from branch to branch, made leaps that seemed incredible for one of his weight, all as if he were some unearthly sprite whose bulk was nothing as he grasped some slim branch that seemed as if it would surely crack into splinters beneath him.

For long, tedious hours the racking chase continued, the lad and the maiden putting up a game and noble fight against the sheer stamina and strength of their remorseless enemy. Then, as Long Hair was gradually breathing more heavily and showing signs of fatigue, ill luck visited the fleeing pair.

SUDDENLY, as she was making a leap from tree to tree behind Slim Hips, her strength seemed to fail her as she clutched convulsively

out and missed her mark by perhaps the small margin of five or six inches, hurtling down to the ground about twenty feet below. And, although she and her kind could stand a marvelous amount of punishment, it was fully a minute before she was again able to get onto her feet. And that one little moment or so was what turned the tables.

Great Jaw emitted a bellow of satisfaction as he saw her fall. He plunged onward with a new burst of speed. Slim Hips, two trees ahead, also turned about with great fear on his face as he heard Long Hair shriek. Instantly he swung back and made his way to the point where disaster had befallen.

The monstrous pursuer, though, reached her first, just as she rose to her feet. He grasped her in his arms and held her struggling form to him as if she had been no more than a wisp of straw, while he stood there with his wicked eyes leering death and his horrible mouth wide open, shouting murderous gibberish that gave Slim Hips to understand death would surely be his should he dare approach within striking distance.

Slim Hips clenched his hands and made as if to rush forward and fight the fight of his life in order to regain what he had already justly and gallantly won. But as he looked again at the towering bulk before him, he gritted his teeth and held back. Helpless rage coursed through him. Well he knew that if he ever went within striking distance of the great creature before him death would be his; a death so quick that he would hardly know it. Others had tried to do away with the tyranny of Great Jaw and Slim Hips remembered what had happened to the poor creatures he had mangled.

No, there was no coping with this monster who broke all the laws of the tribe at his will; crude laws, as they were. For sufficient reason had not come to the cavemen to enable them to

join forces and do away with the despicable Great Jaw. As yet, they fought but singly, each for himself, alone.

Great Jaw, a cunning, cruel goading leer on his lips, roared out unintelligible remarks to Slim Hips that were meant to anger the lad into losing his head and trying to regain Long Hair. But the stripling knew that, for the present, it was hopeless. Should he attempt it, death would be his; if he held back, he would still have life. And, in his simple brain, he knew that he who had life still had some hope, however small it might be.

Therefore, with anger swelling his heart and showing plainly on his face, he had to stand helplessly by while Great Jaw marched back in the direction of the cliff with the bride for whom Slim Hips had fought so valiantly. It was not the first time that the tyrannical villain had cheated others of their just due.

For what seemed to Slim Hips a long, long while he stood alone, his head bowed low on his chest, the picture of utter despair. His brain cried out dumbly against the gross injustice of the world. He had, according to the tribal laws, fought his fight against big odds and won. And now, because of the desire of a being who was heavier and stronger and bigger, the wife for whom he had so gallantly battled was taken away from him without the slightest chance of regaining her.

It was not right. This was his one and only thought; it was not right. And yet, in his crude, untrained brain he realized that there was no way in which he might take Long Hair away from the bestial Great Jaw.

VARIOUS others of the tribe knew this well. Perhaps they, too, had wondered within their immature brains whether there was not some way of stopping Great Jaw's ruthless might. As yet, though, none had thought of any way whereby brutal

strength, committing a wrong act, could be justly disciplined. Great Jaw had lived his free and cruel life without interference. Had he not a strength that was equal to that of any three men on the cliffs?

But night was coming on and Slim Hips thought of the all-important fact that faced him—the need for a safe sleeping place for the night. This, of course, must be where the dreaded saber-toothed tiger, one of the greatest enemies of his kind, could not find him; also, it must be where no poisonous reptile could inflict the deadly germ from which there was no escape! Terror and danger lurked at every hand, reaching forth for victims.

There would have been no use of his going back to the cliffs. Only the chance of death—from Great Jaw—awaited him there. For the present, at least, he was a fugitive from his own home because of another's villainy.

After walking about the gigantic and prolific forest for some twenty minutes or so, Slim Hips settled on a high, lone tree that reared above the others surrounding it. In a big crotch on the topmost limb, he stretched himself out for the night—a fairly safe refuge, for it commanded a view of all that went on about Slim Hips.

The next morning, with the rising of the huge ball of sun, Slim Hips was awake and down on the earth foraging for his breakfast. He partly satisfied his hunger with berries and roots that grew about in the woods in profusion; but, as he'd had no morsel of food since noon of the day before, these did not thoroughly fill his empty stomach. And so, with the patience that he and his kind had learned so well, he set himself about the irksome task of procuring more filling food. Meat.

The tribe had no weapons except their hands. In consequence, Slim Hips searched about for an animal runway leading to a spring or watering-hole. After he had found one that

impressed him favorably, he stretched himself on the grass behind a friendly bush and waited, his eyes searching, his ears sensitive to the least noise, his whole body rigid.

It was slow and tedious work, but he knew of no other way of doing it. After what seemed an interminable time to the hungry stripling, he heard a far-off rustling. He drew in his body to be ready for the spring. Presently a huge wild turkey came clucking and scratching down the path in search of water, its feathers long and deeply colored.

Slim Hips waited until it was abreast of him. Then, with surprising speed and deadly aim he shot straight out for the unsuspecting creature. The sinewy fingers of his right hand closed with a snap over the bird's neck. There was a raucous gobble, then the turkey fell limp as its neck broke in two. Instantly, but leisurely now, Slim Hips devoured his hard-earned meal. It was a crude way to hunt and a crude way to eat, but weapons and fires for cooking were undreamed of.

His hunger appeased, Slim Hips felt the cruel and insistent stab of something far worse than hunger could possibly have inflicted—the loss of the mate and wife he loved and had justly won. He railed futilely at the order of things that allowed such as Great Jaw to commit atrocious actions; he railed madly and uselessly, for he could think of nothing that might possibly help him to do away with the brute with the superior strength.

FOR the greater part of the morning Slim Hips wandered aimlessly through the forest, groping vainly and dumbly for some way of ridding the tribe of the bestial Great Jaw. He felt tired and discouraged, and after an hour or so had passed, threw himself down onto the ground with a loud sigh. He felt, indeed, that never would he regain the comely

Long Hair. There was no hope while Great Jaw lived.

Idly he picked up a rock that lay at his feet and hammered at the boulder against which he had propped himself—merely to keep his hands moving, while his thoughts were troubled. Suddenly he noticed that with each blow the rock in his hand struck the boulder it knocked off a little sliver of stone from the larger boulder.

Slim Hips' forehead, so much broader and wider than any of his kind, was creased into innumerable lines; his mouth was wide and gaping; in his eyes there was a queer, startled look that told that within his crude brain some slight power of reasoning had entered.

For perhaps ten long minutes Slim Hips sat with that queer look on his face. Then it left him and he smiled—a wide, incredulous smile of joy. Quickly he arose and looked about along the grass and leaves on the earth. Finally he discovered what he was looking after—a hard, big nut left over from the autumn before. Usually this form of sustenance was cracked by his kind with their teeth, for teeth were strong, in consequence of the many duties they were required to perform.

Slim Hips, holding the nut carefully between the index finger and thumb of his left hand, placed it on a large stone. Then, with his right hand, he grasped the small rock and brought it down heavily on the hard shell of the nut. It cracked and flew into a thousand pieces. Simultaneously, the stripling allowed a high, joyous cry to escape his lips—a cry born of the reason that was slowly but surely gripping a foothold in his brain.

For the next few minutes, the lad broke nut after nut, all the while with a gleeful smile of joy playing about his lips. Next, he went from tree to tree and tried to see what impression he could make upon the hard trunk,

and each time the rock bit into the wood his smile would expand.

He found, though, that the harder he struck anything the more it hurt the hand in which the rock was held. This, he reasoned in his practically new-found brain, would not allow him to strike a really tremendous and telling blow. Again the queer look of serious thought came into his face and wrinkled his forehead and puzzled his brain.

Again, after a few moments had gone by, a great cry issued from his lips and he rushed madly about the immediate vicinity in search of something. Soon he picked up a stout, heavy club that was perhaps a trifle over a foot in length, after which he searched hastily around for a vine that was thin and pliable and yet powerful and unbreakable.

Presently he found one that satisfied him. With great slowness and care, he proceeded to place the stone at one end of the club and to wind it securely to the club with the tough, elastic vine.

At last it was finished. Stepping to a tree, he raised his weapon and brought it down against the trunk with all the strength his arm possessed. The rock held firmly in its place; the blow did not hurt his hand; and the head of his weapon bit into the wood many times deeper than he would have been able to make it do with his hands alone. A shout of joy came to his lips.

BUT he was not satisfied as to the sureness of his weapon. Hastily he made his way back to the runway near the watering-hole where he had caught his breakfast. With great caution, he hid himself behind a thick clump of bushes, his eyes wide with excitement, his club raised and ready for instant action, his whole body trembling under the strain that gripped him.

Several large birds came down the pathway, but these were not what he

wanted. Several of the smaller and harmless animals skirted his hiding place, but these, also, were not what he sought. At last he heard something coming along that he knew must be an animal of fairly good-sized proportions—a deer, perhaps.

Peering out from his clump of bushes he saw a huge, proudly-antlered buck coming valiantly down the path, an animal that the cavemen had always deemed too big and strong for them to handle.

Slim Hips waited until the beast was but a few feet from him. Then, with a shout, he sprang directly in front of it and brought down his weapon straight for its head with all his strength. It struck the deer full and squarely between the eyes; a terrific blow.

The result, to Slim Hips, was truly marvelous. With a snorting moan, the big creature reared up on its hind legs, swayed there a moment, then toppled down to the ground in a crumpled heap, dead. The stone, with all the lad's force behind it, had penetrated the brain of the big animal without any trouble at all.

And Slim Hips, with a new and great shout of joy, pulled out his weapon and rushed madly off in the direction of the cliffs. Now, indeed, there was some chance of his ridding the tribe of the tyranny of the dreaded and horrible Great Jaw!

Late that afternoon, as the tribal village was bathed in the warm glow of the setting sun, Slim Hips returned to meet the powerful Great Jaw. He walked with head erect, eyes flashing, and with a step that was springy and easy and told of confidence supreme. Hanging from his right hand, close to his side so that it was barely discernible, was the club with the attached stone that was not known to the cavemen.

As he neared the cliffs several of his kind, out searching for roots and berries before the dark made them take to their caves, let out low, warn-

ing cries to him. They told him, with their signs and mode of talk, that to enter the domain practically ruled over by Great Jaw would be quick and instant death for him. Yet the lad, with a smile on his lips such as they had never seen, quietly shook his head and proceeded calmly on his way, followed at a cautious distance by those who had warned him.

They knew, somehow, that he had come to do battle with Great Jaw. Why, they knew not, for he who would do so must truly be mad. Therefore, they felt that they would but witness the death of a peaceful stripling who had been liked by all.

As Slim Hips came out of the woods and onto the grassy plain before the cliffs there arose a noise that was deafening. Men and women and children swarmed from their caves and shouted their queer sounds at one another as they spied the slim lad walking, apparently, straight into his death. High, high up on the cliffs, on a narrow, perilous ledge, Slim Hips saw Long Hair clinging there desperately, with not an inch to spare.

He turned to the nearest of his people asking them what that meant. Gradually they made him know that the maiden, when Great Jaw had returned with her, had broken from his embrace and made her way up to the cliff to a ledge where it was utterly impossible for his huge bulk to follow or reach her. A glad cry broke from Slim Hips, and he shouted at her reassuringly.

THEN Great Jaw entered the scene. He came like a wild and crazed tornado. Hearing the sounds of the cavemen, he had come from around the other side of the cliff to see what they meant. Instantly he had spied Slim Hips. All his fearful anger arose. The slim lad had dared to return! Great Jaw was crazy mad.

The loss of the maiden and his inability to reach her had made him furious; but to have this cub of a

stripling come back after the threats he had received was surely heaping insult on injury. With a snarl and a flashing of teeth and a roar that was uncanny to hear, Great Jaw waved his monstrous arms and came straight out for the lad.

Men and women and children scattered before his approach with shrieks of terror. As they fled in all directions, they cried out supplicatingly to Slim Hips. Above it all, though, the lad heard a high, piercing moan break from the lips of Long Hair. He only smiled up at her confidently and firmly stood his ground, like some solitary sentinel bravely holding his ground before the advance of a regiment.

In a moment Great Jaw was almost upon him, still roaring out his rage in a voice that echoed and reechoed throughout the surrounding woodland. As he came to within some ten feet of Slim Hips, the giant brute halted with an expression of utter bewilderment on his face. It seemed preposterous to him that anyone should ever have stood up before him. Even now he could barely believe it was so. Then, with a cruel flash of his eyes and another of his horrible bellows, he flung himself straight out through the air at the lad before him.

Terrified shrieks rent the air as the tribe expected to see the poor lad instantly crushed to death. Instead, they saw the stripling spring quickly to one side, raise his arm high in the air, and bring the odd-looking thing he held in his hand cleanly and squarely down in the center of Great Jaw's forehead.

Then, far more surprising to them than all else, they saw the huge brute throw up his hands, fall backward, and stay swaying in the air, while a single ear-splitting cry of terror was issuing from his lips. The next instant, they saw him plunge suddenly to the ground, twitch there for a brief second, and slowly flatten out with a

(Concluded on page 105)

Smoke



Burch threw the burning branch at Tonelli

Steve Burch, Forest Ranger, Fights Fire with Fire in a Grim Struggle Against a Trio of Killers!

By **WARD HAWKINS**

Author of "Trouble Hunt," "A Million in Green," etc.

"**Y**OU'VE got to be careful, Steve," Hugh MacDonald, the District Supervisor said to Ranger Steve Burch. "We don't want our record spoiled by a fire this late in the season."

There was a deep affection for the older man in Burch's good brown eyes. He pushed back from the breakfast table and began to clear it.

"Quit worrying," Burch said. "I'll

tell you what. We've got two more days of fishing season; and I'll bet you a new hat for Carrie we get through them without a fire."

"It's a graft," MacDonald growled. "I thought I was through buying hats for my daughter when you married her. But I'll take you. It's worth it—"

The cabin door slammed open, suddenly, and a big man stood there. He

looked at them out of small, cold eyes.

"My name's Jones," he said. "I'd like to hire a guide."

Behind Jones, Burch saw another man, tall and blond, with a strange, bitter look around his mouth and eyes. They were both dressed in new, stiff outdoor clothes. Fishermen. Burch had seen hundreds like them in the past month.

"Sorry," Burch said. "We can't give you a guide."

The heavy face of Jones took on a sullen cast. "I'll pay," he said, and drew a roll of bills from his pocket.

Burch stiffened slightly. His voice lost some of its cordiality, but was still controlled.

"No. You see, we can't furnish guides for everyone, so we make a practice of saying no. I'll give you a pass, though; and you'll find the trail well marked. If you get lost, we'll find you in a hurry. There's no danger. You'd just have to spend an extra day or so in the woods, that's all."

"Time is important," the big man said.

BURCH was vaguely aware of a tenseness in Supervisor MacDonald's silence. He wondered at it, and saw MacDonald get easily to his feet and move to the back of the cabin.

"Sorry," Burch said doggedly to the big man. "I can't help you."

"Give you a hundred bucks."

"No."

"Five hundred, then."

"No."

"A grand," and the big man's voice hadn't changed.

A hot refusal was on the tip of Burch's tongue, when MacDonald's voice sliced through the silence thin and clear.

"Put up your hands!"

Startled, Burch swung in his chair to see the district supervisor holding a rifle in tight hands. The rifle bore directly on Jones' stomach.

"Mac!" Burch gasped, then looked

at the big man. Somehow, the pouches under Jones' eyes had stiffened. His face had become lined and cold. His hands crawled up to his shoulders.

"Sure, you'd pay plenty for a guide," MacDonald rasped. "And time's important, all right. You robbed the Jasper City bank and killed a cashier last night. I got that over the radio early this morning at Headquarters. This was supposed to be your getaway. But it's as far as you go."

"You think so," the big man said.

A sudden shower of falling glass jerked Burch's head to the window. A hairy paw holding a gun appeared through the break. MacDonald swung the gun that way, desperately, but too late—

The gun in the window spat flame and roared.

MacDonald's head snapped back, the gun clattered from his nerveless fingers and he crashed to the floor. An ugly hole was under his right eye. The back of his head was nothing at all. His body jerked several times and then was still.

Burch stared at MacDonald's still body for several long seconds. His mind would not believe what his eyes had seen. It had happened too quickly, too simply. A short moment ago, MacDonald had been talking to him. And now MacDonald was dead!

A moaning curse jerked through Burch's mouth. He threw himself at the big man, blindly, unthinkingly. There was no room for thought in his mind. No room for anything but that insane curtain of red.

Vaguely, he felt his fist connect with bone, felt the bone crunch under his knuckles. A voice boomed a startled curse. Hands clutched at him, bore him down. A tremendous weight came down on his chest. He struck out blindly at the face that hovered above him. A man grunted in pain.

Twisting, he managed to free one leg and lashed out a booted foot. The boot struck something solidly, and a

voice made a shrill whining sound.

But that was the last for Burch.

He stopped trying to fight, tried to protect himself from the unending attack of fists and guns. Finally, even that was impossible. There was nothing but the ceaseless shock of blows and the closing curtain of darkness. . . .

The big man said, "Come on, come on. Snap out of it."

Burch felt himself dragged up by rough hands. He was held in that position by the slack of his shirt. Dimly, he could see the big man's face close to him. It was only a hazy disk, but the eyes burned out of it with a small, red glare. The nose was oddly shaped and something red spilled from it, across his mouth to stain his shirt front.

JONES cursed dully, struck Burch across the mouth. Burch's head snapped loosely across his shoulder, rolled back.

Jones said, "Want some more?"

Burch could only stare at him. He knew, now, this man was not Jones, but Joe Ridack. The blond one was Bishop, the one at the window, Tonelli. Everyone had heard of them. They were public enemies. They had robbed a bank—killed a cashier—killed MacDonald—

"I want a guide," Ridack rasped, "and that's you. You goin' to play ball, or do we start over? We like to play games, too."

Steve Burch nodded, not trusting words past his teeth.

"Okay, then." Ridack shoved him toward the limp body of MacDonald. "The first thing you do is get rid of the old guy. Haul him off in the brush—Tony'll go with you."

Burch glared redly at Ridack across the dead body of the old man. His eyes were not quite sane. Tears trickled down his face. Not tears of grief, but madness. Ridack cursed and walked toward him. Steve Burch bent

quickly and snatched the old man from the floor. He held him tightly and went out of the cabin.

Tony—or Tonelli—was a short man with small, bowed legs and tremendous, rounded shoulders. A half vacant smile always curled his fleshy lips. His eyes were small and red and ape-like, and they never seemed to take an interest in anything.

He followed Steve Burch into the woods.

Leaving the body of the old man behind a log, Burch thought how still and quiet the old man's face was. It was relaxed and stared up at Burch blankly. Burch felt that he should say something before he covered it and went away. But as his mind groped for words, Tonelli's gun prodded him back toward the cabin.

He had to clean the cabin, clean the blood off the floor and set the cabin straight so no one would know what had happened. He did that and made out a pass for these men. They tried to argue with him about the date. He gave it up, finally, and wrote what they told him to. Then they all went outside.

Burch led the way off down the Skyline Trail. Ridack followed close behind him, then Bishop, then Tonelli.

It was a long morning and the sun was hot. The familiar rise and turn of the trail and the sun on his back and all the rest of the things he had come to know helped Burch back to normal. There was a relief in exertion, an escape for the pressure that clouded his mind. By noon he was again normal.

They ate in silence. Burch was aware of Ridack's eyes following his every move. Strangely, the glance didn't seem angry; in fact, there was nothing personal about it at all. The killer might have been thinking about most anything. Burch knew that it wouldn't make any difference to that face, ugly now with a swollen, bluish

nose, whether the mind behind it was thinking of murder or not. The face would not reveal the thought.

Finally Ridack said, "How long will it take to get through?"

Burch was surprised he could answer. "It's forty miles," he said thickly. "Sometime tomorrow night is a guess."

"We'll make it by early evening."

"Maybe," Burch said. "What if I take you out and lose you?"

"You won't. We'll get there, or else—see what I mean?"

The argument seemed senseless, but Burch went on. "What's the difference? I won't live to tell about it either way. Why not take it now?"

"We'll let you go, if we can find a way to keep your mouth shut for a couple of hours."

"I bet you will. But it doesn't make any difference. You won't get away, even if you do get to the pass. There'll be guards there looking for you."

RIDACK laughed. His head tipped back and his bruised mouth gaped his amusement. Burch would have liked to put his hands on that working throat. He thought it would feel very good. But Ridack stopped laughing then, and leaned forward.

"Listen," he sneered. "You can't think of anything I haven't thought of and figured on. I made you date our passes day-before-yesterday, didn't I? So that made us up here in the timber at the time the bank was knocked over. There'll be a bunch of other fishermen going out at the same time, because this is the end of the season. They'll look at our passes, see the date, and let us through. Nice, eh?"

"I suppose so," Burch admitted.

"You suppose so," Ridack snorted. "Hell—it's perfect!"

It was perfect, all right. Steve Burch knew that as well as Ridack. They would get through, and then there would be no way of catching

them again. And if they did, it would be Burch's own fault—he shouldn't have given them the passes.

If he could get away, he could go on ahead and warn the guards. He looked at Bishop with this idea in mind. Bishop was watching him out of washed-out, blue eyes. The thin, bitter smile still curved his lips.

And besides, there was Tonelli. The ape-like man was lying on his stomach. He hadn't been listening to what they said. His face was close to something he held under his hairy paws, and he was crooning softly from deep in his chest. Small, squeaking noises came from under his hands. And no wonder—he was pulling the legs off a field mouse. . . .

No, Burch couldn't get away. He'd have to string along and wait and hope something would happen that would give him a chance.

Ridack said, "So you think we won't make it? Does that mean you're going to get us lost?"

Burch had decided. He said, "Why should I? They don't pay me to risk my neck. I'm a Ranger, not a cop."

"That's the stuff," Ridack chuckled. "He's a smart kid, eh, Bishop?"

"Sure," Bishop agreed.

Tonelli looked up, and echoed, "Smart. . . ."

Burch stood up. "We'd better get going. We've got to highball to get to the pass by tomorrow evening. And you'll get there—I want to live a while yet."

Ridack laughed as he slid into his pack straps. "You'll live, kid, if you play square. Joe Ridack always keeps his word."

Steve Burch led the way off down the trail. He walked fast, and the gangsters had to struggle to keep up. It was funny, Burch thought, what a man could say when he had to. And the way he could act. You just went along as though nothing mattered, not even old Mac getting killed—and that hardly made sense.

Burch thought the worst thing would be telling Carrie. It would be hard to tell her that he had seen her father shot through the head—if he ever got a chance to tell her anything. He supposed he should think of a way to ease the shock; but just then there didn't seem to be any way he could.

Well, the least he could do was get even for the old man. He looked at the three men who followed him. Get even—that was funny. That was very, very funny. . . .

It didn't occur to Steve Burch until the middle of the afternoon that he was about exhausting the men behind him. He had been in the woods all his life—walking was part of it. But Ridack and Tonelli and Bishop were different.

They slogged along sucking breath through their open mouths, as though

Ridack said, "What's that for?"

"Keeps your head cool," Burch answered. "We're going to cross some burned off land in a little while, and the sun will be blistering hot."

"Sounds good. What kind of leaves do you use?"

"Any kind. Those there will work."

Ridack stripped leaves from a small bush and put them in his hat. Bishop and Tonelli did the same, and used the same kind of leaves. Steve Burch watched them—wondering why he didn't laugh out loud. But he didn't; he pushed himself up.

"Let's go," he said. "Time's a-wasting."

They came to the burn in about fifteen minutes. It was all Burch had said it would be. There were no trees, only blackened stumps thrust up like ugly hands. The sun seemed to re-

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each one was the last. Sweat made their faces shiny and wet. But they stood it as long as they could. They had to, because it was important they get out of the reservation early the next evening. That's when the bulk of the fishermen would be leaving. They wouldn't be as noticeable in a crowd.

But finally Ridack called a halt. "Gotta rest," he panted. "We ain't used to tramping in the heat like this."

Tonelli and Bishop collapsed in their tracks. Bishop took his shoes off and rubbed his feet. Ridack smoked and Tonelli lay with his face on the ground.

It was all right with Burch. They'd made good time, he realized. Then, thinking of the trail ahead, he remembered the burn that they had to cross. A forest fire had passed there and had burned out several miles of timber.

He pulled some leaves from a nearby bush and soaked them with his canteen and put them in his hat.

flect off the ashes like heat from a stove top; and the dust curled up from the slogging feet to sting their eyes and throats.

There was heat, plenty of heat, and exertion to bring the sweat cascading down their faces.

NIGHT found them well into the timber on the far side of the burn. The gangsters dropped exhausted when Steve Burch gave the word. They did not help him make camp or cook.

The Ranger stopped in his work now and then to scratch his forehead and curse. Ridack saw him, said:

"You itchin' to? What causes it?"

"No-see-'ums," Burch answered. "They're little bugs like mosquitoes, only so small you can hardly see them. . . ."

They tied him up that night, because, as Ridack said, "There's no use takin' chances." The three gangsters went to sleep at once—dead, almost,

from utter exhaustion. But Steve Burch lay awake.

It was a long night for him. There were so many things to think about. Carrie, mostly, and Old Mac. He knew it was no good thinking; that he ought to close his mind to the whole mess and sleep. But it wasn't that easy.

So he lay there watching the moon come up and ride across the tree tops; and somehow the night noises were a lot of company.

Ridack woke shortly after the first light. And Burch was glad, because that put an end to the waiting. He squirmed around to look at the gangster, who started cursing, first in puzzlement, then in fear, then in the white heat of anger.

His face was no longer a face. Instead, it was an ugly caricature. The flesh was red and angry and swol-

Tonelli said, "Cheez, boss, what happened?"

"Can you see?"

"Sure, I can see good. But what the hell—?"

Ridack's voice fogged up. "Where's that damned Ranger? Can he see?"

Tonelli peered at Steve Burch. Then he said, "He's tied up where we left him. He's all right—his face ain't a bit swollen."

"That's it!" Ridack moaned. "It's those damned leaves. Tony, find my hat and tell me what those leaves look like."

"They're shiny and about medium size."

"Now get the Ranger's. What are they like?"

"Nothin' like ours. They're big and not shiny."

It was about all Ridack could stand.

Jungle Novel by E. HOFFMANN PRICE

len beyond all recognition. The swelling had squeezed his eyes into two tightly closed slits.

RIDACK pawed at them, staggered up blindly.

The sound of Ridack's rage woke Bishop. And his face was as bad or worse than Ridack's. At least he was just as blind.

Tonelli grumbled and growled sleepily and rolled over on his back. Ridack's roar jerked him to his feet.

There was nothing wrong with him.

Though his face was a little red and swollen, it wasn't enough to matter. His eyes were bright and unaffected. He looked at Ridack and Bishop and swore in amazement.

"Bishop!" Ridack bellowed. "Can you see?"

"God, no—I'm blind!"

"Tonelli! Where the hell are you? That damned Ranger—Tony, answer me!"

He stood there making queer, choking sounds deep in his chest. None of them meant anything, really, but to Steve Burch they meant a lot. He had known his simple little plan had failed when he saw Tonelli.

Finally, Ridack said, "Bring him to me, Tony. Leave him tied."

Tonelli lifted Burch and carried him to Ridack. Ridack fumbled for the Ranger, caught his jacket and pulled him close. Then his big hands crawled upward to the Ranger's throat. They stopped there, closed steadily, relentlessly.

Burch was helpless. The fingers tightened and suddenly there was no air to breathe. He struggled feebly. But only because the desire for air numbed his brain and made him fight instinctively. There was really no use struggling—

The hands released him, finally, but he was beyond knowing it. His world had vanished into darkness. A world

born again under the repeated impact of Tonelli's hand.

Dimly, he heard Ridack saying, "Wake him up. Wake him up. He's got to get us out of this."

"He's coming out of it, boss," Tonelli said.

"Here, let me get my hands on him." Ridack caught Burch and dragged him up. He had to hold him, because the Ranger couldn't stand alone.

"What'd you do to us?"

Burch tried to answer once and couldn't. His throat felt like it was squeezed close. Finally, he whispered, "Poison oak. The leaves were poison oak."

Ridack whimpered and struck the Ranger across the face.

Tonelli picked Burch up again and carried him back to Ridack. Ridack said, "Can you make us see again?"

"No," Burch said. "There's nothing you can do."

"There has to be. Why didn't Tony get it?"

"It doesn't bother some people. I don't know why."

Ridack shook Burch in sudden, helpless anger. "There's got to be something — you'd better think of something—" He stopped, suddenly, and in a different tone said, "Would you tell me if there was?"

The Ranger didn't answer.

"Hah!" Ridack grunted. "You guys are around that stuff all the time, so you'd be sure to know a way to fix it. I'll get it out of you. Tony. Here—make it sing. . . ."

Tony freed one of the Ranger's hands and held it in his own. The pressure was light, at first. Gradually it strengthened. The Ranger sank to the ground. His face became gray and streaked with sweat.

"I can do it," he finally moaned.

RIDACK said, "How?" and stopped the pressure.

Burch didn't answer till he'd caught his breath. His hand didn't hurt much. It felt queer and numb. But

at least he could think—he had to think of something. He said:

"Smoke. Smoke will do it. That's what we use—fir smoke."

"I thought so," Ridack grunted. "Untie him, Tony. And listen, kid—it'd better work."

"It will," Burch told him. "It always has."

Tonelli watched Burch as the Ranger built a fire and rigged a blanket over it so the smoke would go in Ridack's and Bishop's faces. And Tonelli had a gun. If it hadn't been for that, Burch might have made a break for it. As it was, he just fed the fire green fir boughs and made the smoke curl upward in a thick column.

He showed Ridack and Bishop where to sit, said, "It'll take a couple of hours before it begins to work. You got a bad dose."

Ridack and Bishop stood it very well the first hour. They coughed and swore a lot, but that was all. Tonelli squatted on his haunches a few feet away from Burch. He swiveled the gun back and forth, following the Ranger's movements.

By the end of the next half hour, Ridack became impatient. Bishop, too, was complaining.

"Hell, this ain't doin' any good."

Ridack's face was twisted horribly under the sweat and soot. "It had better work," he said hoarsely. "By God!—it better."

And Steve Burch was sweating too. Something had to happen pretty quick.

Then he saw the movement on the trail.

Suddenly, he exploded into action. He jerked a burning branch from the fire and threw it at Tonelli.

Tonelli spilled backward. Burch jumped after him and kicked at the gun. The gun went flying off in the brush.

Then he yelled, "Ridack! Bishop! Tonelli!"

Ridack and Bishop lurched up from the fire. Ridack staggered around

with his hands outstretched. Bishop screamed:

"What's happened? What's happened?"

"The kid's gone crazy! Tony, hold him—let me get my hands on that doublecrossin'—"

Burch couldn't wait to think. Tonelli was scuttling toward him. Burch tried to get away, but he couldn't. Tonelli's big hands caught him like a rabbit. Of course, he fought. He hammered rapid, futile blows into Tonelli's face.

And then he felt himself lifted and spun in the air. He tried to brace himself for the crash against the ground. The shock left him stunned, unable to move. Tonelli picked him up again and threw him down again.

A rifle cracked, unexpectedly, from across the clearing.

Tonelli stopped in mid-stride, clutching at his chest. He knelt down slowly. Finally, he laid down across the Ranger, slowly, as if he hurt inside. He didn't move after that—he never moved again. He was dead.

"Tony!" Ridack yelled. "Tony!"

Burch twisted to see a solitary, green-clad figure emerge from the trees. The figure moved to Ridack's side. Ridack stood rigid and still. The man in green laid down his rifle with slow care. He slugged Ridack in

back of the jaw. Ridack crumpled to the ground.

Bishop was lying face down, his head covered with his hands. The man in green jerked the hands down and bound them tightly. He dragged Bishop to Ridack and tied the two together, back to back in a sitting position.

Then he went and lifted the lifeless body of Tonelli from Steve Burch. The face of the man in green was pale and strained. Somehow he managed a tight grin. "I don't know what started it, Steve," he husked, "but it's all over now—"

Steve Burch couldn't help himself—he couldn't hold the crazy laughter that tore at his throat. And he didn't try. It felt good and it released that horrible tightness in his stomach. He let it go and really laughed.

Ridack's head rolled loosely as he came to. He muttered senselessly, and finally started cursing.

Burch looked at him and giggled and bit his lip to stop it. He crawled over to Ridack and said:

"Smoke to cure poison oak! That's a laugh. Do you know what that smoke did? It brought Tom Terry. Smoke like that in the fire season will bring a Ranger anywhere in the district in two hours—"

And Steve Burch laughed again....

DAWN OF REASON

(Concluded from page 97)

convulsive shudder, his life spent. The lad who had done this thing stood over him with a smile on his lips.

The tribe rushed forward in a compact mass, peering down at the form on the ground with unbelieving eyes. Finally, several essayed to touch the body, and drew back with cries of surprise when they saw that he who had wantonly killed all his life, he who had been the terror of them all, had at last been meted out the death which he had more than deserved. With joyous shouts, they surged about Slim

Hips and proclaimed him, in their way, the peer of them all, and one from whom they would learn the correct laws of life and whose leadership they would hereafter recognize.

But he was making a wild dash forward toward the cliff edge that held Long Hair. He must climb to her side and once more—and for all time—regain the maiden whom he had justly and bravely won for the second time through the dawn of reasoning that had entered into his brain only that very morning.

The GLOBE TROTTER



GREETINGS, Globe Trotters! All the rest of the world may be topsy-turvy, but that old spirit of adventure, that quest for far lands and new horizons, still stirs deeply in the breasts of stout-hearted, clear-eyed men and women.

While the rest of the world sits at home, there'll always be those adventurous few, envied by all, disdainful of modern restrictions and lack of opportunity, who somehow manage to outfit themselves and set off for any part of the globe that suits their fancy. To give weight to our point, lend your ears, Globe Trotters, to the story of Elkan J. Morris, adventurer in the great outdoors and his attractive young wife, Anne. Morris, 26 years old, is a writer for outdoor publications, and an experienced woodsman and camper. His helpmate, Anne, is 23, blue-eyed, has brown hair and weighs only 110 pounds.

Yet for the past three years this young couple has been making overwater trips, up rivers and down lakes in the eastern part of the country, living their lives to the hilt while gathering material for articles.

On to Fort Yukon

Even as you read this, the Morrises are now on their way overwater and by portage to Fort Yukon, in northwestern Canada's Yukon Territory. They started out on the Hudson River in New York City by guide boat. Their little argosy of adventure is named the *Anne*, after Mrs. Morris, and is equipped with an outboard motor.

Young Morris, having already paddled 20,000 miles on river and lake, intends to let gasoline do most of the work this time. And if you Globe Trotters will look at your maps, you can practically mark out the route the Morrises must take to reach Fort Yukon.

They expect to get there before snowfall and bed down for the winter in a cabin they'll build themselves. They intend to live off the country as much as possible, regular pioneer style. Morris, an expert with the bow and arrow, expects to bring down small game with it to conserve the ammunition he'll have along for his two rifles.

Not Just a Lark

Just the same, adventure or no adventure, the Morrises are not going off on just

a lark. Experienced campers, they're taking along full equipment—fuel and oil for the outboard motor, tent, summer and winter clothes, sleeping bags, an ax and the usual camping supplies; not to mention such necessities as fishing tackle.

There's something almost inspiring in the trip of this young couple. No automobile and comfortable trailer for them; no expensive sloop with powerful engine and sky-blue pink sleeping quarters. The Morrises are really roughing it, in the old American tradition.

And that's the great tradition of adventure; of striking out for far places, meeting danger of any sort whenever it arises, and up at the crack of dawn to push ahead more miles into the wilderness.

To Elkan J. and Anne Morris, the best of luck, friends, and we hope your New York to Fort Yukon trip will be the best yet!

Background for Action

Action and drama aplenty are crowded into L. P. Holmes' great novel, **STOLEN CARGO**, featured in this issue, with its exciting Caribbean background. We've asked Author Holmes to tell us about it.

Dear Globe Trotter:

I am not one of these fictioneers who have traveled the far corners of the earth. My life has been pretty uneventful. I was born in a mile-high gold camp in the Rockies; traveled with the family to the Mother Lode gold country of California and spent some early years there, then proceeded to grow up on a cattle ranch.

I've never been in an airplane, the highest I ever flew being from the back of a bronc or two that were a little too salty for me to handle when they decided to come undone. I've hunted and camped and fished pretty much all through this neck of the woods, and live out in the sticks now.

I've never sailed the raging sea, nor fought head-hunters in a jungle, nor shot down Hun planes over France. Though one editor got the idea that I must have, after buying a flock of war-air yarns from me.

For my yarn **STOLEN CARGO** I laid the setting in the West Indies because it lent itself to the plot. The Dog Rocks are real enough, being between the southern tip of Florida and Cuba, southeast of the Dry Tortugas. Were I a sea story writer, I think I'd look into the West Indies and the Bahamas, the Windward and the Leeward Islands.

That Caribbean Sea area must be crammed with romance and stories. Maybe one of the boys will get smart one of these days and dig in there, giving us some yarns to counterbalance the more usual South Sea Islands locale.

As for myself, I'm pretty much of a confirmed Western writer, for I've lived that life and I know the country—and I like it. I'd rather wake up there under a dawn sky with the smell of sage-

brush and dew-dampened tarweed in my nostrils, than any other place I know.

In my eyes there is no view to match the blue and lavender bulk of lonely mountains against a sunset sky. Or dawn coming up over some Western desert. I'll take mine up on a good bronc, with a rifle under my knee and plenty of open sky to wander under. Or up to my hips, with the white water of a good trout stream when the rain-bows or steelheads are hitting.

And I can really live when the fall winds are blowing and the ducks are flying and I can hunker down in a tule blind with the little Springer pup beside me and smell the breath of the marsh. And then that never-to-be-forgotten thrill when the shadowy bulk of a big mule deer buck goes crashing out of a jackpine thicket.

Or perhaps on one of those warm, still days about a waterhole, when the wild doves go hurtling by like feathered bullets. Or a frosty morning in early winter, when the quail are calling plaintively from the glistening manzanitas. That is my life, and I'll stick to it.

Sincerely,

L. P. Holmes.

And as long as men like L. P. Holmes love and are themselves a part of the West, readers will not go lacking for adventure and Western yarns of real warmth and color. A man who knows how to live, this L. P. Holmes, and we think that his letter shows it.

Young Adventurers, Attention!

The very first letter we opened this morning stirred up memories of a gone but decidedly not forgotten youth, and made us wish we were back in slacks and tennis shoes, ready for come what may.

For this letter is an invitation to high adventure—a call to two young men with a little cash on hand, and two free years ahead of them, to cast off from shore and set sail in a 35-foot sloop on a cruise to ports far and near.

Dear Globe Trotter:

I have just finished reading my copy of **THRILLING ADVENTURES**, and it was a corker, believe me.

Your **GLOBE TROTTERS' CLUB** is a great idea, and it should help to bring travelers closer together.

But before I go on, let me introduce myself. My name is James Carson, and I've traveled quite a bit in the last few years; all over this country, Canada, Mexico and the Americas, in fact.

Right now, my buddy and I are working to finance another trip. We own a 35-foot Frenchmen sloop which we bought a while back, and there's not another like her in this part of the coast.

She is a sail and motor sloop combined; and she's great to look at, if you like ships.

What we intend to do in the near future is some tall traveling to far-away ports and islands, to take motion picture film shots with our own camera, and get in some good fishing and hunting.

Now, if there are two fellows among your readers who would like to go with us, why, we would be glad to have them come along. And if you can help us find these two fellows, we would be most grateful.

Of course, they will have to do their share of the work. The first fellow must be able to operate a motion picture camera and know what to do with it. The second fellow must know how to cook and be able to handle a boat a little.

Both fellows must not be over 25 years of age, but over 21. Also, they must help to finance the trip a little, although not much cash is needed. We have to buy food and such other supplies as we'll need on the cruise.

The two fellows who want to go along with us can be sure that they'll be in for a lot of fun and thrills, but nobody with a weak heart and an un-

(Continued on page 108)

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(Continued from page 107)

willing spirit need apply, because he'd only be in the way.

We expect to take from one and a half to two years on this cruise, with not too many stopovers.

Right now I am staying aboard the boat, and I make repairs in my spare time. Fellows who want to apply for this cruise can write to me at the address below.

Yours truly,

James Carson.

Care of General Delivery, Post Office,
Portland, Maine.

Well, Jim, offhand we'd say you've got something there. We hope you get a pile of applications for these two berths, and be sure to write us before you shove off, telling us whom you selected; and in fact, let the fellows add a few words of their own to your letter, so we can get a line on 'em.

They Still Play Rough

Anson Hard, whose exciting novelet, **KNIVES OF THE JUNGLE**, is a feature of this issue, has a very interesting letter for us about the Philippine background of his story. Having lived and taught among the natives out there, we'd say he knows what he's talking about.

Dear Globe Trotter:

Once when traveling in Mindanao I asked directions from a native, and his answer was, "Follow the mud." He meant, of course, the trails which were knee-deep in mud. His terse answer explains one of the reasons why Central Mindanao is a practically unknown land.

Rain is a daily occurrence in this country, and the trails even on the slopes and peaks of the mountains are deep in mud. Travel is reduced to a mile an hour by *carabao*, or water buffalo, and no region with such difficult transportation has ever been developed or completely explored. Large sections of Mindanao are still marked "Unexplored" on the map.

This central region is inhabited by wild or uncivilized tribes of Manoboos and Ates and by the Moros. The two former peoples are pagans and the latter Mohammedans. They have never been completely disciplined by military forces. It is a region in which a traveler must go armed.

My story **KNIVES OF THE JUNGLE** is built around a real character, Datu Inda, who led just such a pillaging band as has been depicted in the yarn. His general ranging ground was in Northern Cotabato and Southern Bukidnon Provinces along the Pulangi River. He was still at large on my last visit to Mindanao several years ago and may still be at his depredations. I have never read any report that he has been killed or captured.

He is no creature of fiction, as I know from actual observation. I have passed through the charred remains of villages that he had looted and burned, and came within two hours of catching up with him once in Southern Bukidnon. His knowledge of the mountains made it well-nigh impossible to corral him with military forces; and the tribesmen not actually in his band held him in such fear that they would never divulge his whereabouts.

The region is extraordinarily wild. A few years ago a scientific party scaled Mount Apo in Central Mindanao in the hope of finding the "missing link" between the ape and the human being. Mindanao ranks along with Borneo as a land of mystery. The native pagan tribes are ranked by the government as lower in the scale of civilization than the head-hunting Igorotes of Luzon. They battle with long-bladed fighting spears, bolos, and krises. Many of them live in tree houses.

To turn a trail suddenly and come upon these warriors, long wooden shields over their arms, spears in hand, and every mouth so betel-stained that it looks like a gaping wound, is to believe that the nether regions have spewed up some of their imps. If these warriors are in a friendly mood, a "Mah-yad-gul-lee," which is the Bukidnon equivalent of "Good day, friend," starts the red

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mouths grinning. If they are not friendly, it is better to throw off the safety catch on your rifle.

The Philippine Constabulary, officered by both white and native men, has done yeoman service in keeping the tribes peaceful. The long distances of unsettled country between the constabulary posts on the north side of Mindanao and those on the south side make complete police service impossible; but only when these mountain robbers, or "magahats," have a daring leader like Datu Inda can they continue depredations for any length of time.

While these "magahats" try to elude the soldiers, brisk encounters do take place. I was in one that was pretty hot for an hour—and I'm not talking about the weather. As depicted in my yarn **KNIVES OF THE JUNGLE**, these mountain boys have a pretty decent respect for the constabulary's Springfield rifle.

Like the hero of the yarn, Phil Logan, many of the constabulary officers are promoted from the U. S. Regulars. In fact the constabulary was organized at the beginning by an American soldier. In Phil Logan I have tried to characterize the qualities of these officers who have come from the Regulars over to the constabulary.

They're scrappers. The job has never been one for faint-hearted men.

Very sincerely,

Anson Hard.

We can think of much nicer things than meeting up with a bevy of pre-civilization head-hunters, Mr. Hard. Particularly in a damp and steaming jungle. Guess those men in the Philippine Constabulary earn their pay, and that's no joke.

'Way Up North

Take a Frenchman; transplant him to the New World; set him up in Canada, and before long you've got the makings of a story, particularly if our friend turns trapper and ranges the wild forests with rifle and traps.

Year in and year out, Harold F. Cruickshank continues to keep us informed on the activities of the people up north, in human-interest and animal adventure yarns. Take the floor, Cruick, and tell us about

(Continued on page 110)

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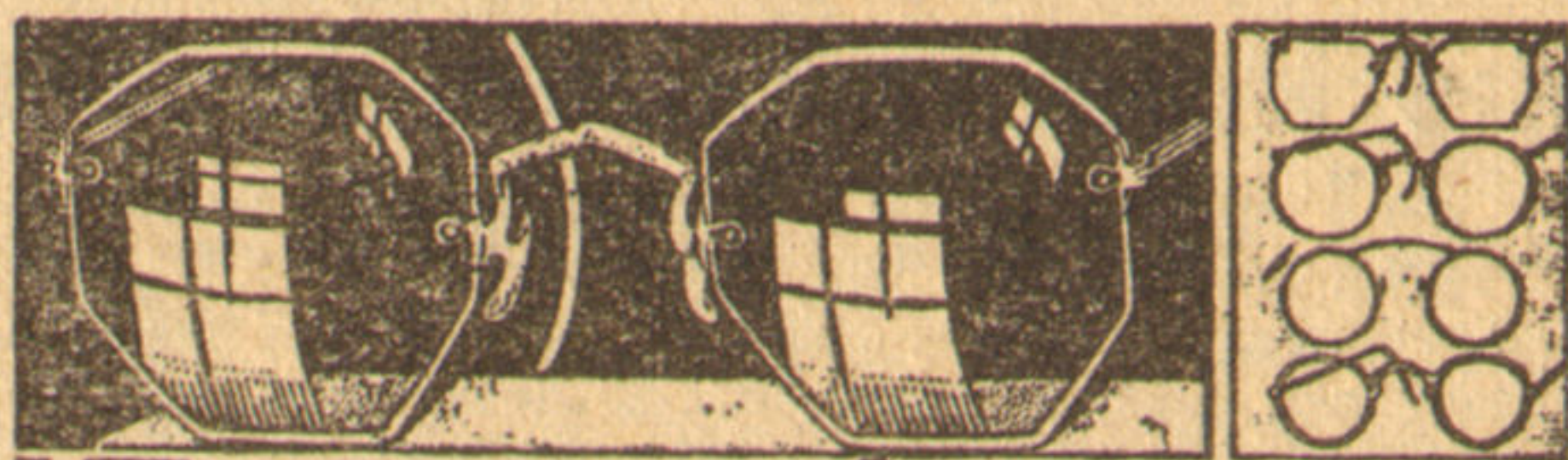
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Name

Address

(Continued from page 109)

THE FANGS OF OTAN, that latest story of yours, in this issue.

Dear Globe Trotter:

This Globe Trotter Department of THRILLING ADVENTURES is, I think, a darn good idea. It gives the author an opportunity to meet his readers on more intimate ground. It also gives the writer an opportunity to disclose some of the basic facts, of color and action, about which his yarns are written.

Take THE FANGS OF OTAN, in the present issue. How come? Well, let me digress, please.

I'd like you to go back some years, and visualize a youngster pretty much alone in the wilderness. That's me; and a pretty empty wilderness it was, since we were almost the first settlers in the district. A young boy, just out of an Old Country school, thrust right into the heart of the wilds, can get mighty lonely very suddenly.

Some kind settlers gave me a little cocker spaniel puppy which became my constant companion. But as I was obliged to leave our homestead and go out to work for distant neighbors, Jack, the spaniel, had to be left at home and wasn't receiving just the treatment I would have given him. A lady, one of the first women in the district, took compassion on little Jack, and offered a telescope to me in trade for him.

Reluctantly I parted with Jack. I had something which, next to a gun, I prized very highly, and at once set it to work. With that telescope I was able to see clearly for long distances. I was able to pick out animal life that could not be seen with the naked eye. I discovered I had an imagination and a heart that yearned for adventure.

And so, in my spare time, I roamed through the forest, trekking far afield, and since the district was so sparsely settled I quickly discovered how plentiful was the wild animal life.

Occasionally I killed a deer for food, and often had to trap for a livelihood; but always I have been a friend of the wild things. One thing that struck me more than anything else while observing the habits of the forest denizens, was their wisdom, the great love of the wilderness mothers for their young. I have seen some great demonstrations of valiance on the part of wild life parents in defense of their young, from the tiny field mouse to the handsome, formidable buck deer.

Many times in my fiction stories I have used the cougar as the villain, realizing at the same time that in all the wilds there is no more devoted parent than the she-cougar. And so, in THE FANGS OF OTAN, I decided to feature the sagacity and devotion of Otan, the mother cougar, in tribute to the real courage of this animal.

Sincerely yours,

Harold F. Cruickshank.

Thanks for your letter, Cruick, and we expect to see another Northwoods yarn from you in the mail for us any day now.

Our Next Issue

We don't see how we can get too enthusiastic about the next issue of THRILLING ADVENTURES, for September. All in one issue we're bringing together a trio of genuine adventure-fiction aces—E. Hoffmann Price, Captain J. Winchcombe-Taylor and Johnston McCulley.

Leading off will be E. Hoffmann Price's bangup novel of jungle revolt—MALAY MASSACRE! Death and disaster in a land of struggle and treachery, where life—even a white man's—is cheap, and the devil counts coup!

With that Chinese-Japanese war still going on and no signs of an armistice, Captain J. Winchcombe-Taylor has contrived another yarn of bare knuckles and tough situations for that ace of he-men, "Club Fist" Mayne. GUERRILLAS FOR

CHINA is the story, and it's a grand novelet!

While Johnston McCulley's **FOUND IN FAR PLACES**, a River of Death story, will keep you glued to your chair with its suspense and drama!

Not to mention our usual roster of short stories and special features, all with color and a punch to them. But wait—there's more to come!

Our Adventure Writers

We figured out the other day that it would be a good idea to have you Globe Trotters meet the men who write our adventure yarns for us, year in and year out. Men who are aces in the adventure-fiction field, and whose own lives are surely as colorful as the characters they write about.

Our authors thought it was a good idea, too; and in answer to our request letters and photographs began coming in with each mail. And so with the September issue **THRILLING ADVENTURES** begins the first in a series of biographical sketches entitled **THEY WRITE AS THEY LIVE**—the story of our authors. The September issue will carry the story of that doughty Globe Trotter, ex-soldier and jack-of-all-trades, E. Hoffmann Price.

Nor should we forget to mention the fifth in the true historical adventure series
(Concluded on page 112)

Next Month's Headliners

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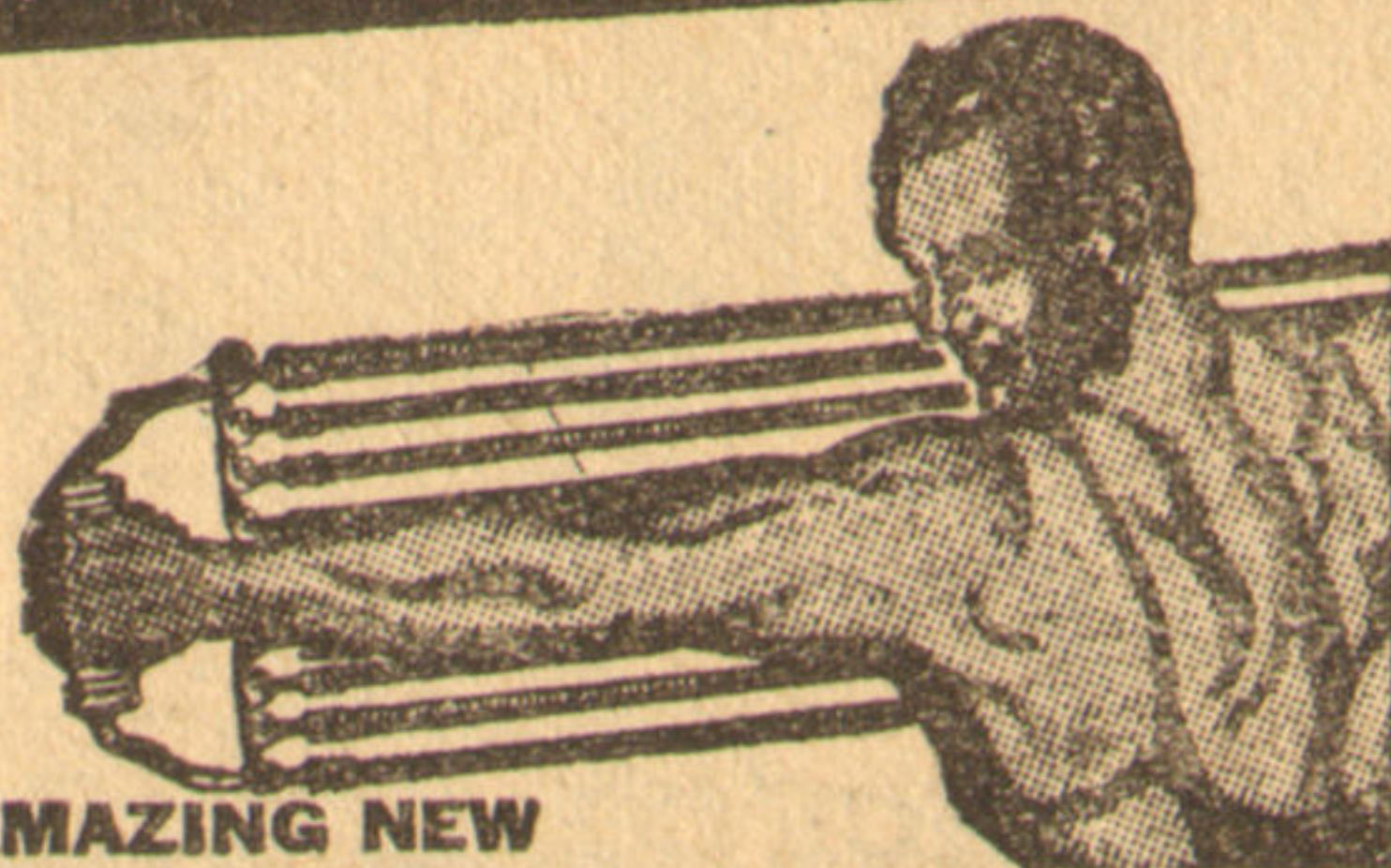
A "Club Fist" Mayne Novelet
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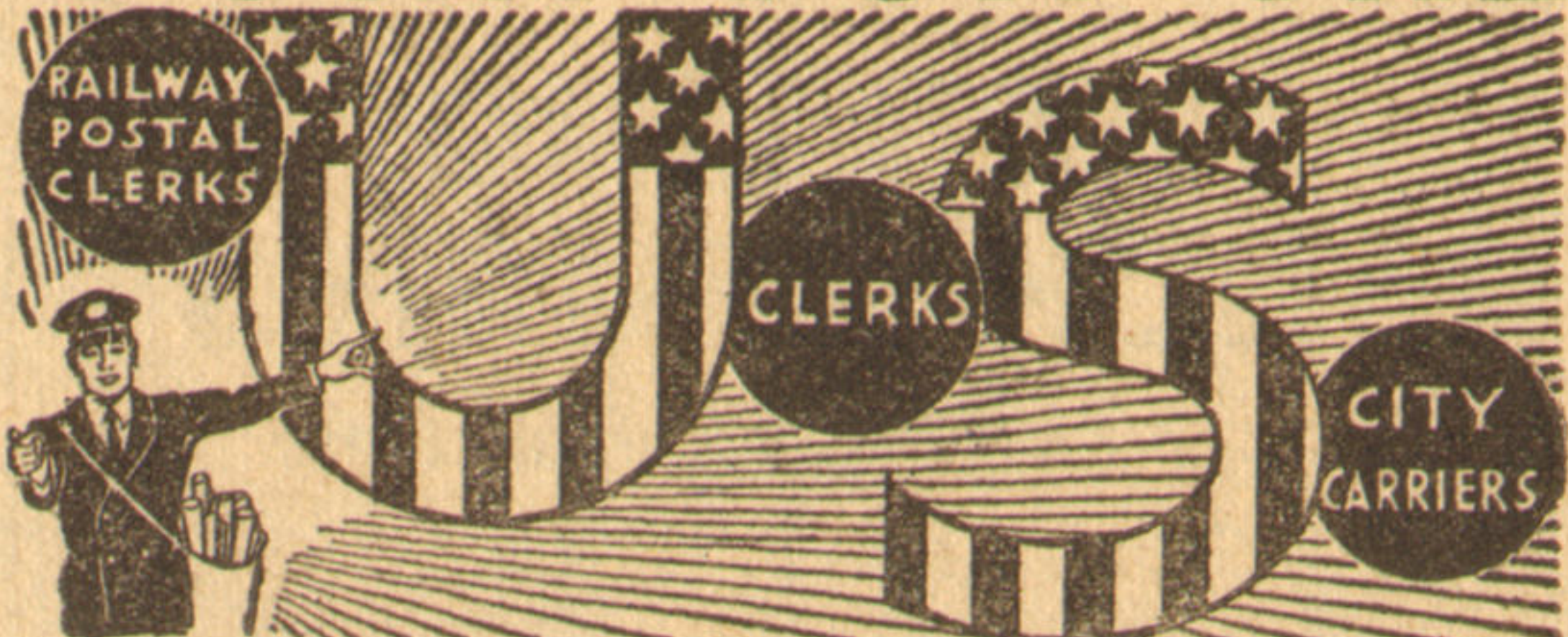
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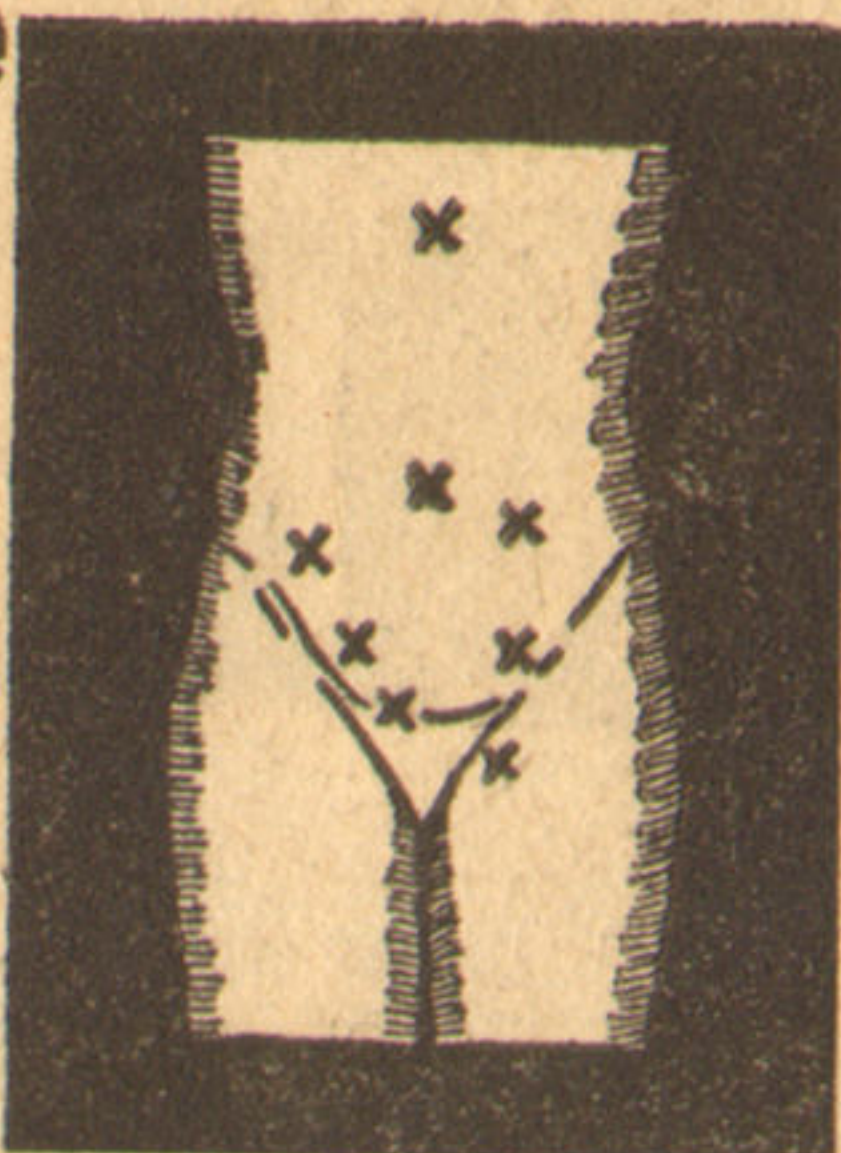
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(Concluded from page 111)

by Charles S. Strong, Arctic explorer, friend of Scandinavian royalty and a prolific fiction writer. **THE MARCH OF DEATH** is the title, and it's the story of Tsali, last chief of the Cherokee Indians of Eastern Tennessee, and how he fought to prevent the white man from encroaching on his tribe's domain in those mountains we know as the Great Smokies.

Those Letters, Friends

Two things, Globe Trotters, before we put the department to bed for this issue. One: keep up those letters! One and all, write into us, let us know what you're doing—particularly if it's adventurous and exciting, or if you're visiting far places, or expecting to take a trip around the country. So just take up pen and paper, and drop us a line. We'll print as many letters as we've room for in each issue.

Which brings us to Point Two. Don't fail to include your application to join our **GLOBE TROTTERS' CLUB** when you write in. You'll find the coupon on page 112. Simply fill it out and send it in. Of course there are no dues or fees of any kind, and no matter where you live or happen to be at the moment, you're eligible for membership.

Guess that about winds up the department for this month. But we'll be around to chat with you again in the September issue. So long!

—THE GLOBE TROTTER.

P.S. A partial list of members of the **GLOBE TROTTERS' CLUB** appears on page 8 of this issue.

The Globe Trotter,
THRILLING ADVENTURES,
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8-39

BEST FUN, FICTION AND FOTOS IN

KNIVES OF THE JUNGLE

(Concluded from page 89)

American fists had done the trick.
Inda, the fox; now the goat.

THE firing had almost ceased. There was a tramp of marching feet. Gimenez at the head of a squad, halted his men at stiff attention. He snapped his heels together and saluted.

"Captain Logan, sir, the Moros are fleeing. Shall we pursue?"

All at once Logan felt weak and tired. He had had enough of battle. No use sniping at the whipped devils. They were powerless without their leader.

"No, let them go. They'll be harmless *taos* driving *carabaos* tomorrow. I've got another job for you. Take this prisoner and *watch him!*"

Gimenez stared at the limp figure. "Ah! The servant of the —er—other captain. He is not dangerous."

"No," agreed Logan sourly, "he's not dangerous. Neither's dynamite if you leave it alone. Just the same you tie him like a bundle of hemp. And when you come to testify in court, remember this, Gimenez. His name's not Nicanor Alvaro. He's the bird we call Inda. Now, step."

The sergeant, good soldier that he was, this time forgot to salute.

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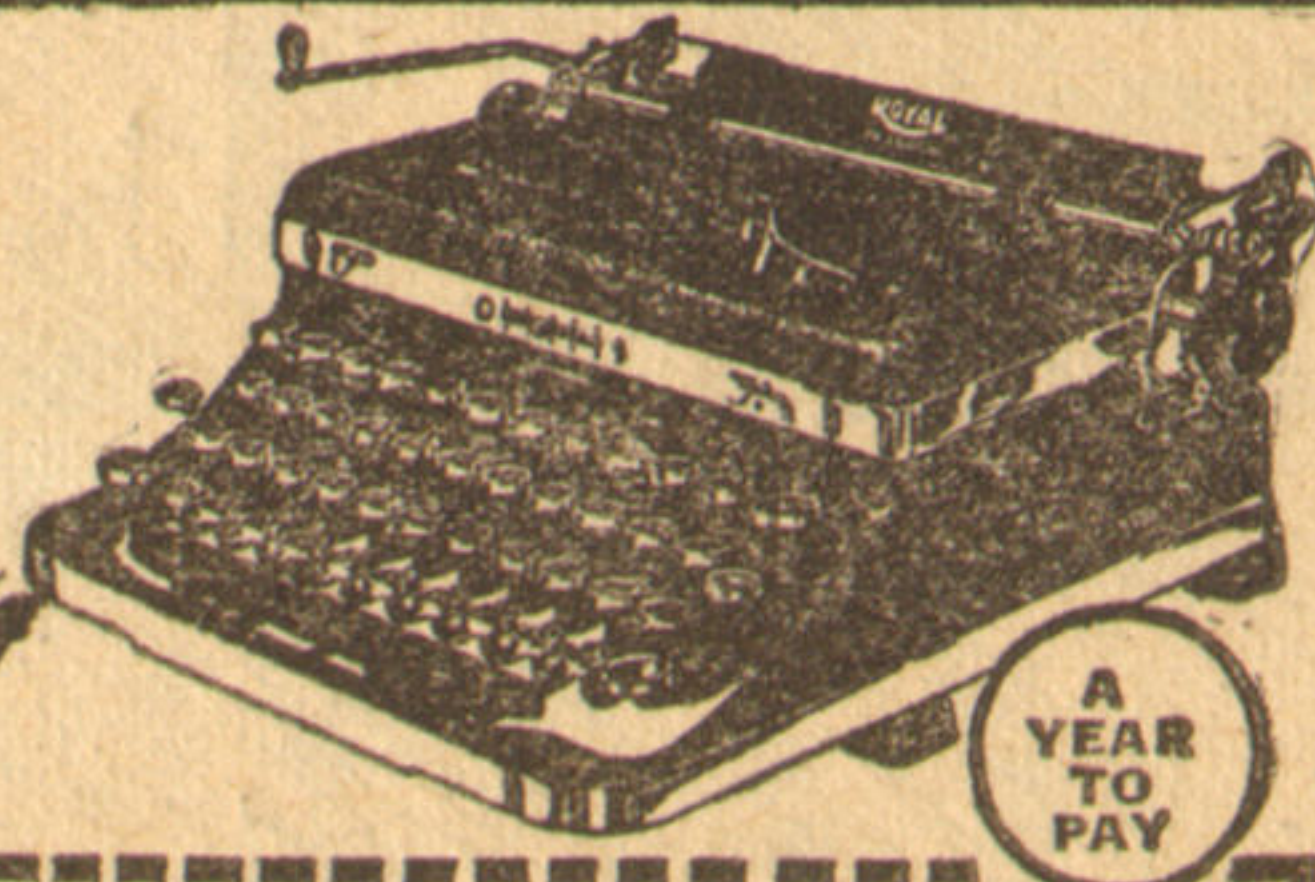


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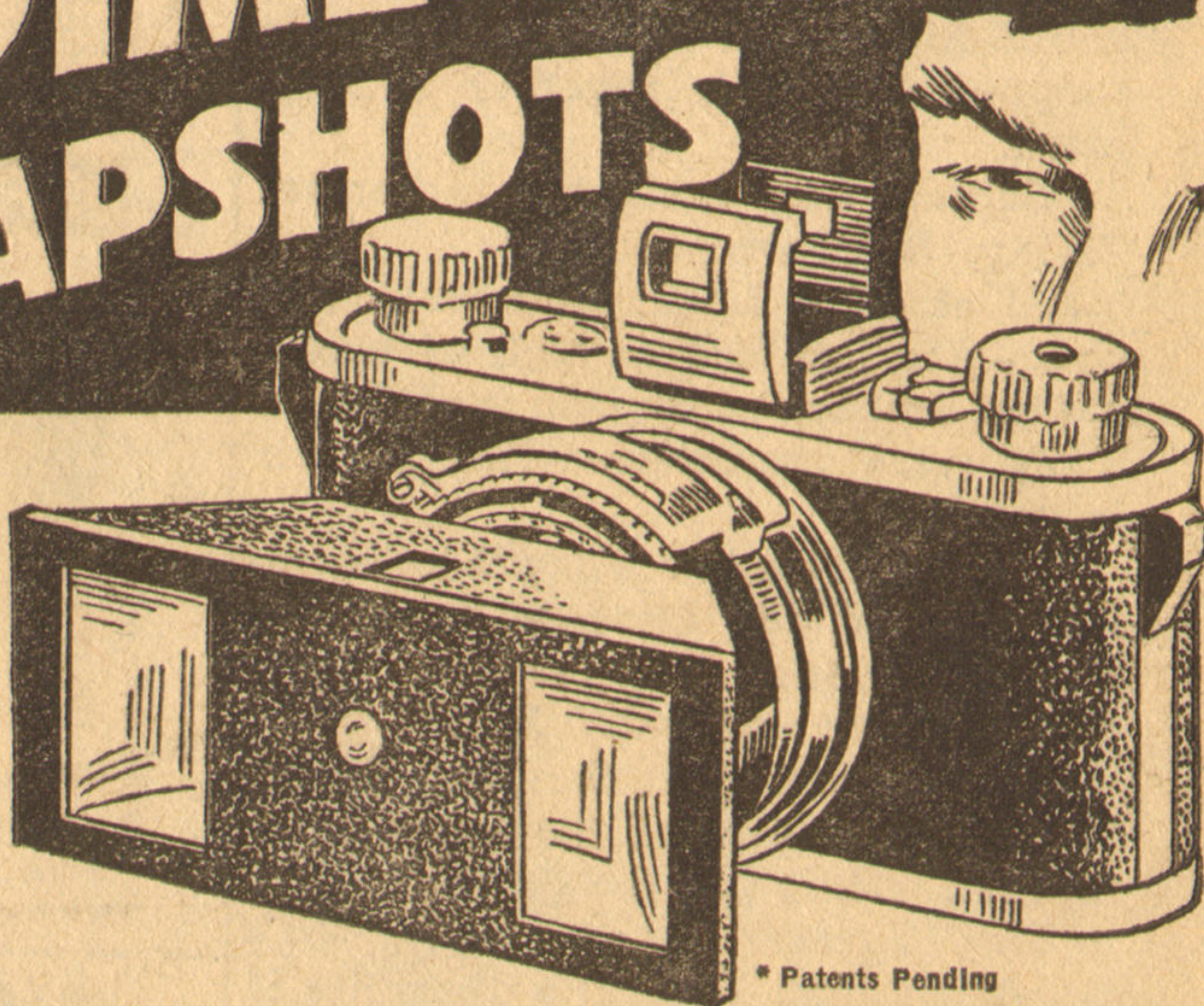
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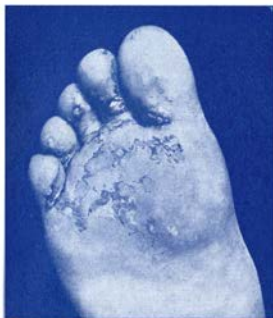
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Usually the disease starts between the toes. Little watery blisters form, and the skin cracks and peels. After a while, the itching becomes intense, and you feel as though you would like to scratch off all the skin.

BEWARE OF IT SPREADING

Often the disease travels all over the bottom of the feet. The soles of your feet become red and swollen. The skin also cracks and peels, and the itching becomes worse and worse.

Get relief from this disease as quickly as possible, because it is very contagious, and it may go to your hands or even to the under arm or crotch of the legs.

HERE'S HOW TO RELIEVE IT

The germ that causes the disease is known as Tinea Trichophyton. It buries itself deep in the tissues of the skin and is very hard to kill. A test made shows it takes 15 minutes of boiling to kill the germ; so you can see why the ordinary surface remedies are unsuccessful.

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When you apply H. F. you should find that the itching is quickly relieved. You should paint the infected parts with H. F. night and morning until your feet are better. Usually this takes from three to ten days, although in severe cases be sure to consult a specialist.

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