

Heart of Asia

BOY CHAPMAN ANDREWS



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Heart of Asia

Books by Roy Chapman Andrews

ON THE TRAIL OF ANCIENT MAN
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UNDER A LUCKY STAR
MEET YOUR ANCESTORS
AN EXPLORER COMES HOME
HEART OF ASIA

Heart of Asia

TRUE TALES
OF THE FAR EAST

By

ROY CHAPMAN ANDREWS

DUELL, SLOAN AND PEARCE

New York

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I

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Printed in the United States of America

To

William E. Rae

an inspiring editor, through
whose friendly cooperation this
book came into being.

Foreword

I have always believed in Stefansson's dictum that "Adventures are a mark of incompetence." In other words, if an explorer prepares himself properly in advance of any expedition, he will have few adventures. Nevertheless, one can not foresee every eventuality and, in spite of preparation, the unexpected will happen. So it is, that during thirty years of wandering into the far corners of the world, I have had a good many adventures and strange experiences. I have written some of them down just as they happened. They are all tales of the Far East, where I spent most of my working life. Strange as they may seem, they are fact, not fiction. The same sort of thing is happening today, for fundamentally the people of the Orient haven't changed, nor will they change for generations to come.

Most of these pieces have been published in *True: the Man's Magazine*. My best thanks are due the editors of *True* for permission to present them in this book.

Roy Chapman Andrews

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This is a terrible story, but it is true, nevertheless. It has been going around in my head for twenty years, and for a time I told it in conversation. Then I didn't tell it any more, for my friends couldn't understand the Oriental mind that made it possible. Now I am going to tell it again.

When I was leader of the Central Asiatic Expeditions of the American Museum of Natural History, we tried to return to Mongolia and continue our exploration of the Gobi Desert. War and bandits shut us off like a wall. Brigands literally swarmed on the great plateau.

The only practical entrance from our headquarters in Peking was by way of Kalgan and the Wanshan Pass. A thousand years before Marco Polo's time caravans had climbed the pass, carrying tea and silk to India and the Near East. Over the same ancient trails, in the same way, camels still crossed the desert, returning with furs, wool, and skins from Hami, Turkestan, and Russia.

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But after fighting sandstorms, blizzards, and bitter cold, the caravans had to run the bandit gantlet where the trails converge on the railroad at Kalgan. In that final hundred miles, all profits were often lost.

The governor was powerless. Time after time, he sent soldiers onto the plateau, only to have them killed or join the bandits. Finally, conditions became so bad that trade ceased. The brigands found they had killed the goose that laid the golden egg; they had no one to rob.

As usual in China when such situations develop, certain "arrangements" were made. The Kalgan officials agreed to let certain "liaison bandits" enter the city and make private deals with caravan owners. In the first week of the armistice, thirteen thousand camels left Kalgan.

As soon as I learned that the caravans were moving again, I went to Kalgan with MacKenzie Young, a member of our expedition. Unofficially, local officers arranged an interview for us with Kung Ching-wei, a bandit who controlled all the region north of Kalgan. Of course, no one from the *yamen*, the official residence, could be present. That would have involved loss of face, since Kung carried a price on his head. So we met at a Chinese inn where the proprietor introduced "my friend, General Kung Ching-wei."

A huge man, more than six feet tall and dressed in gray padded jacket and trousers, rose from a chair and bowed gravely. His face looked as though it had been cut from a block of stone and left unfinished. It could have been stone, too, so far as expression was concerned,

except the eyes. They showed intelligence and the look was direct, honest, and utterly fearless.

There was a quiet dignity and subtle self-containment about the man that gave me a feeling of confidence. He was one who might kill and rob ruthlessly, but he would keep his word no matter what the price. Anything or anybody, even his life, would be sacrificed for what he considered his obligations. A man of iron.

Mac Young felt it, too. Both of us had met other Chinese bandits, but none like Kung. We knew nothing of his history, except that the Foreign Office told us he would keep any agreement he made to the last letter.

A servant brought tea. In the usual Chinese manner of opening any conference with a stranger, I asked his full name, age, place of residence, and number of children.

The answers came in clipped, staccato sentences. "My name is Kung Ching-wei. My age is thirty-eight. My dwelling place is Chang-peh-hsien. My family—none."

Perhaps my eyes betrayed surprise, for seldom does a Chinese admit he has no family, but his face was like a mask. Kung asked the same questions of me. I used the stilted language of polite intercourse. Suddenly Kung shrugged his great shoulders and said impatiently, "I am a man of the people. Let us forget the phrases of the city and talk as one man to another. We have business to do.

"I am told you wish to send a caravan to Mongolia and want protection. I can give you protection. No one else can. It is only a matter of price."

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I could not have been more surprised. Never had I known such directness in any Chinese. I answered in the vernacular, "That suits me. It is the custom of my country. I have one hundred and twenty-five camels, carrying gasoline and food for thirty-seven men. We will remain six months in the desert."

"The usual fee is five dollars for each camel," Kung said.

"I know that," I answered, "but the other camels carry goods for trade and profit. We are men of science. We sell nothing, neither do we buy. Surely it is not the same."

Kung was silent for a moment. "No, it is not the same. The charge for your camels will be half the usual price."

That was that. A simple statement of what he considered fair. I did not attempt to bargain. The whole interview was as utterly un-Chinese as was the directness of Kung himself.

"You will send your caravan to Chang-peh-hsien and accompany it in your motor car. There you may pay the stipulated fee. Carry no guns. My word is your guarantee of safety."

Strangely enough, I knew it was.

"When will you come?" Kung asked.

"Seven days from this morning we will be at the foot of the pass. My lead camel carries an American flag. We will follow in the car."

Kung sipped his tea, the signal that our interview was

ended. When we left, he accompanied us to the outer gate as honored guests.

Seven days later our caravan wound in a long line up through a chaos of ravines and gullies of the pass toward the broken rim of the Mongolian plateau where the outer rampart of the Great Wall of China stretches its serpentine length along the basalt cliffs. The camels were almost at the summit when a dozen men appeared from behind the rocks. They were a grim-looking lot, breasts crossed with bandoliers of cartridges, each carrying a rifle and a Luger pistol in a wooden case. One approached the car and saluted smartly.

"We are here by orders of Kung Ching-wei to guard your caravan. I ride with you. The others go with the camels." He spoke in the soft, slurring dialect of the Shansi peasants. Climbing into the rear seat, he accepted a cigarette and settled to enjoy his first ride in a motor car.

Once through the narrow gateway in the Great Wall, we passed the caravan and in an hour were at the gates of Chang-peh-hsien. The bandit directed us to the Inn of the Weeping Willow where we were given comfortable rooms. We were guests of Kung, the landlord told us.

Next morning, a runner came to the inn gate, bearing a red visiting card at arm's length above his head. Kung was inviting us to his *yamen*; the runner would be pleased to show the way. With the heavy bag of silver dollars in the car, we drove through well-kept streets, past shops

filled with goods of every kind. An air of peace and prosperity pervaded the city.

Kung received us in a room which I took to be his office. With no preliminaries, I dumped the silver dollars on a table. He arranged them in neat stacks of twenty each. Then he wrote a receipt and affixed his seal.

"You need give the safety of your caravan no further thought," he said. "Now, it is in my care until it reaches Piang-kiang at the edge of the desert."

After tea and a cigarette, Mac and I returned to the Inn of the Weeping Willow. The proprietor brought cups of hot *kaoliang* wine.

"What of Kung?" I asked. "He is a bandit and he controls this area, we know, but nothing else. The people of Chang-peh-hsien seem happy, and never have I seen shops so full of goods. It is a strange thing for a bandit stronghold."

"You do not know Kung?"

"No, I only know that the Foreign Office in Kalgan told us he was a man whose word could be trusted, that if we made arrangements with him, our caravan would be safe."

"It is strange, very strange. I thought every man and woman in all North China knew what Kung has done for Chang-peh-hsien. Is it possible you have not heard of the banquet in the Guild Hall six months ago?"

"No, we have not heard."

"Then I will tell you the story, for I, Wang Kwei-shing,

began the story. Had it not been for me, Kung would not be alive today. I sat beside him in the place of honor at the Guild Hall, drank his wine, and ate from the covered dish."

This is the tale related by Wang, the proprietor of the Inn of the Weeping Willow. I have supplied the background, but otherwise the story is as the innkeeper told it, with all the drama of a Chinese actor stimulated by a half dozen cups of *kaoliang* wine.

Kung sat at a table in a mud-walled room, drinking tea. Opposite him was a small, wizened man in the garb of a Chinese peasant, twisting nervously on his stool.

"You have certain knowledge that this caravan will leave Kalgan tomorrow morning?" asked Kung.

"Yes, Honorable Master, it will happen so. I am sure."

"And the silver it carries is a large amount? You are sure?"

"With my own ears I have heard it. While the meeting was being held in the magistrate's *yamen*, I stood outside the screen. Through a tear in the paper I heard the talk and saw the agreement signed with the *comprador* [the contract agent] of the bank. Ten thousand Yuan Shi-kai dollars in ten sacks is what was written."

"It will be a large caravan," said Kung. "Where will the silver be hidden?"

"Every third mule, beginning with the second behind the leader, will carry a bag of dollars buried deep in the sacks of millet.

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"But the guard—how many soldiers will accompany the caravan?"

The little man grinned. "Ah, Honorable Master, there will be no guard. Not one soldier will walk beside the mules. They know that you, the great Kung Ching-wei, would be suspicious were a caravan to leave the city convoyed by soldiers. Even a child would guess that it must be carrying goods of value. But sacks of grain—are they worth fighting for? No. So there will be no soldiers."

"It is a clever trick," Kung mused. "It might have worked. But why did you come to me? What do you expect to gain?"

The little man's eyes narrowed in his wrinkled face. "All the countryside knows of Kung Ching-wei and his generosity to the people of Chang-peh-hsien. Has he not protected the city from bandits? Would not this rich town have been taxed to death by the government soldiers had his men not been here? Has ever any man done a favor to Kung Ching-wei and gone with empty hands?"

Kung rose to his feet. "Events will tell. Now go. I would be alone."

For an hour, Kung sat brooding over his tea. Two years ago, on this very day, he had ridden into the walled city of Chang-peh-hsien with his men. They had been a motley crew, some clothed in ragged soldier uniforms, some in Mongol coats, and some in the sheepskin dress

of the border country. But every man had a rifle and from the saddles of twenty or more swung terrible headsman's swords.

Straight to the *yamen* Kung rode and ordered the magistrate to summon the elders of the city. They came, trembling, bringing the leading merchants. With a wave of his hand, Kung halted the flow of meaningless words of polite greeting.

"I," he said, "am Kung Ching-wei. You have heard of me.

"For three hundred *li* [about a hundred miles] to the north, and more than that to the east and west, the country is ravaged by bandits. Among them I have made my name: Every venture to which I have laid my hand has yielded silver, or profits. I have walked untouched among a rain of bullets. You know that, by common talk.

"I did not wish to lead this life. My father, my mother, and my brothers were tortured by government soldiers because we were people of substance. The soldiers thought we had a store of silver hidden. All my family were slain except me, alone, who was away from home. I returned to find our houses burned, the bodies of my father and mother half-eaten by dogs.

"Because of that I became a bandit. But I am tired of this life, tired of living like a wolf in the hills, even though I lead the pack. I have a wife and daughter. Some of my men have families, too. We wish a place where we may live like men, not animals.

"This city has strong walls and heavy gates. It can be

defended easily. You well know that the soldiers in Kalgan will soon be here to exact tribute for the new governor. I will protect your city, not only from the soldiers but from other bandits.

"In return, I expect your help and loyalty. Rich caravans pass this road, and they will pay us well. What we gain shall be spent or bartered in Chang-peh-hsien. I have spoken."

Two years had passed. Chang-peh-hsien had prospered. It was the only town in the frontier country between China and the grim reaches of the Gobi Desert to escape the toll of raids and tribute taxes.

At first, the tradesmen had been doubtful, but Kung ruled his men with an iron hand. In the first month, a weeping man came to Kung. "I am a poor innkeeper," he said. "An hour ago five of your men drank many cups of *kaoliang* wine in my house and became quarrelsome. They asked for opium, which I did not have. When I told them there was none, they said I lied and they would find some themselves. They wrecked my house. Now I have nothing left."

Kung's action was swift and terrible. Within the hour, the five men were kneeling, side by side in the city square. Kung himself swung the heavy sword which sent their heads rolling in the gutter. From that day, the bandits paid for what they took in the city and its environs.

Twice in the first year, the governor's troops tried to storm the town. Kung stalked along the walls laughing

in their faces, while bullets spattered at his feet or ripped through his clothes. Each time the government soldiers had been almost annihilated. The few survivors brought back a tale which made the elders in Kalgan shake their heads. That One must be protected by the gods themselves, they said. Since then, the bandits had been left in peace.

Kung thought of these things as he sat brooding over his tea in the mud-walled room. Suddenly, he straightened and called to the sentry at his door, "Send Li Ping-go to me."

Li was his second-in-command. In a few words Kung related what he had heard from the *yamen* runner.

"To intercept the caravan," said Kung, "we must go down into the Wanshan Pass. Probably the mules will swing westward on the small trail to avoid Chang-peh-hsien. In all those ravines and gullies we could make a perfect ambush."

Li frowned. "And, General, they could make just as perfect an ambush for us if they had a mind."

"Yes, I've thought of that. Still, the governor has not moved toward us for many moons. I don't think he has forgotten the lesson we taught him last year. But we will have to take precautions."

"Ten thousand silver dollars," said Li, "is worth some risk. Not many caravans carry money these days. It would be a rich prize. What is your plan, General?"

Kung explained: "I'll take a hundred of our best men.

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They should be more than enough to handle twice that many soldiers if the caravan is guarded. It should be up the pass at the branch trail by four in the afternoon, not earlier. I'll be there at two and post the men. Li, you remain in charge of the city. We'll feast tomorrow night and have ten thousand dollars to pay the bill."

At noon next day Kung rode out of the south gate of Chang-peh-hsien followed by a hundred bandits in groups of ten. The streets were lined with grinning men and women. They knew not where Kung was bound, but inevitably it meant profits for the city. Kung seldom returned empty-handed.

By two o'clock, as Kung was nearing the head of the pass, a brigand from the rear of the column galloped to his side.

"General," he said, "there is a great cloud of dust on the trail behind us and bugle calls. I don't know what it means."

Kung swung his pony to the summit of a knoll beside the trail and leveled his binoculars. As a swirl of wind swept the dust away, he recognized his own standard, black with a yellow tiger in the center. The men were riding hard, and well in front, lashing his pony, was Li. Kung could see the whip rise and fall.

Ten minutes later Li rode up, covered with brown dust and sweat. "Buddha be praised that I came in time," he panted. "The story of the *yamen* runner is a lie. The governor has three hundred soldiers in the pass with twenty machine guns. They were posted last night. It

was a trick to draw you into an ambush. Not a man could escape.”

Kung needed to hear no more. He roared a sharp command and watched his troops wheel and gallop back toward the walls of Chang-peh-hsien. When the last man had passed, he followed in the dust cloud with Li at his side.

“Now,” he said, “the story. Tell me.”

“It was an hour after you left, General. The runner who came to you sat last night at the Inn of the Weeping Willow, drinking *kaoliang* wine with a stranger. Their tongues were loosened and their voices reached the ears of the proprietor. He heard them laugh and boast that Kung had been fooled. Before the sun sank behind the Great Wall, they were saying, Kung and all his men would be food for the wolves and ravens.

“The proprietor hurried to the *yamen* and told his story. The magistrate summoned me and sent his guard to bring the two men. They were drunk and denied the words. However, a few turns of the strangler’s cord made them talk.

“Had we not come in time, we should have avenged your death even though we, too, were slaughtered. The gods have protected you again.”

Kung was a grim man, but his face softened as he listened to the tale. “You are a true friend, Li. You knew that if I were dead the command would be yours, yet you would have thrown away your life in my behalf. Loyalty and friendship could have no greater test.”

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Halfway to Chang-peh-hsien, they met hundreds of men on ponies, mules, and donkeys swarming along the road. Some had rifles, others swords and spears. A few carried only scythes. They were on the way to join Li's men against the governor's soldiers.

At sight of Kung a great cheer went up. Kung's heart swelled with emotion. Surely these people loved him, a bandit chief, not merely because he had brought them peace and prosperity amid a world of plunder, but for himself alone!

The next evening Kung invited a hundred men of the city to a banquet in the Guild Hall. For an hour they talked, drinking tea and cracking watermelon seeds between their teeth. Then the doors swung open and the feast began.

Fifty courses came from the kitchen. They were strange dishes—duck's tongues, chicken windpipes, fish stomachs, camels' humps, boars' heads, bears' paws, all laced with palate-tempting sauces. Amber-colored *kao-liang* wine and white rice-brandy, spiced with red pepper, loosed the tongues of every guest. When bowls of snow-white rice marked the end of the feast, a covered dish was placed in front of Kung. He rose to his feet and, with a motion of his hand, commanded silence.

"Dwellers in Chang-peh-hsien," he said. "For two years we have lived as friends. Today, we meet as brothers. I came to you a wanderer on the face of the earth—a hunted animal, driven from plains to hills and into the fastnesses of the mountains. Not a spot in all the world

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could I call my own. I lived by the sword, a bandit feared and hated through all the land, with a heavy price on my head.

“On that day, two years ago, when I rode into Chang-peh-hsien with my men behind me and called you together in the *yamen*, I told you what I wished.

“You were afraid, deathly afraid. You had a right to be. You knew that I could have sacked the city and given everyone of you to the headsman’s sword, for you had no defense. You accepted me because there was no other choice.

“I promised you protection and prosperity in return for your loyalty. I have proved myself. Now *you* have proved *yourselves*. Only those whose blood is of one color would do what you have done for me. You have given me my life.

“What can I offer you in return to show my gratitude? No gift is worthy of the donor unless it entails a sacrifice. It must be something he cherishes dearly, something he prizes above all else. In return for my life, and that most priceless of all possessions, your loyalty, I offer to you what I value most in all the world. I ask you to pass this dish, which I have prepared with my own hands, from one to another. I ask you each to partake of a morsel. It contains the hearts of my wife and my daughter.”

The Great Invisible

In South China, weird legends of men and animals come from the hill people. They find their way to the coast, where their telling often lures men into the back country.

I had followed just such a legend, the story of a "blue" tiger. To me it was not completely credible, although it had been substantiated by friends in both America and China. Still, I told myself as I lay on my camp cot that night, I would never really believe a blue tiger existed until I saw one myself.

My thoughts were suddenly interrupted.

A shriek, like a jagged flash of lightning, tore apart the South China night; then a snarl and the agonized cry of a child. I leaped to my feet. "Good God, Harry, what is it?" Harry Caldwell was already on his feet, jamming cartridges into his rifle. "Tiger, I think. Hurry!"

We ran to a house a hundred yards away. The courtyard swarmed with screaming Chinese. A woman sat on the floor rocking back and forth, tearing handfuls of hair out by the roots. "Ai-ya, ai-ya," she wailed, "my

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baby. The black tiger. It took my baby. Kill it, Shen-shung; * kill the black tiger."

Harry talked rapidly with the terrified natives. "Get lanterns," he shouted. "Come with me."

We dashed out the gate and across the rice dikes followed by a dozen men. Breathlessly, Harry told me what had happened.

"Family eating—baby playing in the court—suddenly the tiger rushed through the door and grabbed the child. He stood for a moment and then leaped over the wall. There's one chance in a thousand he may drop the baby when he sees the lights—but it would be dead—tiger'll head for the big ravine, I'm sure—it's the blue devil—that's where he lives—this makes sixteen for him—sixteen people in two years!"

For a mile we followed a narrow path beside the rice fields. Where the sword grass shut in like a wall on either side, a bloody rag hung on a thorn bush; a few feet beyond lay a tiny baby's shoe. My throat tightened at sight of that pathetic little object.

Caldwell stopped. "No use going farther. The poor little fellow's done for. We'll have to wait until tomorrow."

We turned back to the village but not to sleep. The wailing of the family kept the night alive with the sounds of death. Moreover, our tent was pitched in an orchard and there might be another tiger on the prowl. I couldn't have slept, anyway, so I smoked my pipe until far into

* Shen-shung is the Chinese equivalent of Mister.

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the morning, while Harry sat in the tent door, relaxed, but alert and watchful with a .22-caliber Hi Power Savage rifle across his knees. There was plenty of time to talk and think.

I studied Caldwell curiously, for we had only just met after months of correspondence. Six feet tall, spare and hard as a trained athlete, with a flashing smile that seldom left his face in repose, intensely alive, bursting with enthusiasm. That was the man with whom I had come to hunt a strange tiger! A missionary, too, though he didn't resemble any I had ever seen!

It was Captain Thomas Holcomb* of the U. S. Marine Corps who first spoke of him to me at the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

"He is an amazing man," Tom said. "An effective missionary, a good amateur naturalist, and the finest field rifle shot I've ever seen. I hunted with him. He kills tigers with a .303 Savage rifle. Better get in touch with him if you're going to China; he'd be useful to you and to the Museum."

This was in 1916. I was planning an expedition to the mountains of the Tibetan frontier and Yunnan for the American Museum of Natural History, so I wrote Caldwell at Futsing, China. His reply was vibrant with the personality of the man and told an amazing story.

There was a strange tiger there; not yellow like the ordinary tiger but Maltese blue. Perhaps it was a new

* Lieut. General Thomas Holcomb (Rtd.), Commandant of the U. S. Marine Corps during World War II. Now U. S. Minister to South Africa.

The Great Invisible

species. Why didn't I stop and try to get it on my way to Yunnan?

Letter after letter followed, always full of accounts of the "blue tiger." In spite of what Caldwell said, I didn't believe it was a new species, but rather a melanistic phase of the yellow tiger. Melanism, the opposite of albinism, is an excess of coloring matter in the skin and occurs in many animals. Some, like leopards, squirrels, rabbits, and foxes, are highly susceptible to it; in others, it has never been recorded. A blue, or black, tiger was unknown to the zoological world, but Caldwell's word could not be doubted. Moreover, it was substantiated by a letter from Arthur de C. Sowerby, then representing the Smithsonian Institution as a field naturalist in China. The Museum authorities agreed that the story certainly should be investigated.

After it was decided that I was to stop at Futsing, I talked with Dr. William T. Hornaday, then Director of the New York Zoological Park in the Bonx. "Perhaps," I told him, "I might bring it back alive. When it died, the Museum would get the skin and skeleton anyway. Would you be interested?"

Hornaday smiled. "Would I be interested to have the only blue tiger in the world? Don't ask silly questions! I'll get you a trap if you'll try to use it."

So that was that, and I set off for China and Harry Caldwell. I'll admit to some misgivings about spending weeks in the field with a missionary until I talked again with Tom Holcomb. But he assured me I needn't worry;

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that Caldwell was a "he man" if there ever was one. He had spent his boyhood in the Tennessee mountains near Chattanooga. "If he wasn't born with a squirrel rifle in his hands," Tom said, "he got hold of one soon after. He decided the thing he most wanted to do was to go to China as a missionary. He has certainly done a wonderful job of that."

On the way down the China coast I heard much more of Caldwell; everyone seemed to know of his exploits. Now they are legends among "old China hands." Bishop Bashford told me how he had opened to Christian teaching a community of a hundred towns and villages, and more than half a million violently anti-foreign Chinese, by killing a man-eating tiger that had been ravaging their village.

That was the entering wedge. Before long other villages had asked his help and his fame spread. But it was not only for the killing of tigers. Because of his reputation for courage, honesty, and fair dealing, he sometimes acted as middleman in settling disputes and once he saved a village from terrible slaughter by going alone to a bandit camp and persuading the chief to take his men back to the hills. The chief had been misinformed, he told them; the money they had demanded to ransom the village was not there, and he offered himself as hostage until his words were proved.

I thought of these things as I sat in the tent looking at Caldwell.

"Harry," I asked, "how did you get your first tiger?"

The Great Invisible

“It was in the ravine where we’re going tomorrow. I killed it with buckshot, but, believe me, I’ll never try *that* again. It was a big tigress and she had eaten a boy the day before. The Elders asked me to rid them of her, but the bearer with my load and rifle hadn’t arrived and, like a fool, I went out with only my shotgun. I’d never seen a tiger in the wild, and had no idea how hard they are to kill. It seemed to me that buckshot at close range would be all right.

“I staked a goat on an abandoned terrace and sat down behind some bushes off to one side. The tigress came out almost immediately on a grass-covered dike about a hundred yards away, but she seemed to suspect danger, seeing the goat all alone in that unusual place. For more than an hour she crouched there just like a great tabby cat, sometimes pushing one foot forward as though about to move, but each time drawing it back again. She looked awfully big and I wished I hadn’t come, but I couldn’t get out except by passing right below her. There was a confounded ‘brain fever bird’ on a tree above me, and it kept giving that rising, breathless call that drives people crazy. It got on my nerves so I could hardly keep from screaming. Finally, the tigress got up and circled to reach a small path; they’ll never attack through unbroken tangle if they can get to a trail. She had to cross a small bare space—it was only about twenty yards—but apparently she didn’t like being in the open. She flattened just like a snake, her chin and throat touching the ground, and

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slithered along with no body motion that I could see except for a quivering of her shoulders and hips. Yet she went awfully fast. As soon as she was in cover again, she made three flying leaps up the narrow terraces toward the goat. The last one brought her face to face with me about twelve feet away. She stood there snarling. Her yellow-and-black head looked big as a haystack, and her eyes simply blazed. I let her have both barrels in the face and neck. I thought the buckshot would be in an almost solid mass at that range and would knock her cold, but she only slipped backward off the terrace and didn't fall. Blood streamed over her head, and she shook it out of her eyes and then slowly walked off into a patch of sword grass. I was scared, for I didn't have any more buckshot cartridges—only No. 4 shot. So I sat tight for half an hour and then worked up the hill through the bush and back to the village.

“The bearer was there with my rifle when I arrived, but it was almost dark and I didn't dare go out that evening. Next day I followed the blood trail with a lot of natives and found her dead nearly half a mile away. Her whole face and neck were full of buckshot but most were flattened against the heavy bones and hadn't penetrated. I think she bled to death.

“When the Chinese brought her back to the village, the mother of the boy she had eaten began beating her with a stick, screaming curses. I kept only the skin for myself, and gave the body to the village elders. Every drop of blood was sopped up with rags which they tied

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about their necks to ward off disease and personal devils. The meat was sold as medicine. Anyone who ate a small piece was supposed to acquire some of the tiger's courage. The bones, whiskers, and claws they stewed up into a kind of jelly; after it cooled and hardened, it was molded into pills and sold to Chinese druggists in Fut-sing at a high price. That tigress brought the village nearly four hundred dollars. But shotguns are out for me, I don't mind telling you. That one experience was enough."

"I should think it would be, but," I laughed, "I believe the .22 Hi Power you've got is just about as bad. Both Tom Holcomb and Sowerby said you were a wonderful shot, but it's plain damned foolishness to use that little bullet, if you don't mind my saying so. It hasn't enough weight or shocking power for dangerous game."

Caldwell smiled. "That's what a lot of people say. I killed eight or ten tigers with the .303, and thought it was grand, but the Savage Company sent me out this rifle and the first time I ever fired it was at a tiger. You ought to have seen what that tiny bullet did to him! He was a big tiger, too—a man-eater that had killed several people in this very village. I staked a goat, as usual, but instead of coming out where I thought he would, the tiger appeared on a barren ridge more than a hundred yards away. It was already half-dark, and I couldn't see plainly through the sights, so I walked into the open and moved up. The tiger saw me instantly, of course, and stood there switching his tail with ears laid flat

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against his head. I expected him to charge at any moment but I had to keep on going until I was close enough to shoot in the bad light. If I had turned back then, he'd have come for me. Finally I was only thirty yards away. It was too dark to pick any vital spot, so I just fired at the body. The beast lunged into the air, twisted, and came down dead as a herring. The bullet had caught him behind the ribs and gone through the stomach. The whole intestines were messed up as though they'd been put through a sausage grinder. I found he had just eaten a dog and the stomach was full of meat."

"Is that the only tiger you've killed with a .22 Hi Power?" I asked.

"Yes, it is; it's the only one I've ever shot at with this rifle, but it's good enough for me. I'll take on any tiger that ever lived with it."

"Well, next time you probably won't be here to tell about it, unless you hit it in the head or neck. You don't realize that you were extraordinarily lucky. You said your bullet went through the stomach and that it was full of dog. To my mind what happened was this; the high-velocity bullet, striking that extended stomach, set up a terrific gas explosion which ruptured the intestines. That was what killed your tiger. I've seen the same thing happen when I've shot woodchucks with a hardnose .22 Hi Power bullet. They just blow up if I get them through the body when the stomach is packed with food; if it is empty, I lose my 'chuck.'"

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Caldwell remained unconvinced. "Maybe you're right. But," he grinned, "next time I won't shoot him in the stomach. I'll hit him in the head."

Later I learned that Caldwell did kill other tigers with the .22 Hi Power, but I don't know how many. Even though he once took on five of them with the .303 Savage and killed two, when he had only six cartridges he gave up the .303 and used the .22 Hi Power exclusively. After I had hunted with him for months in China and Mongolia and saw him shoot flying birds with a rifle, I realized he could just about pick the hair on an animal's body that he wanted to split.

"About this blue tiger, Harry! How many times have you seen it?"

"Twice. The first time he wasn't twenty yards from me, but I had only a shotgun. I came on him suddenly, lying right in the path in the sun like a great Maltese cat. While I was watching, he got up slowly and stood for a moment in the trail, then turned around three times. I thought he was going to lie down again, but he stretched, humped his back, and jumped into the bushes. I had a perfect view; could have hit him with a stone. He's really beautiful. The ground color of his body is Maltese, changing into light blue on the lower sides and belly. The stripes are black and well defined, like those on a yellow tiger.

"The second time was last year, and I had him absolutely cold in the sights of my rifle but I didn't dare shoot. I had staked a goat in an open space near the

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lair, and saw the blue tiger creeping up, but from the other side of the ravine. I was going to fire when I realized he was stalking two boys asleep under an old dike right below him. I didn't know they were there. If I had wounded the beast, he'd have certainly rolled down on the boys. I couldn't chance it, so stood up and yelled. He turned about facing me, snarled, and then walked slowly into the grass."

"I'd certainly like to get him alive for the Zoo," I said. "He'd cause a sensation, but I suppose we'll have to kill him tomorrow. What time will we go out?"

"Not until mid-afternoon. The baby was so small it won't be a big meal for the tiger and by evening he'll be looking for something else—I hope."

When the sun rose in a hot red ball over the hills, and the village stirred to life, Caldwell and I pulled the tent flap and slept till noon. Before three o'clock we were on our way through the rice paddies, dragging two reluctant goats, a mother and her kid. At the entrance to a narrow ravine, Caldwell halted.

"This is where the blue tiger lives and I'll bet he's home. We'll tie the goats in this little open space and get behind those bushes."

"Great Scott, Harry, he'll be almost in our laps when he comes out!"

"Can't be helped. There isn't any other spot. I know this lair like the palm of my hand. There is where I killed my first tiger with the shotgun; right on that terrace."

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It was a devilish place; a deep cut in the mountain choked with thorny vines and sword grass. Three or four dark tunnels twisted snakelike back into the murderous growth. "Tiger paths," Caldwell said, laconically. "I crawled up that one on the right for about twenty feet one day. Found a sort of room with bones of all kinds and heaps of pangolin scales; tigers love pangolins. Branch tunnels went off in three directions. Then I realized what a foolish thing I'd done. My hair began to prickle and I backed out in a hurry."

We crouched behind a clump of bushes, half buried in sword grass. Fifteen feet away, the goats blatted incessantly; otherwise there wasn't a sound in the lair. A sweetish stench of rotting flesh drifted out of the tunnel's mouth. It nauseated me; Harry wrinkled his nose in disgust. Breathless, shimmering heat wrapped itself about us like a clinging blanket. For three hours we sat there. I watched the shadows steal slowly down the ravine and reach a lone palm tree on the opposite side. My watch said half past six; that meant another hour of waiting, not more, for night comes swiftly in these South China hills.

Just as I was about to shift my cramped body, I heard the faint crunching sound of a loose stone rolled under a heavy weight. The mother goat bleated in terror, tugging frantically at her rope. Harry's shoulder touched mine. "He's coming," he breathed.

I was half kneeling, my heavy rifle pushed forward. A drop of sweat trickled down my nose, divided, and

ran into the corners of my mouth. Another drop started above my left eye and I blinked, frantically. Caldwell sat like a stone Buddha, the stock of his tiny rifle nestled against his cheek. Ten minutes dragged by; it seemed ten hours.

“God,” I thought, “why doesn’t he come?”

Suddenly, all hell broke loose on the opposite hill. Shouts and yells, beating of pans, stones rolling down the slope. A small army of woodcutters swarmed over the crest on to the trail. The noise was to frighten tigers. They did a good job, for, with a rumbling growl, the blue tiger turned back into the depths of his lair. I got to my feet and stood silently for a long moment just looking at the Chinese; then I let loose. At the end of my spectacular oration, Harry rolled his eyes and pronounced a fervent “amen.”

We walked to the tunnel and saw great pug marks at the entrance. “Tigers always wait before coming into the open,” Caldwell said, “just like any cat. See how he dug his hind claws into the dirt bracing for a spring! In another minute we’d have had him.”

“Do you suppose there is anything left of the child?” I asked. “We ought to take it back to the mother if there is.”

“Probably not. Anyway, it would be suicide to go into the lair.”

I agreed, regretfully.

“What’s our next move?”

“Sit tight until we hear of him again. He operates

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about three or four villages, here and on the other side of the mountain, but seldom stays more than a day or two in any one place. The natives will let us know as soon as he turns up."

We had to wait only a day when a breathless Chinese arrived at camp from a village four miles away.

"The black tiger came right into the street, and grabbed a dog. He threw it over his shoulder like a sack of rice and ran off to the hills. Everyone followed, yelling and beating pans and just inside the grass, on an old dike, he dropped the dog. It's there; we found it."

Caldwell was electrified. "This time we'll get him alive, Roy. If a tiger hasn't finished his kill he'll always come back after dark and they like dogs better than anything else. We'll set the trap. I'll bet a dollar to a plugged nickel we'll have him in the morning."

We hurried to the village. Dozens of excited men wanted to show us the dog, but Caldwell selected only two and told the others to make a cage of heavy bamboo trunks.

"We'll catch the black tiger for you tonight," he said. "I speak the truth." They looked dubious but examined the trap with enormous interest. I clamped the vises on the springs, screwed them down, and set the trap. Then Wang, Elder of the village, touched the pan with a heavy stick and the jaws snapped shut. Three men tried to pull it out; it wouldn't budge.

"That," the Elder pronounced, "is a good trap. Never has its like been seen in China. It will hold the black

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tiger, or any other tiger, but," he added slyly, "first he must get in it. I doubt that he ever will."

We found the dog lying beside a tree on a terrace about five feet wide, just above the open rice fields. Its skull was crushed, probably from the first blow of the tiger's paw, but only teeth marks showed on the body. "It couldn't be better," Harry said. We buried the trap on the terrace, and fastened the dog to the tree with heavy wire.

We slept that night in the village. After sunrise at least fifty men, women, and boys accompanied us to the trap, bearing a cage strong enough to hold a gorilla. Harry and I halted the crowd a hundred yards away and approached the terrace, rifles ready. Silence.

"What's wrong, Roy? He ought to be raising Cain."

Foot by foot we crept forward, but not a sound broke the stillness of the jungle. At last we could see the trap. No tiger, and the dog was gone! We stared in dumb amazement.

"It just can't be," Harry said. But it was, all too plainly. The blue tiger had approached from above, as we expected, dropped his forefeet on the terrace, reached over, and lifted our securely wired dog from the tree as though it had been tied with string. Then he had eaten it comfortably on the upper dike a few feet away. The claw marks were within an inch of the trap-pan. Just one inch more and we'd have had him!

The villagers crowded about like a jury to examine

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the evidence. Collectively they shook their heads and old Wang delivered the verdict.

“Some years ago, Sheng, as you well know, killed his father. He was given the Death of a Thousand Cuts, but nothing was done by our village to atone for his crime. The Gods were offended. Now they have sent this black beast to harass our dwelling place. It is not a ‘proper’ tiger. No one can trap or kill an Evil Spirit.”

Harry and I walked back to camp, saying little. We had “lost face” with the villagers and that was bad. I thought of what a sensation the blue tiger would have caused in New York. To make it worse, a runner waited at the village with a cable from Dr. Hornaday. “How about the blue tiger,” it read, “when may we expect him?”

Three days later the tiger killed again seven miles from our camp. It was asleep on a grass-covered terrace when a dozen fuel gatherers disturbed it. The enraged beast leaped to its feet and dashed into the group, striking right and left with its great paws. One man’s skull was crushed; another’s head ripped half off his shoulders; a third landed ten feet away on a lower dike with a broken neck. Then the tiger jumped to an abandoned terrace, stood for a moment, and turned off into the grass. It made no attempt to drag off any of its victims; apparently the killing was out of sheer bad temper at being disturbed.

When word reached us at three o’clock Caldwell and

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I almost ran the seven miles. "He's sure to return this afternoon," Harry said. "We've got to get there before he comes."

For two wretched hours we sat in the broiling sun, crouched behind a bush near the terrace where the men had been killed. God, it was hot! The thermometer had registered plus 106 degrees in the shade when we left, and the humidity must have been eighty per cent. I didn't feel at all well. Jagged black patches darted before my eyes and violent nausea doubled me up in uncontrollable spasms of retching and coughing. Every time I went into my act the sounds whacked back like rifle shots in the stillness of the jungle. Of course, that ruined our chance again. Just as night was closing in, the vague outline of the blue tiger showed against a background of feathery bamboo on the opposite slope, but before either of us could shoot, it faded from sight like a black ghost. "The Great Invisible," I remarked, sadly, "that's what he ought to be called."

My heat stroke was a bad one, and for a week I lay in camp under a tree, wracked with fever, headache, and nausea. Finally I had to leave for Hong Kong to outfit for a year's expedition along the Tibetan frontier, but ten days of Caldwell's vacation still remained. He stayed on for another go at the Great Invisible and it very nearly cost him his life. I've set down the story as he told it to me later.

"A few days after you left," he said, "the blue tiger did something I wouldn't have believed possible. It

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jumped into a cow-pen beside a house, killed a yearling heifer, and leaped out with the dead animal in its mouth. The farmer and his wife saw the whole performance. I measured the fence; it was twelve feet high. My Chinese hunter, Da Da, and I found the remains of the heifer only half eaten about two miles away. The carcass was in a bad place—a very bad place. Four or five trails led to a little open space where the heifer lay in thick jungle and the only way we could see it was by sitting in one of the paths. We didn't dare touch it.

"I said to Da Da, 'I don't like this at all. You know a tiger always moves along a trail if he can. He might come down this one.'

"Da Da looked about. 'But, Shen-shung, with all the wide world, and all these other paths, why should he come this way?'

"I still didn't like it, but there was no other spot. We'd been watching about an hour, and the sun was bright, when I thought I heard the low rumble of thunder. Da Da heard it, too, and we both looked at the sky; there wasn't a cloud. Then the rumble came again and this time it ended in a snarl. The blue tiger was right behind us in the grass! I knew he was close enough to spring, too, else he wouldn't have growled. We couldn't see the beast, but I was sure any sudden move would bring him on us. There was just one thing to do; take him by surprise! All tigers are afraid of the human voice—it's about the only thing they are afraid of. I twisted around very, very slowly and the tiger snarled again. I suppose

he didn't spring because he was completely taken aback to find us there. Suddenly I yelled and leaped straight at him, but caught my foot in a vine and sprawled on my face, arms outstretched. This, you'll hardly believe, Roy, but it's true; *my left hand actually slapped the tiger on its nose!* The beast went right over backward, whirled, and in one jump disappeared in the grass.

"I never was so scared in my life; I couldn't have fired even if I hadn't dropped the rifle. Da Da and I stood there shaking for a time, and then both of us got awfully sick. We could hardly walk back to the village."

That was the last time either Caldwell or I hunted the blue tiger. After his vacation, he went up the Min River to a mission station at Yenping, and although he returned to Futsing from time to time and killed other tigers, he never saw the blue devil again.

But another has recently appeared in the same region. Caldwell returned not long ago to this country and brought with him reports from natives that a giant blue tiger is again terrorizing villagers in the South China hills.

A Four-Thousand-Dollar Shot

I risked four thousand dollars on one shot at the biggest animal in the world when I didn't have four thousand dollars. It came about, indirectly, because a few years earlier a little fat man had sold the Director of the American Museum of Natural History the idea of constructing a life-size model of a sulphur bottom whale, seventy-six feet long, out of paper. I was assigned as his assistant. The little man made an awful mess of it. His whale was full of hollows and wrinkles; it looked like hell. The Director fired him and asked James L. Clark and me if we could finish the job in papier-mâché. We did, and the model still hangs in the third-floor gallery of the Museum.

While the work was going on, a real honest-to-goodness whale was killed off the coast of Long Island, at Amagansett, and Jimmy and I were sent to collect the skeleton. That whale, and the model, started me on travels that ranged from the Arctic to the tropics and twice around the world. For eight years, afloat and ashore, by day and by night, I lived for whales.

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Of course, men had been hunting whales since the dawn of history, and before, but, believe it or not, I was the first naturalist to study their habits at sea and examine fresh specimens, not bloated carcasses cast up on the beach, or incomplete skeletons in Museum halls. So almost everything I saw was new to science. Moreover, shore stations, where whales were pulled out of the water on a "slip," had only recently been established in various parts of the world. At these, I measured, photographed, and weighed every part of the animals, and described color, internal organs, stomach contents, and parasites. Each week I went to sea on one of the "chasers" with my Graflex speed camera, notebook, and stop watch to record everything that happened above the surface. That was what I liked best for it was always exciting, and tops in big-game hunting. I had shot a lot of big game, but I wanted more than anything else to add the biggest of all animals to my list. As years passed it became a veritable obsession. Each time I saw a whale killed, I visualized myself behind the gun, lining the sights on the great body that rose dripping out of the water. But whale hunting isn't only sport to the men who do it. It's serious business, involving a great deal of money, and you can't ask to try a shot just for fun. Nevertheless, I *had* to do it.

My chance came in Japan. I got to be great friends with Captain Erik Andersson, a handsome young Norwegian, about my own age. He had a magnetic personality and a lovely little Japanese wife (I suppose she

A Four-Thousand-Dollar Shot

was his wife; I never asked), who kept him happy in a bamboo-and-paper doll's house perched on a hill above the harbor. I used to spend almost every evening with them when his ship was in, drinking beer and watching the sun go down behind the gnarled pine trees that looked like old men, bent and twisted with arthritis. Sometimes Chio-san played to us on her flute, or sang little Japanese songs with the *samisen*, a Japanese banjo-like instrument.

One night I brought Erik a bottle of very fine Scotch whiskey with malice aforethought. We had several drinks and, when he was feeling no pain and every aspect of the world seemed bright and rosy, I broached the subject that had been eating at my vitals ever since I saw the first whale killed.

"Erik," I said, "you and I are friends, aren't we?"

"Yes, Roy, we are. Friendship means much to us Norwegians. There is nothing I wouldn't do for you."

I drew a long breath; this was it.

"Would you let me shoot a whale from your ship?"

At my words Erik sat up straight, his eyes wide.

"Of course, I'd love to have you kill a whale from my ship, but you couldn't do it. You've never fired a harpoon gun in your life. It isn't like shooting a rifle. It takes a lot of practice. And suppose you missed! I'd be in a hell of a mess with the Japs. We're on a bonus, you know. I don't mind about my thousand *yen*. I don't need it—much. But the others do, and think of what the company would lose."

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I had figured that all out. "Of course, I wouldn't let you lose your bonus, or the crew, either. If I missed I'd pay them, as well as whatever the whale would have brought the company. How much is a sei whale worth for meat and oil?"

"I don't know exactly, but I think about three thousand *yen*; it depends on size. You'd be risking more than two thousand gold dollars."

"That's all right. I've saved my salary and I've got thirty-five hundred dollars in the bank. I'm willing to risk it for a chance at a whale."

Suddenly, Erik grinned. "You Americans! I can't understand you, at times, but you're wonderful people. Imagine gambling all your savings on one shot with a harpoon gun!"

Erik became practical. "I'm not going to say 'yes' until you've tried the gun. If you really can shoot, we'll pick a calm day and a 'good' whale and give you a chance. I want to target the gun here in the harbor, anyway, and you can have two or three shots. The Japs won't suspect anything because they'll think we're doing it just for fun."

We confided the plan to Chio-san. At first she was terrified. Maybe Erik would lose his job and then where would they be? But when he told her I would pay all costs if I missed the whale, she began to giggle and decided it would be exciting. Could she go out on the ship when I was going to shoot? Erik said she could. Oh, that was wonderful! What fun!

A Four-Thousand-Dollar Shot

Next day the wind blew half a gale, and all five chasers were in the harbor. Erik suggested to the other gunners that they have a bit of competitive target practice. He told them I had put up four cases of beer as a prize. They were pleased, for there was nothing else to do but play cards. Each man was to have three shots from his own ship at floating barrels eight fathoms away. They went off to load their guns.

The harpoon gun is a stubby cannon, fifty-two inches long with a three-inch bore, mounted on the very bow of the vessel. It turns easily upon a swivel, up and down and from side to side. At the butt end, under a short wooden handle, is an iron lever which, when pressed upward, explodes the gun. Three hundred and seventy-five drams of very coarse black powder, sewed in a cheese-cloth sack, is rammed home from the muzzle; then come wads of okum, hard rubber, or cork and wool, after which the harpoon, well greased, is pushed in and hammered solidly into place with a wooden mallet.

The iron measures seventy-six inches, has a double shaft and four twelve-inch flukes, or barbs; the point is hollow, filled with powder, and ignited by a time fuse set for three or four seconds after the gun explodes. Thus it is a real bomb. A large ring slides easily inside the double shaft of the harpoon, and to this one end of a three-inch rope called the "forerunner" is attached; forty or fifty fathoms are coiled on a pan under the gun to be carried with the iron in flight. The other end of the forerunner is spliced to a five-inch rope that runs over a double winch

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into the ship's hold, where one or two miles are in reserve. The winch is used to play a wounded whale exactly like the reel on a fishing rod.

Captain Lars Larson had first trial at the floating target. An enormously fat, jolly man, he was considered to be the finest shot in the Orient. He rolled up to the gun, swung it in position, and with hardly a pause sent the harpoon crashing into the barrel. Two others followed. I suppose all three shots could have been spaced in an eighteen-inch circle. Moreover, a dancing ship in heavy seas was no handicap to him. His record was phenomenal; something like two hundred whales without a miss. Erik shot in second place putting two harpoons through the barrel and grazing its side with the third. The others did equally well.

I had taken photographs of each gunner and everyone was drinking beer and being very jolly. Erik winked at me. "Roy, you've done a lot of shooting. I wonder if you could hit the barrel?"

I acted coy. "Gosh, I don't think I could. It's not like shooting a rifle."

Larson chimed in. "Easiest thing in the world. Just point your gun and let 'er go. Come on, I'll show you."

That was exactly what I wanted. Larson lumbered up to the bow. "I'll give you half my beer if you hit the barrel once out of three."

The sights were open, like those on an ordinary rifle. I lined them on the target and squeezed the lever. A

A Four-Thousand-Dollar Shot

great cloud of smoke blew back in my face, but I could see the harpoon hit the water, short by a fathom.

"Not bad," Larson said. "A line shot, but you didn't hold high enough. You can't shoot right at a whale. Got to aim above its back."

My second shot was closer; the third smacked through the barrel. I looked anxiously at Erik. He grinned and nodded; obviously, I'd done well enough so he'd give me a trial.

That night I went aboard Erik's ship, for we were to be off at daylight. He and Chio-san occupied one bunk in the tiny cabin, and I had the other. It wasn't often that girls were welcome on the chasers, but Chio-san had been out two or three times with Erik and loved it. The Jap crew liked her, for she was pretty and brought them little presents, so they were glad to have her aboard.

When I dressed for breakfast next morning, sun streamed through the porthole, but the vessel was rolling heavily in a long swell. Nothing doing for me if that kept up, no matter how many whales we saw! I knew Erik wouldn't let me try and, anyway, I didn't want to risk two thousand bucks under those conditions. At ten o'clock we sighted a school of sei whales, slim gray beasts about fifty feet long. Usually they are easy hunting, but these were wild. Time after time the ship stole up to three or four, blowing lazily at the surface, but when we were a hundred fathoms away they would slide under water, double, and appear simultaneously half a

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mile astern. Obviously they had some means of communication, but it wasn't until recently that sonic apparatus told the story.

For three hours we chased those damned sei whales. Erik stood at the gun, with me behind him holding my big Graflex camera. Twice, he was almost near enough to shoot. Thirty fathoms is the outside limit, but they never came nearer than forty. Erik was disgusted.

"They're impossible. We'll leave them and see if we can't find others."

It was four o'clock before we raised another spout. This animal was blowing frequently, and a great cloud of birds hovering about indicated that he was "on feed." He was traveling slowly but seldom stayed down long, his high sickle-shaped dorsal fin cutting the surface, first in one direction then in another. Always, it was the center of a screaming flock of birds that dipped into the waves and rose, the water flashing in myriads of crystal drops from their brown wings.

We were going at full speed and dropped to half but the whale was running directly away from us. As he arched to dive, his back came into view and just behind the fin a large white mark was visible.

"That's an old harpoon scar," Erik said. "It's a bad sign. He may give us trouble, after all."

The engines were at dead slow, for the whale had heard or seen us and might double back under water. Erik was ready at the gun, swinging the weapon slightly

A Four-Thousand-Dollar Shot

to and fro, his feet braced, every few seconds calling to the bo'sun in the barrel, "Do you see him?"

We had been waiting three minutes when the bo'sun shouted, "He's coming. Fast. On the port bow."

My face was buried in the hood of the Graflex, but I heard Erik say, "Ready, Roy. Now. I shoot. I *shoot*."

In the camera mirror, I could see the enormous gray head burst to the surface, the blowholes open to send forth a column of vapor, and the sleek back draw itself upward, the water streaming from the dorsal fin. Suddenly everything was blotted out in a great cloud of smoke, and I pressed the button of the camera. Before I could see, I heard the sailors shout, "*Shinda*" (Dead). The next instant the smoke drifted away, showing the whale lying on its side, motionless. Then it sank slowly, and the rope hung taut as a bar of steel, straight down.

"Got him right in the heart, I think," Erik grinned. "He never knew what hit him."

In a few moments he gave the word to haul away. The engineer started the winch, but no sooner had the rattling wheels ground in a few fathoms than we saw the line slack, tighten again, and slowly rise. Faster and faster it came, the water dripping in little streams from its vibrating surface.

The whale blew ninety fathoms ahead, blood welling in huge, red clots from its spout holes. He lay quietly for a time, then swung about and swam toward the vessel. He came slowly at first, but faster every moment. When

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almost opposite us, about thirty fathoms away, with a terrific slash of his flukes he turned and dashed directly at the ship.

“Full speed astern,” Erik yelled, dancing about like a madman. “He’ll sink us. *He’ll sink us.*”

The whale was coming at full speed, buried in white foam, lashing right and left with its tremendous flukes. In an instant he hit the ship. We had half swung about, and he struck a glancing blow, keeling the little vessel far over and making her tremble as though she had gone on the rocks; then bumped along the side, running his nose squarely into the propeller. The whirling blades tore great strips of blubber from the snout and jaws, and he backed off astern. With his entire head projecting from the water like the bow of a submarine, he swam parallel to the ship. As he plowed along I caught a glimpse of the head in the mirror of my camera and pressed the button. A moment later the great beast rolled on its side, thrust its flipper straight upward, and sank. It had been his death “flurry” and he was down for good. As the water closed over the gray beast, I leaned against the rail trembling with excitement, sweat pouring from my face and body. Erik was shouting orders in English, Norwegian, and Japanese, and cursing in all three languages at once.

He realized, though I didn’t at the moment, what a narrow escape we had had. If that whale, weighing fifty tons, coming at thirty knots an hour, had struck the ship squarely, it would have torn such a hole in her side that

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she would have sunk in sixty seconds. The man at the wheel had saved us by throwing the vessel's nose about so that she took a glancing blow. Miraculously, the propeller blades were neither broken nor bent; it was simply the luck that had followed this ship ever since Erik came aboard.

The dead whale was hauled to the surface, a tube connected to the air pump was thrust into the lungs, and the carcass inflated; then the sailors made it fast to the bow, tail first. Erik and I went below where Chio-san was waiting. She had seen the whole performance from the bridge, and was still shaking. She produced a bottle of Scotch from the locker and we all had a drink. It tasted good.

"We are only thirty miles from Matsu-shima," Erik said. "I told them to run for the cove just outside the harbor. We'll anchor there. It will be dark in another hour. The swell is going down and the glass is high. Maybe you'll get a shot at a whale tomorrow, Roy."

I didn't tell them, but I wasn't at all sure that I wanted a chance after what had happened that day.

A cool little hand on my forehead waked me in the morning. Chio-san was laughing into my eyes. "Better get up, Roy-san. We might see a whale any time. It's a beautiful day. Ocean like a lake. Breakfast is ready."

The sea *was* like a lake; not a trace of swell, and a brilliant sun. "We're heading nor'west," Erik said. "That's a whale cruise. When we raise a spout, you are to stand behind me with your camera, as usual. If it's

a 'good' whale, and I can get the ship in position, I'll give you the word, step off the gun platform, and you take my place. Of course, none of the crew will know you are going to shoot until we are right on the whale."

A man climbed to the barrel and we lounged on the deck in the sun. Chio-san was curled up on a seat in a corner of the bridge, looking like a brilliant butterfly in a flowered kimono.

"I brought it especially for you," she told me. "It will bring good luck for your first whale."

"If I do kill a whale, you and Erik and I will go to Sendai and you can buy any two kimonos you want," I said.

About ten o'clock the bo'sun called, "*Kujira*" (Whale). "*Shironagasu*" (Sulphur bottom).

Far off the starboard, a high thin spout shot into the air; then another and another. "I can see birds," Erik said. "He must be feeding. But I didn't figure on a sulphur bottom. Those big fellows net the company six or seven thousand *yen*. The bonus to the ship is fifteen hundred. You wouldn't want to risk four thousand dollars on one shot! Better let me take it."

I will admit that set me back a bit. I didn't have four thousand dollars in the bank; thirty-five hundred was my limit. Still, I knew I could wangle the extra five hundred from the Museum, if necessary. The sulphur bottom whale was the biggest animal that ever lived on the earth or in its waters. Even the great dinosaurs couldn't touch it. If I killed a sulphur bottom, it meant I'd really reached the top; no sportsman could ever beat it. I had a lot of

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confidence in myself, too. The larger the whale the easier it would be to hit! Good God, hadn't I plastered that barrel right through the middle?

"I'll take a chance," I said, "if you can get it in position. I'm sure I wouldn't miss."

The animal behaved like a good whale. It was loafing along at the surface, blowing four or five times and going under for only short dives. Through my glasses I could see it roll on its side, open its great mouth and take in a barrel of shrimp, the water spurting in thin streams from between the baleen plates. It was a big whale, too; we guessed eighty feet long. That would make it weigh about ninety tons. Not a bad trophy for anyone's gun room!

At two hundred fathoms, Erik called for slow speed. I began to get jittery as the ship slid closer and closer, and my stomach seemed full of buckshot. Sweat trickled down from under my hat. Damn fool, damn fool, a whisper in my mind kept repeating. I didn't want to shoot that whale; it was too big! A little whale would be just as good. I could say I'd shot a whale. None of my friends would know whether it was a sei whale or a sulphur bottom; whales were all alike to them. But *I* would know I'd fuked it, and Erik would know and so would Chio-san. Four thousand dollars was a lot of money to put up just for a fool idea. Sure it was, but what the hell? Was there anything I'd rather risk it on? I'd been thinking about it for years and now I had a chance! Then I looked up at the bridge and Chio-san smiled and stretched out her

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hand, the thumb up. Suddenly, all the doubts and uncertainty vanished like mist before the sun. The one thing in the world I wanted to do was to line the sights on that sulphur bottom whale. The bigger the better!

We were not more than fifty fathoms away when the whale took a short dive. Erik spoke quietly. "Put down your camera, Roy. He'll be just right next time. Hold two feet above on your sights and wait till his back comes out. Step up here, quick. He's coming. He's *coming*."

I don't remember exactly how I got there, but suddenly I was standing at the gun, bending over, sighting at the smooth green patch of water that swirled and boiled like a whirlpool. A shadowy form rose almost to the surface, checked its upward rush, and swam slowly right beside the ship. The huge gray ghost lay just under the surface, not six feet down, but as well protected by the water armor as though it had been of steel. Erik's hand was on my arm, "Don't shoot, don't shoot. Yes, now, *now* he comes."

Almost under me it seemed, a twenty-foot head burst to the surface like a breaching submarine, and a cloud of stinking vapor shot right into my face. Somehow I pressed the trigger. I didn't mean to, but that damned spout set off an involuntary twitch that did the trick. Through the veil of smoke I could see the harpoon strike the top of the head just behind the blowholes, glance off the solid bone, and drop into the water. The whale rolled on its side and lay motionless, stunned. Erik saved my bacon. He grabbed the gun, swung it about till the

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muzzle pointed inward, and yelled for the reloaders. I stood there dumb, almost as stunned as the whale. Actually, it was not more than three minutes before the powder charge was in, and the second harpoon rammed home, but it seemed three hours. Erik turned the gun outward and yelled, "Shoot. Low. For God's sake, shoot." The whale was still lying inert, and suddenly I came out of my fog. I sighted under the upraised flipper, and pressed the trigger. The harpoon buried itself to the hilt. Before the smoke blew away, the bomb exploded with a muffled thud and the great body gave a convulsive heave, rolled over and sank like lead. I sat down on the gun platform, feeling weak in the knees. What I most wanted was a cigarette.

Hate of a Dog

During World War I, I was doing an Intelligence job in China that often took me across the Gobi Desert to Urga, in the north. I needed a headquarters at Kalgan, the entrance to the Mongolian plateau. Les Whitman, a trader who dealt mostly in ponies, had to go to America on business, and during his absence I took over his house for a time, with all the servants; also an Alsatian shepherd dog named Khan. This tale concerns Khan and a Chinese house boy, Wang, who did him a grievous wrong and of the hatred that burned in his dog-heart like a devouring flame.

For twenty years I lived with Alsations, four of them, Vic, Khan, Peter, and Wolf. Khan, I never "owned," for his heart belonged to Les Whitman, but the others were my dogs and gave me love for love. Each was as individual as any human. Each had his own likes and dislikes and personal idiosyncrasies as inexplicable as yours or mine, but all had one trait in common: they were great gentlemen. Once their pride or dignity had been wounded, they never forgot or forgave.

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As an example. One day a Russian veterinarian visited my house to give Vic anti-rabies injections. I was not at home. The doctor was afraid of dogs and not only muzzled Vic but trussed him up, feet and body, like a pig going to market. He was so deeply mortified that he retired under my bed. I could only entice him out by talking to him like a hurt child. He never forgot the indignity. Months later the same vet came to treat one of my ponies. Vic got his odor, rushed to the gate, bristling and growling, and, I think, might have killed him had he ventured inside the compound wall.

But Khan's hurt reached to the deepest roots of his being. Not only was his body cruelly lacerated but he lost his trust in humans and the belief that all men were kind. Next to love for his master, to exact payment for his humiliation became the dominant passion of his life.

It happened when Khan was less than a year old. At his mother's death, the pup was left to roll in the yellow dust and watch the herds of wild horses driven in from the northern grasslands. Whitman was often away. At home, Khan was his constant companion. All the affection of a lonely man went to the dog, and Khan was completely spoiled. He had a dancing sense of fun and, of course, he got into all the thousand mischief-scrapes that are the heritage of puppies. Sometimes he dragged Whitman's shoes into the courtyard, wrestling and gnawing them like live things, or tore a sofa pillow to ribbons. The house boys protested, but Whitman only laughed. "He's just a puppy and he's got to have his fun. Let him

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alone." The master's word was law, but the servants regarded Khan as an unmitigated nuisance and with intense dislike.

Whitman went into town for a few hours one day. Wang, the Number Two Boy, had asked permission "to take a bath," the usual excuse for an afternoon's leave of absence. Khan was lying in the sun in the middle of the compound as Wang emerged from the house. In his hand he carried a fan and his gown fluttered enticingly. With a bark of joy, Khan jumped to his feet. Whitman often played the cloth-game with him. Rushing across the compound he leaped about the boy, barking wildly, dashing in and retreating, releasing all his pent-up energy in a frenzy of activity. Making a feint in front, he grabbed the skirt of the gown and rushed away. Came a soul-satisfying rip. A yard of silk was in his mouth to tear and worry.

But suddenly the picture changed. A hand on his collar twisted until his breath came in choking gulps, and he was dragged to the stables. While still gasping, the boy tied him to a post. In a bewildered daze he watched the Chinese grab a horsewhip and felt the agonizing sting of a lash cutting the thin skin of his back.

Crazed with fury, screaming obscene oaths, the Chinese beat and slashed until he was exhausted. After one terrified yelp, Khan made no sound. Blood streamed across his eyes; his left ear hung limply, half severed at the base. His whole body was a mass of bleeding, quivering flesh. From somewhere, far off, it seemed, he heard

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his master's voice, and through glazed eyes he saw Whitman launch himself like a wild beast upon the Chinese. Les told me about it later.

"When I came through the gate, I saw the boy screeching like crazy, beating that poor puppy tied to the post. I saw red. I gave him one on the chin that lifted him off his feet. Then I trussed him up and lashed him with the same whip across the back. His shrieks brought every servant in the house running to the stables.

"'Master,' they cried, 'oh, Master, stop. Please stop. He only whipped a dog.'

"Yes, damn all of you to hell, he only whipped a dog! But he'll never whip my dog again. Take him away. If he ever sets foot in this compound, I'll put a bullet through his filthy hide.

"That's what I said and I meant it, too; I'd have shot him like a skunk. Then I took Khan in my arms and carried him to the house. He tried to lick my hands, but he couldn't force his tongue between his cut lips. Tears came to my eyes at that. In the bathroom, I sponged him with warm water and bandaged the welts with lanolin ointment. His left ear was almost severed. I didn't know whether to cut it off or try to sew it on. Finally I decided it might be saved. I got a needle and sewing silk and stitched it back in place. Khan's eyes never left my face. I could see them darken with pain, but he didn't even whimper. Then I gave him brandy with a medicine dropper. He choked at first, but I told him to swallow it and he did. It gave him a little life."

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Khan slept on a soft sheepskin in Whitman's room. The cuts healed rapidly and even the ear grafted itself, but it hung limply, giving him an expression of perpetual inquiry. Before the pup was able to leave the bedroom, he found a complete change of servants and, to his probable surprise, they treated him with the greatest deference. He didn't know that when Whitman acquired his new household he had issued a mandate: "If I ever see or hear of one of you touching this dog, I'll beat you within an inch of your lives. Remember what happened to the Number Two who tried it once!"

Les told me that Khan was a completely changed dog from that day. Adolescence had gone. Like a boy who has passed through some soul-searing experience, he had grown into disillusioned maturity in a single hour. But for Whitman he developed a kind of god-worship. His first puppy love for a kind master was transformed into absolute adoration. The dog could not bear to have him out of his sight. Les talked with him as to another man. The two unconsciously developed a method of communication, operating on a deeper level than spoken language, a kind of thought-reading that stemmed from great mutual love.

Although quietly reserved, Khan was pleasant with Whitman's friends for that was "guest law," but he hated all Chinese. He ignored the servants, seeming to look through them as though they did not exist. Never would he take food from their hands. When a strange Chinese visited the compound, he stood alert and watchful, his

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eyes dark with suspicion. Walking stiff-legged, he approached the man, sniffed for a moment, and turned away, apparently disappointed. Gradually, Whitman came to realize that he was searching for Wang, the boy who had destroyed his faith in the decency of men, and that some day he hoped to pay his score. Often in sleep he started to his feet with a deep throat-growl. Perhaps he had memories of a whip and burning pain. That, a human can never know.

Only with the Mongol cowboys did Khan relax. They treated him as one of themselves, for a Mongol values first his horse, then his dog, and Khan seemed to know that to them he was person of importance. When Whitman was away he lived in the corral, lying beside the dung fires while the cowboys boiled their mutton, accepting his food portion with quiet dignity. He learned quickly to help handle a herd of wild horses, cutting out and holding a pony in a corner of the wall, but with camels he was useless. The huge, stinking animals irritated him beyond words and when a long line of grotesque beasts shuffled into the compound, loaded with hay or grain, the hair on his back rose. As they sank to their knees, grunting and protesting, slobbering over their cuds, he seemed to feel an uncontrollable urge to leap at their noses and stage a barking party. Perhaps it was because their drivers were always Chinese.

During the winter, saddles, bridles, and other horse-gear began disappearing mysteriously from the stables. Whitman could not be sure whether it was from thieves

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by night or day, so he made Khan responsible for the compound. In a short time the dog understood the duty and loved it. As experience grew, he developed a remarkable cunning. Once, by odor, he discovered a bridle wrapped about the waist of a horse dealer. Khan tore off his gown, frightening the man into near hysterics. From that day on, no visitor left the compound until he had been searched by the dog's nose. The thefts abruptly ceased.

It was early spring when I came into Khan's life. In mid-April, Les Whitman received a telegram calling him to America immediately. He knew I wanted a place in Kalgan and that same night wrote, asking if I would take over his house and dog. "You know Alsations and love them," the letter said. "It's going to be tough to leave Khan, but I can't take him to New York. He'd be deathly unhappy in an apartment with me away all day. He's a difficult dog, but I love him and you'll understand him, I know."

I wired Les that I would come when he sent word.

During the next week, Whitman's compound exploded into violent activity. Most of the ponies disappeared, singly or by twos and threes. Trunks were packed. Instinct told Khan that Les was going away and not only to the Mongolian plains. Eyes dark with sadness, he followed his master about the house and compound, never letting him out of his sight. When Les was away, he curled in the big chair in the bedroom utterly crushed. For days he refused to eat, only drinking water. At night

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he lay beside Whitman's bed, rising to thrust his cold muzzle into the man's face if he stirred in sleep.

When I came to take possession of Whitman's house, I must confess that I had considerable trepidation about meeting Khan. I knew his story and, moreover, such a highly sensitive animal, who had developed a passionate adoration for one man, would be difficult to win. Of course, he would be polite to me, but if I got only that it would be like living with a wife who was not a wife; there could be no happiness for either of us. I did not expect to take Whitman's place, for Alsations give their affection slowly and it lasts forever, but I wanted more than tolerance. So I felt most uncertain.

Les and Khan met me at the door. After we shook hands, Les introduced Khan. I offered him the back of my hand to smell and scratched behind his ears; then I took his muzzle in both palms and looked into his eyes. A message of understanding passed between us. In some subtle way, he felt that I had the "deep knowing" of a dog's mind. He ran his nose halfway to my elbow, under the sleeve, sat up, and offered me his paw.

"It's all right, Roy," Les said happily. "He has accepted you. I knew he would. You'll get on."

Khan and I did get on from the first. He gave me his trust and confidence and, I think, a certain amount of love. That was all I could expect. With Whitman's departure, Khan seemed to feel an increased responsibility for the house; perhaps he thought he was doing something, personally, for his adored master. But I had to

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watch him carefully whenever a Chinese entered the compound. One day a house boy from the American Consulate came to deliver a note. He was dressed in a white gown and Khan leaped at him like a demon released from hell. Suddenly he got the boy's scent, put on brakes with all four feet, and turned away. Then I knew, certainly, that he was hoping to find the man who had beaten him so cruelly in the stables.

At night he rested in his big chair at the foot of my bed, but the doors were always open and he was in and out a dozen times, patrolling the compound. I watched him one moonlit evening. He trotted first to the stables, then skirted the wall, listened to the snores of the servants in the kitchen courtyard, poked his nose under every bush in the rock garden, and finally returned to the middle of the main court. There, away from the intimate smells, he sat for half an hour, nose high, continually testing the wind. Sometimes he made a short excursion into the outer compound and quartered back, stopping to sift the dregs of each scent and sound. Out of the vast reserve of inherited instincts, sharpened and made more potent by contact with human environment, he analyzed every air-wave of the night. Not until the sun was high and the house stirred to life, did he really sleep.

About two o'clock one morning, a month after Whitman left, I heard scratching on the wall behind the bedroom, a stifled yelp, and a soft thud. Instantly Khan was out the door. Half awake, I scrambled from bed, re-

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volver in hand, and stood in the shadow of the porch wondering what was going on. A dog cowered against the wall. Khan's half-born growl died in his throat, for a strange, enticing scent filled his nostrils. His teeth chattered like castanets and saliva dripped from his mouth; he began to tremble violently. The bitch whined and backed into a niche. Khan made little soothing noises in his throat and edged nearer. Suddenly, in a panic of fear, she dashed away and circled the compound, Khan at her heels. Down to the stables, back through the main court, and into the rock garden they raced. Under the apple tree she paused for a brief moment. Khan caught her by the neck-hair and pressed hard against her shaking body. With a frightened yelp she dashed through my room on another circle of the compound, then made for a corner and waited, whining in surrender. Khan was on her in a second. A moment later I saw a dark figure drop over the wall and the gleam of a knife. The man crouched for an instant, straightened, and moved swiftly toward the struggling dogs. But even through the fog of passion, Khan recognized the scent of the Chinese for whom he had waited and searched since that awful day when a whip cut his quivering body like a white-hot brand. With a snarl of rage he tore loose from the bitch.

I saw a flash in the moonlight as the man struck at the dog's throat. Khan sidestepped and, with a flick of his jaws, opened the sleeve from wrist to elbow. Circling, the man fainted for the neck and caught the dog in the

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flank, his long blade ripping through the soft flesh. Khan leaped away. Fangs bared, foam dripping from his mouth, he waited for the next attack. It came in a furious lunge and a whirl of steel, but the dog slipped eel-like into the night and the knife found only empty air. The Chinese pivoted, lost his balance, and went to his knees.

For a long moment the man and the dog confronted each other, motionless. Then Khan shifted to the attack. Body flattened against the stones, he slithered forward like a gliding snake. The man's breath came in shuddering gulps, his face a yellow-green mask of terror as he watched that inexorable approach. Suddenly his nerves cracked. With a wild shriek he lunged at the dog, striking blindly. Khan shot upward under the raised arm, straight for the throat. The Chinese twisted like a cat and saved his life. White teeth sunk deep into his shoulder in a grip that clove through cloth and skin and flesh and grated against the bone. I heard a hideous crunching sound, a shriek of mortal anguish, and the man crushed to earth under fifty pounds of raging dog. Then he began to scream—shrill screams that tore the night-quiet and went shaking and piercing out into the compound.

That brought me to action. Grabbing Khan's collar I tried to pull him off, but blinding rage possessed his brain and heart. Suddenly, he released his hold to shift to the throat. Just in time I thrust the barrel of my revolver between his jaws and twisted his collar. His eyes were red pools of fury, but his mouth opened in choking gasps. It took all my strength to drag him into the living

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room. There, he was like a caged beast newly captured from the jungle, battling the door, snarling in impotent rage as I turned the key.

The man's first shriek waked every person in the compound. Servants and Mongol cowboys crowded about the figure lying on the stone paving. Someone turned a flashlight on his face.

"Wang!" they screamed. "Wang! It's Wang!"

"Who in hell is Wang?" I asked.

"The Number Two Boy; the one who beat the dog."

Vaguely I remembered the name; Whitman had told me, but it didn't register at the time. So that's it, I thought; but why would he come here again? And why was the bitch shoved over the wall? I'd find out.

Wang could hardly walk, but I helped him into the bathroom, washed his shoulder with antiseptic, and got his arm in a sling. He watched me with fear-filled eyes, saying nothing. I gave him a shot of brandy, which he gulped eagerly, and sat him down in Khan's chair. He was a nice-looking boy, about twenty-five with clean-cut features.

"Now tell me. Why did you return to this house? To rob?"

"Not rob, Master, I am no thief-man. If you give me to the police, they will cut off my head. Please, Master, don't give me to the police."

"Maybe I won't; I don't know. Why did you come here tonight if not to rob? Speak the truth. I want no lies."

In the next hour, I got his story told in half-sobs. It was

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a pitiful tale, utterly Chinese; a story of "loss of face," *mayo mienza*, which is so vitally important to every Oriental. That, we, of the Western world, find hard to understand. Yet it reaches beyond the individual into the life of family, town, and city, and dominates national politics. The lengths to which Chinese will go to save face are fantastic. When face is irrevocably lost, suicide is often the result. One day in Peking, I drove my car down the Street of Prince Ching's Well. I was going slowly, close to the curb, looking for a shop number. Twenty feet in front stood a man, balanced on his toes, watching me intently. Something in his tense body and staring eyes made me uneasy. Just as the car came opposite, he threw himself in front of the wheels. I jammed on the brakes and stopped not six inches from his head. Dragging him out, I sat him down on the curb and asked why he had tried to kill himself. He was badly shaken and wanted to talk. He had, it seemed, falsely accused his best friend of seducing his wife. Proved wrong, he had lost such face in the neighborhood that life was unendurable; nothing was left but suicide.

Again, when I went into Shensi province to hunt the "Golden Fleece," our Number One Boy, An, tried to smuggle a large amount of opium back to Peking by concealing it in our baggage. Through An's own nervousness, while we were repacking a box, we discovered the drug. He accused the cook of betraying him to us, which was not true. From that day, the other servants ostracized him completely; would not even speak to

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him. The loss of face so preyed upon his mind that he tried to commit suicide by jumping into a canal. Even then he was unsuccessful, for the water was too shallow and a policeman hauled him out. He was delivered to us, covered with mud and slime, a most deplorable-looking object. That capped the climax. He became so violently insane that Collins and I had to tie him up, and send him back to his family in Peking a raving lunatic. All because he had lost face!

The story I heard from Wang that summer's night in Kalgan, followed a similar pattern. He had, he said, given way to uncontrollable anger the day he beat the dog. He had a date with a certain "sing-song" girl, Eternal Peace, who meant much in his life, and he had worn his best silk gown, new trousers, and white jacket. They were going to a theater. Khan tore his clothes to rags. He was beside himself with fury and he beat the dog; never would he have done such a thing had he been himself. Then Whitman knocked him down, tied him to the same post, and lashed him with the same whip he had used on the dog. Nothing could have been worse! Afterward, all the servants were dismissed. The boys were furiously angry with him, for they had a good job in Whitman's house, with high wages, light work, and much "squeeze"; they could never find such a place again. All over the city they related how he had been whipped like a dog and did nothing but scream. He had lost such face that he was ready to die. His friends deserted him. If he went to a tea-house no one would sit with him at the table. He

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was the laughing stock of Kalgan. Worst of all, Eternal Peace said she never wanted to see him again; he was not a man. Would I believe it, she called him "*wambatung*"—the egg of a turtle—the lowest thing on the earth, or in its waters! That was too much. He would kill the dog with his own hands, he told her. She laughed, "Only will I believe it when you bring me his ears." That's what she said.

So he had gone away. In a tea-house he sat for a long time and drank too much *kaoliang* wine, and when a man sneered at him, he stood up and shouted, "I will kill the dog and show you its ears." Then he walked out. Now, he had committed himself publicly, as well as to the sing-song girl. But how to make good? He thought first of a gun, but he knew nothing of guns, and anyway, he couldn't get one; even if he did, the noise would wake the whole compound. Poison was out, too; Khan might die in the house if he ate the meat, which he probably wouldn't do. As he walked along the street, he saw two dogs wrestling in the throes of love, utterly oblivious of the crowding spectators. Came a brilliant thought; he would get a bitch in heat and put her over the wall during the night! While Khan was occupied, he could slip up, stab him in the heart, and cut off his ears. Nothing could be simpler; easy, safe and certain!

It took him some time to find a bitch in just the right condition and one not too small, but at last he did. He kept her two days and determined to try that night. He took her on a leash up to the compound, and put her over

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the wall. It happened just as he had hoped. Khan chased her, but at last, by luck, she stopped right under the place where he was watching. When the dog caught her, he thought that was the time and dropped to the ground, but it was too soon. Khan pulled away and came at him like a demon. It had gone wrong; everything he did went wrong! This was the end, but if I gave him to the police they would cut off his head like any thief and take all his family's money. Please, would I let him go?

The recital got under my skin. He was not a bad man, and I knew Chinese so well that I could easily imagine the mental hell in which he had lived.

"Wang," I said, "I'll not turn you over to the police. Tonight you may leave, but you must never come near this house again. The dog may kill you next time. Neither I nor the servants will speak of what has happened. Go to Peking where you are not known, and get a job as a house boy. You can start a new life."

He sobbed like a child and, much to my embarrassment, tried to kiss my hands. I saw him safely through the compound gate and went back to try to quiet Khan, who was still clawing at the living-room door.

But my advice to Wang was useless. Next morning his body was found hanging by his own sash from the bridge over the dry river bed just below my house. He had walked straight from me to suicide. Since his last attempt to regain face had failed, he considered that life was not worth living.

But Khan knew nothing of Wang's death. Even after

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rain had obliterated the last trace of human scent, I often found him crouched in somber brooding on the spot where he had fought the man. At night he ranged the compound like a wild thing, resting only when the morning sun lighted every corner of the walls. Khan was never quite the same with me after that night. I felt he held a certain resentment because I had prevented him from killing the man whom he hated above all things on earth. If only I could have made him understand that Wang was dead! Les could have done it, I know, but the dog never saw Whitman again. Two weeks before his return, Khan died of heart worms, the curse of foreign dogs in China.

The Vengeance of Hopalong

Hopalong lay behind a rock on a ridge above the Well of the Sweet Water in Mongolia. Far off in the dancing desert mirage he saw a great cloud of dust streaming behind strange, black carts that came with incredible speed straight for the well. This meant death for him. But what matter? Already he had seen more than mind could bear. He was the only one left of all his family. He'd be glad to have it ended.

The carts swung in to the well and men piled out. Some wore Mongol clothes; others had big hats and he caught sounds of a strange language. Everyone was very busy pulling things out of the carts and pitching blue tents in a half circle about the well. A tall man went into a tent and came out again with a gun. Now he was walking straight toward the ridge where Hopalong lay. No use to run for he was lame. Better burrow under the rock as far as he could. He hoped the man would shoot him quickly and not do it with a knife the way Kula killed the others.

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Hopalong curled like an animal, only half hidden under the rock. He heard shots—half a dozen. What could the man be shooting at? There weren't any people there; no one except him. Twisting about, he saw the man swing his gun and fire at a sand grouse. The bird fell almost beside him. This really *was* the end. He'd sit up and face it.

Suddenly the man saw Hopalong but didn't point his gun. "*Sain baina,*" he gave the Mongol greeting. He was smiling; Hopalong could see that, even though he was shaking all over.

"Don't be frightened. No one will hurt you. Our wind carts came very fast, I know, but we have no other way to travel."

This he said in Mongol. At first Hopalong couldn't believe his ears, but finally the words cut through the fog of fear that numbed his brain.

"You won't kill me like Kula did the others? You mean you don't want to kill me?" he quavered.

"No. You look hungry. Come with me to the well. We'll give you food."

Somehow the little Mongol got to his feet. He was barely five feet tall and might have been thirty years old, or sixty, for his face was incredibly wrinkled like a dried apricot. The man talked quietly and kindly until they reached the camp. "Merin," he called to an old Mongol, "I found this little fellow hiding under a rock. He's frightened almost to death; thinks we are

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going to kill him. Give him food and *kumiss*. Get his story and tell me.”

Hopalong found himself in a familiar Mongol tent. Still in a daze he sat beside the camel-dung fire with a bowl of rice and boiled mutton in his hands. It was a long time since he had tasted mutton; rice he almost never had. *Kumiss* (fermented mare's milk) loosed his tongue and cleared his brain. He began to understand when Merin said, “These wind carts frighten anyone who does not know. I, too, ran away when I saw them first. But they are not evil; they are wonderful things that can take one over the desert a hundred times faster than a camel can travel. These men are from America—a land across the great waters. They have come to see the country, to look at the rocks, to search for dragon bones and get the birds and animals of Mongolia to take back to their own country. Why they do this we cannot understand, but that is of no importance; there are many things about these people we do not comprehend. But they are good people. They pay us well and feed us well. The one who found you is Andrews; he is Khan of this expedition. He tells us where to go and what to do. You need have no fear of him.”

An hour later Merin came to my tent. The old Mongol's face was grave. “I have the little man's story,” he said. “It is a terrible story—the worst I have ever heard. There were eight *yurts* [felt houses] here a week ago.

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About thirty people, all of them his relatives; five brothers with their families and his own wife and his child. They had been here for a month, for during the winter they were scattered all over the plain and had agreed to come together at the well to see each other again. One morning a big caravan of two hundred camels arrived. They were Chinese merchants—very nice men—who for more than a year had been beyond Uliassutai, far up north near the big forests, trading for furs. Many sable, marten, squirrel, and silver-fox skins were in the loads and much baby-camel wool. They were on their way to China, but it was such a valuable caravan that they didn't want to follow any of the main routes for fear of brigands; so they took this trail which had not been traveled for a long time. They had heard that the feed was good at the Well of the Sweet Water and were going to stay a few days to rest their camels.

“The lame man said he went off the next morning to hunt for one of his ponies behind the ridge. After a while he heard shots from the direction of the well, and terrible screams. He was frightened, so he crept up behind a rock where he could see everything that happened. About sixty bandits had come on horses and were killing everyone, men, women, and children. Some they shot if they tried to run away, but most were cut to pieces with swords or knives. He saw his own wife slashed by a big Mongol and she fell down and began to cry and the man laughed and cut off her head while

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she was looking up at him. The man grabbed his baby by the leg, swung it in the air, and then smashed its head against a rock. He knew it was a bandit called Kula, because no other man in Mongolia was as big as Kula; everybody had heard about him.

“The brigands were mostly Mongols but there were a few Chinese and half a dozen Russians. Kula did more killing than any of the others. All the time he laughed and sometimes sang at the top of his voice when he slashed somebody with his sword. After a while no one was left alive. All the merchants and his own people were dead; everyone was dead except him. Then the bandits dragged the bodies over to a ravine near the well, and threw them in and burned the *yurts*. Before the fires were out, they cooked some food and drank a lot of Chinese wine that was in the caravan and then rounded up the camels and put on the loads. They took a trail that led north. Since then the lame man said he had been lying in a hole under the rock all day. At night he'd come out to get some water at the well and search for scraps of food scattered about where the *yurts* had been, and sit on the edge of the ravine just looking at the bodies of his family all huddled up among the stones. Already the vultures and wolves had eaten most of them, but it seemed their spirits kept crying to him every night asking him to kill Kula so they could rest in peace. But how could he do that? He was just one lame man left alone and he couldn't kill the bandit all by himself.”

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Merin said the man was still half crazy but he'd be all right after a time. Wouldn't it be well to take him with us as a guide, for he had spent all his life in the country where we were going and he might be of great use?

"Yes," I said, "if he wants to go. I'll talk with him tomorrow after he has had a night's sleep."

I was greatly worried. A few weeks earlier in Urga I had heard of Kula from a Mongol prince, Tse Tsen, an old friend. "Kula is a huge person," he told me, "stronger than a bull. But he is not a man of this world. He is cruel beyond words and torture goes to his head like *kumiss*. For three months he has been robbing caravans and killing defenseless people, much of it in my own country. He has, I am told, some Chinese and a few Russians with his Mongols, all of them men who should not live. Because I have had to stay in Urga there was no chance to deal with him, but soon I shall return to my city and hunt him down. My last report says he is working north and west of where you will be, but he is a bird that flies swiftly. If you hear of him, have care, for he would travel far to get your motor cars."

Here the bandit was, almost at our front door! Unquestionably he would learn of us before many days, for news travels quickly from well to well in Mongolia. It wasn't a happy thought on which to sleep.

Next morning a miracle seemed to have been wrought in the little Mongol. Fear had gone out of his eyes and

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his wrinkled face shone with curiosity as he examined the strange things about him. Walter Granger immediately christened him "Hopalong," for he progressed in a series of leaps and hops. When only a child, he said, he was kicked by a horse and his broken hip had grown twisted and out of shape.

Merin brought him to my tent. "I have heard your story," I said. "It is beyond human understanding. But that is ended. You can do no good for your family by staying here, and Merin tells me you know the country well. We are going to the White Lake. Would you like to travel with us?"

"Yes, oh, yes, I would like to go with you. You are kind to me. If you will take me, you may have my life. I have nothing else to give."

I asked him to show us where the village had been. A quarter of a mile away piles of ashes marked the eight *yurts*. Hopalong pointed silently to the ravine choked with the bones of his family. After one glance at the gruesome remains, his face contorted and dry sobs shook his small body. Granger put his arm about his shoulders and the little Mongol hid his face in his coat. The look of blank terror was back in his eyes.

But when the cars were ready to leave an hour later Hopalong sat proudly in the front seat beside Granger, a long cigar projecting from his monkey-like face. As the motor roared Hopalong screeched in terror, threw both arms about Walter's waist, and bit through his cigar. The fleet climbed out of the valley and strung

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across the plain, Hopalong clutching a rope, his face a picture of amazement and fearful delight.

Summer had come in a day with blistering heat. The cars traveled over a thirsty land where the scanty vegetation lay brown and shriveled. White rims of alkali marked the beds of former ponds; the desert swam in maddening, waving mirages that mirrored reedy lakes and cool forested islets where there was only sand. Mile after mile passed under the wheels, and we saw no living thing save great black vultures circling in the sky, scurrying spotted lizards and long-tailed gazelles that do not need to drink. White skulls of camels and the bones of sheep marked the way. The only signs that man had ever lived in this desolate land were the circular mark of a *yurt*, the ashes of a fire, a wooden bowl grimed with hard, dry food, and the skeleton of a woman, picked clean of flesh.

Even though every hill looked like every other hill, Hopalong was never for an instant in doubt about the way. We would reach the well in the Valley of the Jewels before the sun went down, he said. It was a very old well and deep, with good water. Two years ago when much rain had come in the summer, he and his relatives pitched their *yurts* near the well. Everywhere one could find the most beautiful little stones; that's why it was called the Valley of the Jewels. The children used to gather the stones and his wife liked them, too.

A hot, red sun still hung an hour high when we came

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gradually into a wide shallow valley; the well was only two miles away, Hopalong said. As soon as the tents were up, all the expedition scattered over the desert like a flock of grazing sheep, hunting "jewels." Hopalong was right. The plain glowed with bits of quartz, onyx, chert, jasper, and chalcedony of rainbow colors. Each man had a full bag by dinner time.

Granger had adopted Hopalong as a camp pet, but it was not a unilateral arrangement. Hopalong also adopted Granger. That night he absolutely refused to sleep with the other Mongols. As a matter of course, he spread his sheepskin at the foot of Walter's bed outside our tent door. But Hopalong was not a bit sleepy. Thoughts raced through his mind. Turning on his back he looked up at the stars hanging like tiny lanterns in the sky. He couldn't believe what had happened. Yesterday he lay beside the rock, hungry, hopeless, only wanting to die. Today, he had skimmed like a bird over the plain in one of the black carts with men who spoke a strange language. Kind men; already they were his friends. They were going to the White Lake and Kula had gone in that direction, too. Perhaps he could find Kula. Nothing seemed impossible after today. Kula! Kula! Kula! The name rang in his mind like the clang of a bell. Two summers ago his family had camped here at this well. He was happy then; everyone was happy and now they were dead, lying in the ravine at the Well of the Sweet Water; all because of Kula! He could never forget how his wife had looked up at Kula with her

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hands clasped together, the way she used to pray in the temple. And his baby! It was here that the little boy was born. He loved him more than he had ever loved anyone else. Hopalong's heart twisted into a hard knot. Tears started to come and he could taste the salt of the tears where they ran down beside his nose and into the corners of his mouth. It was the first time he had been able to cry since that awful day a week ago.

Midnight came and went. Hopalong was still looking into the dim cloud-shadows, when strange vibrations drifted to his ears. Voices that weren't voices, neither human nor animal, rising and dying away only to fill the air again. He was frightened. Scrambling into the tent he shook Granger. Instantly Walter was awake. Hopalong talked excitedly, pointing through the tent door. Sliding out of his sheepskin bag, Granger buckled the revolver belt over his pajamas and stepped outside. Every stone and pebble lay in sharp silhouette under the white light of a brilliant moon; he could even see the lines in the palm of his hand. A cool breeze rippled the flag above the tent. For five minutes he gazed across the plain, Hopalong's hand on his arm.

Then from far out in the desert came subdued indefinable sounds, eerie and unearthly. Ghost voices out of another world murmuring and whispering, swelling in toneless waves to fade and rise again. It's like spirits of the dead talking among themselves, Granger thought. Stepping into the tent, he put his hand on my forehead.

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"Roy, wake up. Something is happening out on the desert."

"What is it?"

"I don't know. Sounds; like voices."

For a moment we stood in a flat silence. Then the weird undertone began again, quavering into a crescendo without timbre or substance, to die in a shuddering moan like the sob of a lost soul.

I gasped. "For God's sake, what was it? It wasn't real, but—I surely heard something."

Hopalong's face was a white mask in the moonlight. "My family's spirits come back to the place where we lived. They tell me again to kill Kula."

Suddenly I grabbed Granger's shoulder. "Look—look there! Do you see it? That Thing hovering in the air?"

A shape, filmy as gossamer, formed in the black mouth of the well, and floated upward in a long spiral. Two almost transparent arms detached themselves, stretched into slim waving fingers, and drifted off in the moonlight. Over the spot where the *yurts* had stood, other shapes took form like a long line of dancing children, holding hands. The breeze seemed to waft them back and forth till they soared upward and disappeared in the eye of the moon.

I saw them; so did Granger and Hopalong. They weren't the figment of just one man's imagination. Three people couldn't see the same thing if it wasn't

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real! Suddenly the scream of a great horned owl crashed through the stillness and when it died away there seemed to be a jagged rent in the night where the sound had been. In a single leap, Hopalong was inside the tent, cowering at the far end, a coat over his head. Walter and I stared at the place where the Things had been but we saw only yellow sand and shining gravel. The wind died as quietly as it was born, and a cloud drifted over the face of the moon. For an hour we smoked our pipes in the tent door, but neither the voices nor the shapes came again. Silence, broken only by the distant song of a wolf, lay thick over the desert.

“Marco Polo described this same thing in his *Travels*,” I said. “Sven Hedin did; and others have, too. There must be a scientific explanation. Probably the intense heat today and a moonlight mirage. But Hopalong will always believe it was the spirits of his family. Maybe it was. I wouldn’t know.”

At the White Lake, on a rise of ground near the far end, the beehive-like silhouettes of Mongol *yurts* showed against the sky. After our tents were pitched, Hopalong and I drove to the village. The little Mongol found many old friends but the place was in utter confusion. Two riders had arrived that morning from the Jade Well, the head man said, and brought frightening news. The bandit Kula, with all his men, was camped in a valley six days’ ride to the north. They must be intending to stay some time because they had forty camels and twenty-five or thirty Chinese women, and had put

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up *yurts*. In the morning the head man was going to move his village to another lake five days' travel to the west. Hopalong and his friends had better come too, for surely Kula would want their wind carts. If he had those, he could go all over Mongolia and no one could catch him.

I thought a moment. "Your Prince is an old friend of mine," I said. "In Urga he warned me about Kula. He told me that, as soon as he returned to his city, he intended to hunt him down. I think I shall go to see him."

The words electrified Hopalong. He clutched my arm. "Three times I have traveled to the Prince's city to pray at the great temple on the hill. I know a quick way; the wind cart will have no trouble. You will take me, too?"

"Yes, Hopalong, if I go, you go, and I think we must. I can see no other way."

Back at camp I called the staff together. After I told my plan there was a long silence. Finally Granger spoke:

"I don't see that there is anything else to do, Roy. As long as Kula is raiding this country we're in great danger. If we got through without his finding us, it would be just pure luck and we can't chance it. His Russians would know how to run our cars, and of course he'd want them. My vote is to follow your suggestion. What do the rest of you men think?"

A chorus of assent gave the answer.

"Well," I said, "that's that. We'll start at daylight."

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The gray light of dawn showed vague outlines of the lake and mountain when my car roared out of camp across the desert. Hopalong's face wore an expression of serenity and confidence. On the way north he told me of his nomad's life; of his despair when night after night he sat on the edge of the ravine, listening to the wolves gnawing on the bones of his family, and his numb terror when he saw our motor cars; how, now, he lived for one thing alone—to kill Kula. The wraiths of his wife and child came to him while he slept, speaking in the toneless voices of the dead, demanding vengeance. Therefore it was obviously Fate that had brought us to the Well of the Sweet Water at that particular time and was now taking us to the Prince. It seemed coincidence to me, but not to Hopalong. To him, all this was predestined. His Buddhistic religion taught him that our little human contrivings are of small moment when set against the great plan of nature and eternal destiny. That I, with the strange wind cart, should be a factor in fulfilling that destiny he accepted unquestioningly.

Hopalong had selected an easy route and we camped that night in the mouth of a narrow valley, lush with green grass, two hundred miles from the White Lake.

"Why aren't there any Mongols here?" I asked.

"Kula; that's the reason. See, here are the marks of *yurts*; they left only yesterday. Now everybody knows that Kula is camped in Tiger Canyon, for men rode out from the Jade Well in all directions to warn the people."

By noon of the second day we topped the summit of

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a grass-covered hill and saw the golden spires and up-turned gables of a temple-city spread on the green floor of a wide valley. Tiny prayer flags fluttered gaily from a thousand little standards, and prayer wheels ringed the temples. Just beyond the northern corner of the lama city, in a vast enclosure surrounded by a palisade of unpeeled logs, scores of white *yurts* and blue tents clustered about a great pavilion. Horsemen were riding at full speed toward the compound. I guessed they had seen my car and were carrying the news to the Prince. As we drew up in a cloud of dust a tall man, about thirty years old, with the handsome features of a Mongol aristocrat strode out the door. Tse Tzen Wang embraced me affectionately.

“The sun is brighter now that you have come, my friend. You have been particularly in my mind. It is as though my thoughts drew you across the desert on the wind that blows up from the south, so I was not surprised when my men reported a black car on the hill-top. I arrived only yesterday from Urga. Come inside, we have much to talk about. I will order food.”

The pavilion was a superb tent-like structure of white felt hung with yellow and blue silk, the floor strewn with lynx and bear skins; fur robes covered the couches along the walls. On a dais at the far end lay a white horse skin, used only by the descendants of Genghiz Khan. Obviously this was an audience tent, not living quarters.

While the inevitable boiled mutton, rice, and *kumiss*

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were being served, I told of Kula's camp and the massacre at the Well of the Sweet Water, and spoke of Hopalong. Tse Tzen Wang's face was very grave.

"Bring the man. I would talk with him," he said to a servant.

The little Mongol hobbled through the door to kneel at the Prince's feet, trembling and well-nigh speechless.

"Do not be afraid," Tse Tzen Wang said kindly. "I wish to hear the story from your own lips. This is something that concerns every man who lives upon my land, and me most of all, for it is I who am responsible. Now tell me what happened from the very beginning."

Hopalong reached for my hand like a frightened child. The friendly clasp gave him courage and he told the tale so simply and dramatically that I felt my throat tighten and saw the Prince's face set in granite lines.

"It is only one of similar stories I have heard," he said, "but this is worst of all. It marks the end for Kula. We will ride tomorrow and I, myself, will take command. Not one of his band shall remain alive, else we do not return."

He questioned Hopalong closely about Kula's camp. "Yes, I know the place; Tiger Canyon. It could be easily defended if Kula had the mind, but his brain is no larger than a desert rat's though his body is like a camel's. He must be completely mad to camp so near my city. Probably he thinks I am still in Urga, but he

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could have learned the truth easily enough had he sent a man to hear the gossip at any well."

The Prince called one of his generals and briefly outlined the campaign. "A hundred men, each with a hundred rounds of ammunition, rifles, and pistols; twenty with sabers. I want the best shots we have. There will be no prisoners. We ride at dawn tomorrow."

General Chactar's face lighted. "It shall be done, my lord. At dawn tomorrow."

"Send four men with led horses at once to scout Kula's camp. The place is barely fifty miles from here. We will meet them tomorrow at the stream by the great *obo*.*"

Tse Tzen Wang turned to me. "You will remain here, of course. It should not be longer than three days and I cannot lose you so soon. Hopalong, as you call him (and it is a good name), will ride with me tomorrow. His bullet will kill Kula if the gods so direct. It is his due."

The little Mongol was almost speechless with happiness. Hobbling forward, he kneeled again at the Prince's feet.

"It is a good thing you have done today," I said. "Its echoes will reach to the highest mountain in your land."

As the first morning light picked out *yurts* and temples, the boom of drums stirred the city to life. A servant brought rice, mutton, and tea. I ate hurriedly and walked to the great plaza fronting the pavilion.

Hopalong rode up on a gray mare, a short saber

* An *obo* is a religious cairn on a point of land.

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dangling at his side. The cartridge belt and Colt revolver I had given him were about his waist. The little man tried to hide his pride but his face was radiant.

"Never will I forget this day," he said. "If I die tomorrow it will be of little matter, for all Mongolia will know I rode beside our Prince to meet Kula."

Tse Tzen Wang blew his silver whistle. Instantly the Mongols swung into their saddles and formed in five companies of twenty each, with an officer wearing a peacock plume in front. At another blast of the whistle, a great clash of cymbals and drums rolled back from the snow-capped mountains. The little army swept out of the gate at full gallop to circle the lama city, the Prince at its head, with Hopalong and General Chactar on either side. I turned back to my *yurt* as they disappeared behind the hill.

Three days later I sat at a camel-dung fire with the Prince, General Chactar, and half a dozen others. The account of the raid emerged in staccato sentences, with minute detail and sometimes brilliant descriptions, as *kumiss* loosed the Mongols' tongues. At one point, General Chactar leaped to his feet and re-enacted the scene in Kula's *yurt*. Put together, with my knowledge of the background, this is the story I heard.

It was late in the afternoon when the Mongols reached a brook running like a silver thread out of a deep canyon in the hills with the *obo*, a great pile of

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stones on a promontory. Two men sat about a fire, boiling tea. They jumped to their feet as the Prince dismounted. "*Sain bina*," he called.

"*Sain bino*, my lord, *sain bino*."

"What of the others?"

"All is well. Even now they lie among the rocks watching Kula's camp. We arrived an hour ago to bring you our report."

"Good. I will hear it later. First let us see to our beasts."

The ponies were unsaddled, given a short drink, and hobbled closely so they might crop the sweet grass but stay within the valley. Then Tse Tzen Wang with General Chactar and the two scouts walked to a green slope. Tuli, the elder, spoke: "Kula's camp of eleven *yurts* and fourteen tents is less than two hours' slow ride from here, well up in Tiger Canyon. Forty camels and more than a hundred horses feed upon the plain but not a single herder watches; they roam at will. Sixty Mongols, four Chinese, and eight Russians are in the camp. Last night the bandits had a great feast and drank much wine from black jugs. Every man was very drunk, Kula worst of all. By midnight they were all asleep and not a sentry stood guard over the camp. This morning no one moved until long after the sun had climbed above the rocks. Then a few came out to draw water from the well and make tea. When we left, sheep were being killed and we think there is to be another feast tonight."

The Prince asked, "If I wished, could I post men

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among the rocks to command every corner of the camp?"

"Yes, oh, yes. It would be a good plan. The place is like this"—he drew a pear-shaped figure in the sand—"with high rocks on every side and only one entrance from the plain. Not even a rabbit could move in the camp without being seen."

"Yours is a good report, Tuli; you both have done well. Get yourselves some food."

The prince turned to General Chactar. "We will leave four hours before day begins to dawn. All your men, except the company with sabers, will climb the rocks and surround the camp. Their orders are to shoot every man they see as he comes from the tents or *yurts*. But be careful not to harm the women. If I see there are too many bandits to be dealt with from the rocks, I will blow my whistle. At that signal, the company waiting at the entrance will ride in and cut them down. Remember, I want no prisoners."

"Yes, my lord. The plan is good. No one will escape; that I promise on my head."

At one o'clock in the morning the Mongols rode away from the stream. In the soft light of countless stars, the forms of men and horses showed dimly on the summit of rolling hills, only to be lost in the utter blackness of a valley's depths. Suddenly out of the gloom loomed the figure of a man; one of the scouts left to watch the camp. The other waited at the entrance to the canyon's mouth, he said. All was quiet there, every man drunk and asleep.

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It had been a terrible night. Three of the women were tortured when they tried to run away. Kula was in his *yurt* with two other Mongols and a Russian, and four Chinese girls. Kula slept at the back, the two Mongols on either side and the Russian nearest the door. He knew how they lay because he slipped into the camp, cut an opening through the back of the *yurt*, and watched for longer than it would take to smoke a pipe. No sentries had been posted. It was well the Prince had come tonight for the scout thought Kula intended to leave that day. The horses and camels had been rounded up and hobbled just outside the canyon. They must be preparing for a big raid because ammunition had been distributed in the afternoon, and every man had full belts of cartridges; some were sharpening sabers and knives. He crept among the rocks close enough to hear the talk of three Mongols. It had to do with the Prince. He could only get bits of the conversation, for he was too far away, but he gathered they think he is still in Urga with all his soldiers, and Kula means to attack and burn the Prince's city.

Tse Tzen Wang spoke to General Chactar. "It is as I thought; the stupid fool did not even try to learn if I had returned. Because he has robbed defenseless caravans over all the land, his thick head has swollen like a goat's skin filled with *kumiss* and he thinks he is a great general."

In half an hour the ragged outlines of Tiger Canyon in the root of an ancient mountain, showed in silhouette

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against the sky, like broken teeth in the jaws of an old man. The Mongols halted.

“General Chactar, you will go forward and post your men. They are not to fire until they hear shots in Kula’s *yurt*; then pick off any man who shows himself. I shall not attack until the light is good for shooting, but well before sunrise. When your men are placed, report to me.”

“And what of you?” General Chactar asked.

“The plan is simple. You and the lame man will ride with me to the door of Kula’s *yurt*. We walk inside, I in front with Hopalong, and you behind. Hopalong will kill the beast when I give the word. You and I must watch the other Mongols and the Russian. Shoot them at the first move, even though they lie upon their beds. As for Kula, I want him to know before he dies who it is that takes his life. Is it understood?”

“It is understood, my lord.”

The general wheeled his pony, issued a low command, and the Mongols dissolved into the darkness like phantom horsemen. Twenty remained. “Dismount,” the Prince ordered. “We have only to wait for daylight.”

Hopalong sat on the ground close to the Prince, fingering the revolver that was to send the man he hated above all others on earth to eternal hell. At last gray light spread imperceptibly over the plains. A dark shape rode out of the gloom. It was General Chactar coming to report to the Prince.

“Every man is posted, my lord. Dawn comes swiftly;

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in fifteen minutes the light will be strong enough to shoot. When you wish, you may move to the canyon door.”

The Prince stood up, waved his hand, and the Mongols swung into their saddles. Tse Tzen Wang, Hopalong, and General Chactar rode slowly between the giant boulders forming the gateway. Suddenly they were at the door of Kula's *yurt*. Swinging from their saddles, they dropped the reins over the horses' heads. Pistol in hand, the Prince lifted the curtain and stepped over the sill, Hopalong at his side. General Chactar followed at their heels. It was a big *yurt*, and against the far wall sprawled a giant of a man snoring like a pig, one arm across his breast. Beside him was a young Chinese girl, her face a white mask of loathing even in sleep. Two Mongols lay on either side as the scout had said, with the Russian at the left. Not a person stirred.

Tse Tzen Wang picked a piece of camel dung from beside the fire and threw it at Kula's head. The giant rolled over, flailing one great arm across the girl. She screamed and sat upright. Another slab of dung struck the half-drunken giant full in the mouth. Spitting and cursing, he raised on one elbow.

“Get to your feet, Kula,” the Prince said. “Even carrion like you should not die on its knees. Do you remember the Well of the Sweet Water? It was there you murdered the family of this man beside me. Probably you have forgotten! But he has not forgotten. He has come to kill you that their spirits may rest in peace.”

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Suddenly the Mongol was wide-awake. "You! Tse Tzen Wang! I thought you were in Urgal!"

Scrambling to his knees, he reached for a pistol hanging in a belt above his head. The Prince motioned to Hopalong. A roar split the air like the explosion of a bomb, and the top of Kula's skull flew off. One of the Mongols half rose, and Chactar shot him through the body. The other fumbled for a gun, but the Prince swung his pistol like a darting snake and the man collapsed in a limp mass. From the tail of his eye, Hopalong glimpsed the Russian who still lay prostrate, leveling his pistol at Tse Tzen Wang, while the girl clawed at his hand. The gun spat fire and the Prince's cap drifted from his head as though caught by a gust of wind. The man raised his pistol for a second shot, but Hopalong dropped on one knee and almost thrust a bullet squarely between the bandit's eyes.

The girl crouching on the floor, screamed in terror.

"Don't be afraid," the Prince shouted in Chinese. "You won't be hurt."

Hardly had the first shot been fired in the *yurt* when a muffled tattoo like the noise of children's popguns sounded beyond the felt walls. Then louder and louder, till it mounted into a crescendo of crashing echoes, whining bullets, and piercing screams.

"It's ended here. Outside," the Prince ordered.

Stepping through the door, he collided head-on with a running bandit. As both went down the Mongol fired wildly and rolled over, trying desperately to turn his gun

The Vengeance of Hopalong

on Tse Tzen Wang. Hopalong shot him behind the ear.

Men erupted from the *yurts*, firing at flashes from the cliffs, only to drop before they had taken a dozen steps. General Chactar pulled his rifle from its scabbard and knelt beside his horse. The little group in front of Kula's *yurt* was the only visible target the bandits had, for not a Mongol was in sight among the rocks.

"On the ground," the Prince shouted as Hopalong's mare collapsed like a felled ox, almost over the little man. With a curse he nestled behind the body, took deliberate aim, and killed the one who had shot his horse. More Mongols poured into the open, to plunge headlong in grotesque, writhing shapes. When the Prince's pony screamed and sank to its knees, he blew a long blast on his silver whistle. Instantly a torrent of yelling horsemen raged through the camp like demons released from hell, their heavy sabers severing heads, arms, and legs in a mad rush. One man was split from neck to waist; another cut through the middle like a halved apple. Tse Tzen Wang waved his arm and the soldiers from the rocks scrambled to the valley floor. Into every tent and *yurt* they swarmed; muffled shots told of bandits, drunk with wine or terror, hiding beneath the skins.

The Prince pointed to a crag halfway up the canyon's wall. A man was climbing frantically, dodging behind rocks and crawling, belly down, across narrow ledges.

"May I borrow your rifle?" he asked the general politely. "I need practice on mountain goats."

Chactar passed him the gun. Tse Tzen Wang fingered

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it lovingly, the stock just below his shoulder. When the man appeared for an instant, almost at the rim, he fired like a flash. The figure poised, arms upraised, balanced uncertainly, and plunged headlong to the valley floor.

The Prince handed back the rifle with a smile. "Another of the Russians. Not a bad shot you must admit, General. Almost worthy of you, yourself."

Echoes died in dull mutterings among the rocks. Heavy silence settled over Tiger Canyon, broken only by the sobs of frightened women; silence more poignant and oppressive because of what had gone before.

A captain reported to the general. "The work is completed. Not a man escaped."

"'Twas well done, Chactar," the Prince said. "Drag out the bodies and lay them all together. We must count the dead. Then we can be sure."

Hopalong disappeared into Kula's *yurt*. After a short time, he stood in the door holding what remained of the giant's head by its matted, black hair. For a long moment he gazed at the thing, then hobbled slowly to a great rock that rose like a temple altar from the center of the amphitheater. He placed the head, face up, on the flat top and carefully opened the half-shut eyes. Turning, he looked up at the sky. Vultures were already circling low above Tiger Canyon.

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I have seen a good many men shot, or beheaded, in China and I wondered a hundred times how I'd act if I were to be executed. Would I be a man or a mouse? A mouse, certainly. I'd not have the backbone of a chocolate éclair. Too much imagination! I found out in 1926 when three members of my expedition were lined up with me before a firing squad. So far as preliminary feelings were concerned, we *were* executed. In a few seconds there'd have been a spurt of flame and—blackout! It wasn't at all the way I thought it would be. But to get on with the yarn.

In 1926 civil war in China ceased to be *opéra bouffe* and became real war. A foreign flag had always been sacrosanct to the Chinese and a pass through any army, but suddenly its safety value vanished. It took some time for us resident foreigners to realize that no longer were we exempt. The old order had changed but we couldn't believe it. Only after a few experiences such as I had, did the idea really soak in.

In April 1926 the "Christian" General Feng Yu-hsiang

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was having a private war with Marshal Chang Tso-lin, the "Uncrowned King of Manchuria." Feng wasn't doing so well, for one of his generals deserted to the other side and he retreated from Tientsin to Peking. I had fifteen scientists from America waiting in Peking ready to start for the Gobi Desert. Three new motors had arrived in Tientsin and we had to get them before we could leave. The only way was to drive them up over the automobile road.

The American Minister thought it unwise for us to go, but I pooh-poohed the idea. I had been through Chinese armies so many times merely by displaying the American flag, that I couldn't believe there would be trouble.

At noon four of us, in an open touring car, drove to Peking's east gate. It was sandbagged and heavily guarded, but the soldiers looked at the flag and let us pass. Carts were already coming into the city loaded with grain, camp gear, and soldiers. Cavalry streamed by, and then thousands upon thousands of infantry. They were retiring in good order and were most pleasant. They waved at us and cheered. An officer told me that Chang Tso-lin's troops had taken Tungchow, fourteen miles from Peking, and were looting the city but that there was no fighting. We soon passed beyond the rear of the retreating army.

The farmhouses along the road were tightly shuttered and deserted. All was quiet as the grave. It was a weird feeling. Usually the place seethed with activity; men working in the fields, women washing clothes in the

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ditches, carts, cars, and camels on the road. Now, not a sign of life. I began to get cold feet. I said to Shackelford, our photographer, "I've never seen it like this when there wasn't actual fighting. Maybe we'd better go back."

"Gee, Roy, I don't like it much. Gives me the creeps. Wish we were in Peking."

"I do, too. I'll turn at the next place. The road is too narrow here."

A moment later we came in sight of the ancient marble bridge outside Tungchow, built long before Marco Polo visited Kublai Khan.

Suddenly came a sharp report and a pebble flew up beside the front wheel. Then all hell broke loose. A mass of gray bodies swarmed over the bridge and a machine gun opened on us at point-blank range. The bullets kicked up the dust in front of the motor, but it was aimed too low. The soldiers could see the big American flag plainly enough, but that made no difference; they were out to kill. Fortunately the road was wide enough to turn our car and I backed around in record time. "Every one down," I yelled.

The soldiers had elevated the gun, and bullets buzzed like a swarm of bees just above our heads. The flag was riddled and two bullets crashed through the windshield. Forty yards down the road a sharp curve took us out of sight of the machine gun. The men were crouched in the bottom of the car and I was the only one who could see what was going on. It was a rough road but the speed-

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ometer showed fifty miles an hour as we went back. I thought we were safe, but that was just a pipe dream. The houses, seemingly so peaceful and deserted, actually were occupied by the advance guard of Chang Tso-lin's soldiers. They had let us pass because of the flag, but when they heard the firing in our rear and saw us fleeing at such mad speed, they thought we were anybody's game; at least, they knew the bridge guard had treated us as enemies.

For three miles we ran the gantlet from both sides of the road. I would see soldiers standing with rifles at the ready, waiting until we came opposite. Then "bang," they'd let us have it. Sometimes they fired in squads; sometimes singly. Fortunately they were rotten shots. Most of them merely pointed their rifles at the car and the bullets struck behind us. Two or three zipped in between my head and the windshield. At a small temple I saw a villainous-looking chap waiting. Something told me he was dangerous, for he handled his rifle as though he knew what it was for. He brought his gun up and sighted carefully.

"This one," I thought, "will probably get me." My tummy took a nose dive. I ducked my head just as he fired and the bullet sliced off the brim of my hat. Still, I wasn't really frightened. There was too much to do and the thought continually ran through my mind. "I got the other fellows into this and I've got to get them out."

I was afraid one of the tires would be hit. At that speed on the rough road, we'd have turned over sure as

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fate. Up ahead I saw the rear guard of the retreating army; the firing ceased. Thank God, we were back with friends.

Soon we had to slow up because of the straggling soldiers. Men began to jump on the car. Both running boards were jammed solid, half a dozen others hung to the rear bumpers, and two sat astraddle of the hood. I couldn't see to drive and the car could barely crawl in low gear. Obviously something was bound to happen if this went on. I stopped and protested vainly. One of the soldiers ordered me on and slapped my face. They were damned unpleasant. These men spoke the Shantung dialect, which is extremely difficult to understand; it was just as though they talked with a hot potato in their mouths. Then came the accident that set off the fireworks. One of the men on the hood fell off. A wheel ran over his leg grinding it into the gravel; it was a frightful mess. He lay there screaming and cursing us. I caught the words "foreign devils" and "kill, kill." I saw from his arm-tab that he was a sergeant; the soldiers took his curses as an order. They yanked us out of the car to the road. One of them pushed Shack and he fell down. I can see him now looking up at the soldier, with the grin that makes everyone love him. It didn't make the soldier love him! The brute kicked him in the ribs, grabbed his shirt, and pulled him to his feet, spitting in his face. Shack wiped off the saliva and said quietly, "You shouldn't have done that."

Chinese can work themselves into an hysterical rage

at times, and the sergeant was frothing at the mouth. Holding his mangled leg, he kept yelling, "Kill, kill the foreign devils." Pointing to the flag, I shouted in Chinese, "American. Friends." It did no good.

The soldiers lined us up against the car. A dozen stood beside the sergeant throwing shells into the chambers of their rifles. No one said anything. I wasn't frightened; I think none of the men were. In a moment they'd fire and we'd all be dead. It didn't seem to matter to me, personally. My knees didn't sag or my backbone go limp. I had no feelings whatever; no thoughts of anything or anybody; my mind was a complete blank.

Just as the soldiers were bringing up their rifles, an officer pushed through the crowd on a horse. He was a major.

"What," he shouted in Mandarin Chinese, "is going on here?" The cursing sergeant subsided and the soldiers dropped their rifles.

Thank God, I could speak Mandarin. I stepped out of line and briefly explained what had happened. We were American Intelligence officers, from the Military Attaché's office, on reconnaissance. He nodded. "Yes, I know your colonel, but I'm a staff officer. I can't control these men. Get off the road. Here's my card. Show it if you're molested, but get off quickly. I'll stay here till you're out of sight."

There was a steep slide down the side of the road into the fields. No motor car of that period should have been asked to make it, but that one did. We bumped across

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dry rice dikes and *kaoliang* stubble toward the Antung Men, the north gate of the city. In ten minutes the retreating army was lost to sight behind a corner of the Tartar Wall.

The car dropped into ditches, hurdled banks, and plowed through mud. The left front spring broke; then the other. A rear tire blew but we kept going on the rim. Not until we gained the north road and hobbled through the Antung Men did we stop to make repairs. There, only a short mile from the east gate, life went on as usual. Women bargained at the market stalls; a barber placidly shaved a half-sleeping man; noodle sellers chanted their food songs. It seemed fantastic to us, whom death had just passed by. Now that we were safe, reaction began. The men sat stiff and straight, jaws set, not speaking. Each one was hanging on to himself with difficulty. I drove straight to the club. "We all need a drink," I said. "A very big drink."

It was four o'clock in the afternoon and the bar was deserted. We ordered whiskey straight. My hands suddenly began to shake so that I spilled half my drink. A wave of nausea turned my stomach upside down and I made a dash for the washroom. The whiskey released the tension of taut nerves and we began to talk in short, staccato sentences. Most of it was of inconsequential details. All of us were a little drunk when we left the club and were laughing as though it had been merely an amusing experience. One of the men, newly arrived from America, lived at my house. He had been superb during the

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whole performance and showed less emotion afterward than any of the others. But at two o'clock that morning reaction hit him right where he lived. I was waked by wild laughter and found him wandering about the courtyard in a beautiful case of hysterics.

Only the next day when it was possible to analyze the incident did I understand the psychological reasons for our behavior. None of us had been consciously frightened. Why? Obviously, because the magnitude of the moment had drugged our senses. We were human automations, moving in a trance; we had ceased to think or feel. I imagine that is what happens to most candidates for execution when the moment comes. It's a comforting thought.

The Golden Fleece Came High

Bandits, torture, and sudden death don't go well with a hunt for one of the world's rarest animals. If anyone wants to mix that kind of a cocktail again, he can drink it alone; I'm definitely on the wagon. I was damn fool enough to stick my neck out once, for sometimes one has to be an idiot to get what he wants, but never again; the rewards weren't enough. I was scared green for two days. The going was tough—so tough that this narrative might well only have been written in my obituary. In addition, strange things happened on the mountain which I can't explain. Perhaps it was really Eastern magic; perhaps just coincidence. I will give the facts and you may interpret them as you wish.

I wouldn't have gone to Shensi province at that particular time except for the Golden Fleece, but not the one of Greek mythology. This fleece was very much alive and lived in the roughest part of the Tsing Ling mountains. Naturalists call it takin, *Budorcas bedfordi*; the Chinese know it as *yeh-niu*, wild cow. It weighs five

hundred pounds and is a large member of the musk-ox group of the *Rupracaprinae*.

Malcolm Anderson got the first one in the early nineteen hundreds while collecting for the Duke of Bedford. It created a major scientific sensation, for even at that time a new big animal wasn't discovered every Tuesday or Thursday; moreover, the Chinese takin is a spectacular beast quite unlike that of Tibet and the Indian frontier which had been known for years.

When I was sure of returning to China, thoughts of the Golden Fleece obsessed me like a phantom. They flitted through my dreams and floated to the surface of my subconscious mind at the most extraordinary moments. Perhaps at a dinner table when some woman wore a yellow dress; when I saw a saffron flower or glimpsed the golden tiles on a temple roof.

In Peking I had been too busy for half a dozen months to think of leaving. Then, at the club one evening, I was introduced to an English officer, Captain W. F. Collins. He was a correct young man and very British, but, to my intense surprise, out of the pockets of his dinner coat he produced four jack snipe.

"Shot 'em this morning in the Old Summer Palace. The colonel told me you'd be here tonight so I brought 'em along. Thought you'd like 'em."

I did like "'em" and I liked Collins. Drinks at the club stretched to dinner at my house where we talked shooting until the crows began their dawn reveille on

The Golden Fleece Came High

the upturned gables of the roof about the "Heaven's Well."

Collins had shot in Africa and over half the world, but our talk centered on the game of China. "The takin that Anderson discovered in Shensi! Now that would be something! Fenwich-Owen and Wallace got 'em after Anderson; no one else has. I saw the skins in the British Museum. Yellow—yellow as gold; 'Golden Fleece' was all I could think of. That chap in Greek mythology—what's his name? Jason—that's it—he went after the Golden Fleece. Wish I could get one. Haven't been able to forget 'em since the day the Duke of Bedford showed 'em to me before I came out to China. The Old Boy was pleased as Punch that Oldfield Thomas named it for him. He ought to be, too; most spectacular animal I've ever seen."

I took a long drink from my scotch and soda and murmured, "*Et tu, Brute.*"

"What's that? What did you say? Have you been thinking about 'em, too?"

"Have I? Nothing else but. It's like a boil on my neck that itches even when I'm asleep. Why don't we do it? I've got some free time now, and a green light from the American Museum of Natural History to collect a group for the North Asiatic Hall. Could you get leave?"

"You're right I could. I've got leave coming up next week. Been wondering where I'd go."

"Shensi is a rotten place; crawling with bandits. I sup-

pose you know it. There's a new governor there, Feng Yu-hiang, and he isn't popular, except with the missionaries. We might hit trouble."

"Quite. But old Jason hit trouble too, if I remember correctly. Makes it all the more interesting."

So that's how the trip was born.

Almost from the first we ran into difficulty. At the end of the railroad no pack mules were to be had. A new magistrate, who could measure his tenure of office only by weeks and was trying to cash in, had cornered the market. He wouldn't let a mule out of the city except at the most exorbitant rate. We had dropped like manna from Heaven right into his lap. Moreover, the gentleman tried "to throw his weight about," as Collins expressed it. When we called to pay our respects, he motioned us to sit on his *right* hand; left is the place of honor. We bowed, turned on our heels, and stalked out. Half an hour later, in his red official chair, the magistrate arrived at the temple where we were camped. After keeping him waiting fifteen minutes we figured he'd lost enough "face" and deigned to receive him. He apologized for his discourtesy and promised us mules for the morning at the customary rate. When about to leave, he intimated that he was troubled with constipation; did we, by chance, have something to relieve this distressing condition? I produced some black pills, warranted to work successfully even on a horse, and maliciously told him to take a double dose. When I asked Collins, "Did I do right?" he said, "Quite."

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But next morning the mules were not forthcoming. All day we waited. Two calls at the *yamen* elicited the information that the magistrate was not at home. We knew damned well he was, for his red chair sat in the outer court. Obviously, the solution of our problem lay in Chinese methods and a sit-down strike. We proceeded to the *yamen* with our servants, beds, and gear, and made camp in the main courtyard. Having "cased the joint," we knew the only exit was through the front gate and, moreover, the "john," as in most Chinese houses, was against the front wall not far from us. Unless the pills had done us wrong, we were sure to see the magistrate.

While we were smoking our pipes after an excellent dinner, the magistrate capitulated. He sent word that the mules would be at our temple in the morning. "We are sorry for you—most sorry—but we cannot leave this comfortable spot without the mules," I replied. In an hour they arrived and next morning, at daylight, we were on our way.

The people of Shensi are a poor lot at best. Sullen, dull, sodden with opium; unlike any other Chinese I have ever seen. The inns were indescribably filthy and there were few temples along the road in which we could camp. It rained a good deal, so we needed a roof over our heads; otherwise we should have slept in the fields. Poultry, pigs, and prostitutes strolled about with curiosity and no restraint. All came into our room, but only with the human element did we have difficulty in

convincing them that we had no interest in their company or personalities. A slap on their behinds sent them out cackling, grunting, or cursing as the case might be. The poultry and pigs took it with resignation and good nature; the prostitutes not so. They retired with predictions that any progeny we might have would definitely resemble a turtle, than which there is no lower animal in the Chinese fauna.

In one hostelry a baby girl about a year old nursed contentedly from a sow beside five piglets. When I focused my camera on the domestic scene, the outraged mother snatched up her screaming offspring, kicked the sow for no reason at all, and created such an uproar that we left to sleep under a tree on the outskirts of the town.

Of brigands we heard more than enough at every stop. A band of three thousand, under the leadership of Ching Kung-pah, was a particularly nasty lot. They had ravaged villages along the road and tortured the merchants, but now the governor's soldiers were hard on their heels. No one knew where they were at the moment.

On the tenth day, about noon, we passed through a narrow gateway like the jaws of a giant trap, half closed, into a beautiful valley. On both sides mountains rose in snow-crowned ridges, pierced by needlelike peaks lost in mist-clouds hanging about their summits. A stream meandered lazily among the rice fields, bordered in places by willows, silver birches, and poplars. The village, straggling in a broken line along the valley, was a poor affair even as Shensi villages go, but at the far end,

The Golden Fleece Came High

beyond the houses in a grove of straight white poplars, sat its one redeeming feature—a lovely temple. We knew that Anderson had camped there, and also Fenwick-Owen and Wallace when they followed upon Anderson's heels, even as we were doing. The bleary-eyed priest seemed bowed with years and care, though his sole duty was to keep the altar candles alight and consume the food after the gods had had their chance at the rice, pickles, and bits of pork. A silver dollar changed hands. We were welcome to spread our beds in the main room. Only twice in the half century of his residence, said he, had foreigners come this way. First, one man alone; then, years later, three others together, all to hunt the wild cow. Could we engage Yong, the hunter the other had had? No, Yong was dead, but his son now roamed the mountains in his stead. But Yong had not his father's gift; moreover, he drank too much rice wine and smoked many pipes of opium.

Yong soon presented himself with three others, and a grimy letter, written years ago by Anderson and endorsed by Fenwick-Owen, saying the elder Yong was a fine hunter. He didn't impress us much, but, I suppose from precedent, we hired Yong at one dollar a day plus a bonus of five dollars for each takin; he was to pick his associates. Then an argument ensued between Yong and an old man named Liu. I couldn't understand it all—Shensi is a difficult dialect—but I caught something about "opening" and "closing" the mountain. It didn't make

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sense to me. Finally, Liu left in a huff. Yong seemed belligerent, but, nevertheless, a bit worried.

Next morning Collins and I worked up a rocky canyon, wading an ice-cold stream numberless times, through the lower growth of birch, oak, and spruce into the zone of dwarf bamboo that begins at six thousand feet. At dark we climbed out of the trail to the wide, basal ledge of a sheer rock wall. Anderson had slept there, Yong said. It was almost sanctified for us by the man who had discovered the Golden Fleece. Our platform was on a level with the lower peaks, and beyond their summits snow shone white in the moonlight. It was very still up there. Not even the roar of the stream reached our ears; not a bird note, nor the call of an animal, sounded in the night. After dinner Collins and I lay propped against the rock-face smoking silently, utterly content. "Will, how lucky that we didn't let bandits keep us away from this," I said. He replied, "Quite."

A heartbreaking crawl up a trail like the side of a church steeple brought us to a grassy meadow thickly carpeted with brown grass, before the sun was two hours high next morning. There we pitched our tiny silk tent, just big enough for two sleeping bags, and covered a skeleton of poles with dwarf bamboo and grass as a shelter for the men. Behind us the meadow met a rhododendron jungle that spread up the steep ridge, over the crest, and away into the peaks and chasms of far-off mountains. A wild lonely place, fit home for one of the strangest beasts in all the world!

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Two days of hard hunting netted no result; takin had been there, but the sign was old. Yong liked it even less than we did, for such luck brought few silver dollars to him for rice wine and opium. Much talk went on among the men. Finally Yong came to me.

“The old man, Liu, whom you saw at the temple, has closed the mountain. Only he can do it. Then all the wild cow leave. I do not like Liu and we quarreled, but we must send one to bring him here, else we waste our time.”

“It sounds like poppycock,” I told Collins, “but they’ve made up their minds and won’t hunt without Liu. We might as well give him a trial.”

A man left that night for the village. While we were having breakfast, Liu came into camp bringing a live rooster. “I will open the mountain,” he said. “The wild cows will soon return; that I promise.”

Collins and I watched him build a little shrine of bamboo sticks and grass to house a worn black stone from a leather bag. In front of the altar he placed seven incense sticks. Next came the rooster. While it flapped disconsolately, he slit the neck and dripped blood in three concentric circles about the shrine. Then, opening the breast, he placed the heart upon the altar, lighted the incense sticks, and tossed a pinch of green powder on each tiny flame. Until the incense ceased to glow, he sat in rapt contemplation before the joss.

“Now,” he said, “the mountain is open. You will see *yeh-niu* before noon.”

“Where will they be?” I asked.

Liu pointed across a canyon to the bamboo jungle on the face of a steep slope.

“There. We should be on our way.”

Of course, it didn't make sense to our Occidental minds, but the old man was deadly serious and supremely confident. “He's in for bad 'loss of face,' Will, if it doesn't prove up,” I said. “Let's go.”

At ten thousand feet, the air is thin, but Liu plowed through the rhododendron jungle like a hound on scent. Hearts pounding, sinking into holes, bruising our legs on hidden rocks, twisting and turning among the maze of rope-like branches, we were just able to keep the old man in sight. At last, Collins and I dropped exhausted on the sun-warmed stones of a granite buttress. Liu pointed to a bamboo-clad spur across the canyon.

“The wild cows are there. Use your 'thousand-mile eyes' [field glasses]. You will see them soon.”

Sweeping the slope with the binoculars, I nearly fell off the boulder in excitement when they picked up a yellow speck with another close beside it. Then both stepped into the open—huge yellow brutes moving easily through the bamboo jungle on a slope so steep they seemed to be hanging by their horns. Collins' hands were shaking as he leveled his glass.

“The Golden Fleece,” he breathed, “just as I thought they'd look. Aren't they wonderful? Worth the trip only to see 'em. But how in hell did Liu know they were there? Damnedest thing I ever heard of.”

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“That I couldn’t guess. Maybe this is their morning feeding ground. Maybe he knew, but the others didn’t. Maybe this abracadabra did some good. Maybe a lot of things that we wouldn’t believe.”

Liu gave us a triumphant look. “I told you I would open the mountain and we would find wild cow before noon. What time is it?”

The hands on my wrist watch pointed to five minutes after twelve.

“Now we sit here and watch where they go. I think, high up to sleep.”

Collins settled against a shelf and lit his pipe. He looked very serious. “Roy, do you suppose that show Liu put on meant anything at all?”

“I don’t know; it’s pretty confusing to me. The longer I live in China, the more I believe that, basically, there’s something in it. Of course, it’s easy to scoff and laugh it off because of the trimmings, like the rooster, but I’ve seen some amazing things that couldn’t be just coincidence. The Orientals can understand life, and what it means, in a way that reaches far beyond our Western minds. They do long-range thinking about the past and how its lessons apply to the present and the future. We’re so busy with the progress of our material civilization that we haven’t time to think about anything but the obvious present. The past is as dead as yesterday’s newspaper.”

“I suppose that’s the reason why those old boys in Tibet go up to a mountain top and renounce the world—so they can do nothing but think.”

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“Exactly. They believe that by solitary contemplation they can project their minds into the Infinite. Maybe they do find out something about what we call the occult. I know just enough to believe we can’t dismiss it the way most Occidentals do. I’ve learned a lot from two old Chinese philosophers in Peking. Every month I go to drink tea with one or the other of them. We sit and talk for hours; or rather I ask questions and listen. They make me feel like a child at times.”

“But how could that have anything to do with Liu telling us exactly where we’d find these takin?”

“Probably nothing, but I don’t dismiss it as an impossibility as you do. I’ve seen too many strange things which can’t be explained. You haven’t, and you know nothing of Oriental philosophy, so you think I’m nuts.”

Collins shook his head. “I don’t think you’re exactly nuts; only that you’ve been too long in China. I’ve heard people get that way.”

Old Liu touched my arm. “See, the wild cow have climbed up as I said they would. Now we go. Better send Lao Chung back for food. We will not find them before tomorrow.”

The animals were about seven hundred yards away in an air-line. It seemed incredible that we couldn’t reach them before dark; nevertheless, I sent our man back.

Details of the stalk are unnecessary. Suffice it to say, it wasn’t easy. We had to skirt the upper end of the gorge, descend to the stream bed, and climb up an almost perpendicular slope a thousand feet, through bamboo jun-

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gle. Dwarf bamboo is bad—very bad. The stalks, not larger than one's finger, grow so thickly that one can see hardly ten feet ahead. The whip-like stems slashed us mercilessly until our hands and faces were bleeding welts. In the late afternoon it began to rain. By dark we had just reached the spot where the takin had been feeding when we saw them first. Impossible to go farther. Soaked and shivering, we huddled about a tiny fire, praying that Lao Chung would find us with food and sleeping bags. He did—bless him—but not until almost daylight; we got no sleep at all.

The sun was high next morning before we reached the summit of the peak and found the takin tracks exactly where old Liu said we would find them. They led up a steeple-like peak and back toward an amphitheater at the canyon's head, but the trail was fresh and plain. At eleven o'clock we struggled through a particularly nasty patch of jungle and sank down, utterly exhausted, on a ledge in the sunlight. Both Collins and I were somewhat shaken, for I had missed death by the barest margin only a few minutes earlier. While I was crossing a narrow ledge, my coat caught on a spur and jerked me over the cliff. With one foot I touched a projecting shelf, frantically grasped three bamboo stalks, and held on. Had they not been tough as rawhide, I would have plunged head-first to the jagged rocks three hundred feet below.

While we were resting, Yong climbed out upon a granite pinnacle for a look about. He slithered back,

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tense with excitement. The wild cows were there—we could shoot from where we were. When we peeped over the edge of the rock, I saw nothing but the bamboo jungle shimmering in the sunlight; then the stalks parted and a takin emerged to stand quietly, gazing directly at us. It was small, I could see that, but Liu and Yong urged me to shoot, for no others were in sight. Collins and I had drawn for the first shot and luck fell to me. I was trembling violently, but the moment my cheek nestled against the rifle stock my nerves steadied like threads of steel. This was it; what I had been dreaming of for years and months! I couldn't muff it now. Thoughts raced through my mind as the front ivory bead centered in the peep sight on that yellow body. Shooting almost straight down, the bullet will go high—hold on the belly line—maybe not enough—better two inches below it. I squeezed the trigger. Pandemonium broke loose as the beast plunged forward. I have no clear remembrance of what happened, for the jungle seemed full of charging yellow forms, and the wretched Yong, to whom I had entrusted my second rifle, opened a mad fusillade almost in my ear. At the first shot, six sleeping takin leaped to their feet, but only now and then could we glimpse a flash of gold as one crossed an open space. Collins worked his rifle coolly, but it was snap shooting and he failed to register.

In less than sixty seconds, the thunder of our shots lost themselves in dull mutterings in the far canyons, and heavy silence settled over the amphitheater. "May be

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more there," Liu said. "Sometimes they lie quiet; never move for long time." Collins had the choice. He elected to watch from above while I went down with Liu. My first takin, a yearling calf, lay with a broken back. Not fifty feet away the mother leaped out, and I snapped uselessly as she vanished in the jungle. A moment later another cow dashed down the slope but stopped beside a tree just long enough for a bullet to find her heart. Two takin; that was the bag. We had traveled a thousand miles for one minute of shooting! Had it not been for Yong we might have completed our Museum group in that short time.

I looked down at the magnificent creature lying in the sunlight like a great lump of shining gold. Horns resembling a musk ox; a huge Roman nose; body big as a cow. The Golden Fleece! The animal I had been dreaming of for months! I was the fourth white man to shoot one—and the accomplishment left me cold. I sat down on a bed of moss and lit my pipe, waiting for Collins. He came slowly off the rock-spur and along the side of the canyon through the bamboo. Without a word he flopped beside me and reached for his pipe.

At last he said in a flat voice, "Extraordinary beast—really quite extraordinary. It's a long way to camp."

I settled deeper into the moss.

"Damn it all, Will, why don't we get a thrill? We ought to be dancing and pounding each other on the back. God help me, I don't want to dance, and if you touch me I'll fall apart."

Collins groaned. "Don't worry, I won't. We're just too tired, that's all. Guess our brains are numb. Maybe tomorrow we'll get the thrill. I can't feel it now."

From where the takin lay we looked across the canyon less than a mile to the meadow where our tent showed as a green dot in the brown grass, but with the load of skins, skeletons, and sleeping bags it was two days of grueling climbing down and up, down and up, before we reached the camp. Will and I slept all that night and until almost twelve o'clock next day. Our only job for the afternoon was to select a site for the Museum group, make photographs, and collect specimens of rocks, grass, and leaves for the accessories. It was a labor of love. Then, both of us got the delayed thrill of having found the Golden Fleece.

A bull wild cow for the group was a "must," of course, even though it is difficult to tell the male and female apart, for both have horns; moreover, I was keen to have Collins get a takin. On the second day we made our base camp in a cave halfway down the mountain, and with three light loads set off for the snow-clad peaks where Liu said there would certainly be wild cow. It began to rain in the afternoon, a steady sullen downpour, and we camped early under an overhanging rock. Liu built his little shrine with the incense sticks and a bit of takin meat as the altar offering. Even the doubting Collins waited eagerly while I questioned the old man.

"Yes, we will find wild cow in the morning, deep in the bamboo jungle to the west."

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“Will we kill one, or more?”

“Ah, that I cannot say, Honorable Master. All that comes into my mind is where and when we will meet wild cow.”

“Liu, you say it ‘comes into your mind’! What do you mean by that? How do you know these things?”

“It is beyond my comprehension, Honorable Master. Ever since I was a child it has been given to me to look somewhat into the future. My father sent me to a temple priest in Sian-fu. A wise man he was; a very wise man. He taught me many things that he had learned from the lamas of Tibet. After two years he said, ‘Go back to your village. Use your gift, but use it only for good.’ I have tried to do so, but few will follow what I say, for my family is very poor and we are not people of importance. They discover too late that I am right.”

“Why do you build the little shrine and place meat upon the altar and burn sticks and throw green powder on the flames?”

“Because that is what I was taught to do by the priest in the temple at Sian-fu. It is, he said, an offering to the gods that they may draw near and clear my mind. When I look into the little flames and think hard only of what I wish to know, I see pictures—clear pictures. But it is not always so; sometimes my mind is clouded like the mists that veil that mountain peak. Then I can see no farther than you, or any other man.”

I translated to Collins what Liu had said. He grinned

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and shrugged. "Maybe I'll believe it if we find takin tomorrow where he says."

We did find wild cow exactly where Liu had predicted, in thick bamboo jungle. They were within twenty feet of us, three large bulls, but as invisible as though behind an opaque screen. So it went day after day. Snow on the high ridges had driven the takin down into the bamboo forest on the lower slopes where it was like hunting for an ever moving needle, endowed with super senses, in a haystack. Only once did Liu fail in his prediction of where wild cow would be. That time he shook his head. "The image was not clear last night. I guessed, but it was only a guess."

The hunt went on for a week. At night we crept under ledges and overhanging rocks, wet and shivering. It rained every day and all day. Sometimes we were so exhausted we could hardly cook our food; warmth and rest was all we wanted. On the seventh night, in the far corner of the cave, Liu sat long before his little shrine. The incense sticks had burned down to tiny points of light before he came to me with a worried face.

"Honorable Master, I cannot understand what I saw tonight. There were no wild cow; that picture would not come. Instead I saw my village and many men—not our people—they were in our house and every other house. It means trouble, I know—bad trouble. I want to go home tomorrow; I must go. My father is a very old man and I am the eldest son. I am sorry to leave you, but in the morning I must go down the mountain."

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"I don't know what it means, if anything," I said to Collins, "but I do know we'll be helpless without Liu. I can leave Lao Jung and Kang to kill a bull takin. If it's all right with you, let's call it quits. Personally, I've had enough anyway."

Collins drew a long breath of relief. "Quite," he answered.

"Will, Liu has found takin for us almost every day just where he said they would be. Are you still as skeptical as ever about his 'occult' power?"

Collins thought a moment.

"Yes, I am. I don't see that what he has done is very extraordinary. Probably Liu has been observing takin all his life and knows their habits better than anyone else. Like most animals, they must have favorite feeding grounds, and he can be pretty sure they'll be at a certain place at a given time. I've had a few native hunters in other parts of the world who could do about as well. When he sits in front of his little shrine he concentrates on where they were today and where they'll probably be tomorrow. He's had a high average, I'll admit, but there isn't anything occult about it."

"Of course, what you say makes sense, Will. But this picture he's just described is a different thing. It has nothing to do with takin."

"Well, we don't know that he'll be right. If he is, I'll begin to wonder."

From the bamboo jungle to the edge of the sun-splashed rice fields was only a three-hour walk. Liu, far

ahead, waited on a hillock. He pointed up the valley to the rocky gateway.

"Look there. The picture I saw last night when I sat before the joss was true."

Like a muddy flood, gray-clad figures were pouring down the slope, over the rice fields, and into the village. Ragged, hard-bitten men with rifles on their shoulders, pistols swinging in wooden holsters, breasts crossed by bandoliers of cartridges. By the time we reached the poplar grove the wave had engulfed the temple. Two men lay stretched on our camp cots demanding food; others sprawled on the floor cooking "pills" of opium over tiny lamps. The Number One boy was green with fright.

"The bandit, Ching Kung-pah," he whispered. "The governor's soldiers have chased them into this valley. We'll all be killed."

"Give them anything they want. Don't argue. Tell them we are missionaries on vacation if they ask who we are."

"What do you make of it?" Collins asked.

"Looks as though we're really for it. These babies are a nasty lot. If they don't get mad at some small thing and bump us off, we're certain to be held for ransom. They've got a heaven-sent opportunity to bargain with the governor. We'll be the stake."

"Quite," Will answered. I blew up.

"For Christ's sake, can't you say something else than 'quite.' I'm sick of the word. Evidently you don't real-

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ize, my friend, that we're in one hell of a mess. There's about one chance in ten that we'll get out alive." ↙

Collins put his hand on my shoulder. "Sorry, old boy, guess I'm too damned British. Really, I'm scared as hell. Wish I knew as much about Chinese as you do; maybe I could be of some help. You're the boss. I'm sure whatever you do will be right."

I was ashamed of my temper. "Just nerves, Will. I can think of only one thing: find Ching Kung-pah and try to bluff it out. It'll depend on what kind of chap he is. Maybe we'll get a break somehow, but I've seen a lot of bandits in China and these are the worst yet."

One of the half-sodden opium smokers muttered that Ching was in the village headman's house. I knew where it was. Collins and I started up the street.

A sentry at the door challenged us roughly. I presented my Chinese visiting card. There is something about a visiting card that works miracles in China. I've never fathomed the psychology behind it, but I've seen it operate time after time. The soldier thawed visibly, held it at arm's length above his head in the formal manner, and marched into the house. A moment later he reappeared, motioning us to enter. I glanced behind and saw his Mauser pistol six inches from Will's back.

The bandit chief sat on the bed platform, two cocked pistols within reach of either hand. He was a small man, dressed no better than the others, with a sour mouth, down-turned at the corners. Only a slight nod acknowledged my greeting. I explained that we were American

missionaries on vacation, hunting wild cows; that we came from Peking. He listened with no comment, but at the end growled an order and a sentry brought tea; at least, that was something. Then I had an inspiration.

"I see your hand is bandaged. I am a doctor of medicine [which I am not]. My duty, and the reason I came to China, is to care for the injured and the sick. Perhaps I can help you."

At that Ching brightened. "You are a missionary doctor? We need a doctor badly. Many of my men are wounded. A bullet hit my hand two days ago and since then I have slept but little. It is very painful."

"If you will come with us to the temple at the end of the village where I have my medicines, I will be happy to dress your hand."

Ching rose. "I will come," he said.

Collins and I walked ahead; the chief, two paces behind. His bodyguard still held the cocked pistol at the ready, his finger on the trigger.

"Hope the bastard doesn't stumble," Will growled.

"That's a hell of a way for a missionary to talk, Reverend Collins. I told Ching you were newly come from America and that's the reason you can't speak Chinese. Be true to your cloth."

"So I've become a missionary and an American, too, have I? Then I suppose I'll have to give up saying 'quite.' What was the idea in telling him we were missionaries?"

"Because the Chinese know missionaries seldom have

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much money and they aren't of political importance. They live in the outlying districts and are always exposed to bandit raids. They stay, mostly, on their own responsibility. Half the time, when the Legations order them out because of danger, they won't leave. But a British army officer would be a top-bracket political hostage and put the governor in a nice mess; he'd have to get you back. Ching could ask for almost anything he wanted and get it, too."

When the chief appeared at the temple not one of the soldiers moved. "That's bad; no discipline here," Will said. I got my medicine case, ordered the cook to heat water, and made a great to-do about laying out the shining forceps, scalpel, and scissors on a towel. Then I pulled on a pair of rubber gloves. The soldiers pressed in a garlic-stinking mass so closely that Collins and I were nearly suffocated.

The wound on Ching's hand certainly was painful but not serious. A bullet had creased the palm and clipped off the thumb's first joint. I washed it with potassium permanganate, trimmed the stump, smeared the wound with boric ointment, and wrapped it with a clean white bandage. The audience was visibly impressed. To complete the cure, I dissolved a five-grain tablet of quinine in a little water colored with a drop of Brown Mixture, and told Ching to drink it down. He made a wry face but licked the last drop. Long ago I had learned that no Chinese believes a treatment efficacious unless it involves internal medicine, and the more bitter the draught the

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surer the cure. (That goes for other nationalities, too, I may say, including our own.)

As I treated the bandit's hand, I watched his face. Moment by moment, the hard lines relaxed and his eyes softened, reflecting an almost dog-like faith. He's just an animal, I thought; he knows now I really want to help him. He was a different man when he left the table. I said to Collins, "Perhaps we've got something. This just might be the answer." Will started to say "quite," caught the word between his teeth, and stuttered, "Right you are. Keep on going."

The next patient almost threw me for a loss. He was a fairly decent-looking individual with a bandaged head. Ching pushed him forward. "He is my most trusted captain, but three days ago he was shot in the head. I will be grateful if you can help him."

I untied the filthy rag and got a shock. A three-inch groove through the skull left the brain exposed. What in hell could I do with that? My sketchy training didn't include trepanning, but I had to do something, else we were sunk. I told Collins to get my safety razor and shaved off the hair about the wound. None of the bandits had ever seen a safety razor and they gaped like half-wits. That strip of brain stared up at me like a long, gray, accusing eye; at least, I thought, I can protect it. From a Standard Oil tin, used by the temple priest as a water bucket, I cut a strip wider than the bullet track, polished it clean, and dropped it in the bowl of permanganate. Then I coated it on both sides with adhesive tape, fitted

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it over the wound and stuck it down. It made a neat cover. I must admit I was rather pleased, and when the captain looked at himself in the mirror he grinned like a gargoyle. A drink of quinine water made his happiness complete. Ching gave the man a careful inspection and said, "Good."

Patient Number Three had a bad right leg—a very bad leg. Half his calf was shot away. I could smell the sickening stench of gangrene before he unwrapped the cloth and almost up-chucked when I saw it. The wound was a mass of crawling maggots. Still, I thought, they probably saved his life feeding on the infected tissue. His leg went into a pail of permanganate where I dug out the maggots. He never peeped when I ruthlessly cut away the gangrene down to good red meat, leaving a flap of skin on both sides. I sewed them together with the baseball stitch, dusted it with iodoform, left a drain, and bandaged his leg from knee to ankle. My patient beamed, and Ching said, "Good," again.

These are merely samples of the wounds that confronted me those next hours.

"God help us, and them," I said to Collins, "if I'm not doing right. I'm no surgeon. I had two years of comparative anatomy at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York, and watched a few operations, but that was all."

"Looks wonderful to me," Will replied. "Anyway, whatever you do is better than what they have. They believe you are a great doctor and that's half the cure."

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"Yes, but I'm going to sidestep anyone that looks as though he might die. If one or two shuffled off, they'd say it was my fault; that I know. All the others that didn't die would be forgotten."

"Did you see how Ching softened up when you dressed his hand and that chap with the open brain?"

"I'll say I did. This doctor business gives me a little hope. All Chinese reverence doctors. Maybe he'll let us out, after all."

By midnight I was exhausted, but dozens of patients pressed in to be treated.

"You'll have to wait till sunrise tomorrow," I told them. "My medicines are gone. I must make more to-night."

They didn't like it but we put it over.

Both Will and I slept like logs for five hours.

The temple seethed with a mass of suffering humanity at daylight. We began work just as the sun peeped over the Tai Pai Shan where I hoped Lao Jung and Kang were on the trail of a bull takin. Liu had sent a man up the mountain to tell them not to come into the valley until the bandits left.

By five o'clock in the afternoon I had treated seventy-six wounds. "Treated" is a strange word for what I did. Mostly, it was cleaning out infection, getting rid of cow-dung pads and washing with permanganate. Still, it probably saved a good many lives.

When the last patient left the temple, I said to Col-

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lins, "Now we come to the payoff, if there is a payoff. Let's go to see Ching Kung-pah and get the score."

The sentry even smiled when he ushered us into the room where the chief sat on the bed platform. The pistols lay beside him, but uncocked. Ching rose as we entered.

"I have done all I can for your men," I said. "To help the sick is my mission in China. It has been a great opportunity, but now I can do no more. I hope you will find it in your heart to let us depart in peace."

Ching gazed at me for a long moment.

"For months I have been fighting the governor, Feng Yu-hsiang, who came a year ago. He is a cruel, scheming man who speaks with two tongues; no one can trust his word. I was a merchant in Sian-fu. The taxes Feng levied were beyond endurance. He ruined my business and many others', too, so we revolted. We thought to form a people's army to drive him out, but look at what we have! Except for a few, only the scum of Shensi joined us for what they could gain in loot. The others refused to fight. The cause is hopeless. Soon I shall leave and vanish in the hills with those who wish to follow. You have done good to me and I shall not hold you.

"I have little control over these men. They rape and pillage and torture and I can do nothing. They will not be pleased that you have gone, but I shall tell them you escaped into the mountains whence you came. Tonight

I will come to the temple. Before daylight, we will leave with my personal guard and see you safely beyond the valley gate."

I thanked Ching Kung-pah and we walked out of the court. When I told Collins what the chief had said, he shook his head. "Do you believe it? He doesn't look like a very noble chap to me."

"I don't think he is noble, only practical. Obviously, he's fairly well educated and much superior to this crowd of cutthroats. I'm not surprised that he's fed up and wants to clear out. He could get little by bargaining with the governor for a couple of missionaries, otherwise he'd have kidnapped several before this in the towns he has raided, but if he knew you were a British officer you can be dead sure he'd never let us go. As it is, he can put on the noble act and lose nothing; perhaps even gain eventually, for the missionaries think they have some influence with Feng Yu-hsiang. They call him the 'Christian General' because he baptizes his troops by regiments and shoots the ones who don't like it. He has made a lot of converts! There would be no point in Ching saying he'd take us out if he didn't intend to keep his word. We're completely in his power, you know."

Collins smiled ruefully. "Well, if he's a bloody double-crosser we'll find it out in the next few hours."

Silently, we walked on to the temple resting so peacefully among the white poplars beside the stream. For the first time the place was deserted except for our two

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servants. In my medicine case was a small bottle of brandy.

"I've kept it for emergencies, Will, but if ever we needed a drink it's now."

Collins gulped the brandy. "If Ching doesn't keep his word we'll be dead tomorrow. It isn't pleasant to think about."

"No, we won't be dead. We'll give Ching until an hour after dark. If he isn't here then, we'll take to the mountains. The four of us can carry food and sleeping bags and we'll camp in the cave we left yesterday. We'll hide the takin skins and skeletons before we leave."

"Suppose the bandits try to stop us?"

"We'll shoot our way out. Only six or eight slept here last night and if they ask for it, we'll bump 'em off. We'll be killed anyway, if we stay, you can bet on that. There isn't any choice. I hope you agree."

"You're right. There isn't any choice."

It was only half-dark when Ching arrived with a dozen men. No bandits had returned to the temple. Shrieks, drifting faintly down the valley on the breeze, told where they were and what hellish work they did. Three sentries were posted at the gate while the others lounged in the outer court. Ching's face was like a block of stone.

"You saw what goes on up the street?" he asked.

"Yes, we saw."

"I can do nothing; I ask you to believe that. Were I to

interfere they would kill me, too. Now you understand why you must leave tonight.

“Four mules will come to the trees below the temple within the hour. They are poor beasts and very small but none others could be had. Now they are on the way through the rice fields with two of my men. Pack your things, for we must leave as soon as they arrive.”

The skins of the Golden Fleece, with the skeletons and group accessories, made a full load; our four sleeping bags and camp gear another, without the folding cots. The two servants must share one mule; Collins and I, the other.

Ching was very nervous. “It is fortunate that this temple is at the far end of the village beyond the houses. The men are filled with wine and opium and I doubt if any come here, for they have affairs elsewhere at the moment. If they do, there will certainly be trouble. It is not my plan to leave them yet, but if the gods direct that we must fight, I will go with you beyond the valley gate and take to the mountains. That I decided after you left me this afternoon.”

Hardly were the loads tied when a man appeared at the temple. I recognized him as the one to whose skull I had fitted the tin trap door. He grinned amiably and said, “The mules are here. They wait in the trees beside the stream.”

Fifteen minutes later, with all the men, we struck across the rice fields to the base of the mountain foothills and turned up the valley. The village showed as a

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dark blot against the sky except where fires glowed in tiny points of light.

"You know what those mean?" I said to Collins.

"Yes, I know."

In less than two hours we reached the valley gate. Ching halted our caravan a hundred yards from the great rocks and went forward alone. We heard talk, and a dozen men appeared like phantoms out of the dark, leading the way through the narrow defile.

At the summit of the pass, Ching said, "We leave you now. Three *li* beyond this point are the governor's soldiers."

I reached for the bandit's hand. He offered it awkwardly, for it is not Chinese custom.

"Ching Kung-pah, I have nothing to give you except thanks and my 'thousand-mile eyes.' I hope they will help you to find your way to a happier life."

For the first time the man smiled. "An Shen Shung, your thanks are enough, but your thousand-mile eyes will be very useful. Perhaps you will tell the people at your mission that Ching Kung-pah is not all bad. Some day I may ask their help. Good-by."

Collins and I picked our way down the rocky slope to the vast plain where frogs were croaking in the rice fields.

"Will," I said, "that's that. We've got the Golden Fleece and we haven't lost our heads—yet."

Collins grinned. "Quite," he answered.

AFTERMATH

A short time after Collins and I left, Ching Kung-pah with nineteen men deserted his "army" and took to the mountains. Eventually he got in touch with a mission station and reminded them that he had helped us escape. Then he learned that we were not missionaries, but, nevertheless, he asked their good offices as intermediaries with Feng Yu-hsiang. The "Christian General" promised pardons if they would come to a temple near Sian-fu and give up their arms. Ching and his men reluctantly agreed. They passed one by one into the main temple and deposited their weapons; then into a rear court where they were told their pardons awaited them. As each man stepped through the door he was seized and his head lopped off.

Feng Yu-hsiang reported to the missionaries that Ching Kung-pah and his men had attacked him and he regretted deeply that all had to be killed. The true story was reported by the temple priests. I have often wondered if Liu could have told Ching Kung-pah what was in store for him.

Terror in the Sea

I think fear is largely a product of imagination and nerves. It certainly is with me. I've been scared a great many times during a somewhat adventurous life, but usually when the action ended and my imagination began to function. While things were happening, my mind was so occupied with getting out of the mess that I had no time to be frightened; afterward I'd go into a swivet. But once it didn't work that way. I was utterly terrified during the time the show was going on and at the end furiously angry.

It happened during a whale hunt off the village of Aikawa, northern Japan. One doesn't associate danger with modern methods of whaling, for the animals are shot with a bomb harpoon from the deck of a small ship, and usually the job is quickly ended. Exciting, yes, but hardly dangerous; nothing like the "Nantucket sleigh rides" when the deep-sea sailors slid up to a whale in a twenty-five-foot boat, got fast with a small harpoon, and fought it out on even terms with a hand lance. But now and then the operation doesn't go according

to schedule, and strange things happen. Accidents occur only once in a hundred times, but when they do, it's no laughing matter. I was in one of those accidents.

Aikawa was a little fishing village where life drifted on quietly, far from the storm and strife of the great cities to the south. In a corner of the bay, the Oriental Whaling Company had a shore station, and sometimes as many as fourteen "chasers" kept it supplied with meat for the Tokyo and Yokohama markets. I spent a summer at Aikawa studying and collecting whales for the American Museum of Natural History. Those were, I suppose, among the most interesting and productive months of my life. I was young, bursting with enthusiasm and *joie de vivre*, and every day brought new excitement and new thrills in human, as well as natural, history. The company had given me *carte blanche* to do and see what I wanted, but personalities were involved and I had to sell myself to the Norwegian gunners who operated the chasers, if results were to be achieved. In those days the Japs were just beginning shore whaling, and they had engaged the best foreign gunners to teach them the business. They hoped their own people would learn, and become as good as the Norwegians. They never were.

Because of coastal restrictions, the ships carried a Jap captain and crew, but the gunner's word was law; what he said went, both at sea and ashore. All the gunners, except one, were from the little town of Tönsberg, Norway, which in shore-whaling history, corresponds to

our own New Bedford. For some reason a Swedish gunner, Johnson by name, had appeared in the picture. The Norwegians didn't like him much. In the first place he was a Swede; in the second, he did not hail from Tönsberg; and on the third count he wasn't a "mixer," if you know what I mean. Naturally a taciturn chap, he kept very much to himself, and doubtless this personal characteristic was enhanced by the fact that he did not belong in their close corporation.

In spite of the fact that Johnson wasn't a "regular fellow," they all had to admit he was a darned good whaleman. Except for Captain Lars Larson, I've never seen a better shot. Moreover, he had a sixth sense of where to find whales and how to get his ship in the right position for a sure kill. He brought in more whales every week than anyone else, partly because he didn't play the game with the other gunners. Rivalry existed among them, of course, but it was good-natured and sportsmanlike. They exchanged information as to the best hunting grounds, and gave mutual help; if one of their number was low on his quota, they would even let him kill a whale they had found. There was an unwritten law that the ships went out together, and if the weather was bad enough to make hunting difficult and uncertain, all remained in port. But not Johnson. He subscribed to no rules, unwritten or otherwise, and told "nothin' to nobody." Often he'd leave in the middle of the night to be first on the "whale pastures," and, in foul weather, bucked the seas while the other ships stayed at

anchor. He was obsessed by a desire to keep up his record; get whales by fair means or foul was his creed. As you can imagine, that burned up the Norwegian gunners. He drove his crew unmercifully, too, and the Japs hated him. "No heart," they said. "He think only of whales; never of us. He crazy."

Johnson and I got along well enough, for I didn't see him often, but he had never invited me to go out on his ship. With the other gunners, I didn't think of waiting for an invitation. I simply asked, "How about a cruise with you tomorrow?" I knew I'd be welcome. Perhaps Johnson resented it; I don't know. Anyway, at a dinner given me by the gunners on my initiation as a regular whaleman, after I'd killed a big sulphur bottom, he said; "You haven't been out on my ship. Wouldn't you like to go tomorrow? I think I can put you on a lot of whales and you'll get some good photographs." This, with a malicious grin at Larson, the top gunner, who had done badly during the week. I was surprised and stalled a bit, but Erik Anderson whispered, "Better go." "Sure," I said. "I'd love it."

We went aboard Johnson's ship about ten o'clock. He had drunk enough *saki* to make him reasonably human, and I was at peace with all the world. At last I had reached the coveted position of a gunner, and was ready to think the best of everything and everybody. After a night cap, which neither of us wanted, we turned in.

At six o'clock the next morning, the alternate stopping and starting of the engines brought me out of a

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whaling dream with a sense of unreality; it was exactly as though the dream had continued into waking moments. I knew we were on a whale, and dressed hurriedly. The porthole showed a wet, gray sky, so I got into rubber boots and oilskins and drank a cup of tea.

Topsides, there was every indication of stinking weather; drizzling rain and a leaden sea without wind, but a heavy swell. Johnson stood at the gun, and from the bridge I saw a high, thin spout shoot into the air a hundred fathoms off the port bow. A finback—one of those long, slender whales, built like a racing yacht and of incredible speed and strength. Unpredictable, too; always doing the unexpected.

The gunner waved his hand. "A bad whale. We've been almost on him twice, but he's wild. Won't give me a shot."

No use to try for photographs in that weather, so I made myself comfortable in a corner seat of the bridge, and got what data I could on duration of dives, number of spouts, and so forth. I must admit I was filled with admiration at the way Johnson handled his ship. He had an uncanny knowledge of where the whale would go, and twice to my surprise swung dead about and turned back on our course. Sure enough, the finback had doubled underwater. The beast seemed to be playing with us. He wasn't feeding; neither was he traveling. For no obvious reason he hung about, showing momentarily just out of range, but never going down for a deep sounding dive. He was a big whale—more than seventy

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feet long—but he twisted his lithe body as gracefully as a serpent.

The game of tag went on for an hour. At last the whale headed directly away from the ship. I thought he was on a straight course but Johnson yelled, "Hard starboard. Hard starboard." The ship keeled sharply, and the captain swung the gun about so far that he was almost standing on the rope-pan. The water began to smooth out in an oily slick not six fathoms away. From the bridge, I could see the shadowy form rushing upward, and looked down right into the blowholes as they opened for the spout. Tense as a coiled spring, Johnson bent over the gun waiting for the head to submerge and the body roll up before he fired. At the crash of the explosion, I saw the harpoon strike high in the back between the shoulders, embedding half its length.

Stillness settled over the ship as the giant figure quivered, straightened out, and lay motionless. "*Shinda*" (Dead), yelled the Japs, but the whale was far from *shinda*. Suddenly it righted itself, and with a mighty smash of the flukes dashed away like a hooked salmon. Above the shrieking of the winch, the engineer yelled for water to wet the smoking brake. One hundred, two hundred, three hundred fathoms of line ran out before the rush ended and the ship lay quietly rolling in the swell. The whale had sounded and the rope hung rigid as a bar of steel.

We waited fifteen minutes with no sign from below. Johnson stamped on the rope, hoping to stir the beast.

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"I don't want him to die down there, for I'm afraid of this line. The starboard rope is all right but this one has weak spots. We may break it in heaving him up. He's down a long way and the strain will be awful."

After twenty minutes the line began to rise slowly, little trickles of water running off its vibrating surface. I went forward to the gun platform, waiting for the whale to spout. It came at last, but so far away I thought it was a different animal. The engines had been stopped but now the hundred-ton vessel began to move, slowly at first, then faster, until we were tearing through the water at fifteen knots.

"I got him in a bad place," Johnson said, "right between the shoulders, and the bomb didn't explode. He can pull like hell."

And how he did pull! For half an hour the ship danced over the waves; then the whale sounded. After ten minutes he came up with such speed that his entire seventy feet of body shot into the air. Talk about a leaping tarpon! You should have seen that whale! Johnson didn't dare check the next rush, and ordered another line spliced on when the men below called up that the rope was almost gone.

"How much is out already?" I asked.

"About three-quarters of a mile."

"How much have you got?"

"Don't know exactly; three miles, I think. He may use it all, too. I never saw such a strong whale."

Finally the animal slowed enough for the winch to

hold. The gunner called for half speed astern. Still the ship was dragged forward at eight or ten knots. Then followed a series of short dives, followed by frantic plunges from side to side. Each time the beast sounded, the winch ground in a few fathoms of the coveted line, sometimes losing it, and more, on the next mad charge.

At eleven o'clock the whale began to weaken. With the glasses I could see that the water about his back was tinged with red. The hundred-pound iron was making an ugly wound and letting gallons of blood flow from his great veins. Slowly the ship crept up. At last, only the harpoon leader was out. Johnson stood ready at the gun. The wind had died, but a big swell was running and the tiny vessel rolled and tossed like a thing possessed.

The line slacked away as the ship dropped into the hollow of a swell, then tightened suddenly and, when she rose on the crest, parted with a crack like a rifle shot. Johnson yelled for full speed ahead and fired as the whale disappeared. It was a long chance, but he made it. We saw the harpoon shoot over the water in a wide semi-circle and drop on the whale's back. Came a sudden jerk, a muffled explosion, and the line slacked again, leaving a crimson patch staining the surface. The ship plunged through it, amid bits of torn and mangled flesh; the bomb had blown out the spent harpoon and the whale was free.

We lay to, with the engine stopped, to see what would happen next. The only sound was the retching and

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groaning of a pump when the ship rose on a swell. At last the captain said quietly, "There he is, far away on the beam." Instantly the "ting-ting" of the bell in the engine started the vessel at full speed. All the rest of the afternoon the little ship hung to the whale's track, sometimes almost close enough for a shot, and again losing sight of the spout in the rain and mist. It was disagreeable enough for me on the bridge, where I could be partly protected from the cold drizzle by a canvas screen, but Johnson never left the gun. I admired his persistence. At three o'clock he drank a cup of tea and crammed a few crackers into his pocket. An hour later the whale spouted thirty fathoms away, and in desperation the gunner tried another long shot. This time the harpoon held.

In spite of two grievous wounds the animal dashed off as though it never had been hit. But it was a short run. Its great strength was spent and soon it lay at the surface, blowing frequently. We could see the shaft of the harpoon hanging over the back; only two barbs were embedded in the fibrous blubber.

"I don't dare go up for a shot," Johnson said. "If he makes another dash we'll lose him. Mate, lower the pram and lance him where he lies."

I had always wanted to be in at the kill with a hand lance. "Will you let me pull an oar?" I asked.

"Sure, if you want to. You're better than a Jap," he said with a grin.

The pram is a small Norwegian skiff that carries three

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or four men. Wide astern and narrow forward, it can swing about on its tail like a top—a handy little boat, but tricky. The Jap mate scrambled over the side carrying a long slender lance and took his place in the stern; a sailor was next to him, and I pulled the bow oar. The whale lay at the surface a quarter of a mile away, blowing every minute or two. About it, the water showed a red stain but the spout was clean; no bits of iron had reached the lungs. As we rowed out, dozens of black fins cut the water, with now and then the flash of a white belly. Sharks, attracted by the blood; big fellows, fifteen feet long. I loathe sharks. An unreasoning aversion, I suppose, but they terrify me. I touched one with the oar and it rolled over showing its grinning, semicircular mouth and a row of wicked teeth. It made me shudder.

We slipped up on the whale from astern. It lay high in the water, fifty feet of the body above the surface. A beautiful thing, slender as a seal, dark above, shading into Isabelline gray on the sides; body lines to make a yachtman envious! I could have stretched out my hand and touched the smooth skin. I'd never before been so close to a live whale. It looked awfully big—four or five times as long as our little pram. The water lapped quietly along its sides, and ran in tiny streams off its back like wavelets on a sand beach. The first harpoon was half embedded between the shoulders, with the rope trailing off astern. An ugly wound, the size of a washtub, in its side showed the work of the second bomb. The spout carried almost no vapor, but the whistling wheeze, as

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the blowholes opened and closed, sounded like a human laboring for breath on a death bed. That's what it was, too—the whale's death bed—and I was one of its executioners!

Suddenly I did not want the animal to die. It had been impersonal before; a wild thing to be chased and caught. Now it was a living entity. It was such a magnificent beast, had survived so many storms and fought so gallantly for life, that I would have liked to see it swim away unhurt. The other men didn't feel that way, of course; to them it meant tons of meat and oil and fertilizer and money in their pockets. The mate signaled to swing about and back in. We sat with oars raised, ready to pull away as the lance went down. The little Jap stood up, set his feet firmly in the cleats, and drove the long, thin blade deep into the animal's lungs. I gave a great heave, heard a sickening crack, and my oar broke short off. The pram pivoted against the whale's side. The body lifted like a gray mountain, and I saw the flukes twenty feet across, weighing more than a ton, waving just above my head. They seemed to hang suspended for endless seconds and then, as in slow motion, to be coming down right on me. The tip missed my shoulder by a scant foot but caught the gunwale of the pram, splintering the side.

I was in the water, oilskins and boots pulling me down. My head struck wood as I came up, and instinctively I grabbed what remained of the boat. The mate was swimming like a porpoise toward the wrecked pram. The Jap

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sailor seemed to be stunned and lay face up beside the wreckage. In a moment he turned over and one hand groped blindly for a plank. I suppose it was a matter of seconds, but it seemed hours, when all of us were hanging to the half-submerged craft. The whale lay on its side, great clots of blood welling from the blowholes. It wasn't more than twenty yards away.

When my confused mind began to function, I saw a swarm of writhing, blue-black bodies set upon the dying whale like a horde of vampires. Biting, tearing jaws gouged out chunks of flesh and blubber in a maelstrom of crimson froth. Others came, scores of sharks, following the blood trail. A blunt head bumped my foot and turned on its side, jaws open. I kicked, and it backed off. Another slid close under my arm. I slugged it in the nose with my fist. Utterly terrified, I had just sense enough to yell at the mate to wrench off a piece of the splintered boat and use it as a club. Each time a shark came too close, we jabbed it in the teeth or slammed its head. One caught the toe of my rubber boot and hung on. I kicked frantically, and the boot came off in its jaws. Crazy with the smell and taste of blood, the horrible beasts were biting at anything that moved. The mate fought like a mad man, stabbing at the grinning faces, screaming in mortal fear. The Jap sailor, still partly stunned, hung inert, his body half over the boat. A shark moved in, turned, and clamped its jaws on the calf of his leg. He shrieked in agony. The mate jabbed it in the eye, and the brute backed off astern with the chunk

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of bleeding, human flesh sliding down its throat. The man slipped off the wreckage but I caught him by the hair and pulled him back across the pram.

A few moments later, the ship passed us, Johnson bending over the gun. I yelled frantically, but he only waved his hand. He maneuvered the vessel deliberately, and fired a harpoon into the whale's body. I could hardly believe my eyes; he was leaving us to the sharks while he made sure of his whale! God damn him to hell! I sobbed with anger and the mate yelled curses at the gunner, but other sharks were coming and we could only smash and stab and gore.

When the whale finally sank in a smother of bloody foam and flashing fins, a pram put out from the ship. Two sailors picked us up. The mate was crying hysterically, but I felt only cold, murderous anger. Climbing up the ladder, I went forward to Johnson still standing at the gun. He grinned happily. "We got the whale, after all," he said. "I was afraid we'd lose him."

"Yes, and you left us to the sharks while you did it. Why?"

"The iron would have pulled out when we heaved him up. I had to get fast with another harpoon before it sank."

"You saw what was happening to us?"

"Sure, there were a few sharks about, but you were doing all right. You didn't have to worry."

For a moment I just stared. Then I blew up.

"Johnson, you're a god-damned, cold-blooded, in-

human son-of-a-bitch. Take this." I swung for his jaw but he sensed what was coming and ducked. My fist grazed his cheek.

The man looked at me as though I were an angry child. "You're just mad. You'll get over it. Don't be silly."

Then he turned to stare down into the water where the dim outlines of the dead whale showed just below the surface.

What could one do with a man like that? He wasn't human! I left him and went below. The Jap sailor was moaning in his bunk, half crazed with pain. There wasn't a medicine kit on the ship; no antiseptic, nothing. I bandaged his leg with handkerchiefs, and gave him a shot of whiskey that would have felled an ox. In half an hour he was drunk and asleep.

I took my few belongings from Johnson's cabin and asked the Jap captain if I might share his quarters till we reached Aikawa; it would only be five or six hours. Johnson didn't inquire about the sailor and I never spoke to him again.

When we dropped anchor in the harbor, I got my medicine kit and gave the wounded man a shot of morphine and washed his leg with antiseptic. It was an awful mess. The whole calf was torn away and the shark's teeth had dug deep into the bone. He was taken to Sendai, but infection set in and his leg had to be amputated at the knee.

The station master telegraphed a report of the inci-

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dent to the head office in Tokyo, and Johnson was sent off by the afternoon train. The whaling company canceled his contract and shipped him back to Sweden. In subsequent years I hunted at stations all over the world, but I never met him again. Reports indicated he had gone to the ice-filled Antarctic waters. That's where he belonged.

The Ram of Ill Omen

On the wall of my log studio, in the forest at Pondwood Farm in Connecticut, hangs the mounted head of a world's record bighorn ram. It came from the mountains near Kwei-hua-cheng, on the Shansi-Mongolian border of China. Other heads are there, too—ibex, bear, sambur, and a tiger with a bullet hole in the neck. Of the many big-game animals I have shot for the American Museum of Natural History, I kept only these because each one had a history that made it mean more to me than just a trophy. But among them all, I think most often of the ram. It recalls a little cave-village dug into the Shansi hillside to which the sheep was a beast of ill omen; a Mongol hunter for whom I had great affection, and Green Jade, a pretty half-Chinese girl. They are all a part of the story.

Harry Caldwell, the straight-shooting missionary with whom I hunted the blue tiger in Fukien Province, went with me to the Shansi mountains in 1919. It was a wonderful place for game and, in addition to three magnificent wapati, Harry killed the biggest ram I had ever

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seen. It was then I met Na-mon-gin, a Mongol married to a Chinese girl. We hunted together for a month, sharing the same food, the same joys and disappointments, happy in each other's company, because we both lived for a common passion. Na-mon-gin was always stimulating. We talked for hours while lying in the sun, waiting for feeding sheep to retire for their midday nap. His simple philosophy, learned from a life in the mountains with birds and beasts, continually gave me food for thought. He was, I think, that rare phenomenon, a completely happy man.

Just as we were leaving to return to Peking, Na-mon-gin said to me: "An lao-yeh, your friend has killed the biggest sheep I have ever seen, but I know where there is the ancestor of all sheep. It lives near the Black Dragon village, three days' travel from here. But it is not a 'proper' sheep. It comes often to a peak of rock and stands there for all to see, and each time it shows itself something bad happens in the village."

"What do you mean by 'something bad'?"

"I speak only from hearsay, but one day a pig belonging to the head man died. The pig was well and ate its dinner, but the ram stood on the peak just before dark and in the morning the pig was sick. Again, a woman five months gone with child first saw the sheep and called the village people. That night her child was born, dead. Still again, the ram stood on the rock for a long time, and next day bandits robbed the village of all its food. They had a hard time that winter."

"But Na-mon-gin, would not all of these things have occurred anyway, whether the ram showed itself or not?"

"That could be true, of course, but the Elders of the village considered the matter and decided that the sheep is responsible for their misfortunes. They have lived many years and are wise about such things. I am not one to dispute their words. And," the Mongol grinned, "for you and me the result is the same. The ram is there, it is bigger than any other in these parts, and if we kill it we will make the Black Dragon people very happy. Better that you come."

"Perhaps I can. Not next year, for I must go across the ocean to America, but the year after, when the geese fly south."

Exactly two years later, I returned to Wu-shi-tu, Na-mon-gin's village, with only my camp boy, Shu. The Mongol embraced me like a brother. We drank tea and then a cup of *kaoliang* wine, and I asked about his family, as is customary. All were well. At last I said, "What of the big sheep? Does he still come to the peak above the Black Dragon village?"

"Yes, he comes, and misfortunes continue to occur. Last autumn I went to the village to see for myself if the ram is worthy of your rifle. An lao-yeh, I have seen many sheep in my day—many, many sheep—but never such a one! His horns make a full turn; thicker than my leg they are, and of such weight they must be a burden for

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him to carry. I spent four days in the mountains and I saw him three times. Now I think I know his habits.”

We sat on the *kang* (bed platform) talking long into the night of the things that made up their simple life; of crops, weather, birds, and beasts. Sheep, he said, were more plentiful than ever before, and a few wapati still lived in the wooded valleys at Wu-tai-hai. He had caught one in a snare during the summer and its horns, in the velvet, he sold for three hundred dollars at a drug shop in Kwei-hua-cheng. It was an aphrodisiac of undoubted efficacy. He killed a snake, too, not long afterward, with another partly swallowed; that, it seems, is very rare and of special value, and the druggist gave him ten silver dollars. Then he gambled with part of his new wealth. Five days' travel back in the mountains, a very sacred temple stood at the entrance to a cave that was full of bats. Their dung was a sure cure for dysentery. Na-mon-gin invested twenty dollars in powders, each one stamped with the seal of the temple priest. His friend, the druggist, paid sixty dollars for the lot. Thus he had done well for himself during the time I had been away.

“What,” I asked, “has become of the money?”

His wife smiled a very wifely smile. Na-mon-gin, she said, parts easily with money, so she had demanded half the profits of these unexpected windfalls. She had dug a hole in the compound wall, and there deposited the bag of silver dollars against the day when his snares

would yield no wapati horns and bat dung would be a drug on the market. Na-mon-gin admitted, rather sheepishly, that not even he knew the location of her personal bank. Sitting in the little mud-walled house, I was utterly content. Here, life was simple, and simplicity is the soul of happiness. I realized, with something of a shock, that I envied Na-mon-gin. Because of education, environment and ambition I had missed what he had never been without.

We were on the road next morning shortly after sunrise. While Shu sat atop the lone mule, carrying my sleeping bag and our few necessities, Na-mon-gin and I walked the hillsides shooting pheasants, chucker partridges and hares. On the third day, in the afternoon, we saw a pinnacle of rock, rising like a blunt church steeple from the foothills of distant mountains.

“That,” said Na-mon-gin, “is the peak above the Black Dragon village where the Great One stands. In an hour we will arrive.”

Off the main road, a small trail led upward into the mouth of a narrow canyon. For perhaps two miles we followed it among rocks and jagged outcrops and unexpectedly came upon the village. Actually, there were no houses as one thinks of houses; only clean-swept courtyards walled by sunbaked bricks. Each family had dug itself a cave in the brown North China löess that cuts like cheese.

We halted at the base of the low plateau while Na-

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mon-gin went forward alone. A few moments later he returned with the head man of the village, Bato, by name. "*Sain bina*," I gave the Mongol greeting, but he answered in Chinese. The people, I discovered later, were about half and half; two races mingling on the frontier in a curious mixture of Mongol and Chinese. Bato asked that we wait in the court while they prepared a suitable house. A girl brought tea, and Shu and I sat on the earth-wall smoking cigarettes and talking with the village people. They all spoke Chinese. Great activity centered about one door and in half an hour Na-mon-gin escorted us to our "hotel."

As a boy, I had always wished to live in a cave and this was a cave *de luxe*: a large central dome with a wide *kang* at one end, flanked by two smaller caves. Shu took charge and soon our establishment was complete. Then came the village Elders, grave old men with wisp-like beards, to pay their respects. Na-mon-gin's publicity was most effective. The story of the sheep of ill omen that plagues their village, he told them, had become known even in America and I, a mighty hunter, had come all the way across the ocean to rid them of this evil beast. Figuratively, they spread the red carpet and I was treated like visiting royalty.

Bato arrived shortly after the Elders took their departure, escorting a pretty eighteen-year-old girl. He introduced her as his daughter, Green Jade. She would, he said, be happy to share my bed and board. For this I was completely unprepared. I knew, of course, that

such was Mongol custom and the ultimate in hospitality to honored guests, but it was not to be expected in a partly Chinese village. Chastity is not a virtue with Mongols. They consider that if a girl reaches marriageable age as a virgin, it indicates she is unattractive to other men and who wants a wife that no one else wants? To avoid offending our host, as well as Green Jade, was a problem beyond my understanding of Oriental diplomacy, so I stalled politely until I could consult Na-mon-gin.

For skeptics, let me say that my reluctance had nothing whatever to do with personal morals, or monastic vows. It was a matter of the future. I knew damned well that if the girl played house with me, the story would become a legend in the village, handed down as a tradition with the tale of the evil sheep, long after she and I were dead. The leader of the Central Asiatic Expedition wasn't making that kind of history. I don't know what Na-mon-gin told the head man, but the subject was not mentioned to me again.

Of course, we asked immediately about the sheep. It had come to the peak frequently, they said, and Bato recited a long list of minor misfortunes, any one of which might have happened in the normal course of village life. But that meant nothing to those superstitious people. The Elders, in their infinite wisdom, had decided the sheep was responsible and, of course, it must be true.

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"Why," I asked Na-mon-gin, "does the ram always come to this particular peak?"

"That I cannot say. Sheep are creatures of habit, and one of their habits is to visit the same spot year after year where they can over-look a vast sweep of country. You and I have favorite views. So do sheep!"

"I'm sure you are right. But what are we to do now?"

"Wait until the ram shows again. The rut has started and it will not be long. Here we can find pheasants, partridges, and hares in great numbers. The time will pass quickly."

He was right. Pheasants lay under every bush, it seemed, and the hillsides swarmed with chucks. I killed twenty-three hares in one morning. Every family had more game than it could eat.

I was quickly accepted as a part of the village life. Their existence was communal, with mutual sharing of work and harvest, but fraught with personal squabbles and feminine jealousies as in any small community. Every day someone drank tea or *kaoliang* wine in my cave and I heard all the gossip. Green Jade, it seemed, was very unhappy, not because she wanted me, but for more important reasons. She was the reigning queen of the village and of the countryside for miles around. Her suitors came from near and far. The other girls were jealous and I suspect she treated them in a somewhat queen-like way. My refusal of her company had made her "lose face," and nothing in life can be more devas-

tating to an Oriental; often it drives people to suicide. I was told that the girls taunted her unmercifully. Women can be very cruel.

Green Jade moped about, never smiling, refusing to eat, and avoiding me like the plague. She spent hours sitting alone on the brink of a ravine staring down at the stream that foamed over jagged rocks two hundred feet below. I thought to make amends by presenting her with my hand mirror, for it was coveted by all the women in the village. She accepted the gift gravely, murmuring polite words of thanks, but the next morning it reposed on my *kang*, neatly wrapped in rice paper. There seemed to be nothing else that I could do.

In the late afternoon of the sixth day the ram showed itself. I had come in from pheasant shooting and was resting on the *kang* when the head man rushed into my cave. "An lao-yeh, the sheep has come." I grabbed my field glasses and stepped out the door. There, on the very summit of the peak, stood a superb ram, a living statue on a granite pedestal. With the powerful binoculars I could almost count the rings on the great horns that curled in a perfect circle about its head. The body was sleek and brown but the neck hairs showed the grizzled touch of many winters. Never had I see its like.

Na-mon-gin stretched out his hand for my glasses. Squatting in a corner of the wall, he studied the sheep, seeming to draw its very thoughts into his mind. For half an hour the animal gazed over the plain, sometimes looking down at the village where we were hud-

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dled in a close-knit group. There was little talk; all eyes were on the sheep, but I noticed that Green Jade stood apart, staring intently as though into a crystal ball. At last the ram turned, slowly picked its way down the almost perpendicular slope, and vanished into the blaze of the sunset sky. Na-mon-gin came to me. "Before dawn we must be on the mountain behind this peak. We will find the sheep tomorrow."

By starlight we climbed the steep slope and lay beside a granite boulder. Gray light spread imperceptibly over the ridge. I could see a rock, not visible before, and bunches of grass and a blue gentian nodding its head at my feet. The panorama below us opened slowly. We sat on the lip of a grassy basin that rolled away in gentle land waves to a chaos of broken ridges and ragged peaks. A dozen phantom forms took shape on the basin floor. My glasses showed only ewes, except for two young males; the great ram was not there, but Na-mon-gin smiled confidently. "Don't worry. He will come; of that I am certain. The females belong to him."

The sun was more than an hour high when the ewes stopped feeding, threw up their heads, and gazed steadily at the entrance to a narrow canyon. A moment later the Great One stepped out of the rocky mouth and walked without a pause to the middle of the basin. The females moved forward in a body but the young rams hung back; they had been poaching on private property and had no wish to meet the boss-man of the harem. To my surprise the big sheep lay down immediately, not

waiting for the ewes. I saw that his chin was resting on a stone, obviously to ease his neck muscles from the weight of the massive horns. He did not even raise his head when the females reached his side. After drifting about uncertainly for a few moments, they lay down one by one a few yards behind their lord. For half an hour an old ewe stood guard on a slight rise of ground; then she, too, settled into the grass.

“Now,” Na-mon-gin whispered, “we can go.”

“Go where? How on earth can we get near enough to shoot on that flat plain?”

“It will not be easy, but it can be done. The floor is not flat. If we crawl like serpents behind the earth folds, we can get very close.”

A light breeze was in our faces. We slid back over the ridge, made a half circle, and entered the vast basin along a shallow wash. After a hundred yards, it became a matter of belly crawling, hitching along, foot by foot. The plain looked smooth and grassy from a distance, but intimate contact proved it otherwise. Sharp stones and jagged pebbles ripped our knees and elbows; a long scratch on my stomach began to bleed. On and on we went—push and squirm, push and squirm. I lost all sense of time or location; we seemed to be in a brown ocean with only the sky above and stalks of grass before our eyes. At last the Mongol motioned me forward. With his mouth close to my ear he breathed, “Get ready. He’s right in front.”

Slipping off the safety on my rifle, I hitched forward

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over a low swell of ground. I expected the sheep to be twenty or thirty yards away, but suddenly a huge form blotted out the sky almost above me, and two yellow eyes stared into mine.

As I struggled to my knees, the rifle exploded. With a snort the Great One charged straight at me. Instinctively I flattened, face down. That surely saved my life for the lowered horns just grazed my back. Behind the ram swept an avalanche of sheep. Na-mon-gin waved his arms, yelling like a banshee. The ewes, blindly following their leader, swerved just enough to miss us. Before I got to my feet, the herd were only brown dots bobbing away across the plain.

I stood there grinning foolishly at Na-mon-gin. Then I sat down and groped for my pipe. The confused events slowly sorted themselves in my mind. The ram, suddenly roused from sleep and confronted by a man not ten feet away, had rushed blindly forward at the crash of my rifle. It was not a premeditated charge like that of a rhino, or a lion, or a buffalo; I'm sure of that. Nevertheless, the result would have been just as serious. Had I remained on my knees, that great battering ram head would have crushed my skull.

Never have I been more humiliated, but Na-mon-gin—bless him—put his hand on my arm and said, "Don't mind, An lao-yeh, we'll get him next time. It was just bad luck."

I sighed and stood up. "What to do now?"

"Better go back to the village. Those sheep are so

frightened they'll run a long way. I think I know where they'll feed tomorrow, but it is far from here. Of course, we could find others but none like the Great One."

As we worked down the steep slope behind the village, we could see a group of people gathered in front of one of the caves. Wails, like the thin cries of sea birds, floated up to us.

"Something bad has happened," Na-mon-gin said. "Someone has died."

Bato, weeping, came to meet us. "Did you kill the sheep, An lao-yeh?"

"No, Bato, it escaped this morning, but tomorrow we get it. That I promise. What has happened?"

"Green Jade is dead. She jumped from the cliff above the stream an hour ago. I saw her sitting there alone, and I did not like it because the sheep came last night and she acted strangely. I called, and started to bring her back. She turned toward me, waved her hand, and plunged head first down to the rocks. *Ai yah*, and the sheep still lives!"

I went into my cave and sat on the *kang*, feeling very sick. Indirectly, I was responsible for the death of the lovely little girl. Moreover, I had not killed the sheep they all firmly believed caused their trouble. It was a bad show—a very bad show!

Na-mon-gin came in.

"How," I asked, "do the village people feel about me?"

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"Why, they don't blame you; it was the sheep, of course."

I was glad of that, but it did little for my mental peace. I thought for a long time. At last I decided there was one thing I could do for Green Jade.

"Na-mon-gin, a fine coffin and a big funeral are very important to your people. If I were to provide a funeral, the like of which this country has never seen, do you think it would make Green Jade happy in the other world?"

"Yes, of course; her spirit would rest in peace. The fact that you did not wish to have her in your house would be forgotten. She would be the envy of all the women. Their tongues would be stilled forever."

"Would five hundred silver dollars provide such a funeral?"

Na-mon-gin stared, almost speechless.

"An lao-yeh, five hundred dollars is a fortune. It would buy the best coffin, astrologers to select the proper grave, two hundred mourners, and a red funeral car from Kwei-hua-cheng. Never has such a thing happened in my memory of forty years. Green Jade would be buried like a princess."

"Then that is what I wish. How best to do it?"

"Call the Elders, and Green Jade's family, tell them what you have decided, and give the money to Bato."

"Good. Now about the sheep. Tomorrow I would like to take blankets and a little food, and stay in the moun-

tains until we have killed that ram. We will not return without its head and skin for the Black Dragon village. Do you agree?"

"It is the proper thing. We will leave before the sun rises in the morning. Now I will bring the Elders and Green Jade's family."

Shu served tea and *kaoliang* wine to the dozen people gathered in my cave. The family wore white, the Chinese dress of mourning. I made a little speech and gave Bato an order on the Bank of China, in Kwei-hua-cheng, for five hundred dollars. I regret to record that grief for Green Jade was completely forgotten in the excitement of my announcement. This would put the Black Dragon village on the provincial map; every man, woman, and child would have a part in the grand funeral.

At daylight Na-mon-gin and I were astir. He carried our light pack and my extra rifle.

"This," I said, "is serious business. I wish greatly to kill the sheep myself, but if I miss you are to shoot."

He smiled. "You will not miss, An lao-yeh. The sheep is already dead."

It was a long hard climb to the ridge behind the village, across the basin, and into a maze of jagged peaks where the ram had disappeared the previous morning. We saw perhaps fifty sheep, but not the big one.

Late in the afternoon, Na-mon-gin suddenly stiffened. A dozen sheep were feeding near the summit of

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a hill to the west and the ram stood out like a colossus among the females. It would be an easy stalk. The Mongol dropped his pack, took a quick look about for location, and we crept into the valley, sliding from rock to rock. The sky was overcast, but the light good for shooting.

The sheep had almost reached the hill crest when suddenly the sun burst through the clouds directly in our eyes. Vainly I tried to find the ram in the sights, but there was only a blinding glare. Nestled behind a rock, the rifle against his cheek, Na-mon-gin cursed fervently in Mongol and Chinese. While we sat, utterly impotent, the ram walked slowly over the ridge and out of sight, the ewes straggling behind. We ran up the slope hoping to find them on the other side but they had disappeared like wraiths.

"Surely," said the Mongol, "that sheep is protected by all the Gods of Evil. But we will get him tomorrow. It cannot always be like this."

We recovered our pack, and Na-mon-gin headed for the highest ridge on the skyline. "We will sleep up there so that in the morning we can look down on all the valleys. 'Tis useless to follow the Great One tonight for it will soon be dark."

Dawn found us traveling the ridges, scrutinizing every valley. We saw dozens of sheep, some so big that I was tempted to shoot. Then I thought of Green Jade and my promise to the Black Dragon village not to return until

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the evil ram was dead. It might be feeding, or asleep, on the next slope. A rifle shot, echoing up the canyons, would put it on the move.

By late afternoon I was very tired; even Na-mon-gin definitely dragged. I could not remember how many peaks and mountain sides we had climbed. The Mongol was making a systematic survey of every mile of country between us and the village, for he was convinced that the ram would appear on the rock spire in another day or two. It was not behind us in the broken rocks and ravines, of that he was sure. Therefore, as we closed in on the Black Dragon mountain, sooner or later it must be found.

The second night our bed was in a tiny rock cave on the very summit of a ridge three miles behind the basin where we had seen the sheep on the day Green Jade died. I was utterly worn out. Why, I asked myself, was I punishing my body with fatigue and discomfort to kill one animal? Of course, now, that particular beast had come to mean more than just the biggest ram I had ever seen, but originally that reason did not exist. It was, I admitted wearily, because I am a primitive at heart; I find my happiness in seeking out the wildest and most inaccessible corners of the earth. The spirit of adventure! Without that, life would be a poor thing for me.

An hour after sun-up we were moving slowly down a shallow canyon. A patch of long brown grass, perhaps two acres in extent, lay among the rocks almost at the top. Na-mon-gin walked in front. Suddenly came a snort

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and a clatter of stones. There stood the Great One, broadside, gazing at us. I dropped to one knee, sighted just behind the left foreleg and fired. At the dull thud of the bullet on flesh the sheep gave a convulsive leap and plunged over the crest out of sight. Na-mon-gin looked at me, completely crushed. For the first, and only, time during all the years I knew him, he lost his temper.

“An lao-yeh, how could you miss that sheep! I thought you were a good shot; so I have told all my friends. I have traveled the mountains with you day after day and seen you kill many sheep, yet you lose the only one we want! Were you blinded by the Evil One?”

This time I laughed at him. “Bah to you, Na-mon-gin! I didn’t miss. It lies near by. I know how a beast acts when its heart is torn to shreds. If you do not find it within a hundred yards, this rifle is yours.”

The Mongol shook his head, but climbed like a cat to the spot where the ram had stood. I followed slowly. Suddenly he yelled, “Blood! You hit him.” Then he dashed over the ridge. There, ten feet away, lay the most magnificent sheep I had ever seen, or ever will see. What impressed me first was the body size; the animal was colossal. Three inches behind the knee joint of the left foreleg a tiny hole oozed blood.

I lit my pipe and gave Na-mon-gin a cigarette. For a time we sat and smoked just looking at the beast. Then I got out my tape and camera. The right horn measured twenty inches in circumference at the base and fifty-four inches along the curve. The left was a trifle smaller:

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nineteen and three quarters and fifty-three and one half inches. A world's record for *Ovis ammon comosa*, as I knew it would be. Each horn had lost four or five inches at the tip, for sheep wear them down by rubbing on rocks if the curl is too close and interferes with vision. We took a dozen photographs and then skinned the ram. Na-mon-gin happily shouldered the head and hide.

Our entry into the Black Dragon village was dramatic. Every man, woman, and child joyfully gathered in the court before my cave to view the sheep. They were free at last of its evil influence, but Green Jade was dead; I could not forget that. The skin I myself spread before the altar in the cave temple, clapped my hands three times to call the God's attention, and kowtowed. That was that.

We did not remain for Green Jade's funeral because the astrologers had decided that the *feng shui*, the spirits of earth, air, and water, would not be right for at least six months, but Bato proudly showed me her coffin of fine pine cut to a thickness of two feet at the end. She rested happily, I hope, in the knowledge that she had made history for her village.

The Knife of Genghis Khan

On a Chinese table in our living room at Pondwood Farm lies a long, slender knife in a wooden case heavily embossed with silver. It is attached to a chain of eight silver strands, intricately woven. It resembles the body of a snake. Another chain bears a semicircular blade of steel, set in a hard leather pouch that once contained flint and tinder. That knife belonged to the great Genghis Khan, Emperor of All Men. Any museum in the world would give its museum soul to own a knife that hung from the belt of the world's greatest conqueror more than seven hundred years ago. But it will go to no museum until I am dead.

It came to me as a gift from Prince Tse Tzen, a direct descendant of Genghis Khan. Our first meeting, and the beginning of what became more than friendship, was dramatic. It was in the summer of 1922. The Central Asiatic Expedition was camped in a rocky amphitheater west of Urga, capital of Mongolia. I was sitting in front of my tent, when three horsemen rode through the gate-

way. They dismounted in the center of camp and I was surprised to see three of the expedition's Mongols kneel, their foreheads touching the ground, and only rise when the foremost visitor waved his hand. He was a young man not more than thirty, tall and strikingly handsome, with the high-bridged nose and patrician features of a Mongol aristocrat. He wore a brilliant purple robe caught about the waist with a yellow sash, and a green jade button gleamed in his gold-embroidered cap. A long-barreled Luger pistol poked its nose below the sash over his right groin; its wooden case swung empty at the man's side. The two others, obviously attendants, were more quietly dressed but peacock feathers streamed from the tips of their black-and-yellow hats.

I walked to meet them giving the Mongol greeting, "*Sain bina, Sain bina.*"

"*Sain bino,*" the tall visitor answered. Then, in perfect Mandarin Chinese, he asked, "Are you the leader of this expedition?"

"I have that honor," I answered.

"Good. Then we will talk."

The Mongol strode to the mess tent, pulled a canvas chair ten feet outside where he could view the whole camp, and sat down. Shu, our mess boy, brought tea and cigarettes. I extended my snuff box. "Have you come in peace?" The Mongol accepted the box in both hands, touched it to his nose, and passed it back. In return he offered a jeweled bottle. "Yes, I have come in peace. Does your encampment dwell in peace?" "It dwells in

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peace," I answered. After an interval of silence while he looked about and sipped the tea, he said:

"I am Tse Tzen Wang, ruler of this province. I received word that a big expedition with motor cars and camels had crossed into my territory. I came to see for myself. You have permits, I suppose?"

I produced a sheaf of passports for each member of the expedition with an impressive document listing in detail our equipment, arms, and ammunition. The Prince read them carefully.

"Those rifles I would like to see, and the cartridges." I brought one with a box of shells. The Mongol's eyes gleamed. For the first time his official manner slipped slightly, and he handled the light weapon almost with affection. Obviously, he was a lover of guns.

"Would you like to try it?" I asked. "You can shoot from here against that rock."

A real smile lit the Prince's face. "No, it would not be wise. You will see why."

Standing up, he pulled a silver whistle from his robe and blew three long blasts; then he waved an arm. Instantly the place seemed to erupt Mongols. They scrambled down from the peaks, out of crevices in the rocks, from behind boulders, and a dozen on horseback swept in full gallop through the rocky gateway. I stood in utter amazement. The Prince laughed. "It doesn't pay to take chances in these troubled times; particularly for me," he said, rather grimly.

The Mongols lined up in military formation with the

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horsemen in front. They were an effective-looking lot, each with a rifle slung across his shoulder; some had Luger pistols. The Prince spoke a few words, and the men broke into small groups, squatting on the grass, lighting tiny pipes.

"Shu," I called, "open that case of cigarettes and give each man a pack."

That seemed to break the last barrier of formality. "Now I can try that gun," the Prince said with a charming smile.

Resting the rifle on a stone, he fired five times at a small rock a hundred yards away. Four were direct hits.

"Never have I shot a gun like this," he said. There was a great longing in his eyes.

"It would be an honor to me if you will accept it as a gift," I said.

The Prince put both hands on my shoulders in the Mongol gesture of friendship. "In all my life I have never wanted anything so much. You know how we Mongols love guns! Thank you." When we walked to the mess tent, Tse Tzen Wang laid his pistol, knife, and riding whip on a chair outside as a sign of trust in me, his host. Shu produced a bottle of brandy. The Prince smiled as he tossed off a tiny glass.

"Not since I went to school in Peking have I tasted wine like this."

"So that's where you learned to speak Chinese so perfectly!"

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"Yes, I was there five years. I even learned some English but I have not spoken it for a long time."

As cup after cup of brandy slipped down his throat, the Prince talked without restraint. "Now tell me of your expedition," he said. "What brought you to Mongolia?"

I sketched our plans briefly. "We are bound for the Central Gobi. It is completely unknown to us who live across the sea."

The Prince nodded. "Yes, no foreigners have ever been in that region. Great mountains cut through the plains, and the desert is very bad; few wells and little feed, so the Mongols seldom go there. A sacred mountain, the 'Little Buddha,' is always crowned with snow, and *argali* and ibex of great size are said to live upon its slopes. In that country you will find wild asses, big as ponies, wild camels, and wild horses, too. But, most of all, you should look for the *aller-gor-hai-horhai*. I have never seen it, nor has anyone to whom I have spoken, but it is known to all our people and it lives somewhere in that central desert. It is less than a meter long, shaped like a sausage, with no head or tail, and has countless small feet on the body. Its poison is so great that even to look at it is death, so the story goes. That I cannot quite believe, but assuredly it is a thing to be taken seriously. Find it if you can."

We had luncheon in the mess tent. Only two or three of the expedition members spoke Chinese, and none knew Mongol. With almost childlike diffidence, Tse

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Tzen Wang tried to recall English. Memory searched into the past and half-forgotten words and phrases returned to his mind. Late in the afternoon he rose to leave.

"It has been a wonderful day," he said to me. "I feel that I have found a friend. Before you leave you must visit me in my city. It is less than fifty miles from here."

"I will come to you on the third day before the sun goes down," I promised.

Tse Tzen Wang blew his silver whistle. The fifty Mongols scrambled to their feet, tightened girths, and stood ready to mount. At another signal they swung into their saddles and in full gallop swept between the line of tents. At the gateway to the plain, they checked their ponies, wheeled, and fired a farewell salute into the air. I walked slowly back to my tent. Never had I been so profoundly impressed by any man as I had been by the Prince, and all the others had felt his charm.

Three days later I visited Tse Tzen Wang. Our mutual attraction warmed rapidly into friendship. The Prince had a quiet dignity and a sureness within himself, but his warmth and personal magnetism was the most extraordinary thing about him. Some of the other nobles whom I met were strong men, with dignity and character, but when Tse Tzen Wang entered a *yurt* something vital and compelling came with him. Even though he might say little, he was the focal point of any company.

After that first meeting, I saw him many times during the next eight years, at Urga and in my camp or his city.

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We rode and hunted together days on end. He was one of the best field shots I have ever known, but horses were his great love. His herd numbered five or six thousand, besides a score of race ponies; these were all of the white-nosed stock preserved as a pure breed, since the days of Genghis Khan. He pointed out one magnificent bay: "Twice he has won the champions' race at the Festival of the Seven States. He will win this year, I know. No pony in Mongolia can run with him. I hope you will come with me to see that race."

I did go. The festival was held in a lovely valley outside Urga. When we arrived, hundreds of snow-white *yurts* and blue tents dotted the green plain. Mongols in half a dozen different tribal dresses, lamas in flaming gowns of yellow and red, Tibetans, and natives from far Turkestan drank and gambled beside glowing fires of camel dung. In its barbaric mass of life and color, it was like a pageant on the stage of a great theater. Everywhere brilliant horsemen, in pointed yellow hats and streaming peacock plumes, dashed about among the rows of tents. Tse Tzen Wang's *yurt* had been prepared days in advance. Blue and yellow silk hung from the walls, and skins of bear, lynx, and baby lamb covered the floor. In the rear, on a low dais facing the door, lay a white horse skin, used only by descendants of Genghis Khan.

For seven days we watched races, archery, wrestling, and rifle-shooting contests. At night we ate and drank and talked long into the morning. The races were all of

ten miles over the Mongolian turf. The jockeys were boys and girls from seven to sixteen years old. They rode bareback. It was as much an endurance test for the riders as for the ponies, and sometimes the children fell off their mounts at the end of the race too exhausted to speak or stand.

Tse Tzen Wang's white-nosed bay won his race easily on the third morning, but a magnificent cream stallion was far out in front in his qualifying race on the fourth day. The horse belonged to Kara Wang, the "Black Prince," one of the lesser nobles.

The afternoon before the "champions," to which only winning ponies were eligible, Kara Wang came to our *yurt*.

"I will bet ten camels that my cream beats your bay," he said to Tse Tzen Wang.

"Certainly, but why not add ten ponies as well? Or thirty ponies, if that suits you better?"

Kara Wang thought a moment. "Yes, it does suit me. Ten camels and thirty ponies, then, to be selected by either of us from the other's herd."

The Black Prince left. Tse Tzen Wang made a grimace. "The man's a fool. His horse did run a good race, but he can never beat my bay. He can't afford to lose, either. He is the worst gambler in Mongolia. He keeps himself poor. But I have no sympathy for him."

Word of the wager ran through the camps like wild-fire. Kara Wang was an unpopular man, and betting against Tse Tzen Wang's bay seemed like madness.

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On the morning of the great race Tse Tzen Wang and I watched the start from the summit of a knoll and then rode leisurely to another hill where we could see the ponies come down the two-mile home stretch.

At last the leaders swung into the valley. The bay and the cream stallion were running neck and neck. But slowly the cream edged forward. Under the lash of his boy rider, the horse drew farther and farther ahead. In the last mile he ran alone, winner by more than a hundred yards.

The Prince and I sat our ponies, utterly stupefied. At last Tse Tzen Wang said, "Never have I seen such a horse! There is not another like him in all Mongolia. I wonder where he came from. I'd give half my herd to own him, but I suppose Kara Wang won't sell. He'd be a fool if he did."

At the great dinner that night given by the Premier of Mongolia, the Black Prince was the guest of honor, as winning owner. He did not wear his laurels well. He got himself very drunk on *kumiss* and boasted extravagantly. Tse Tzen Wang asked if he would sell the stallion. The Black Prince laughed unpleasantly.

"For three years I have trained that horse to beat your white-nosed bay and win this race. Why should I sell him, and particularly to you?"

So the matter rested. The cream stallion became the most famous horse in all Mongolia. He raced often and never lost. In spite of many offers, Kara Wang refused to sell, or breed him, no matter what the price.

In the meantime, the political situation in Mongolia moved from bad to worse. Slowly, but very surely, the Soviets were taking over the government, replacing the cabinet ministers with Buriats, Russianized Mongols. Official difficulties finally became so great that exploration in Outer Mongolia was impossible. I decided to end the Central Asiatic Expedition's work and return to New York. I spent a week with Tse Tzen Wang.

The night before I left we had dinner together, alone. We were very sad, for although neither of us spoke the words, we both felt that we would never see each other again. The Prince sat for a long time looking into the fire. Finally he said: "During all these years we have known each other, I have had the feeling that we were foreordained to meet since the day each of us was born. We Mongols believe in the Wheel of Life. In another existence long ago, it was prearranged that you, from across the great ocean, and I, a prince of Mongolia, should be of importance, each in the other's life. Our philosophers teach us that the present, with its little human contrivings, is of small moment when set against the great plan of nature and eternal destiny, so I am sure we will meet again, if not in this world, in the next. But I have something for you to take away that will help to keep me in your mind."

The Prince rose and stepped across the *yurt* to a red lacquer chest above which hung a scroll painting of the Living Buddha, bathed in a thin curl of incense smoke. On the chest lay a long, thin-bladed knife hung on a

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silver chain of intricate design. He placed it in my hands. "This knife came to me through generation after generation of my family from our ancestor Genghis Khan, the Emperor of All Men. It is what I value most in all the world. I am the last of my line. I want you to have it. Will you accept it as a pledge of brotherhood that distance can never break?"

My throat tightened and for a time I could not speak. I felt that a part of his heart went with the gift.

Next morning when I stepped into my car, Tse Tzen Wang stood alone in the plaza before his great white *yurt*. We said a last farewell, and as I drove past the temple courts crowded with lamas dressed in red and yellow, and Mongols of every age all shouting, "*Sain bina*," it seemed that I was really leaving home.

On the way back to camp, my mind was filled with thoughts of what adequate return I could make to Tse Tzen Wang for the knife of Genghis Khan. A plan gradually shaped itself. Nothing would give him so much happiness as to own the cream stallion. We had talked of the horse during the past week. Tse Tzen Wang said it was common knowledge that the Black Prince was in a bad way, financially. He was drinking heavily and gambling far beyond his means. I thought he might possibly sell the horse to me since I was going to China. Of course, if I gave it to Tse Tzen Wang, it would be double-crossing the Black Prince. My conscience balked at that. I didn't like it at all. But I thought of it all that day and the next, and finally decided to visit Kara Wang. He

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received me politely enough, but he was an unpleasant individual. His face showed the marks of dissipation and his person was unkempt. After the usual preliminaries, I told him I was leaving Mongolia forever and wanted to buy the cream stallion. He was silent for some time. At last he said: "I will consider it. I would not sell him to a Mongol, for I love that horse like my own son, and I would never run against him. Sometime, of course, as he grows older, he will be beaten and I do not want to see that day. He is a proud horse and I think it would break his heart. In China the races are short, and he still has several years to go. How much do you offer?"

I said seven hundred silver dollars; he asked twelve. At last we settled for one thousand plus the big white lead camel of my caravan. The beast was worth a good two hundred dollars. Thus, at the current rate of exchange, the cream stallion cost me four hundred fifty dollars, American gold.

I counted out the money and left. The Black Prince agreed to send the horse to my camp next day and collect the white camel. I did not say where I was taking the stallion. The Prince naturally assumed that I wanted to race him in China and I simply kept my mouth shut. My Mongols were delighted that I had got the best of Kara Wang, whom no one liked. Anything was legitimate in a horse deal. I thought of David Harum!

A week later we broke camp and started back to China. The same day I sent the stallion to Tse Tzen Wang. He wore a yellow bridle, and a sable skin hung

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about his neck. Such was the way horses were presented to Genghis Khan! In a letter I told the Prince that, when I bought the horse, Kara Wang had said he would never sell him to a Mongol and had assumed that I was taking him to China, but that I had made no promises of any kind and had not even discussed the matter.

It was two months later that Tse Tzen Wang's Mongol secretary, Durbet, an old friend of mine, arrived at my house in Peking. The Prince had sent him on the long journey from Mongolia to bring me his personal thanks for my gift. In an affectionate letter he told me how happy he was to own the stallion and of his plans to breed him to mares of the white-nosed ancestral stock in his stable. There was no mention of the way the Black Prince had done us both in the eye. That story I got from Durbet. Every Mongol is a natural raconteur and Durbet told it well.

Within a week after Tse Tzen Wang received the cream stallion, the news had traveled to the uttermost parts of Mongolia. It went by "well telegraph." Wells are the meeting places where the nomads come from miles around to water their stock, spend a pleasant day, and exchange gossip. Such exciting news sent Mongols riding in every direction to the next well, and others carried it to still other wells in an ever widening circle. With each repetition the tale improved.

It seems that by the most devious, Machiavellian methods I had tricked Kara Wang into selling the stallion

to me and had then presented it to Tse Tzen Wang. My Mongols were right; the natives loved it. It was clever horse-dealing, of which everyone approved. Instead of being called a "double-crosser," my personal stock rose far above par. Kara Wang was furious, of course. He ranted and cursed and at last challenged Tse Tzen Wang to a race. His acceptance was immediate, with the additional concession that the Black Prince could name the time, place, and stakes. Kara Wang selected a circular valley on his own estate; the stake was two hundred ponies and the distance fifteen miles. Such a stake left every Mongol gasping. Tse Tzen Wang could afford it, but it meant utter ruin to the Black Prince if he lost. What madness prompted him to race against the cream stallion which never had been beaten? He owned some good horses, yes, but none *that* good. Moreover, fifteen miles was a very long race; only a few ponies could go that distance. Thus, the news was rolled over and over on every tongue.

Mongols love festivals, and days before the race hundreds of *yurts* and tents dotted the valley on Kara Wang's land. Everyone had a good time, even though the Black Prince was a bad host. Partially drunk every day, he cursed me and Tse Tzen Wang to anyone who would listen, but that got him little sympathy. The universal opinion was that he had been worsted in a horse deal and should have accepted it gracefully. Speculation ran high as to what pony he would match against the cream stallion. On that subject his lips were sealed and he had

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made no declaration even on the night before the race. He would only say, "You'll see when the time comes."

A preliminary race in the morning received scant attention except from the owners. The big event was at two o'clock in the afternoon. At half past one, Tse Tzen Wang himself led out the cream stallion for a warming-up canter. The Old Man never looked better. He whinnied when he saw Kara Wang and cocked his ears. It was like the call of a child to his father, but the Black Prince turned away, his face set. "He really loved that horse," Durbet said. "Anyone could see that."

At a quarter of two, from the mouth of a narrow canyon in the hills, a rider appeared with a led horse. As he came nearer, a gasp of astonishment ran through the crowd. The man was leading a horse so like the cream stallion that one could not believe one's eyes. The same long-reaching stride, slender legs, and deep chest. He was perhaps a trifle lighter in the body and not quite so high in the withers; otherwise, each matched the other point for point.

Kara Wang took the bridle and led him up to Tse Tzen Wang. "I bred this horse from the one you now own through the trickery of your American friend. I trained him in secret, and I swore never to run him against his father. But you have forced my hand. He will win this race, for your horse cannot go fifteen miles. Mine can."

Tse Tzen Wang bowed. "We will see," was all he said.

The course circled about a flat-topped hill in the center of the wide valley. From its summit one could see the

start and finish and much of the race. Both horses were ridden by boys fifteen or sixteen years old. Kara Wang's jockey wore a black shirt; Tse Tzen Wang's was dressed in blue. When the boys were mounted, only by their colors could the horses be told apart. They started together running easily and rather slowly, each matching the other's stride until they merged into the dimness of grass-covered hills. Tse Tzen Wang watched, apparently calm but lighting one cigarette after another. Now and then he scanned the valley with a pair of binoculars that I had given him. The Black Prince rode up beside him. "You may put down your glasses," he said. "I can tell you what will happen. They will stay together until about two miles from home. Then the young one will pull away and win. That is why I put the race at fifteen miles."

At last Tse Tzen Wang picked out two tiny moving dots against the green. "They're coming," he said to Durbet, "side by side." Passing a rocky promontory that marked the last mile, both horses moved as one. Kara Wang's face was darker than his name. "I didn't think he could stay that long," he muttered. "He'll kill himself."

In the final half mile both jockeys began to use their whips. Up and down, up and down, the lashes fell. The cream stallion responded for a moment, but his rush ended and the younger horse began to pull ahead, inch by inch. As the Old Man lost ground, his great heart gave him another burst of speed and he drew even with his son. But he couldn't hold the pace. In the last few

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yards he slipped back to finish three lengths behind the winner. As he crossed the line, the stallion stood for a moment with drooping head and quivering body; then his legs buckled and he collapsed upon the ground. Kara Wang seemed to forget that he had won the race. He galloped up, threw himself out of the saddle, and took the stallion's head in his arms, crooning to him like a tired child. A Mongol brought a pail of water. The Black Prince squeezed a soaked cloth into the gasping mouth and washed the nose and eyes.

Tse Tzen Wang rode up. "Kara Wang," he said, "this is the last race that horse will ever run. From this time on, he will have a happy life begetting more sons as great as the one who ran against him today."

Dog Fight

One sunlit afternoon I sat on the rim of a grassy basin in Mongolia and watched a dog fight. It wasn't just an ordinary dog fight. Not only did the setting and the drama make it different, but it happened to be very personal to me for the principal actor was my Alsatian shepherd dog, Wolf, whom I loved devotedly. He might have been killed or badly hurt, but for his self-respect I had to let the fight go on.

The Central Asiatic Expedition was camped at the root of an ancient mountain on the northern edge of the Gobi Desert. Beyond the canyon's door, the slope merged into a grassy plain, level as a floor. A few miles away, in a shallow basin, lay a great temple, gleaming white and red in the sunlight, surrounded by hundreds of tiny houses for the lamas. We needed meat in camp. Antelope had been seen near the temple, so Walter Granger and I drove across the plain in an open car with Wolf in the back seat. Far off, moving forms showed white against the yellow grass. The dog whimpered excitedly. Time after time he had chased these illusive beasts only to

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have them mock him with their speed and flaunting tails, leaving him consumed with impotent rage.

When the car was half a mile away, the antelope ceased cropping the short grass and gazed curiously at the long, black object racing toward them. A pulsing throb beat upon their ears and the wind brought an odor the like of which they had never known. This was something to be considered seriously. Better move. A buck led the parade that streamed in single file diagonally across our course. A burst of speed carried them almost in front as the car ground to a stop in a cloud of dust. Fire stabbed from two rifles. At the first shot the animals seemed to flatten, skimming the ground like wisps of yellow paper before a gale of wind. With the dull, sodden thud of a bullet on flesh, the buck somersaulted; then another and another. Three were down and a fourth rolled over, recovered, and dashed away. Granger fired, but missed, as the gazelle disappeared into a hollow of the plain.

Walter and I climbed into the car. "We'll leave these and get the wounded one," I said. "Where's Wolf?"

"There he is," Granger shouted. "After that antelope. Great God! Look at him run."

The dog was streaking over the desert like a black comet, body close to the ground, each separate muscle strained to the uttermost limit. He was gaining; this time it would be a different story. A fierce joy raced with him across the plain, sending the blood surging in hot streams to his heart and brain. In front, a fleeting form showed and vanished like a yellow wraith, but he edged nearer,

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foot by foot. Sand from flying heels struck hard upon his eyes. It was almost time; just one more inch. *Now*. With a terrific leap he shot through the air to the gazelle's back. His weight bore the animal down, kicking madly. For a long minute he held the struggling body; then with a lightning shift he found its throat. Rushing blood bathed his face in a red stream.

When the car arrived, Wolf stood across the dead gazelle. I moved to lift the animal but the dog pushed me away. Not yet. It was his game and he wanted time to savor the full elation of his kill. I sensed his feeling. "All right, old boy, we'll let you alone. When we've picked up the other three maybe you'll let us touch your gazelle."

As the car drew away, I looked back. Wolf was circling the antelope. Blood still oozed from the torn neck. He was thirsty and he lapped it eagerly; it tasted good. Never in his life had he felt better or stronger. He was alone on the vast plain, with the blue sky above and an antelope dead under his feet: a beast he had run down and killed in fair chase. Then, for no reason he could understand, he put one foot on the gazelle, lifted his nose, and sent forth a long, exultant howl. The voice of his ancestors proclaiming to all the animal world that he had made his kill!

Response in a chorus of yelps came from the white temple. A score of half-starved dogs swept across the plain in a dense mass, yapping, snarling, each racing to be first to answer the food-summons. Suddenly the pack halted as though checked by an electric shock. There

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stood a dog, a strange dog, on the body of a dead gazelle. Blood-scent hung thick in the air, but he gave no invitation to share his kill.

At that moment our car stopped with a scream of brakes on the rim of the depression fifty yards away. It was a scene to make a painter gasp. In the distance, the snow-white temple lay like a cloud resting for a moment on the yellow plain; to the west, the broken cliffs of a mountain base showed against the sky, bathed in pastel tints of lavender and pink. In the foreground, a score of shaggy dogs with lolling tongues and dripping jaws sat in an intent, silent half-circle about Wolf. Lips drawn over gleaming teeth, snarling a deadly menace, he stood like a figure cast in bronze, one foot on the gazelle.

"Let's scatter the brutes," Granger growled. "Twenty to one is no fair odds."

I thought a moment. "No, Walter. They won't fight that way; I've often seen them. Only the leader will tackle Wolf while the others wait to tear apart the dog that's beaten. It's Wolf's show. He's got to see it through."

Knowing Wolf, and having watched him in other battles, I knew what was passing in his brain. No red film of rage dimmed his eyes. His mind was as clear and cold as a glacial pool. The next move was theirs; he need only wait. From the center of the pack a huge mastiff pushed forward, inch by inch. So this was the one he'd have to fight! Big and heavy, but he'd be slow. The long hair hanging in strips and patches made it bad; no use get-

ting that in his mouth. But the throat was bare and the legs; he'd concentrate on them and keep away.

Behind, on the slope, Granger and I sat tense, rifles on our laps, waiting for the curtain to rise on the first act of this desert drama.

The mastiff edged closer to the motionless statue crouching in front of the dead antelope. I saw Wolf draw up his hind legs slightly, settle his feet more firmly in the gravel, and knew what he planned to do. "He'll wait for the spring," I whispered to Granger, "and come in from the side."

Suddenly, the great beast reared and launched himself at Wolf like a battleship trying to ram a destroyer, hoping to bear him down by sheer weight. But he found only empty air. Timing to the split second, Wolf slipped aside and, while the dog was off balance, slashed his bare hind leg. Whirling, the brute charged again. Wolf leaped away and gashed the throat with a sideways flick of his head. Blood oozed through the ragged strips of hair. The mastiff reared forward, erect like a brown bear, and Wolf took a dangerous chance. Flattening himself, he rolled on his back and cut upward, opening the abdomen with both canine teeth; a loop of gray intestine pushed through the jagged gash.

Time after time the Mongol dog charged, but never could his jaws find the slim body that slipped like a black ghost just beyond his reach. Half starved, he was beginning to tire. Foam slobbered from his mouth and

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his breath came in choking gasps. For an instant he paused. Wolf seized the opportunity, side-stepped, and ripped the tendon of his left hind leg. The dog slumped, trying desperately to dig his useless foot in the shifting sand. Then Wolf made his only mistake; too soon he dashed in for the kill. The mastiff caught the charge with his shoulder, rolled him over, and, before Wolf could twist from under, the gaping jaws closed on his neck. The teeth only grated fruitlessly across the razor-sharp spikes of his broad collar. Lips and tongue dripping blood, the Mongol dog released his hold and Wolf squirmed from beneath the crushing weight. Leaping ten feet away, he shook his head, stood for an instant, and like a snake slid forward inch by inch. The mastiff faced him, half crippled, lying just behind the dead gazelle. Wolf planned his attack with consummate skill. Suddenly he leaped, twisted in mid-air, landed on two feet, and with a slashing dive cut the tendon of the mastiff's good leg. The dog collapsed across the antelope's body. As one animal, the silent waiting pack moved forward, but Wolf stood at bay, snarling like a tiger. He would finish the job himself; when the time came they could have what he wished to give. The mastiff was a beaten dog. He tried desperately to get to his feet, but both hind legs were paralyzed. Like the black shadow of doom, Wolf inched closer, motion without motion, legs gathered for a spring. With a deep throat-snarl he shot straight for the bare neck, slit the jugular vein, and

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leaped away. The great dog dropped his head, watching his life blood stain the gazelle's body through eyes glazed with death.

Wolf walked slowly to the dying animal. For a moment he gazed at the waiting pack, then, with one foot on the mastiff's body, raised his head and sent forth a long, triumphant howl. Turning, without a backward glance, he trotted up the hill to my car. Now they could have their dog and his antelope. Let them eat their fill.

The Thirty-first Concubine

The end of World War I found me in Peking, China, where I had spent two years doing an Intelligence job for the United States of America, plus her Allies. Peking is always a fantastic city, but during that time it was something out of this world. The damndest things happened; things you wouldn't believe could happen in any place on earth. Part of it was due to the chaotic political situation; in addition, the war had suddenly imposed Western customs on an Oriental civilization not yet ready to receive them; and finally, everyone lived on excitement, normal inhibitions apparently having been given a shot of anesthetic.

In 1919, war lords, jockeying for power with their personal armies, had sprung up like mushrooms. Almost every week a new civil war flared somewhere in China, but as a rule they were pretty civil and few people got killed. Actually it was a poker game on a gigantic scale. Provinces changed hands like cards, for it was the decade of the double-cross. One never knew when he went

to bed at night who would be boss of the city in the morning. It was highly stimulating.

We got a great kick out of another phase of those hectic years, too. The hard shell of traditional social custom had begun to crack and Chinese girls of the best families sometimes appeared at dances in the Wagon-Lits Hotel or at Legation dinners. For the first time we had a look at the women who had been so carefully secluded behind the gray compound walls. The prowling males of the foreign community sat up and took notice—and *how* they took notice! Some of the girls were lovely in anybody's language, combining a wide-eyed excitement with a half-frightened shyness that fascinated the most blasé bachelors as well as those who weren't bachelors.

It was against this background that I became involved in an amazing love affair, not through any will of my own, but simply because Eric Rhode happened to be my closest friend. He was a strange man but his strangeness wasn't congenital. He had emerged from two years of war with a brilliant record and half a dozen decorations, plus an uncertain heart and lungs so badly gassed that the doctors said they might quit at any moment. Not a happy thought to live with! Retired from the army, he came to Peking as representative of a British import-and-export company. There, he threw himself into study of the Chinese language and Buddhism with furious intensity. I think that out of their philosophy he hoped to gain something of peace in his last days. But it didn't work. Moods of blackest depression, when he would see

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no one except me, alternated with periods of wild hilarity. At thirty-five he was an arresting figure. One's first impression was of a pair of remarkable blue eyes, intensified by a bronzed skin and coal-black hair. He had, too, a subtle charm and an air of recklessness combined with courtesy, that turned the heads of every unmated girl and half the married women of Peking. But Eric would have none of them except for a night or two. They could stay at his house if they wished, and some did, but marriage was out, and he made that clear before they came.

"I haven't many years to live," he told me. "This heart and these damned lungs may give out at any time. I'd be a rotter to marry, even if I fell in love, which I won't. For me, it's got to be a short life and a merry one—when I feel like it."

Eric saw much more of the Chinese than he did of his own kind, for the maze of political intrigue amused and interested him. Watching from the side lines, he derived a sort of Machiavellian amusement out of bringing together participants in a "new deal" at his dinner table. They were glad to come, for it was neutral ground and they knew their host would neither betray their confidences nor usher in a firing squad by way of dessert. Thus, Eric came to know many of the prominent Chinese and we all envied him at the hotel parties, for he had the confidence of the grim chaperones which we did not share. But with him it never went beyond a dance or two; he was as careful of what he did, and what he said,

as though he were handling bits of dynamite—and, believe me, they were just that. A too familiar word or action might have ignited an explosion that wouldn't have been confined to the dance hall. Therefore, I was completely unprepared for what happened that evening at the French Legation when Eric and I stood in the drawing room sipping cocktails.

“Of course, you know the dinner tonight is in honor of Li Shi-kou,” Eric said. “I'm keen to see the old boy. At the moment he is the richest and most powerful man in China. He's bringing his First Wife, and two daughters, also, I hear. I wonder what made him loosen up? He's stuck to the old ways in spite of what his friends have done.”

I grinned. “But you don't know the whole story. The gals aren't his daughters; they're concubines. I got the low-down from Betty Carson. She's been at the house almost every day this month teaching them to dance.”

“Good God! Why is he doing it?”

“As near as Betty can figure it, since he is so deep in international politics he feels he must adopt some Western customs. The First Wife hates it, but the old man insists. He hasn't any daughters and he thinks it is part of the foreign idea to have girls to go out with them to give him 'face.' But Betty believes there's a more subtle reason. Li has the finest art collection outside the Imperial Palace, as you know, and he wants the foreigners to see that his women are just as beautiful as his paintings.

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Betty says one of the girls, Hwa Shan, is a knockout. She's the last one; his thirty-first concubine."

"Oh, I say! The old boy must be nearly seventy."

"I know, but lately he has collected 'concies' just as art objects, not for Master's body. If he sees a beautiful piece of porcelain or jade, he simply can't rest till he owns it. Apparently it's the same with girls. Betty says he has the most wonderful gardens, and in the afternoon he sits on the porch drinking tea with some of his intimate friends, or just alone, while the girls take classical poses among the flowers; something like a static ballet. He nearly bursts with pride."

Just then, Li Shi-kou's party entered. Eric spilled his cocktail. "My Sainted Aunt, look at that girl! Isn't she perfectly exquisite?" he muttered. "She must be Hwa Shan—the one Betty told you about."

The girl was breathtaking. Wide brown eyes set at the slightest angle in a little heart-shaped face, a straight nose, and soft, full lips. The long silk coat hung from her shoulders in an unbroken sweep, save where the hips showed as fascinating hints of bodily substance; her young breasts were bound just tightly enough to break the line from neck to waist. She didn't seem quite real at first; more like a flower or a lovely butterfly. Then I saw that her cheeks were flushed and her eyes were bright with excitement. She was like any other girl entering a new world of which she probably had dreamed, but never seen.

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Betty Carson stepped to the side of the women and went with them down the receiving line. Their hostess at once took charge of the First Wife, very grim but determined to do her part. Betty beckoned to Eric and me, for she knew that we both spoke Chinese and few of the guests did.

“You’ve got to help me take care of these girls,” she laughed. “It shouldn’t be a bad assignment.”

Eric beat me to it, and annexed Hwa Shan. That night he was on the crest of the wave. He knew the difficult art of twisting Chinese phrases into a double meaning, and in ten minutes Hwa Shan was laughing shyly. Her nervousness evaporated in the warmth of this foreigner, the first she had ever talked to, who could speak her language as well as she herself. Eric piloted her from one group to another, introducing her where he thought it necessary. I followed in his laughing wake with the other concubine, who was lovely, too, but couldn’t touch Hwa Shan. Li and the First Wife had joined the receiving line and were both too busy to pay much attention to what was happening to the girls, but now and then I saw Li glance quickly in our direction with an expression of mingled pride and anxiety.

At dinner our little group remained intact; Betty had seen to that. Eric sat with a French girl on his right, and Hwa Shan next to me. The other concubine was on my left. I had rather hard sledding with her, for she was overcome with shyness and I didn’t have Eric’s facility in Chinese speech. We were at the end of the long ta-

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ble, far from the notables, and could be ourselves. Eric didn't devote himself exclusively to Hwa Shan; he was too clever for that, with Li Shi-kou in sight. Still, he did give her a good deal more than half his attention and that super-half was charged with dynamite.

I listened, shamelessly, to as much of their conversation as I could catch with one ear, and even to me, who knew Eric, it sounded better than good. What it was doing to Hwa Shan was nobody's business; she had completely forgotten where she was. Her eyes seemed enormous and they could only see Eric. Now and then her shoulder touched mine and I could feel her tremble. Finally I caught Eric's eye.

"Steady on, old man," I said in English. "Better slow up a bit."

"Damn it, I guess you're right," he murmured out of the corner of his mouth. "You take over, but remember she's my girl."

To Hwa Shan he said, "You must talk to An Shen-shung [Mr. Andrews] now. He is nice, and besides that he's my best friend."

Hwa Shan tried but it wasn't much good; the girl was in a daze. Her eyes kept sliding toward Eric and the only way I could capture her attention was to talk about him. I gave him a great build-up. Told her what a brave man he had been in the war; how he had half a dozen decorations; how the doctors said he had only a few more years to live. Her eyes misted at that. Then came the question I knew she would ask.

"Is he married?"

"No, and he says he will never ask a woman to be his wife. He lives by himself in a great house on Nan Chi-tzu, and is often lonely."

There were more questions until dinner ended. When the women left us to coffee and port, I moved up near the group at the head of the table. Our host and the British Minister, with the Chinese Secretary of the Legation, were deep in conversation with Li Shi-kou. Then I discovered why the dinner had been given. An incipient war had started in the Yangtze Valley. One of the better war lords was in revolt against the corrupt Peking government and had threatened to move northward. Was it good politics for the French and British governments to look with favor upon the movement to the extent of raising their embargo on arms and ammunition? What Li thought, and where his sympathies lay, was of the utmost importance in any decision.

I knew enough of Legation dinners to be sure that Li would be dragged off to the minister's study for an all evening conference soon after dancing started. That meant Hwa Shan would be left to the tender mercies of Eric Rhode if the First Wife were disposed of.

The men moved into the drawing room as the orchestra were tuning their instruments and I fell in step beside Eric.

"I'm going to ask Hwa Shan for the first dance. You'll lay off until the minister takes Li away, if you're wise, and you damned well better be! You were going a bit

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too strong at dinner; Li seemed nervous. I'll tell her you'll come later."

So I danced with Hwa Shan while Li Shi-kou watched with prideful eyes. But the diplomats did not give him long; they were as hot on his trail as a pack of foxhounds. As soon as the barest formalities were ended, I saw their group move off to the study.

Betty Carson had told our hostess that the First Wife was a devotee of mah-jongg. The game had only recently swept the foreign community like fire in dry leaves, and bridge had almost been forgotten. The French Minister's wife was one of the worst addicts. When dancing was in full swing, she happily relinquished her official duties to the Legation's Third Secretary and with the First Wife made for the card room. Half a dozen tables had been prepared and the older women were crowding through the doors. I strolled by a short time later and saw their eyes fixed avidly on the ivory blocks in front of them.

When I returned to the ballroom, Eric was dancing with Betty Carson. I could see she was teasing him and it wasn't hard to guess why. As he brought her over to one of the big sofas, I whispered, "Li is in the study and the Old Lady couldn't be dragged away from the mah-jongg room. Better make hay while the sun shines."

Eric unceremoniously turned Betty over to me, going straight as a homing pigeon to Hwa Shan. She saw him coming and the light on her face was like a flood of sun. She nestled into his arms as a waltz began and closed her

eyes. When she had danced with me I felt she was as unreal as thistledown, but there was nothing unreal about her in that dance with Eric! She pressed so closely against his tall figure, her little head just under his chin, that I felt the blood begin to throb in my own temples.

Hwa Shan was wildly infatuated; half an eye could see that. The smoldering fires of inexperienced girlhood had suddenly blazed into a bewildering flame. She didn't know what had happened to her and she didn't care. As for Eric—well, I couldn't be sure; he was an uncertain quantity! I had seen him in action before when he was in one of his "up" moods, but never quite like this. Still, no foreign girl in Peking could compare with the lovely little concubine so far as charm and looks were concerned. I could only think how I envied him!

It was midnight almost before I knew it. The evening had passed quickly enough for me, but I was sure Hwa Shan had hung desperately on each minute as though that night were to be her last. It would be, too, so far as Eric was concerned; certainly there could be nothing beyond it for either one.

Eric and I waited until Li's party had gone, then made our own exit.

"Come up for a whiskey and soda. I want to talk with you," he said.

Eric hardly spoke on the way home. That wasn't unusual; we often had long silences together. A sleepy *kan-mundi* swung open the great gates and our feet echoed on the paving of the deserted courtyards as we walked

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back to his study. Shu, the Number One Boy who had been with him during all his stay in China, brought a tray with Scotch. For a while Eric said nothing; just looked into his glass, sipping the whiskey. Then he burst out.

“Say anything you like, but I’m crazy about that girl. I’ve never felt like this before. What she’s done to me is unbelievable.”

I sat right up. Eric, hanging on the edge of life, the sophisticated target of a score of lovely women, to suddenly capitulate to a little inexperienced Chinese girl. I’ll say, it was unbelievable!

There was nothing I could think of except to ask him what he proposed to do about it.

“See her again, of course. What did you suppose we’d do? Just let it go? Li’s off to Shanghai Monday and she’s coming here at two o’clock.”

That, I don’t mind saying, jarred my back teeth. To play with the family affairs of a man like Li Shi-kou was as safe as stirring a pot of nitroglycerine. I said as much and reminded him that she was not Li’s daughter. That would have been bad enough, but a concubine was ten times worse.

Eric exploded. “I don’t give a damn for old Li; neither do I give a damn that she’s a concubine. She wants to come. A little danger makes it all the more exciting. Why shouldn’t I skate on thin ice?”

There were other arguments and I gave them, but, of course, it was only wasted breath. I might as well have

talked to the Ming Buddha on the mantelpiece. Eric hardly listened, though he did tell me how Hwa Shan was to get out. She had said that all the women of the house slept for two or three hours in the afternoon; her room opened on a passage which led to a small gate in the compound wall used only occasionally by the servants; she could dress in her *amah's* (nurse's) clothes and slip out.

Well, that was that. There wasn't anything I could do, so I went home. I didn't see Eric again until Monday evening, when he told me what had happened.

It seems that as soon as she said her formal good-night to the Old Master and the First Wife, Hwa Shan ran to her room where the *amah* was waiting. Into the delighted ears of the old woman she poured the story of the evening, but when she explained what she intended to do, the *amah* gasped in horror; she wanted no part of it. But Hwa Shan pleaded and cajoled. Intrigue is like the breath of life to every Chinese, and when at last the old woman saw that she could do nothing with the love-sick girl, she decided to enjoy it. Out from the black-wood chest came her own best garments. They fitted Hwa Shan well enough. With a blue-and-white cloth tied about her head she could be mistaken for any servant.

That afternoon, Eric said, he was pacing the floor; he couldn't work or read. Never had he felt so excited at meeting a girl. Others had come to this same study alone, and he had taken it as a matter of course. At last he heard

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the outer gate clang and padding feet on the stones of the court. The boy ushered in a little blue-clad figure and closed the door. He didn't recognize her until she pulled off her head cloth. She stood for a moment, almost ready to cry, and then ran into his arms.

For two hours, Hwa Shan stayed at his house. She told him how she had slipped out the side gate after the *amah* made sure the alley was clear; how strange it was to be alone upon the street; how never before had she ridden in a rickshaw; how frightened she was when she knocked on the gate of his house. At four o'clock, the time agreed upon with her *amah*, she didn't want to leave; apparently she had lost all sense of danger. "I had to stand her on her feet," Eric laughed, "and dress her myself; she wouldn't make a move to help."

It was very interesting to listen to, and Eric told it well, but when he said she was coming the next day, I really went to work on him. It simply couldn't go on. There were a hundred, or more, people in Li's house and Eric had fifteen servants. He knew damned well someone would discover it; you couldn't keep anything like that from the Chinese. Li would be furious; he'd ruin Eric's business; possibly hire hatchet men to kill him! Eric only laughed. "Suppose he did sick his dogs on me, it wouldn't be important. But don't worry. No one's going to find out. My Number One would strangle any of the boys that talked; he's devoted to me."

So that was that. Stupidly enough, neither he nor I thought of real physical danger to Hwa Shan. Why, I

can't imagine now, for we both knew how important "face" is to the Chinese. I supposed, vaguely, that Li would send her home in disgrace. That would be bad enough, for her father was a highly respected merchant who had owed Li Shi-kou a large sum of money. Only because of that did he get her in the first place. One day when Li went to call, he had seen Hwa Shan among the flowers in the garden. She was like a rare painting to him, and he couldn't rest until she was in his house. The middle man had a difficult time. At last Li agreed to cancel her father's debt if she came as his concubine; otherwise, it meant financial ruin. But also Li made it clear that what he wanted was her beauty, not her body. So eventually Hwa Shan, with the *amah* who had nursed her since childhood, joined the "ballet" in Li's house. Li kept his agreement and, except for what the *amah* had told her, she was unlearned in the ways of men when she came to Eric Rhode.

Li Shi-kou remained nearly a month in Shanghai, and every day Hwa Shan came to Nan Chi-tzu. What had started for Eric as merely a romantic adventure, had suddenly become deadly serious. To his surprise and consternation he had fallen desperately, passionately in love. "What a hell of a thing to happen to her, and to me," he said. "After all these years, too, when women have been nothing in my life." But there it was. Both of them had played with fire and got burned. There seemed to be nothing they could do about it, nor did either want to do anything except wrap themselves more closely in

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their love. They were involved in an emotional whirlpool which just went around and around with no progress except to whirl faster. Trying to escape from it seemed not to have entered their beclouded minds. They must tell of their happiness to someone. Hwa Shan had her *amah* and Eric had me. Almost every moment that he was not with her, he spent at my house. Always he talked of the Chinese girl; what they had done and said; how adorable she was!

Eric completely disappeared from the foreign community, but it caused no comment; his friends assumed that he was in one of his "black moods" and that it was wise to let him alone. No longer did he invite Chinese politicians to his dinner table. His business suffered, for he could not fix his mind on work. Every waking thought was concentrated on Hwa Shan.

One evening at the club, I sat over a cocktail with Campbell, an Englishman who had been born in China and knew the people as no other foreigner did. He was, too, a deep student of their customs and philosophy. The thought came to me that he might offer some solution of Eric's problem. I presented the story to him in detail, but, of course, as a hypothetical case.

Campbell smiled. "I can tell you exactly what would happen. If, or rather when, the Chinese discovered that his concubine was having an affair with another man, particularly a foreigner, he'd have to kill her with his own hands; there would be no other way to save his face. Probably he'd have the lover killed, too."

I was stunned. I knew, of course, that Eric faced such a possibility, but not Hwa Shan. Every day I had become increasingly uneasy, with a vague feeling of approaching doom. It oppressed me so that I spent many wakeful hours, for in spite of his strangeness, I was very fond of Eric; more, even, since he had met Hwa Shan, because I, alone, shared their vital secret. His complete dependence upon me made it my personal problem. I knew that if the consequences of their romance, for which he was entirely responsible, were visited on Hwa Shan it would be unbearable torture for him; a hundred times worse than his own death. Inevitably he would go, too; he never could live with his remorse.

My eyes must have shown the horror that suddenly gripped my heart, for Campbell looked at me curiously. "I hope this hasn't been a personal story, old boy. It's a bad show. I couldn't think of a worse predicament."

"No, no, I need a drink, that's all. I'm a 'writin' feller,' you know, and I've been doing a story along those lines. One gets frightfully involved with one's characters. They become very personal; like real people. I got them into this mess and I don't know how to bring them out. That's why I asked you. But I didn't think it would have to end like that. Guess I'll never publish the yarn unless you can think of a better solution."

"There can't be any other ending if your story is true to life. Better drop it. Occidentals couldn't understand how that sort of thing gets at the root of Chinese age-old social customs."

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I left Campbell as soon as was decently possible and, in a blue funk, went home to a solitary dinner. I tried to think what I ought to do. There seemed to be only one thing; tell Eric exactly what Campbell had said and tell him at once. I telephoned his house and ten minutes later he arrived, starry-eyed, still under the spell of his afternoon with Hwa Shan. I got him a stiff whiskey and then gave him the story straight, with no attempt to soften the essential fact that the end of their romance could only be death for Hwa Shan. It was almost a knock-out blow. He sat rigid, his face drained of color, gasping for breath, then slumped in his chair. I was frightened. What a damned stupid thing to tell it that way! I'd forgotten, for the moment, that he wasn't a well man. I telephoned Dr. MacIntosh at the British Legation and told him to come on the double quick. Eric was only half-conscious when the doctor arrived. "It's that bad heart; it can't stand much. We'll get him into bed and I'll give him a hypodermic. He must stay here."

The next morning Eric was still white and shaken, but we talked of what to do. For a while he didn't make sense, and I gave it up. Sometimes he sat brooding over a whiskey and soda, sometimes exploded into violent action, striding about the compound, formulating wild schemes for kidnapping Hwa Shan. He'd marry her tonight, then Li couldn't touch her; he'd take her to England! At last he wore himself out and was able to listen to reason.

I suggested that I go with him that afternoon and meet

Hwa Shan. The three of us could talk it over. Perhaps Campbell was wrong. She wasn't an ordinary concubine; maybe she could see some way out of the mess. Eric agreed.

Hwa Shan came at two o'clock. I sat in a corner of the study and she didn't see me at first. She slipped into Eric's arms and he held her close for a long moment, kissing her eyes and lips. Then he released her and I got up. Color stained her face but she held out her hand shyly.

"Don't be embarrassed," I said. "I've always known about you and Eric."

"Yes, yes, he has told me. You've been very kind."

Then she turned to Eric. He was standing beside a table, the muscles of his jaw working; Hwa Shan ran to him.

"What has happened? You look so strange, and why is he here?" Eric drew her to the sofa and said to me, "You tell her; I can't."

Again I related Campbell's words, but this time I tried to soften the implication and ask if such a thing could possibly be true?

Hwa Shan drew away from Eric's arm and sat up very straight. There was about her a calm dignity that somehow made me feel like a child. She spoke quietly and without emotion.

"Yes, it is true. Only that way could the Old Master save his face. Certainly he would have to kill me."

"Hwa Shan, did you know all along?"

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"Yes, Eric. At first I thought I would come only a few times; that it would not be discovered; it was exciting and there wasn't much danger while the Old Master was in Shanghai. Then I didn't care. What would be left to me now without you? Only breathing and existing—not even sleep would come to let me dream of our hours together. In these days I have lived a lifetime—a lifetime of wonderful happiness. I knew it would end soon, but my life is a small thing to give for our love."

"But he couldn't kill you! That would be murder!"

"Oh, Eric," she said, "you have forgotten that I am a concubine; that Li Shi-kou bought me for a great sum of money; that I am his property to do with as he pleases. He can kill me or let me live, as he would one of the birds in his garden."

"Still, there is the law. No one can take a human life as though it were a bird's, even in China."

"The law does not exist for me. Even if it did, Li Shi-kou is more powerful than any law. You could do nothing; my father could do nothing."

"Suppose he did discover our love; why should he kill you? He has many other concubines. You have only been a plaything to him."

"Surely, Eric, you know what 'face' means to my people. I, the concubine of the great Li Shi-kou, have left his house in the clothes of a servant for the arms of another man—and that man a foreigner! You must realize that I have brought unutterable disgrace upon his head. He could never show himself again were I to live. His

name would be a laughing stock in the lowest tea houses. The story would be told from Peking to Canton! The great Li fooled, tricked by a concubine!"

Eric tried desperately to control himself. Hwa Shan took his face in both her hands, looking into his eyes. She had forgotten that I was in the room.

"Beloved, if we never could see each other again, why should you feel unhappy because I must die? Would it be easier for me to live, thinking of you every moment of the day; longing for your arms holding me close? For me, no. I am a Chinese. Death to us is nothing to be feared. We don't think of it as you foreigners do. The moment of passing is like the opening and closing of a door. On the other side will be peace—peace and happiness while I wait for you to come."

I listened to the little Chinese girl express her simple faith with a feeling of deep humility. That day I learned what love could mean to a woman. One month's happiness and then—death! She had always known what the price would be, but never by look or word had she let Eric guess. Such forgetfulness of self became sublime. When she said so quietly that life without him would be no life at all, she meant exactly that. Never had there been a thought in her mind that it might not happen. "*Mayo fadzu*," she said. "It is fate."

Of course, we couldn't accept that philosophy and we told her so. She could slip away from the House of Li and somehow we would get her on a British ship; once at sea, she would be safe. Hwa Shan sat wide-eyed,

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listening incredulously while we talked. Never, in her wildest dreams, had she imagined being Eric's wife in a country where they could live and love in peace. At last it was arranged that she should not leave her compound again until Eric sent her word; Shu knew her *amah* well and could take a message. When I left, after an hour, we were almost gay. Hope was in the air.

At home, I called the Jardine-Matheson line and found they had a British ship leaving Tientsin two days later; it would sail at midnight on the tide. How we could get Hwa Shan aboard, without exciting suspicion, would take some thought, but already a plan was forming in my mind. For the first time there seemed to be a ray of light in Eric's blackness.

It was five o'clock the next morning when Lo, my Number One Boy, shook me awake. Shu was on the telephone.

"Come quick, oh, come quick. My master very sick. I afraid he die." His voice trailed off into hysterical sobs. I pulled on a shirt and trousers and rushed for the car, telling Lo to call Dr. MacIntosh and send him to Nan Chi-tzu.

Eric was unconscious, lying on the divan in his study, when I arrived. His face was the gray-green of death, but his pulse fluttered in irregular beats. Five minutes later the doctor came.

"It's his heart again. He's almost gone. If this hypodermic doesn't bring him back, he'll go west. Must have had a shock, and a bad one."

Shu told me what had happened. Just before he telephoned me, Hwa Shan's *amah* had pounded frantically on the gate, demanding to see Eric. Half crazed with grief and terror, she sobbed out the awful story. The First Wife had learned about Hwa Shan from servant's gossip and for three days had watched her go and come. At her orders a coolie followed the girl to Eric's house and reported to his mistress. The First Wife said nothing to Hwa Shan, but Li Shi-kou had returned unexpectedly that evening and hardly was he in the compound before she told him what his favorite concubine had done. Mad with rage, Li ordered Hwa Shan to the great hall. She admitted the tale was true. Then, standing before his ancestral tablets, Li had killed Hwa Shan with his father's sword.

Eric did come back for a few hours into the gray dawn of a cloud-hung sky, but he had no will to live. Before noon he slipped quietly away to join Hwa Shan. It was better so.

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