



UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY



121 984

UNIVERSAL  
LIBRARY









THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF JAMES L. PRICE

# Jungle Jim

IN COLLABORATION WITH SAMUEL DUFF McCOY

ILLUSTRATED



DOUBLEDAY, DORAN & CO., INC., NEW YORK 19.

Printed by the Country Life Press, GARDEN CITY, N. Y., U. S. A.

CL

COPYRIGHT, 1941  
BY DOUBLEDAY, DORAN & COMPANY, INC.  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED  
FIRST EDITION



# Contents

## PART I

CHAPTER	PAGE
I ONE FOR THE MONEY . . . . .	3
II TWO FOR THE SHOW . . . . .	11
III THE KING OF THE CARIBS . . . . .	20
IV ENTRANCE INTO JUNGLE . . . . .	36
V THE VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED . . . . .	55
VI THE PROSPECTOR . . . . .	64
VII THREE TO MAKE READY . . . . .	76
VIII THE GLASS STILETTO . . . . .	86
IX YOUNG MARSTUH . . . . .	92
X LOLA . . . . .	103
XI THE VEST OF GENERAL SANDINO . . . . .	11
XII HOLIDAY . . . . .	134

# Contents

CHAPTER	PAGE
XIII THE CAGE . . . . .	157
XIV MY JUNGLE . . . . .	172
XV PEOPLE OF THE JUNGLE . . . . .	188
XVI THE TAPIR . . . . .	199
PART II	
XVII YOUNG MR GOODVALLEY . . . . .	215
XVIII BOSCO TELLS A TALE . . . . .	228
XIX BOSCO BEGINS CLIMBING . . . . .	238
XX TORGOGO, THE MOUNTAIN OF THE FROGS	250
XXI THE SEA . . . . .	270
XXII FOUR TO GO . . . . .	287

# Illustrations

Jungle Jim and Rene Belbenoit	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
La Palma, the Capital of Darien Province	28
Ilipia's Mother, the Old Queen of the Chocos	168
El Real, the Last Outpost of Trade in the Darien Jungle, Panama	176
Peccaries—Giant Sloth—Red Deer	192
At the Mouth of the Rio Tuira and Rio Congo, Which Lead to Pirri Mountain, the Peak in Darien	232
A Cuna Indian Belle	256
A Fire That Never Ceases in the Home of a Tule- Cuna	292



# Jungle Jim



## CHAPTER I

# One for the Money

**I**T WAS LIKE THIS: There were four of us. If it wasn't one of the four who was in trouble it would be another. It was like that all through college. And now college was over. We had to go somewhere else for trouble, didn't we?

The four were Honeybee, Johnny Barleycorn, Eel Thompson and me—Jim Price.

Johnny and I roomed together. He was a big, husky guy but he didn't play football. He was king of the campus. He had more friends than anybody that ever lived. He would grin at you, and you would love him. That was Johnny.

Honeybee wasn't bigger than a grasshopper. But he was one hundred and twenty pounds of dynamite. He played quarter and ran us all ragged.

Eel got his name from the way he could wiggle through any line-up you might mention. He and I were the backs, but it was Eel that made all the touchdowns.

## Jungle Jim

Any kid in college in those days, anywhere in the U.S., used to get sort of mixed up in his mind. Half the time he would be in college and half the time in the army. To begin with, just about the time we were freshmen they had started up a war over in Europe. We weren't in it then, but a lot of us kids got ready.

Polytechnic is at Auburn, in Alabama. Auburn is right near Montgomery, where I hail from. A lot of us at Auburn joined the National Guard. The favorite outfit—if you could get into it—was Battery C, 1st Field Artillery. Battery C was like a club. Call off the roster, and it was like calling off the pick of all the college athletes in the South. If you could get yourself into Battery C you could strut like a cornfield nigger with a ten-cent sec-gar.

You could belong to Battery C and still be going to college. But all of a sudden we found we had got ourselves a job. This man Villa was romping around Mexico. Troops got sent down to the border. We went along with Battery C. We never got across the border. We got stuck at Camp Jones, in Arizona, along with about twenty thousand others, for months. There were Regular Army regiments there, and we got kidded plenty. They looked down on us, naturally. So we didn't do any strutting.

They played interregimental football there in camp, and the champs were the 18th Infantry team. We figured we could get up a scrub team in Battery C, and the 18th consented to play us—as a favor.

The Battery C line-up was a honey. We had Harg Vandergraft, University of Alabama—he was All-Southern fullback that year. We had the two Bates brothers from Sewanee. We had "Kid" Knapp from Georgia Tech—he was All-Southern end. We had "Rabbit" Johnson, as fast an end as Knapp, but we didn't have a quarter, so "Rab-



## One for the Money

bit" went in at quarter. The rest of the team was just as good. We didn't have time to practice signals, so "Rabbit" would just call the play in a huddle. The 18th Infantry team came out on the field and told us, "You'd better go home, little boys, to your mummies." A crowd of thirty thousand saw that game. The final score was 105-0. That's a fact. Battery C, 105. Eighteenth Infantry, zero. We had just worn ourselves out running.

After that the Regular Army didn't bother us so much.

Well, we came back from the border and went back to college. The next spring the country got into the war in France. Battery C got mustered in as the 117th Field Artillery. But I didn't get to go with the rest of them. I'd broken my left shoulder in a game the year before and was just getting over it. I was transferred to Auxiliary Remount Depot 312 at Montgomery, and there I stayed till the end of the war. We bought and trained and shipped four thousand horses and mules to France, and I got so I never wanted to hear a mule heehaw again.

They mustered us out in January 1919, and back I went to Polytech. The next fall I was in shape to play football. Old Mike Donahue of Yale, Tui-Tui Donahue, was coaching us again. Walter Camp said once that Mike was the greatest player that ever stepped on a field. We used to call him Tui-Tui there at Auburn because he would always be pulling up a handful of grass while he was watching us work and chewing it and spitting it out. "Tui-Tui!" He ran us ragged. He was a wizard.

The biggest game we had on our schedule that fall was Washington & Lee. When college opened up in September we heard that some of the team weren't coming back, because they couldn't afford to. So Eel Thompson went around and started up collections at the frat houses, and

## Jungle Jim

everybody rained nickels and dimes into the hat, and we raised a couple of thousand dollars to bring 'em back with. Then old Prof. Steadham, who was faculty adviser on athletics, got wind of it and called a mass meeting in the gym and stood up and told us that it couldn't be done, that it would be just like buying professionals. You should have heard the boos! The whole college was there, and we all but tore the gym down. Somebody got to throwing rolls of toilet paper, and the riot was on. They took old Prof. Steadham out the back door, and the next day he resigned. The whole college would have gone on strike if he hadn't got out.

We went through the season without a defeat. We licked Vanderbilt 56-6. But by the time we were to play the Washington & Lee game we were all crippled up. I got a Charley horse and was just dragging one leg behind me, and Tui-Tui wouldn't even let me into the game. Washington & Lee was picked to win. I don't know what happened to our team, but they seemed to go scoring crazy. I sat on the side lines and watched them roll up a score of 77-0.

Georgia Tech had come through the season with only one defeat—the Washington & Lee game. Neither side scored a touchdown, but Mattox kicked a goal from the field for the Generals. Except for that Georgia Tech was at the top of the heap. We played 'em Thanksgiving Day at Atlanta. We ran a special train to the game from Montgomery, and everybody in college who could beg, borrow or steal the price came along to back up the team. If we could lick Georgia Tech we would take the championship of the South.

That was as tough a game as I ever played in. Those Golden Tornadoes from Georgia Tech were out for

## One for the Money

blood. They had Buck Flowers at left half. He made the All-America. They had Judy Harlan at fullback. *He* made the All-America. We fought up and down the field all that afternoon, and Tui-Tui Donahue must have chewed up a ton of grass on the side lines, praying for us. They went over for a touchdown, and the score was 7-0 against us. Eel wiggled through for a touchdown, and the score was 7-7. We kicked off and held them, way down in their territory, and they had to punt. Eel was playing way back to receive the kick. Count on him to run it back.

Nothing ever happens the way you expect it. We had a center that was a pippin, but nobody ever expected him to run with the ball, naturally. But in this play he broke up the Golden Tornado line like it was paper. That punt got off just a split second late. He came charging at Judy Harlan just as Judy kicked, and the ball struck him square in the stomach. He wrapped his arms around his stomach and the ball was still there. He kept right on charging. He went over their goal line. We kicked the goal, and the score was 14-7. We were champions of the South.

We went off the field and into the showers. We were happy but worn to a frazzle. We were so tired we could just stand up, and no more. From the top of our heads to the soles of our feet we were just one continuous ache and bruise. They got us into the busses, but an ambulance would have suited us better, and took us back to our hotel. The excitement of winning kept us up long enough to get some dinner down, and then we headed right for our hotel rooms. All we wanted was some sleep.

But you know how it is. Our fellows from Auburn, who had come up to root for us, never had enough money for a hotel room. The team had rooms, of course, and that

## Jungle Jim

was enough for the gang. They just naturally wandered in, and we were lucky to keep our beds, but they took up every other square inch. It was the same after all games. They slept on chairs and on the floor, and three or four of 'em would sleep *under* the beds. And after this game they came in, tired as we were, and, of course, they had to talk it all over. Georgia Tech, 7. Auburn, 14! Oh boy! There must have been twenty fellows jammed into our room, and the corridor outside the doors of rooms on that floor where the rest of our team were looked like a mass meeting.

In our room there were two beds. Honeybee and I had one, and Johnny and Eel were to have the other. As soon as we went up after dinner Eel took his clothes off and said he was going to get some sleep. He never wore any pajamas, just slept raw. He was black and blue from head to foot, and his knees were like a couple of pumpkins. He pushed enough of the gang away so he could get on the bed and lie down. The hullabaloo went right on.

Pretty soon a fellow nobody knew stuck his head in at the door. He was a little guy in a black derby hat and he looked like a race-track bookie, hardy looking and much older than any of us kids. He had a bunch of folding money in each fist and he waved it at us and said, "Any Auburn money here?" He pretended he was from Georgia Tech, but that was a lie. He never saw Georgia Tech. He was probably in a reform school from the time he could walk.

Somebody got out the dice, and the game was on. They squeezed the crowd back enough to make room on the floor and began rolling. Most of our fellows had had bets up on the game that afternoon and had cashed them, so the little guy in the derby figured he was all set to make

## One for the Money

a killing. But they wouldn't let him use his own dice, and he didn't make out so good. The money seesawed back and forth on the carpet for an hour or so, and he began to get nervous. The noise in that room got worse and worse, and the smoke was so thick you couldn't breathe. Finally Eel, still trying to get to sleep, began to get tired of it. He was always soft-spoken and never got mad at anybody in all his life, so far as I know. He just sat up on the edge of the bed and begged them to let him get some sleep. He had carried most of that football game on his shoulders that afternoon and he was plumb tired.

"Listen, fellas," he said gently, "would you mind goin' somewhere else?"

The little guy in the derby gave him a dirty look and said, "I'm losin', fella. Gimme a chance to get somethin' back."

"All right, all right," said Eel. "But, please, mister——"

They went right on shooting the works and never even listened.

After another half-hour Eel tried again. "Aw, just one more," they told him. "Then we'll go—honest."

A half-hour more, and they were still going strong. Eel got up off the bed and came over to them. "Say, you birds," he said, still in that soft-spoken way of his, "we were in a football game. I have to sleep."

The little guy got nasty. "The hell with you," he said. "I'm stayin' right here."

Eel reached down and lifted him up and walked him over to the door. I held the door open, and Eel dropped him out in the corridor. Eel was just starting to close the door again when the little guy picked himself up and said:

"Come out here, you!"

## Jungle Jim

Eel started toward the little guy, who had backed across the corridor. I was right at Eel's elbow. The little guy was holding his right hand down by his side, and I saw he was holding a knife in it. Eel was so mad he never saw it, but it wouldn't have made any difference to Eel if he had.

I took off with one step and dived at the little guy's knees. I may have missed a couple of flying tackles that afternoon but I didn't miss that one. We went down together with a crash, and the knife flew out of his hand. We rolled on the floor.

By that time all the fellows in our room had come swarming out, and the crowd in the corridor came a-running. Eel picked the little guy off the floor and held him over his head. Then he gave him a heave. The crowd never let him touch the floor. They tossed him from one end of that corridor to the other over their heads. The elevator door opened, and they pushed him into the elevator. "On your way," they said. "Come back for your knife if you want to."

We went back into our room, and there was nobody in it now but Honeybee and Johnny. They were both sound asleep—had been for an hour. Eel looked at me and grinned.

"Well, here we are," he said. "The four of us. Came sorta close to bein' only three of us, huh? Well, what do you say we get some sleep?"

Try and get it!

## CHAPTER II

### Two for the Show

**A**FTER that final football game it made us feel melancholy whenever we got to thinking that football days were over for good and all. We felt like old men: everything was behind us. I was all of twenty-two years old.

If it hadn't been for my being on the college boxing team and in the Glee Club I don't know how I could have got through that winter and spring. Being socked on the nose with an eight-ounce mitt once in a while keeps your mind off too much melancholy. I came through the winter all right in the intercollegiates and wound up by kayoing Smear Case, Vanderbilt's welterweight champ, in three rounds.

The Glee Club was a help, too, in getting you through those last six months when, if you don't watch yourself, you find yourself thinking, "Holy smoke, just a few more weeks, and there won't be any more of this. We'll be breaking up and separating, and it will be good-by forever!" Rehearsals for Glee Club concerts helped make you forget, and when the club went on tour we had a swell time. There was always a dance after each concert, and

## Jungle Jim

there were more good-looking gals than a fellow could take care of. Yes sir, being in the Glee Club was a great help. We had a quartet, and I was the lead baritone. They use to make me sing solos too. "Vale of Dreams" was one. But the one that always got the biggest hand was "Baby, Won't You Please Come Home?"

That was a song written by a Negro named Clarence Williams who used to play in a honky-tonk in New Orleans, in the Basin district. He wrote the words and the music. I've heard people say that it is the greatest jazz song ever written. Clarence Williams went up to New York after that and went into the music-publishing business. But that song was famous long before that. There was a race track near Montgomery called the Washington Track, but the colored folks always called it Peacock Track, because that was where they strutted. There was a cook named Bessie Smith, from Birmingham, who used to sing that song like nobody's business. The words were sort of foolish, of course, but those breaks when the C chord would slide into the F were enough to break your heart with homesickness.

### BABY, WON'T YOU PLEASE COME HOME?

Words and Music by  
CLARENCE WILLIAMS (A.S.C.A.P.)  
and CHARLES WARFIELD

I've got the blues, I feel so lonely,  
I'd give the world if I could only make you understand,  
It surely would be grand;  
I'm going to telegraph you, baby,

Copyright, 1928, by Clarence Williams Music Pub., Inc., 145 West Forty-fifth Street, New York City.



## Two for the Show

Ask you won't you please come home,  
'Cause when you're gone I worry, all day long.

### *Chorus:*

Baby, won't you please come home?  
'Cause your daddy's all alone.  
I have tried in vain, never more to call your name,  
When you left, you broke my heart,  
'Cause I never thought we'd part;  
Every hour in the day, you will hear me say:  
"Baby, won't you please come home?"

If I could only find my baby,  
Straight to the preacher we would, maybe, happy I would be,  
My little babe and me;  
I never knew how much I love you,  
Till you went away one day,  
What made you leave I just can't hardly say.

That was what I sang. I couldn't sing it now, not if you were to give me a million dollars on a platter. But there was no use trying to get through one of our Glee Club concerts in those days without singing it. They would stomp their feet and yell and whistle and carry on till you had to do it. "Sing it, Jim! Sing 'Baby, Won't You Please Come Home?'" A crazy song, wasn't it? And crazy kids.

February went by, and March came along. The dogwood started blossoming; the fields began getting greener, and soon it was warm weather, and the nights were made for sitting outdoors and talking and wondering what we were going to do after we got out of college. We would spend hours, Johnny, Honeybee, Eel and I, talking and talking and getting nowhere with it. The only thing we were sure of was that the four of us oughtn't to separate. We ought to stick together.

## Jungle Jim

And then the split-up came. Honeybee and Johnny got bids. They got offers of jobs with the Honduras Fruit Company down in Honduras. That sounded an awfully long way to go. They were to start down there in June, right after graduation.

Eel and I were as excited as they were, even if we weren't going with them. I remember all four of us went around to the college library and asked to see maps. The librarian nearly fainted. It was the first we had ever been known to go in there of our own accord.

But the librarian got the maps out for us, and we took them over to a wide table and spread them out and crowded against each other, all four of us trying to look at the same map at the same time. I wish somebody had taken a picture of us then. I'd like to see it. The four of us, with our arms around each other's shoulders and breathing down each other's necks. Crazy kids. That would be a picture for the book, all right.

"We sail from New Orleans," said Johnny, trying to whisper so as not to bother the grinds who were glaring at us. "See? Right from here! And we go almost due south across the gulf and around this shoulder of land—Yucatán, isn't it?—and on down to Rincon. Doesn't look very far, does it?"

"Doesn't look far?" said Eel. "Why, that's going to take you three full days."

"Where's Panama?" said Honeybee, crowding in closer. "Let me have a look, can't you? Do we go anywhere near Panama?"

"Certainly not," said Johnny. "You're as ignorant as a mule. Look, here's Honduras, where we're goin', and there's Panama, away to hellangone further south."

## Two for the Show

"Aw, shucks," said Johnny in a disappointed sort of way. "I was hopin' maybe we'd get to Panama."

"Why are you so steamed up about Panama?" said Eel. "You gotta girl down there?"

Johnny got red in the face. "No," he said. "I haven't any girl there. I just sort of thought——" He stopped.

"Thought?" said Honeybee. "You never had a thought in your life. Come on, spill it—what gave you the idea we might get to Panama?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Johnny, sort of embarrassed. "I was just readin' a book about it. It was about how the Spanish first came there. You know, right after Columbus. Four hundred years ago. They were bad actors, those Spaniards! What was it they called 'em?—conquistadors? The way they treated the Indians was somethin' scandalous, I'm tellin' you. They heard tell where there was an Indian goddess——"

"Aha!" said Eel. "I thought there was a girl in it somewhere."

"Shut up, Eel. I'm tellin' you. These here Spanish conquistadors were all hopped up to get gold. They had an idea the Indians knew where there was mountains of it—if they could only get them to say where. But the Indians gave 'em the old run-around. They kept tellin' the Spaniards they would find all the gold they wanted, but not there. Just over the next mountain they could find plenty. But the biggest lot of gold anywhere, they said, was in the temple of this goddess of theirs. They said the temple was over the mountains, somewhere in Panama, and it was stuffed full of gold from floor to ridgepole. But of course the Spaniards never found it. I was just thinkin' case we got to Panama we might sort of look around for it."

## Jungle Jim

Honeybee and Eel and I let out such a yell the librarian rapped on her desk and shook her head at us to keep quiet.

"And of course you would marry the goddess," said Honeybee. "That's a great idea, Johnny. You must have lay awake all night thinkin' that one up. Only trouble is, you and me aren't goin' to get to Panama. You're goin' to be pickin' bananas in Honduras, and that's as near as you're goin' to get to Panama."

The next couple of months, till June, the four of us didn't talk about much of anything else except this job that Johnny and Honeybee were going to soon as commencement was over. Eel and I would have given our eye-teeth to go along.

We went down to the train to see them off when they finally started for New Orleans. Honeybee and Johnny stuck their heads out of the car window when the train pulled out. I sure was sorry to see them go. We four had been running around together ever since we were kids. We ate together, bunked together, made love to the same girls, had our ears torn off in the same football games, borrowed money from each other, got in jams together for so many years that it didn't seem like the four of us would ever break up.

When the train had sure enough pulled out Eel and I walked back along the station platform without saying a word. Eel began humming a song under his breath. I don't suppose he even knew what he was singing. But I got the tune. It was "Baby, Won't You Please Come Home?" Eel was humming the words:

*"But when you left, you broke my heart,  
'Cause I never thought we'd part;  
Every hour . . .*

## Two for the Show

"Oh, for the love of Mike, lay off that!" I said.

"Huh?" said Eel. He was startled. "Lay off what?" he said.

"That song."

Eel sort of came to. "Oh!" he said. "Sure."

I went home and hung around the house all that summer. Once in a while either Eel or I would get a letter from Johnny or from Honeybee, and whenever we did we would sit and talk about it for hours. They were having themselves a swell time, they said. We ought to get ourselves a job with the same company and come down there. Or maybe we hadn't better. Honduras was an awful tough country, they said. It was no place for green-horns. You had to carry yourself a gun and know how to use it. Course, we knew they were kidding us. What they said made us all the more hot to go down there, no matter if it was all lies. Eel and I used to talk a lot about it.

But that summer was all over before we *did* anything about it. By that time, long about November, I was as restless as a cat with kittens. It got on my mother's nerves. It got on my father's nerves too. They knew I wanted to go.

I was mooning around the house one night and I got to work on an old hoss pistol of mine, going over it with oil and a soft rag, just for something to do. It was an old .41-caliber revolver; you don't see them much. My father had given it to me when I was a kid. I would brag to the other kids that it was the same one my granddaddy carried to catch himself a mess of Yankees for breakfast, but I don't know. It didn't need any cleaning. I'd cleaned it about once a day for weeks.

As I was sitting there, fooling with the thing, thinking about Honduras, my mother put her sewing down and

## Jungle Jim

spoke up to my father. "Mr Price," she said (she most always called him Mr Price), "if you don't make Jim stop fooling with that gun I will!"

My father put down his newspaper. "Why," he said, "he's a grown man. He's twenty-two. I can't make him put it away."

My mother's chin sort of wobbled. I thought she was going to cry. I got up quick. "Why, sure," I said. "I didn't know it was worryin' you, Ma."

"It isn't the gun so much," she said, "as it's the way you're carrying on. I got you home safe from the wars"—you would have thought I'd been fighting and getting wounded all over the map instead of just skinning shave-tail mules in Alabama—"and now you want to go wandering all over South America."

"Why, no," I said. "Not all over South America. Only Honduras."

"Well," she said, "nobody in *our* family ever went gallivanting around among Amazons."

My father picked up his pipe. "No," he said, "I wouldn't. I like 'em your height. But Jim's great-granddaddy did. Maybe it skips in the blood."

He held up the pipe. It has a curved stem, nearly a foot long. The bowl is mighty near as big as a teacup.

"That's your great-granddaddy's pipe, Jim," he said. "That's more 'n a hundred years old. Richard Price, his name was. He was an Englishman but he was Welsh stock. That's a Welsh name. It used to be Ap Rhys, and that means 'son of the warrior,' but the English ran the two words into one. There was a cattle shortage in England in his day. He knew all there was to know about Herefords. The government picked him out to go to South America and see if he could buy any cattle there.

## Two for the Show

He went into the back country, into Uruguay, traveled among the Amazons and places where an Englishman had never been seen, let alone a Welshman. And he brought back enough cattle to give roast beef to every Englishman from that day to this. There's a Mother Goose rhyme that was written about your great-granddaddy. The South Americans got it up. 'Taffy was a Welshman, Taffy was a thief, Taffy came to our house and stole a leg of beef.' If Jim wants to go to South America, I don't know who's got a better right to go."

"Mr Price," said my mother, "I never heard such nonsense but I suppose he's got to go."

So Eel Thompson and I sent in our applications to the Honduras Fruit Company, and they told us to come ahead. We were to get a hundred and twenty dollars a month and our board. That's about four dollars a day.

We didn't know there was to be a show thrown in along with the money.

## CHAPTER III

### The King of the Caribs

**E**EL THOMPSON AND I were the most excited pair of kids you ever saw by the time we got on board that little steamer at New Orleans and headed south, bound for Honduras, across the Gulf of Mexico. The Ellis, that was the name of the boat. She had room for only fifteen or twenty passengers, all told, but she looked to me like the Leviathan. We thought she was carrying us straight into romance.

I was all dressed up in a sixteen-gallon Panama and an ice-cream suit of Shantung linen, with snow-white riding breeches, and my old .41-caliber gun in a holster at my belt. Eel was just as bad. The old-timers on the boat must have been amused at us. We had been told by a guy in New Orleans that was the right way to dress and we believed everything they told us.

As soon as we told the old-timers on the Ellis that we were on our way to work for the fruit company at Rincon they said:

“Oh, oh! Look out for the king, boys!”



## The King of the Caribs

“King?” we said. “What king? They got a king over Honduras?”

That’s as much as we knew then. We didn’t even know Honduras was a republic with a president, same as the United States.

But the old-timer that was kidding us just laughed. “Oh no,” he said. “This bird isn’t a real king. But that’s what they call him—the ‘King of the Caribs.’ Better watch your step when you meet up with him.”

Eel and I were so green we didn’t even know what a Carib was.

“What’s a Carib?” we said. “Who is this ‘King of the Caribs’?”

It turns out that the man they called the King of the Caribs was an American named Anderson, a whale of a big redheaded guy, hard-boiled as they make them. He was wharf superintendent at Rincon, for the fruit company, and boss of the two or three hundred natives that worked on the docks loading bananas onto boats like the Ellis. Some of these laborers were native Hondurans, but a lot of them were full-blooded Negroes—dumped on the north coast by slave traders. Anderson had been working in Honduras for twenty or thirty years and had got a name for himself for handling these poor devils pretty rough. That was why they called him the King of the Caribs.

He wasn’t any better tempered, our friend on the boat told us, with white men than with the natives. His particular meat, they said, was youngsters fresh off the boat. He was a bad hombre, the King. He liked to play all the mean tricks he could think of, especially on greenhorns. It was a good idea to sit quiet and act polite and steer clear of any ruckus with the King, they said.

## Jungle Jim

Eel and I listened with a sort of sick feeling in the pit of our stomachs, but we figured we could mind our own business as well as anybody, even if we were as green as they came.

In three days the *Ellis* pulled up at the Rincon docks, and we—Eel and I—almost fell over the rail, yelling at Johnny and little Honeybee, who were there to meet us. The sun was hotter than any I'd ever known. We could see palm trees everywhere and over across the bay, to the south, we could see low mountains rising, blue in the distance. Boy, here we were!

The first man that came on board the ship, before they let any of us off, was a big redheaded guy, built like a bull, in a dirty white suit that looked as if he used it for pajamas. He took a look around the deck and spotted us and came right over. He was as polite as pie. Butter wouldn't melt in his mouth.

"You two boys Thompson and Price?" he said. "My name's Anderson. Glad to see you!"

The King of the Caribs! Eel and I nearly fell over.

He stuck out a hand as big as a ham, and we shook hands. He had a fist like iron. He was grinning, but I didn't like his eyes. They were cold all the time he was grinning.

Right away he caught sight of the old pistol I had slung in the holster. He pointed at it and shook his head.

"It's a good thing I came on board before the government men," he said. "They can make a lot of unnecessary trouble if they want to. They'll never let you, a newcomer, take that gun ashore with you. Just slip it to me, and I'll take care of it for you. And that camera of yours, Thompson—better let me take that too. No sense in letting these spig customs squirts bother you. Here, I'll fix

## The King of the Caribs

all that for you. Just come around to my house in a couple of days, and I'll have 'em for you, all safe and sound."

Eel and I sure were obliged to him. We thanked him three or four times. We thought it was mighty nice of him to be so helpful to a couple of greenhorns.

We sure were glad to see Johnny and the Honeybee. The four of us stood there on the dock, hugging each other and whooping like Indians. There was a steady stream of truckloads of bunches of bananas going past us while we talked under the long corrugated iron roof of the dock, and I never saw so many naked niggers in my life, all working like mad. Most of them didn't seem to wear anything but a G string, and I didn't blame them. It was hotter than hell. Honeybee and Johnny laughed themselves sick at our white suits and told us we would chuck them plenty soon.

"What's the idea of the swords?" I said. I was staring at the nigger workmen, with my eyes popping out. No matter if mighty nigh every one of them was naked as a jay bird, he was carrying a big, heavy sword, dangling from a strap. Leastway, they looked like swords to me.

Johnny let out a howl. "You mean to say you don't know what a machete is? Why, there isn't a native from here to the far end of the banana country that doesn't carry one of those razors! He doesn't think he's dressed unless he wears one. As a matter of fact, a machete is the one tool a plantation worker can't get along without—clears away jungle vines with it, chops wood, uses it for everything."

"Looks like it would make a mighty mean cut," I said.

"Take a man's head off his shoulders with one blow," said Johnny. "When a native gets full of likker watch out for him."

## Jungle Jim

"A man by the name of Anderson took my gun away from me before I got off the ship," I said. "He told me I couldn't get through customs with it and he said he would fix it for me. He's taking care of Eel's camera too."

Honeybee looked mad. "He can't get away with that," he said. "He probably thinks you'll be afraid to come back to get them. We'll get them—don't worry."

He and Johnny took us on up to the company's clubhouse, and we checked in. They got us a room in the dormitory, and we were introduced all around, and everything was swell. They began showing us the ropes the next morning. I didn't sleep much that first night. There was some sort of a bird with a funny whistle which lit right outside my window and kept whistling all night. It wasn't like any sound I'd ever heard before in all my life. I wished I was back home in Alabama, almost.

They let us take it easy the first day or so, and Johnny and Honeybee showed us what there was to see of the town, and the four of us had a barrel of fun, talking over old times in Alabama.

We were chinning about football and this and that and wondering where different fellows were now—fellows we had known at college—when Johnny said:

"Remember Larry Casey, Jim?"

"Sure," I said. "What about him?"

Larry had been welterweight boxing champ at Georgia Tech. I had boxed him the year before, my senior year at Auburn. It went eight rounds, and then they gave me the decision on a technical knockout. But it was an off night with him. He was ordinarily much better.

"He's down here too," said Johnny.

"Is that a fact!" I said. "I'd sure like to see Larry. He was a mighty nice guy."

## The King of the Caribs

"Yessir," said Johnny, "he's around these parts somewhere. He qualified as a civil engineer, and the fruit company has got him out in the bush, draining off lowlands so as they can be planted with banana trees. He doesn't get into Rincon more than once in a dog's age, but we could get hold of him. Say, how about fixing up a match with him one of these days? What do you say?"

"Okay by me," I said. "I'm in pretty fair shape, I guess. This left shoulder of mine is still bothering me some—remember I got it broken in that Vanderbilt game?—but this hot weather down here ought to take out the stiffness. I'd like to see old Larry anyway."

Johnny said he'd get busy right away.

I went over to the dock the next day to hunt up Mr Anderson and get my gun back. The place was swarming with workmen, hundreds of them, toting big bunches of green bananas out of the dinky little freight cars that had come in on the narrow-gauge tracks from the plantations and loading them on board ship—hundreds of natives in ragged pants and half-shirts and bare feet, and hundreds of Carib niggers in half of that, all sweating in and out of the long sheds. When you stepped out of the blazing sun into the shadow of the sheds you could hardly see for a while. But it was easy to pick Anderson out of the crowd. He was head and shoulders taller than the rest of them. I went over and stood alongside of him, but he made out as though he didn't even know I was there. Looked right over my head and went on bawling out orders right and left.

Finally I coughed a little to attract his attention. "Cap'n Anderson, excusing me, sir——" I said, moving around in front of him.

## Jungle Jim

He flickered those cold eyes of his over me once and kept on looking right over my head.

I could feel myself getting sort of red. But I went on talking polite. "Excuse me, sir," I said. "Could I get my property now, sir?"

He looked down at me as if he had just noticed me for the first time.

"What the hell do *you* want?" he yelled at me.

I clamped down on what I wanted to answer and kept on talking polite. "Could I have my gun now, please, sir?" I said. "And thank you very kindly, sir."

He stared down at me and commenced to get red in the face, like as if he was working himself up into a mad. "No!" he snapped. "Can't you see I'm busy?"

"Yes sir," I said. "I'm sorry. I can come some other time if you'll tell me when, sir."

He didn't answer a word—just turned and walked off. I was plenty mad. I took a step or two after him and then I pulled myself together. I'd be a fool to start anything—a green kid just off the boat—with the King of the Caribs. So I got a hold of my own coat collar and marched myself back to the company clubhouse. I told Johnny about it, and he was sore but agreed that it would be better to wait till Anderson wasn't so busy.

So I hung around until quitting time came and I could see the dock laborers hurrying for home and then I went over there again. This time Anderson couldn't give me the stall that he was too busy. He was standing around gassing with some of the foremen. I waited until he got through with them and then braced him again to let me have my gun. But this time he thought up another excuse.

"No, no, not now," he said, acting as though he was talking to a kid. "You don't understand, Price. See that

## The King of the Caribs

soldier over there? If I was to give you that gun now he would stop you before you got off the dock. Wait a few days, wait till he's got used to seeing you around. I know what I'm talking about."

I looked over at the soldier. He was a brown-skinned kid in faded blue pants with a red stripe in them and he was leaning up against a post with his mouth open, asleep on his feet. His rifle was propped up on a pile of planks ten feet away. You could have taken his rifle and given him a good spanking across your knee but you would have had to wake him up first.

I choked down what I wanted to say. There was no use arguing. I just walked off. Anderson stood there grinning. I know now that he was just plain ornery mean, getting a laugh for himself by kidding a greenhorn. But I didn't know that then.

I let three or four days slide by without going back to see Anderson. I was being kept plenty busy learning the business anyhow. Then I heard a rumor that in a couple of weeks more I could be sent by the company to a place call Taujica, fifty miles or so to the south of Rincon, to work on new plantations that were being opened up there. The boys all told me it was a pretty wild country, almost untouched jungle. So I began to worry about getting my old .41 pistol back from Anderson more than ever.

I worried so much about it that I finally did something that I'm sorry for now. I kept thinking about it but the more I studied over it the less I wanted to go back to Anderson and run the risk of being stalled off for a third time. If he should refuse once more to hand my gun back to me I knew I wouldn't be able to hold my temper any longer. I would blow up, and that would be just too bad. Even if we didn't get into a brawl it couldn't help me any,

## Jungle Jim

as a beginner with the company, to have an argument with one of the top men. I just couldn't see myself getting turned down for a third time by Anderson without losing my temper and telling him where to head in and yet I was convinced that he would hang on to my gun just as long as he could get away with it.

I just didn't know what to do. Finally I did what I wish now I hadn't done: I went to see Mr Beckett, the general superintendent of the company, and told him the story. Looking back on it, I don't think I should have done that. I should have handled the thing by myself. But I was just a kid and I thought that was the best thing to do—get some advice.

Mr Beckett listened and told me not to worry. He said that if I would go back to Anderson the next day he thought I wouldn't have any more trouble about it.

I walked over to the docks the next morning, and as soon as Anderson saw me coming he beckoned to me to come over. He had my gun all ready for me, wrapped up in an old newspaper, and when he handed it over to me he patted my shoulder.

"Here's your little plaything, *Mister Price*," he said. "Now run along and don't hurt yourself with it."

I looked him straight in the eye. "And Thompson's camera?" I said.

He handed it over without a word.

"Thanks very much," I said.

"Oh," he said just as I was turning away, "give my regards to Mr Beckett, *Mister Price*."

He was smiling, but there was a look in those cold eyes of his that meant I was in trouble if he could manage it. By this time I was so mad that I didn't care. Anderson was sore, of course, because Mr Beckett had ordered him





La Palma, the capital of Darien Province, seven thousand square miles of dense jungle.



## The King of the Caribs

to give my gun back and quit riding a new man. I wished I hadn't told Mr Beckett a thing about it. I made up my mind I'd fight my own battles from then on.

But from then on I didn't have time to think about Anderson, because I was too busy with other things. It kept me busy all day learning my job, and outside of the job I was trying to get myself into better shape for the bout with Larry Casey which was to come off in a week or so. He had agreed to come over, and the boys had fixed up a card of three or four bouts for that evening, with Larry and me as the main bout. The company clubhouse, where we lived, was a two-story barracks with rooms for about fifty men, all single. We called it the Crazy House. Married men all lived in bungalows on the higher ground toward Trujillo, which was eight miles away, around the end of the bay. The clubhouse was built on flat swampy ground, on stilts. There was water a foot deep under the boardwalk around the building. Beyond it was a mangrove swamp, with clumps of low, bushy trees growing right out of the water. On the ground floor of the clubhouse there were a couple of big rooms, with a billiard table and a couple of pool tables in one of them. We moved the furniture out of one of the rooms, and I got myself a little sparring there, mornings and evenings. I felt as fit as I ever did. Everybody crowded around to watch the workouts, and nothing else was talked about except this bout that was to come off. Anderson must have heard about it, of course, although he never stuck his face into the clubhouse.

Christmas Day came along, and it was hot as August in Alabama. Most of the fellows living in the Crazy House went over to Trujillo that day and got themselves nicely boiled. Johnny and the Honeybee took Eel and me

## Jungle Jim

over to Trujillo so we could blow ourselves to a real dinner at the only good restaurant in the town, a little place run by an old Frenchman who sure knew how to cook. It was tucked away on a little cobblestoned street up on the hill overlooking the bay, and we made out we could see all the way across a thousand miles of water and see what the folks were doing at home. I guess all four of us were homesick.

We went back to Rincon after dark and wandered down to the docks to look at a big fruit steamer that was getting ready to sail for Boston the next morning. She was lighted up from one end to the other, and there was a big gang of nigger stevedores getting the last of her cargo on board. It didn't help our homesickness any, staring at her.

One of the fellows from the clubhouse came along while we were standing there and stopped to say hello. "Going to the party, ain't you?" he said.

We hadn't heard about any party.

"Why, sure, everybody's welcome," he said. "The King of the Caribs is leavin' for Boston tomorrow mornin' on this boat. He's throwin' a farewell party for himself over at his house. Open house, free drinks. Come ahead, let's get goin' before the likker runs out."

Well, naturally I didn't want to go, for two reasons: first of all, I didn't like Anderson, and, moreover, I was more or less in training and didn't want a drink. But Johnny and the Honeybee and Eel Thompson had all tucked several under their belts and they were raring to go. They wouldn't listen to me. I had to go along, and that was all there was to it.

Anderson's house was a bungalow right alongside the docks. Sure enough, it was all lighted up, and there was a

## The King of the Caribs

dozen or so fellows in there, with a lot of noise going on. We went up on the porch, and they all yelled to us to come in. We went in, with me hanging back behind the others, sort of. I didn't want to be there, anyway.

Anderson was standing in the middle of the room alongside a table covered with bottles and glasses. It was a hot night, and he was naked to the waist, with sweat running down his chest. He looked bigger than ever—bigger than Jess Willard.

"Step right up to the bar, gents!" he yelled. "Christmas comes but once a year, and when it comes I say to hell with it!"

Just then he saw me back of the others. He put his glass down on the table and let out a yawp.

"Well, look who's here!" he yelled. "Our champion of the ring in person! Well, well, this is indeed an honor!"

Nobody could miss the sneer in his voice, and everybody in the room quieted down till you could hear a pin drop. He sounded mighty mean, mighty ugly. He took a step toward me.

"So you're a box fighter, are you?" he said.

I tried to laugh it off. "No sir," I said, "I don't claim to be a fighter."

"You don't, huh? They tell me you're braggin' you can whip anybody. Well, I'll tell you somebody can whip you."

"There's plenty can, I reckon," I said. I was still trying to smile, but it didn't seem to come easy.

"I'll tell you somebody," he yelled. "Right here!" He thumped himself on his chest. "And right now!"

I was getting cold mad. "That's no way to talk, mister," I said.

## Jungle Jim

"You claim to be a boxer," he went on, sneering. "All right, we'll box."

"Suits me," I said. "But take that ring off your finger, mister." I noticed he was wearing a ring on his right hand with a cut stone in it as big as a walnut.

"I'll take off nothin'!" he said. He took a step toward me. I backed away a step. He reached out and grabbed me by the lapel of my coat, that Shantung linen coat I had bought me in New Orleans, for nice. I thought the world and all of that coat.

"Take your hand off me," I said. I jerked away. The ring tore the lapel. I went crying mad.

A couple of his friends pulled him back. "The kid's right, King," they said. "Take your ring off first."

He pulled away from them. "The hell I will," he said. "That's what I cut 'em with."

He started coming at me again. I had got my coat off and tossed it behind me without taking my eyes off him. Honeybee grabbed the coat.

The King came at me. He was half a head taller than me and he weighed two hundred pounds easy. I was scaling a hundred and fifty pounds then. I knew blame well that if I didn't get to him fast it would be just too bad—for me.

He swung at me with his left as he came in, and I ducked under it and feinted with my left. He was off balance and tried to pull himself back to block it and left himself wide open. I started my right for his chin and gave it everything I had. It was then or never. I gave it all the weight I had, and it was traveling fast.

When it hit him he gave one grunt. His hands went down slow, and he rocked back and forth a little. Then his knees went out from under him, and he dropped like a

## The King of the Caribs

two-hundred-pound sack. He rolled over and lay there. His head was half under a wicker couch that was pushed against the wall.

They all rushed around him—everybody but we four—and somebody yelled, "Get some water!" They doused a pitcherful on his head, and he rolled his head a little but he didn't move anything else. Honeybee handed me my coat, and I put it on. I was trembling.

I looked down at my hand. It felt mighty lame. It had begun to puff up a little already.

"Come on, let's get out of here," I said. I was hopping sore at the whole business.

"Looks like Christmas had come and gone," said Johnny. "Might as well mosey along."

"Now, wait a minute," said Eel Thompson. He was looking a little worried. "We had better stick around, hadn't we, till they bring him to?"

"It will be all right with me if he doesn't come to till the boat gets to Boston," I said. He was stirring a little now but still flat on the floor. A couple of fellows slipped out and ran down to the docks to see could they find a doctor.

While we were standing there the ship let off a couple of toots from her whistle. "What's that?" said Eel. "Is she getting ready to pull out?"

"Not till morning," somebody said. "That's just the signal that they've got all the cargo aboard. Quitting time for the roustabouts."

It wasn't any time at all before we heard a lot of yelling break out, down toward the ship, and right on top of that the queerest sort of noises you ever heard—sounded like a million people running along the pier without any shoes on. And that's exactly what it was. Right then they boiled

## Jungle Jim

around the corner of the house, those black boys in bare feet—I don't know how many hundred of them—mostly dressed in nothing at all except their machetes. I don't mind saying I was plumb scared to death. I looked around the room, quick, and all I could see was a couple of machetes hanging on the wall, crossed, for decoration, I reckon. I gave a jump for them and yanked them down, one in each hand. Eel and Johnny and the Honeybee were running around the room, trying to find a gun or a chair leg or something—anything that came handy—and some of the other birds had dived out the back door. Anderson was still lying flat on his back groaning.

By the time I had jumped back toward the door a lot of those black babies had bounded up on the porch. I waved the two machetes over my head and yelled, "Keep back, every one of you, or I'll start carving!"

I was so scared that I never once noticed that they weren't carrying their machetes in their hands. All the machetes were slung in their sheaths. And I didn't notice that most of the men were grinning.

But the first man to get up on the porch, leading the rest, was a big black buck from Jamaica, so he talked English instead of Spanish—the funniest English I ever heard.

"'Scuse, Capting, sar," he said, saluting like a soldier. "Huss gemmen 'as hinformytion that Honderson hintends to kill an hinnocent mon, sar. Kindly hawks Honderson to step to the do', sar, and huss gemmen will tyke pleasure hin 'angin' the ruddy gent to the hadjycent palm tree, sar."

I put down the machetes.

"You're a little late," I said. "But take a look for yourself."



## The King of the Caribs

He peered into the room and stared at Anderson, flat on the floor, and his eyes bugged out. Then he let out a laugh like a mule's heehaw.

"Capting, sar," he said, saluting again. "Hi thanks you, sar. Huss all thanks you, sar."

And with that he turned around and yelled out the news to all the rest of them. There was a yell went up that you might have heard in New Orleans. And after that they fought to get a peek into the door. The laughing and the cheering would have done your heart good. As for Anderson, he struggled up on one elbow and when he saw those faces at the door he just slumped down again. They had to carry him to the ship on a stretcher.

Johnny and Eel and the Honeybee and I went back to the company clubhouse, and they made me break training and take a drink. I needed it.

When the bout came off with Larry Casey a week later he whaled the tar out of me in the first rounds. I was lucky to get a draw out of it.

## CHAPTER IV

### Entrance into Jungle

**M**R BECKETT, the general manager, called me into his office and told me I was to start work at the company plantations called Chiapas Farm, in the Aguan River valley, about thirty or forty miles south of Rincon. Chiapas Farm was near a small town named Taujica and about eight miles beyond a little railroad station, Sinaloa, where the district manager, Mr McKeever, had his office. I was to take the freight train, the string of empty cars going back for bananas—there weren't any passenger cars—as far as Sinaloa, report there to Mr McKeever and get my instructions from him.

“Yes sir,” I said.

When the train of empties rattled out of Rincon the next morning, skirted the big *laguna* to the eastward of the town and turned southward I was on board, chuck full of excited anticipation of adventure. What was the name of that range of blue hills off to the southward? *Montaña de la Esperanza*, they told me—the Mountains of Hope! Would my hopes come true?

## Entrance into Jungle

There was only one thing that dampened my spirits: the fact that I hadn't been able to buy any cartridges for my old .41-caliber revolver, now strapped snugly to my belt. I had hunted high and low for them in Rincon and Trujillo, but not one storekeeper had any in stock. Of course not! That caliber was of an antiquated vintage. And in the cylinder of the gun I had only three shells left of those I had brought from home!

The train jolted slowly along and stopped repeatedly at sidings along the way to shunt off empty cars for reloading at various plantations. It was midafternoon before we finally reached Sinaloa, a village of one straggling street, lined with adobe houses, and with the long, low storage sheds of the fruit company straddling the railroad track. The company district manager at Sinaloa was too busy to give me any attention for an hour or so, and the sun was already getting close to the treetops when he gave me directions as to how to get to Chiapas Farm. He ordered a boy to saddle up an old gray mule that was dozing with drooping ears at a hitching post and pointed toward the darkening green wall of forest.

"Take this road for three or four miles," he said, "and you come to the trail leading off to the right. Don't worry about finding the place; just give this mule her head, and she'll take you there. She's made the trip so many times she can do it in her sleep. We'll send your traps on after you next time the pack train goes over. Good luck!"

I gathered up the reins, the mule flicked her ears, and we trotted off. In two minutes even the little town of Sinaloa had disappeared from view, and, so far as I could see, I was the only living person in the world. The road, hardly more than a cart track, led on through fairly thick wooded country, and nowhere did I see even a native hut.

## Jungle Jim

The old mule trotted steadily on. In an hour we came to the fork of the road that McKeever had spoken of, but by this time it had grown so dark that I never would have seen that narrow gap in the unbroken wall of vegetation that lined the road. But the old mule saw it, or sensed it, and turned confidently into the tunnel of overarching branches. I hoped she knew where she was going.

The forest closed in around us. The light was so dim now, the last rays of the setting sun filtering down through the tangle of leafage, that I could barely see the trunks of giant trees and the festoons of vines, swaying like ropes, which hung from their branches. Far overhead troops of small dark shapes moved from branch to branch, screaming and chattering. Some small catlike animal scuttled out from under the mule's hoofs and into the fernery beside the trail. Mud squished beneath the mule's feet. I wondered more and more if she had lost her way.

Suddenly I almost leaped right out of the saddle. Without warning the most startling and fearsome noise I had ever heard in my life exploded right overhead. It began with a chorus of deep, coughing roars, like those of a lion. It mounted swiftly into a booming thunder, rolling and echoing until all the jungle overhead was filled with the terrifying sound. I hadn't the faintest notion what sort of a beast was sending out this rolling thunder. Surely it was something bigger than an elephant. It seemed to come from everywhere at once. I was a goner. I slapped the mule on the haunches convulsively and grabbed for my revolver. At least, I would sell my life dear.

The mule trotted on unconcernedly, without quickening her pace in the slightest. I clutched my gun and peered vainly into the darkness. Ah, there it was! That dark shape looming up at the left of the trail—didn't I see it

## Entrance into Jungle

move? I fired at it three times, as fast as I could pull the trigger. Bang! Bang! Bang! And at the fourth pull there was only a click. My ammunition had run out!

My mule trotted calmly ahead. In three strides she had come opposite the dark looming mass that I had fired at. It didn't move. It was the stump of a tree.

But the rolling thunder went on, menacing, deafening. My only consolation was that it didn't seem to be drawing any closer. The mule went on. Little by little the fearsome voice died away behind us. Little by little the hair on the back of my neck began to settle back to normal.

And in due course of time the gleam of a house lamp shone out ahead. I was never so thankful in my life.

I heard the gurgle of water, and the mule's feet splashed as the trail disappeared into a stream. I reined her in and shouted. The lighted cabin was a hundred yards away. A lantern shone out and came bobbing toward me, and a voice shouted: "Who's thar?"

"Where's the bridge?" I shouted back. "How do I get across?"

"Ain't no bridge!" was the answer. "You kin ford it. Come ahead!"

We came ahead. The stream gurgled around the old mule's knees, but the footing was firm. We scrambled up the opposite bank. I was at Chiapas Farm.

The place was a clearing in the jungle, "new land," as they called it. There stood a group of low cabins, newly built and thatched with palm leaves, on slightly higher ground overlooking the little river. Beyond them were cattle corrals. The man who had come out to meet me shouted a command in Spanish, and a native slouched out of the darkness and led my mule away. We went up to the cabin.

## Jungle Jim

In the light of the lanterns inside the cabin I got my first look at the man who had met me, old Cliff Barker, the *mandador*, or overseer, of the farm. He was a tall, lean old fellow, a Carolina mountaineer. As well as I afterwards came to know him, he never disclosed the reason for his first coming to Central America. But it was generally believed that he had fled from the United States because of a mountain feud in which he had killed his man. But he was as gentle as a lamb, thoroughly trustworthy, and I grew to like him immensely. He had only one eye, with a glass eye in the other socket, a glass eye which he would sometimes take out and polish thoughtfully with a red bandanna handkerchief. My curiosity once got the better of me, and I asked him how he had lost his eye.

"A fellow tuk it out on me in a saloon in Panama City," he drawled. And that was all he had to say on the subject.

The other two occupants of the cabin were two younger fellows, Joe and Pete. They were good men, slightly older than myself, and delighted with the opportunity of playing practical jokes on a green hand. On that very first night after the cook, an old Jamaica Negress, had been called from her cabin to rustle up something for me to eat and we sat around the table getting acquainted my first question was as to what mysterious animal it was that had made that frightful bellowing in the jungle. Pete and Joe, and even old Cliff, laughed uproariously and slapped their knees with delight at my ignorance.

"Them was nothing but black howler monkeys," they spluttered. "Wouldn't harm nobody."

And when I sheepishly admitted that I had fired my last three cartridges at something I couldn't see they laughed harder than ever.

"Did ye ever go snipe huntin'?" asked Pete with sus-

## Entrance into Jungle

picious innocence. "Purty good snipe huntin' around here."

But that, at least, was one thing they couldn't fool me on. I'd been born in Virginia country where "snipe hunting" was something you fooled city fellers with. The victim would be taken out into the woods on a dark night and told to wait while the rest drove the snipe toward him. And there he would be left to wait for as many hours as the practical jokers thought sufficient. No, they couldn't fool me there, but in the weeks that followed Pete and Joe "got" me with many a joke.

Before we turned in that night on the long-legged iron cots that were the only furnishings of the room old Cliff and I walked out to have a look at the night. Overhead, far down on the southern horizon, burned a cluster of stars that flamed bigger than lamps, more wonderful than any stars I had ever seen.

"What stars are those?" I asked, marveling.

"Huh?" said old Cliff. "Oh, them thar? They's the Southern Cross."

The Southern Cross!

The near-by pueblo or little town of Taujica, which I soon visited, lay in a small green valley surrounded on all but one side by steep mountain walls. The floor of the valley was covered completely with a springy green turf similar to Bermuda grass, and tall palm trees of every variety, cocoa palms, manaca palms, cabbage palms and royal palms, grew luxuriantly there. The sheer rock walls had but one opening, that leading into the larger valley of the Aguan below.

But although Taujica has the most beautiful natural setting I have ever seen the town itself was wild and law-

## Jungle Jim

less, a more primitive and vicious kind of "wild West." When the weekly paydays of the hundreds of natives employed on the surrounding fruit farms came around there were always fights and frequently murders. After two or three days of carousing the men would wander back to the farms and work just enough to get enough money to maintain them for another week or so.

One day as I was riding along the muddy main street of the town where almost every other building was a cantina, or saloon, I noticed a crowd gathered around the door of one of these squalid barrooms. Just then the crowd parted to let two men come out, fighting with machetes as they came. The first, the taller of the two, was moving slowly backward, merely parrying the blows of his opponent. He was completely sober and was much the better machete man. The smaller man was extremely drunk and was lashing wildly with his machete, screaming insults and boasting of his own prowess. The excited crowd circled around them, just out of reach of the clashing blades. The taller man fended off every blow easily but as he backed away he suddenly tripped on a stone and sat down hard. The other rushed forward, raising his machete for a murderous cut at the fallen one's head. But as his blow descended the man on the ground flashed his machete just once, and the drunken man's hand, severed at the wrist, flew through the air and landed on the ground several yards away, still clutching the machete. The crowd laughed and shouted and clamored for more blood, but the fight was over.

Many similar brawls gave the town and the valley below a well-deserved reputation for lawlessness, and everyone went about armed. A drunken Honduran native was always given a wide berth.



## Entrance into Jungle

When some months had passed old Cliff was transferred to another district, and I, to my surprise, was made *mandador*, or overseer, of Chiapas Farm. Shortly thereafter two new men were sent up from Rincon, and I rode over on my horse to the district headquarters at Sinaloa to meet them. They were young boys—I already felt like a veteran, though I wasn't much older than they—fresh from the States. One, nicknamed Red, was a tall, gawky country boy from the South without much education and extremely gullible. Jack, the other lad, was well educated and had polish. I noticed a violin case among their baggage. In this isolated district it seemed incongruous. I asked Jack if he played. "Oh, I fiddle a little," he said modestly. We soon found out that he played wonderfully well.

The two boys rode back to Chiapas with me and were fascinated by the sights and sounds of the jungle through which we passed. They asked endless questions. Red, especially, had picked up a great deal of misinformation from some old-timers he had met aboard ship on his way down from the States and in addition had read much lurid fiction about "life in the wilds." He was bursting with questions and wanted to know all about the animals of the jungle. Was it true that tapirs were to be found in this country? And what were they like? I told him—which was the truth—that the tapir is the only animal, except the rhinoceros, which when hunted with a jack light at night will rush straight at the light in a mad fury instead of standing still or slinking away.

"Gosh!" said Red. "Are they dangerous?"

Again I told him the truth—that one of my native foremen while hunting with a jack light had been charged by

## Jungle Jim

a tapir and trampled on so viciously that he had been crippled for life.

That night, back at Chiapas, the two old hands, Pete and Joe, who had had so much fun playing jokes on me when I first arrived were eager to go to work on a new victim. We decided to pull a trick on Red. We let Jack in on it too. At dinner we were all seated around the table, a wide plank rough hewn from a mahogany tree felled on the farm. The bench we sat on completely surrounded the table and was fixed to posts driven deep into the earthen floor, so that it was not movable and you had to step over the bench in order to sit down at the table.

Halfway through our meal as it grew dark the black howler monkeys which hung out in the trees near the cabin began to howl as they usually did at this time of day. Red and Jack jumped as I had done the first time I heard that alarming thunder.

"Good grief!" exclaimed Red. "What's that?"

"Tapirs!" yelled Joe. "Better blow out the lights before they rush them!"

Pete and Joe and I instantly extinguished the lanterns. "Come on!" I yelled. "Let's get out of here before they smash in here!"

We all ran for the door. But Red, who had bought himself a pair of long Mexican spurs with enormous rowels that very morning, got tangled up with the bench and fell flat on the floor. He was up again in an instant and dashed for the door leading to the yard, a door of thin bamboo canes. Joe had slammed it behind him as he ran out, but in the darkness Red couldn't see it was closed and took the door right out of the house with him.

About forty feet from the house was the bank of the little river which wound its way through the farm. We

## Entrance into Jungle

had felled a tree so that it bridged the narrow stream and we used to cross on this natural bridge to a grassy spot on the other side where we had a bathing place. We all hurried across this log, but Red didn't know it was there and ran right off into the river. We fished him out and brought him up on the bank where we told him he mustn't make a sound till the tapirs had gone away. Finally we told him the danger was past and took him back to the house where he put on some dry clothes.

He was thrilled by his experience. "Gosh," he said, "just think, they wanted to come right in here where we are! Swell to have this happen the first night I got here! I've got to write home about it right away."

Red was the kind you could take "snipe hunting" every night and he would never catch on.

About two weeks after the tapir invasion a frame house which was being built for us further down the valley was completed, and we moved in. It had a wide hall running through it from end to end, with steps at each end. The hall was used as a dining-and-recreation room, and the bedrooms opened off on each side of this hall.

At the upper end of the valley, near the town of Olancho, one of the periodic "revolutions" which plagued Honduras was in progress. On our farm there had been quite a lot of talk about it and much speculation as to when the revolutionists would get down our way with their burning and pillaging. One afternoon Pete rode in before the others got back.

"I've been riding all over the farm today, Jim," he said, "and there's an awful lot of talk. Everybody's talking about the *revolucionistas*. I just left Red over on the river, and he said he sure wanted to see a revolution so's he could write home about it. I told him he probably would

## Jungle Jim

see one but I didn't know whether he would live long enough to write home about it."

Pete and I then decided we would stage a revolution especially for Red's benefit. Jack rode in a few minutes later, and we explained the idea to him and told him to tell Manuel and Pedro, a couple of the labor contractors for the farm, to bring some of their men and guns up to the house that night and put on a show.

After supper that evening we were all sitting in the hall reading. Red was deep in one of his usual magazine adventure stories when all of a sudden all hell broke loose. The natives rushed into the house, shooting their guns off and yelling and shouting like mad. I jumped up as if to grab for my gun which was lying on the table not far away. But before I could get to it Manuel pointed his gun at me and fired three times. I clutched my chest and dropped to the floor, dead. Jack and Pete ran for the back door, dived down the steps and then turned and hid under them. Red stood frozen with terror for a second and then he, too, turned and dashed for the back door. As he reached the bottom step Pete and Jack, under the steps, fired their guns in air and yelled, "*¡Mata el gringo* [Kill the Yankee]!" Red went over the barbed-wire fence and into the jungle like a rabbit. He worked his way through the bush the whole eight miles to Sinaloa and he was a sorry sight when he reached Mr McKeever's house, scratched and bleeding from a thousand thorns and briars, and his clothing in shreds. Breathlessly he told the district superintendent the story of the "revolution," my death and the probable deaths of Jack and Pete.

But we, of course, didn't dream that he had made his way to Sinaloa and we went on hunting for him all night, searching for him high and low, calling and whistling. But

## Entrance into Jungle

he didn't appear, and when we finally went back to the house early in the morning to get a cup of coffee we were a pretty gloomy and worried lot. We didn't want to notify Mr McKeever, for fear he would relay the news to Mr Beckett, the big boss, at Rincon. We were sitting there and gloomily wondering what we should do when we heard the sound of a motored track car approaching. Going out, to our amazement, we saw Red with Mr McKeever, McKeever's chief clerk and four soldiers get off and start toward the house. When he saw us unharmed Red's mouth fell open in astonishment. Mr McKeever looked at me, gave a snort of disgust, strode into the house, threw his hat on the table and said, "I need a cup of coffee." I nearly fell over myself getting it for him. Finally he said, "Jim, you aren't dead. Are you hurt?"

"No sir," I said.

"Are any of you hurt?"

"No sir."

"All right, then, go ahead and spill it—what's all this about?" He was sore.

So we had to tell him the true story of the "revolution." He didn't like it much but he couldn't help laughing. Red listened with his ears wagging and when we had finished he burst out disappointedly: "Doggone, you mean it was all a joke?"

We weren't out of it yet. Before leaving Sinaloa Mr McKeever had notified Mr Beckett in Rincon and now, of course, he had to get word to Mr Beckett that it had all been a hoax. "I want those men to come up here and report to me immediately," said Mr Beckett. We climbed ruefully into the track car and reached Rincon about noon. We went directly to Mr Beckett's office. He was a tall, slender, elderly man, a fine person, very mild tempered but

## Jungle Jim

firm. When we trooped sheepishly into his office he told us to sit down and, looking at us gravely, said: "This joke you thought up might have turned out with very serious results. This sort of thing has got to stop."

We all thought we were going to be fired. "But I realize you men have a hard life," he went on, "without much recreation, so I am going to let it pass this time. Go on back to your jobs."

And as we filed out, feeling like a lot of schoolboys, he turned to Red and said: "Don't take these boys too seriously, son. They'll worry you to death if you do. Especially that rascal Pete."

It wasn't Red who was the victim of the next practical joke, but Jack. And it was his violin which was responsible for it.

Only a few weeks after Red and Jack arrived at the farm I assigned Jack to the ranch (which was a part of the farm) to watch the mules and the cattle and take charge of the stockmen, the *vaqueros*, who tended them. He enjoyed the job immensely. There were always three hundred pack mules, used for packing bananas out of the plantations to the railroad, of which fifty were "spare" mules kept for reserve. Fifty head of cattle, milk cows and steers were supposed to be on hand at all times on the ranch, as we killed beef twice a week, sometimes butchering twelve steers a week. The beef was for the scores of men working on the farm. It was Jack's job to keep this stock up to the correct number, fifty, at all times.

One day he came to me and said, "We are getting a little low on beef, Jim. You told me to let you know when the stock was down to fifty, and it's down to forty-five now. What 'll I do?"

I told him I would make out a requisition, and as the

## Entrance into Jungle

next day was Saturday it would be a good time to take two men and ride over to Jericho Ranch and bring the needed cattle back. I told him the cowboys knew the way to the ranch and warned him that on the way back he would have to swim the animals over the Aguan River. The Aguan River at the point where they must cross was about four hundred feet wide, very swift, and all along its banks were immense crocodiles. I told him, merely joking, to watch his step and not tread on a croc. Crocodiles wouldn't bother him, of course, but would run from a man, but he seemed to be a little worried about this. But I have known crocodiles to go into a pasture, kill a mule or a steer and attempt to drag it back into the river, being prevented from succeeding in getting the carcass away only because of the barbed-wire fence.

So the next day, Saturday, Jack and his *vaqueros* left for Jericho Ranch, Jack taking his violin with him. He said that he played "only a little" but he had turned out to be an excellent musician and could make that violin talk. The natives loved to hear him play.

He should have got back late that afternoon with the cattle but he didn't show up. At supper we fellows in the house wondered about him but we concluded he had decided to spend the night with Gonzalez, the Jericho Ranch overseer.

When by three o'clock Sunday afternoon he still hadn't shown up Pete, Red and I decided to ride over to see what the devil was the matter. Perhaps he had had some trouble with the cattle on the way back, we thought. When we arrived at Jericho we found the cowboys all drunk in the camp quarters and we heard the wailing of a violin in the overseer's house. It was then about seven o'clock at night.

## Jungle Jim

As we walked into Gonzalez' house we saw Jack sitting on the edge of a bunk, his violin tucked under his chin, his hair ruffled, his eyes red rimmed for lack of sleep, his whole body the picture of weariness. His face lit up when he saw us but he went right on fiddling. The overseer and his foreman were sitting opposite him, their chairs tipped back against the wall, blissful expressions upon their drunken faces, and their pistols on their laps.

"*Buenos dias*, Gonzalez," I said. "What's going on here?"

Gonzalez' eyes popped open. He got up hastily, shoved his gun back into its holster and staggered over to me with open arms. Giving me a big *abrazo* (a hug), he exclaimed:

"Meester Jeem, *mucho gusto* to see you! And you gen'lemens!" Pointing to Jack, he said with a grin: "Thees fellair ees wan damn good *violinista*. He know everra kind musica!"

Jack dropped his bow and said: "Gosh, am I glad to see you fellows! These crazy galoots have kept me up all night playing this thing. Every time I tried to stop they pointed their guns at me and made me keep on playing. They gave me time out to eat a bite once or twice, but except for that I've been playing steady since yesterday afternoon! Gosh, are my arms tired!"

Then the foreman laughed and told us they had started it as a joke and that when they saw Jack took them seriously they had kept on with it because it was so wonderful to have such fine music while they were drinking. Of course they wouldn't have shot Jack for anything in the world, they protested. But, as they were a pair of drunken Hondurans, perhaps it was just as well that Jack took them seriously.



## Entrance into Jungle

There was nothing to do but laugh it off, and we kidded Jack awhile and then let him get some sleep. He slept like a log, believe me. The next day we drove the cattle back and teased him all the way home. The story reached Rincon on the coast, and when Jack went to Rincon for a dance at the club, as we all did once a month, he got no peace at all but he took it very well.

But a few weeks later a terrible thing happened to him.

That day Red and I had just ridden in from the farm to the house for noon dinner and had turned our mounts over to the stableboy. We walked to the back of the house where there was a pump and some basins. We unstrapped our guns, hung the gun belts to a post and proceeded to wash up. Jack had reached the house a few minutes before and had finished washing. He came out of the house and said, "You fellows hurry up and come along. Let's eat. I don't want to wait too long."

I had fired our cook a few days before and had not been able to get another, so we were boarding at our foreman's house which was on the other side of the railroad right of way and about a hundred yards above our house. Jack went on ahead and was walking up the right of way when I heard Red say:

"Look at that drunk coming toward Jack!"

I looked up and saw a native workman, carrying his machete in his hand, coming along the right of way. I don't know who he was and I never got a good look at his face, for he was wearing a straw sombrero that was tipped over his eyes. He was very drunk and staggering from side to side, waving his machete and muttering to himself. We saw Jack, who had been very cagey with drunks after his experience at Gonzalez' house, edge well over to one side of the path as he came opposite the man.

## Jungle Jim

But he didn't get far enough away. Just as he was passing the man the fellow whirled his machete and struck Jack a blow that cut him across the neck and down his shoulder.

Our foreman was standing on his porch and as soon as he saw it he started running toward them, yelling and firing his gun in the air. Red and I jumped for our guns and also began running toward them. But we didn't dare fire directly at the man, for fear of hitting Jack who had dropped to the ground behind him. The man ran down the bank of the right of way, splashed across a narrow ditch and dived into the jungle.

Several of the natives who had seen what had happened, together with the foreman, dashed into the bush and began hunting for the man, but he had vanished. No one had ever seen him before and no one ever saw him again.

We picked Jack up and carried him over to the house, put him on a cot, tore the shirt from his back. The wounds lay open from his shoulder halfway down his back, with one deep cut across the side and back of his neck.

I said, "Jack, we haven't got anything but boric acid. I've got to douse that in the cuts."

"No," he groaned, "we've got plenty of iodine. Empty some right into the cuts. They're burning me like fire anyway."

Red and Pete were getting hot water and towels. After we had bathed the wounds Jack begged us again to put the iodine on them. I poured it into the cuts and I think it hurt us more than it did him. He only gritted his teeth and said, "Gol-lee, does it burn! But go on, pour on plenty!"

In the meantime I had told Joe to call Sinaloa for a

## Entrance into Jungle

motored track car to take Jack to the company hospital at Rincon. I had torn bath towels into strips and bandaged him as well as I could. Lying there on his stomach, he began grinning.

"You must be feeling pretty good," I said.

"No," he said, still grinning, "the iodine burns plenty, but I just got to thinking about something. I was thinking how lucky I am, compared with that poor *mozo* we saw yesterday."

The day before Jack and I had been riding the farm along the river about three miles from the house. We had seen a group of people standing around a native who was sitting on the ground. The man had been bitten by a snake, either a *fer-de-lance* or a *barba amarillo*, either of which is very venomous and among the most deadly of all snakes. The natives were all chattering and giving lots of advice but no help.

A labor camp was just a quarter of a mile below. We put the man on my mount and took him there. Our house was so far away that there wasn't time to go there, and, besides, I didn't have any snake medicine, so I didn't know what to do. But the man himself took charge of things.

He sat down on the ground again, with his back to a hut, gave his machete to an onlooker and told him to put it into a fire and get it good and hot. He asked someone else to bring him a cup of kerosene and some turpentine and a wad of cotton.

When the machete was brought back to him, practically red hot, he took it and drove it into the ground several times to cool it a little. The snake had bitten him in the calf of the leg, and he now took the machete and calmly cut a deep gash in his leg across the mark of the fangs and another gash at right angles to the first. Then with

## Jungle Jim

the point of the machete he turned the layers of flesh backward and stuffed the wound with the wad of cotton soaked in the kerosene and turpentine. Before our horrified eyes he struck a match and set the cotton afire. I couldn't watch the proceedings any longer, and Jack had looked pale as we rode away.

But it was to that poor native's courage that his mind turned as he now lay there suffering, burning with liquid fire, and he said: "Now I can imagine how that poor devil felt."

We got Jack to the hospital and after six weeks there he was able to leave. But the contraction of the muscles of his neck as the wound healed left his head skewed over to one side, and there were large welts on his neck and back. He decided he had had enough of the tropics. He returned to the States, and I have since heard that he has become a successful lawyer. I wonder if he still plays his violin.

## CHAPTER V

### The Village of the Damned

**D**URING the many months that I worked at Taujica the engineering firm that had undertaken to extend the railway eastward from Rincon for the use of the fruit company completed the extension. When I first reached Rincon the line ran only as far east as Farallones, a small town on the coast, some thirty miles east of Rincon. The little single-track narrow-gauge line had now been pushed another thirty miles eastward, paralleling the seacoast, more or less, toward the coastal swamps known as Brewers Lagoon. New plantations were being opened up along this extension, and I was recalled from Taujica to make my headquarters here. To my great delight, Eel Thompson was sent with me.

The company headquarters, where eight or ten white men were stationed, consisted of several frame huts and loading sheds adjoining the railroad track and close to the beach. We hadn't been there long when some of the older men mentioned casually that there was a village of "bush Negroes," of the Zambunga race, not far from where we

## Jungle Jim

were stationed. Their village was called Tocomacho. To this day no one has been able to tell me whether these were a tribe of Carib Indians, the original inhabitants found by the first Spanish discoverers when they landed in the New World four hundred years ago, or whether they were descendants of African tribesmen who in some manner had reached this continent before the Spaniards came, or had been brought over as slaves. Certainly they speak a language which is entirely different from that of the Indian tribes farther to the south. Perhaps a Negro fresh from the Congo might understand it. . . .

We set off early one Sunday morning, Eel and I, to visit the place. There was no road—only a trail over which our mules picked their way. We might as well have been in the heart of Africa, close as we were to a civilized seaport. We took with us as guide and interpreter one of our houseboys, José, who knew them well.

José didn't much want to go along. He had a girl, Duala, I think he called her, with whom he was much in love. She was a native of this tribe, very pretty, and, we gathered, had aroused resentment among the Tocomacho villagers because she refused to return home to her own people. She probably had run away from some Tocomacho lover. At any rate, José seemed to think that these savages would not be pleased to see him. We laughed at him and told him not to worry—we would see to it that he wasn't harmed.

When we were still a mile away from the village the breeze, blowing toward us, brought a lively smell of fish. We soon saw the reason; the Indians had spread their catch of fish out to dry, by the hundreds.

We came to a rocky point of land, a bluff four hundred feet high, overlooking the sea. The Indian village was

## The Village of the Damned

built at the foot of this bluff, called Punta Piedra, on a wide strip of white sandy beach, with palm trees growing profusely for miles along the beach and around the huts of the village. The dazzling blue sky overhead, the snowy beach, the green palms and the glittering blue sea made us think we had come upon a village in an earthly paradise.

But we had not then seen the inhabitants of this paradise.

We descended the path to the village, and as we passed one person after another a feeling of horror and pity began to steal over us. One after another was deformed; one after another was crippled in some way. Here limped a man with a clubfoot. Here shambled a man with twitching arms and legs over whose movements he had no control. Here a hunchbacked dwarf scuttled out of our path, like a strange, misshapen monkey. Here I saw a man whose back was turned toward us but whose eyes remained staring at us as he walked away, his head permanently twisted on his shoulders, so that he seemed to be walking backward. So frequently were these twisted and deformed bodies encountered that we began to believe we had found, not a paradise, but a village of the damned.

José gave us the explanation. The place was truly a village of the damned. A generation ago, he explained, the Tocomachos living in jungles in the interior were in the habit of banishing from their villages any crippled or deformed person, all of whom were sent here. Cut off from marriage with outsiders, they married among themselves—with the result that many crippled or physically abnormal children were born to them.

And in spite of this they seemed a cheerful, happy-go-lucky race of blacks. As we strolled through the village the men and women, dressed only in sarongs, went on chat-

## Jungle Jim

tering among themselves in a strange guttural language which sounded to me for all the world like a repetition of "Boogly boogly boo, boogly boogly boo" and gave us scarcely a passing glance. José called to one of the men in his own tongue.

"Ah oo fa da ba!" he cried. "Come here, boy!"

The man came over smilingly, and José added, "*Ahooba ahba wera doona noo* [May I have a drink of water]?" The man nodded, hurried away and returned with a coconut shell brimming with water.

For a primitive people, the houses and the village seemed unusually cleanly. The houses were far from being small huts but were often forty feet square, their roofs thatched with the leaves of manaca and corozo palms, and their walls made of small bamboo poles or of *caña brava*, the wild cane that grows in swamps. On wood fires built on sand heaped on the floor of the hut women were baking their bread—large round crackers, thirty inches in diameter and a quarter of an inch thick, made from flour obtained by pounding in a mortar the dried roots of the yucca, the large potato yam.

Now and then a woman carrying upon her head a *batea*, a bowl carved from mahogany, sometimes four feet in diameter, heaped with rice or yams, would pass us, her hands hanging idly by her sides, the bowl balanced miraculously.

We walked on. We came to a small hut. Beside it, squatting on the ground, were fifteen or twenty women. They were laughing and chattering among themselves, the whole group giving the appearance of a festive lawn party. I was about to ask José if he could find out the occasion for the party when from the interior of the little hut came the scream of a woman in mortal agony. We stopped



## The Village of the Damned

dead in our tracks, horrified. And again came that dreadful cry, chilling the blood.

But the group of women squatting around the hut—were they startled? Did they show the slightest interest or alarm? Not they! They paid no attention whatever to that pitiful shriek but went on chattering and laughing as if they hadn't heard it at all. Eel Thompson and I didn't wait to ask questions. We tore toward the door of the hut as fast as we could run. If that scream had meant anything it had meant that a woman was being murdered inside the hut while the rest sat there and giggled.

At the door we peered in and stopped short. We heard José yelling at us from behind. "It is a nothing, señores!" he shouted. "It is a woman who gives birth—that is all!"

On the floor of the hut lay a naked black woman, writhing and moaning. Over her bent two other women, strips of white cotton cloth in their hands. They worked swiftly and silently, wrapping the woman's legs in the white cloth from ankle to thigh. Then, propping her up slightly, they wrapped her body from waist to neck in the white cloths. Then they bound her feet and legs to the top of her thighs. Last of all they wrapped even her head in the white cloths. And when this had been done they lifted her into a grass hammock suspended from the poles of the hut.

Without showing any other concern over the woman's suffering, they then came toward the door where we stood. We stepped aside to let them pass and watched them take their seats with the ring of women squatting outside. Plainly, the woman close to childbirth was to be left by herself.

"Aren't they going to help her any?" exclaimed Eel.

Another scream of agony from the woman tossing in the hammock was his only answer. But the women seated

## Jungle Jim

on the ground began to chant, swaying their naked black shoulders in time to their wailing chorus. Perhaps it was a chant of exultation; perhaps it was merely a means of drowning the woman's cries of suffering. José shrugged his shoulders. It was just the usual thing, he said.

We couldn't stand it. We got out of earshot as quickly as we could.

We strolled over to the beach, shucked our clothes and spent the rest of the afternoon floating in the warm sea and running up and down the sands. As the sun sank lower in the west we saw the fishing boats of the Tocomachos coming back to shore from far out at sea. These boats were *cayucas*, or dug-out canoes, only fifteen feet long or thereabouts, each one carrying a sail crazily patched together from hundreds of scraps of canvas. Small and difficult to balance though these canoes are, these men, admitted to be among the world's best sailors by all who have seen them, do not hesitate to venture from ten to thirty miles from shore in these frail canoes. They bring back many fish with them and, splitting and salting these, they add them to the odoriferous store already spread out to dry.

This was in the season, too, when the villagers were planting their little patches of ground with yams and other vegetables, a season in which they indulge in ancient tribal dances and work themselves up into a frenzy of celebration. Three weeks before they had begun making *chicha de manaca*, a liquor made from the pulpy center of manaca palms. The palm trees had been cut flush with the ground, and cloths were pegged over the cuts. The core of the tree, resembling cabbage in its texture, had been allowed to ferment during these three weeks. It had then been scooped from the trunk and strained through

## The Village of the Damned

cloths, the resulting liquor being a most potent whisky.

That night there was much drinking of this *chicha* from calabash gourds, much eating of fish and yucca crackers, and as the dusk deepened everyone in the village began gathering at a cleared space in the center of the village and taking their seats on the ground in a double ring, the men squatting nearer the blazing bonfire which had been built in the center, the women forming a circle outside the ring of men. No one paid us the slightest attention as we stood watching from a distance.

Naked men carrying drums first stalked into the circle of the firelight. The drums, or *tambores*, were of two sizes, hollowed from logs of different diameters. The larger, about two feet in height, was hollowed from a log almost two feet thick. The other, about eighteen inches in length, had a drumhead at each end. The drumheads were of tanned deerskin, lashed taut with rawhide. As the drummers began to thump upon them a dozen men bounded into the circle.

Their faces were painted white with a plaster made from rock chalk. Circles of black were painted around their eyes. Their tall headdresses were of the light balsa wood adorned with the bright red, green and yellow feathers of macaws and parrots. Their bodies were striped with white, and their arms were circled with white at the wrists and above the elbows. Above their knees and around their ankles were fastened clusters of small sea shells.

The men began slowly to move in a circle, putting their feet down heavily in time to the slow beat of the drums, the shells rattling at each step. As the beat of the *tambores* quickened so did the footsteps of the men, until the air was filled with the continuous clashing of the shells. The dance went on and on until suddenly the leader, the

## Jungle Jim

medicine man, bounded into the center of the circle and began to leap high into the air, his arms outstretched above his head, and his feet spread wide apart. As he came down with bent knees the shells quivered and clicked more wildly still. Now the other painted dancers, one by one, began leaping into the air, each one in perfect time to the furiously quickening patter of the drums, and the excitement of the seated spectators increased, the voices of the women rising in a wailing chant while their bodies rocked back and forth in unison. From time to time one after another of the dancers would drop exhausted to the ground, but his place was immediately taken by a fresh entrant. The bounding, leaping bodies, the tossing head-dresses, the eerie chanting of the women, the whole ghostly scene lit up by the flickering fire was inexpressibly thrilling.

Absorbed as we were in the savage spectacle, we scarcely took our eyes away from it when a dark figure crept along the outskirts of the frenzied circle of dancers and spectators and, drawing José to one side, began whispering to him in the unintelligible gibberish of the Tocomachos. But we were startled by a groan from José, a groan of utter despair, and then he was at our elbows, whispering in an anguished voice:

"For the love of God, señores, let us go and go quickly! Quick, before it is too late!"

Alarmed, we slipped away with him silently to the spot where we had tethered our mounts, climbed into the saddles and started back for town. As we rode José, his teeth chattering with fear, explained the reason for it. We couldn't believe our ears. What he asked us to believe was utter nonsense, childish, or rather savage superstition. The friendly savage had brought him the message that

## The Village of the Damned

at the very moment when José had first been seen with us in the village that morning the jealous and disappointed suitor of José's beloved Duala had immediately gone to the village medicine man, had obtained a supply of the root called *camotilla* from him and had hurried off, unseen by José, to reach town while we were absent. José had asked his informant how long it had been since the medicine man had dug up the root of *camotilla* from the place where he had found the plant in the jungle. Seventeen days, the man had answered. It was then that the groan had burst from José. Seventeen days! If the savage succeeded in secretly placing some of the deadly root in Duala's food and she ate of it, then she had but seventeen days to live.

We laughed at him, argued with him, did our best to convince him that this was sheerest superstition and nonsense, but José's face was ashy gray, and his forehead was beaded with cold sweat. So frantically did he beg us to hurry back with him to town that we at last yielded. The wailing chant of the women died away behind us.

José rushed straight to the 'dobe hut where Duala lived. When, next morning, we saw him bringing in our coffee and breakfast he seemed considerably relieved. Yes, he had seen Duala, and she had told him that she had seen no one from the village of the Tocomacho. What had she had to eat that day? She had had some *enchiladas* from a pan that stood on the shelf by the window. Had she noticed anything strange about their taste? No, they were unusually delicious. She had made them herself, she had added complacently. José might be sure that she would make him a good cook.

But seventeen days later Duala suddenly died. I don't know why.

## CHAPTER VI

### The Prospector

**Y**ES, the jungle is brutal. Of course it is brutal. How could it be otherwise? Among the simple folk who dwell along its fringe there is plenty of kindness and hospitality, honesty, loyalty and good will. But there are also many men, ignorant, superstitious, debased from birth, hating all men whose ways of life are different from their own lives of filth, drunkenness, bestiality, readiness to do murder for a fancied insult. To guard one's self against such men in these isolated communities where there is no pretense of a police force able to protect the law-abiding from the wanton violence of the malevolent one must carry the law in his own hands, walk warily, strike to save himself and waste no pity on the killer who, in turn, is killed. Is it brutal merely to live?

One of the gentlest and simplest men I ever knew was old Tom Martin. Old Tom had been hunting for gold for a lifetime but remained as poor as when he started. He had drifted to Honduras from the mountain ranges of California and for twenty years he had searched the hills

## The Prospector

of Honduras in a vain hope of finding a truly rich vein, a real "strike." Disappearing from the coast towns for months at a time, alone he would climb the low ranges of the interior, pitch his camp along some gravelly stream and patiently pursue his prospecting and "panning" until his supply of provisions ran out and he was forced to return to the coast to exchange the few dollars' worth of gold dust he had gathered for a new stock of food. He owned nothing in the world except two pack mules, one of which he rode, and one of which carried his supplies, and the double-barreled shotgun with which he brought down deer or wild pig in the jungle. He was a tall, lean old fellow, with a drooping gray mustache. He was tanned by the suns till he was as brown as an Indian. His blue eyes were remarkably steady.

Although everyone was glad to see the gentle, unassuming old fellow whenever he put in his occasional appearances the man who was old Tom Martin's closest friend was Hank Williams, manager of the fruit company's plantations near Corocito Switch. Corocito Switch was the junction point of the one-track road leading from Farallones, where I was stationed, to the line connecting with the company's main shipping port, Rincon. Rincon was about twenty-five miles from Corocito Switch, Farallones about thirty. Whenever he came back from a prospecting trip old Tom always made his way to Williams' plantation and was invited to stay as long as he liked. Henry Williams, like old Tom, was an extremely mild-mannered and kindhearted old fellow who was respected and loved by all the younger men working with him and who treated the hundreds of native laborers employed on the plantation so fairly that he had no trouble with any of them.

## Jungle Jim

On one occasion, however, when old Tom was visiting him two of the natives, Manuel and Ricardo, reported for work one morning so drunk that they were staggering. Williams saw that they were in no fit condition to work that day and told them to go home and sleep it off. They became angry immediately, enraged because they had been thus disgraced (as they thought) in front of the other men, and muttered threats of revenge as they staggered away.

A day or two later old Tom, who had witnessed the scene, stopped off in Farallones, and we gladly gave him a bunk at our shack. Mr Williams had been called to Rincon on business, and, as he might not return for several days, the old prospector had decided to mosey along and get ready for another expedition.

While he was still with us dreadful news came from Corocito Switch. Mr Williams, returning from Rincon, had been murdered, together with one of his assistants, a youngster named Hardin. Hardin, who had only recently come from Kentucky to work for the fruit company, was as fine a young fellow as I've ever known. He was a mere boy, scarcely twenty. The two had come down from Rincon with the string of empty freight cars, reaching the Switch in the afternoon, and had been met there by a stableboy from the plantation who had ridden over, leading horses for them. The boy reported that when he first got to the junction the two laborers who had been reprimanded, Ricardo and Manuel, were hanging about the place, still drunk, and in an ugly mood. After a while, however, they had slouched off down the road. Mr Williams nodded and mounted his horse. Young Hardin rode beside him, and the stableboy followed. They set off for the plantation.



## The Prospector

A mile or so from the railroad switch a gigantic *ceiba* tree stood close by the road. Its head towered a hundred and fifty feet in air, and its mighty trunk was buttressed by roots that spread out fanwise from the main trunk to a height of a dozen feet above the ground. When they reached this tree Williams and young Hardin were still riding almost side by side, but the stableboy had lagged fifty yards behind them.

Just then he froze in horror. Two men leaped out from their hiding place between the fans of the *ceiba*. He was so close that he saw their faces distinctly—Manuel and Ricardo! They leaped, and each one seized the bridle rein of a rider. Their machetes whirled up and descended sickeningly. Williams and young Hardin reeled in their saddles and toppled to the ground, and the plunging horses, jerking loose from the hands of the murderers, galloped, riderless, wildly toward the plantation. Shaking with fear, the stableboy wheeled his own mount and fled desperately back to babble the story to the switching-station crew.

But long before they could reach the spot the two murderers had vanished into the jungle. The crew found only the dead bodies of Williams and Hardin, horribly mutilated, chopped almost limb from limb.

When the dreadful news came to us in Farallones it was followed almost immediately by an announcement that the American fruit company, through its general superintendent at Rincon, offered a reward of five thousand dollars for the capture of the two murderers, dead or alive. The superintendent well knew that he need look for no co-operation from the Honduran police. That force was worthless, had no one in the district and could send no one who would be able to track the men. We heard afterward that the officer in command at Rincon

## Jungle Jim

merely shrugged his shoulders when told of the reward.

Next came word that funeral services for Williams and Hardin would be held in Rincon before their bodies were shipped home to the United States. Several of us decided that we would attend them. "You'll go along with us, of course?" I said to old Tom Martin. I knew how intensely he had admired Williams, how much he had loved him.

To my surprise, he shook his head. "No," he said slowly. "I cain't do that. I ain't got time."

I was considerably nettled. The old man's refusal shocked me. "Why not?" I demanded. "He was your friend, wasn't he?"

Old Tom stroked his drooping gray whiskers. "He was the finest man I ever knowed," he said softly. There was a sort of pleading look in his blue eyes. "But I cain't go, noways. I gotta git started."

For the life of me, I couldn't see why he couldn't delay his prospecting trip for a few days, but, after all, it was no business of mine.

"Have it your way," I said shortly, and turned away.

All that day the old man had been getting his gear in readiness and he now threw the *alberdones* upon his mules' backs, lashed the *aparejos* over them, lifted the *mochilas*, the big bags of coarse cotton in which he had carefully stowed his supplies, onto the saddle of his lead mule and cinched the pack to the *aparejo* with the expertness of long practice. Then, having arranged his roll of blankets on his riding mule, he hesitated. Three or four of us had come out to watch his departure. Already astride his mule, with his long legs dangling ridiculously, his old shotgun clutched in his right hand, he turned and spoke.

"Any of you goes up to Rincon"—and he swallowed at

## The Prospector

his Adam's apple as he spoke—"tell Hank Williams not to worry none."

He clucked to his mules, and the shabby little cavalcade moved off. We looked at each other and shook our heads. "Poor old Tom!" said somebody. "Hearing how Hank Williams got killed must have sorta got him touched in the head."

A few miles to the west of Farallones and south of Limón, "The Lemon," the narrow-gauge railroad running west to Corocito Switch crosses the Salada River which comes down from the mountain country, virtually uninhabited, to the south and flows northward to the sea at Limón. Where the trestle bridge crosses it is a cluster of huts known as Limóncita, "*Little Lemon*." It had always been old Tom's habit on previous trips to turn southward here and follow the upward course of the Salada to its headwaters and to prospect for gold in that desolate jungle region.

But this time—as we afterward learned—he did not turn south but struck on across the river, still going southwestward, in the direction of Corocito Switch. From this point he guided his mules in a sweeping half-circle which led always higher and higher across the green flanks of the *Montaña de la Esperanza*, the Mountains of Hope, always deeper and deeper into the jungle and always growing closer to the mountain divide beyond which no escaping criminal had ever been followed. He was remembering a trick he had learned long ago on the Mexican border—he was "cutting trail."

He camped that night only when darkness had overtaken him and it was no longer possible to watch for signs of any recent passage. He made no fire that night, munched dry biscuit and was up and on his way once more

## Jungle Jim

at the first faint sign of dawn. At noon, on a trail leading southeastward from Corocito Switch, his watchful old eyes brightened at something he saw, the depressions left by two bodies in a clump of ferns just off the trail. He listened. There was not a sound of anything, except for the chatter of monkeys and the cries of parrots overhead. He went on.

At noon, still following this trail, he drew rein sharply and dismounted, fairly flinging himself to the ground. A hundred yards ahead a bird was whistling. Again and again it whistled, loud and shrill, like a man calling to a companion. Tom Martin knew the bird: it was the *mon-téador*, that dark brown thrushlike bird whose name in Spanish means "the mountaineer," or bushman, but which in English is called "the pathfinder." He knew that always when excited by the presence of humans in its jungle fastnesses it whistles its warning note over and over, keeping close to the intruder, so that searchers for a lost companion are often guided to the lost one by its persistent call.

Old Tom had heard enough. He knew that the men he was tracking were just ahead, their presence betrayed by the feathered sentinel.

Silently he crept back to the tethered mules and led them back along the trail until he was well out of earshot of the men ahead. Then, splashing along the bed of a tiny stream, he made a long detour, driving the mules ahead unrelentingly until late in the afternoon he came out again upon the trail he had been traveling when he had first overtaken the men he pursued. He knew now that he was well ahead of them.

Coming soon to one of the innumerable creeks threading the mountainside, he selected a gravelly bank above

## The Prospector

it, overlooking the trail, for his camp. At a point farthest from the trail he tethered his mules and removed the sacks of provisions, the *mochilas*, from the pack animal. From one of them he drew out the articles needed for his evening meal, then carefully carried both heavy sacks to the spot where anyone coming from the trail would at once see them. This done, he went back to the other end of the gravel bank, swiftly built a campfire and, after drawing water from the brook, set his coffeepot on to boil. He crouched over this fire, with his face to the trail. His shotgun lay beside him, hidden in a patch of grass.

He finished his meal, keeping his eyes fixed upon the trail even while he munched his food. The sun was reaching the tops of the trees, but the sky was still bright. For a long time there was no sound except the voices of birds.

Then, at a distance, he heard the mumble of men's voices growing nearer, and a moment later two men emerged from the forest, following the trail leading toward him. They were the murderers.

They walked with heads down and bowed shoulders, dragging their feet with weariness. Their cotton shirts were scratched and torn with briars, and their bare legs caked with mud. There were dark bloody stains upon their tattered clothing. They were still carrying their machetes.

"*Buenos dias*, señores!" shouted old Tom in a loud and cheerful hail.

They lifted their heads. They stared at him with blood-shot eyes. They seemed incapable of further motion.

At last one croaked, wetting his swollen lips: "Are you alone, señor?"

"Most certainly, my friends!" laughed the old miner. "Alone except for my mules, as you see!"

## Jungle Jim

The two glanced at each other. Then the other, in a voice of suspicion, quavered: "From whence do you come, señor?"

"From Farallones," responded the old man promptly. "Two weeks since!"

Again the two men glanced quickly at each other, and their dark faces lightened. They took a step toward him.

"You have been in these mountains for two weeks?" demanded the one. "You have not returned to any town upon the coast in all that time?"

"Not I!" laughed Tom Martin. "But, come, señores, join me in my camp and tell me news of the world! What I have is yours!"

The two men came toward him slowly, their evil eyes searching the scene. Old Tom remained beside the smoldering fire. He stood there with empty hands, a smile of welcome upon his face. They could see that he was unarmed.

As they came slowly, step by step, up the slight incline and reached the bulky sacks which he had placed upon the ground he halted them with a wave of his hand.

"Seat yourselves upon the *mochilas*, señores, I beg of you," he said courteously. "You are tired—you need rest. Sit there, and I myself will bring you coffee. Thanks be to the good God, it is hot and ready! Have you, perchance, your own *jicaras*? Bueno, I will bring the pot and fill them for you!"

He stopped to lift the coffeepot from the hot ashes. The two men sat down upon the sacks, twenty feet away, exchanging grins. Of what an incredible simplicity was this gray-bearded gringo jackass! He was not only inviting their approach—he promised to come to them, within

## The Prospector

reach of their hands, so that they would not even be put to the trouble of running toward him! Here was his store of provisions—enough to last them for days! There grazed his mules, gifts from heaven itself! In another day they would be beyond all possible chance of pursuit! They placed their machetes upon the sacks beside them and pretended to fumble for their calabash drinking cups slung over their shoulders by a cord. It would be easy to seize the weapons again when he had come within striking distance.

Old Tom, without bothering to keep his eyes upon them, stooped to lift the coffee from the ground. But when he straightened up again he held in his hands his shotgun.

The two men sprang to their feet. But they had not time to take a single step. The double report, one barrel fired instantly after the other, echoed like a thunderclap. Both men, their chests almost torn in two by the charge of buckshot, fell heavily. Their bodies twitched convulsively, then both were still. The tethered mules snorted and plunged, then stood quiet. Old Tom snapped out the empty shells, replaced them and stood for a moment, the gun ready in his hands, looking down at the sprawled forms.

"I'd have followed ye to the ends of the earth," he said softly.

Without another glance at them he returned to the fire, stamped out the last embers, unrolled his blankets and lay down, to sleep like a child. But at daybreak he was up and stirring. Saddling the mules, he rearranged the contents of the two gunny sacks and placed one sack on each saddle. Then, with a heave of his shoulders, he lifted the bodies to the saddles and lashed them firmly to the

## Jungle Jim

*aparejos*, face downward, the stiffening arms and legs of the murderers drooping grotesquely across the animals' backs. The mules sniffed; their long ears lay back.

"Take it easy," murmured the old prospector. "This is pay dirt."

They set off on the return journey, the old man on foot, leading the burdened mules. This time he took the direct trail down the valley of the Salada, heading northward for Limóncita. Even so, the going was slow and hard. All day long they plodded and saw no man in all that journey. But vultures swung circling overhead, wondering why the carrion moved away from them. It was long after dark when the little procession skirted the huts of Limóncita and stumbled along the railroad right of way toward Farallones. It was nearly midnight when old Tom's hail outside our dormitory shacks brought us tumbling from our bunks, and, hurrying out with lifted lanterns, we saw the grisly burdens he had brought back.

We rushed the news to Rincon, and a yard locomotive was ordered out to take old Tom and his lifeless captives to headquarters. In our excitement we sat around and marveled at his exploit long after the rattling freight car had pulled out.

"He told me he didn't have time to go to Hank Williams' funeral," I recalled. "Didn't have time! Of course not—he knew he'd have to move fast to head them off before they got over the divide!"

"Boy, has he struck it rich this time!" exclaimed someone. "Five thousand, gold! That's more 'n he's panned out o' them hills in twenty years put together!"

But when old Tom Martin reached Rincon and the company's check was handed over to him he merely signed his name—laboriously, for his fingers were tired and stiff



## The Prospector

—upon the back of the slip of paper and handed it back to Mr Beckett.

“Will ye send this to Hank Williams’ folks up home?” he asked. “And thank ye kindly, sir.”

“But, Tom——” began the superintendent protestingly.

“Hit’s all right, Mr Beckett,” said the old prospector. “I kin git along. I’m single. But Hank left a wife and a kid, I know. He was the best friend I ever had.”

## CHAPTER VII

### Three to Make Ready

**A**S THE GUN WENT OFF Fulgencio half rose from his chair with a little gasp and fell forward across the table, his head sinking between his outstretched arms. His hands opened, palm upward, in a curiously appealing gesture and then were still. Johnny Barleycorn, who had been laughing, looked from Fulgencio to the gun in his own hand, and an expression of utter bewilderment came over his face. His mouth hung open.

Honeybee and the Eel and I jumped from our chairs and lifted Fulgencio by the shoulders. His head lolled. We lifted him and laid him down gently on the floor. Blood. He was dead. We three stood up and looked at Johnny Barleycorn.

We had been playing poker that afternoon. Fulgencio had ridden over from his own plantation and joined us. We all liked him. He was always jolly. He and Johnny, in particular, were great friends.

Johnny took a step forward, laid his gun on the table

## Three to Make Ready

and looked at us piteously. He was dazed by the suddenness of it, and so were we three. It was like a bad dream—but it was real.

How can you ever explain an accident like that? There was no rhyme or reason to it. We had been having the friendliest sort of a game. Everybody was in a good humor. Fulgencio had neither won nor lost. Johnny was the one who had had most of the luck. He had been taking Honeybee or the Eel or me for one hand after another. He was the big winner. He was crowing over us, kidding us, giving us the laugh every time he raked in a fresh pile of chips. And it was all right with us, because we four had been playing poker together ever since freshman year in college. We four had fit, bled and died together through the years. You couldn't have pried us apart—no, not with a crowbar. We didn't mind his winning; it would probably come back in the course of time, just as usual. When he raked in this last jackpot—Fulgencio had stayed out of it altogether—Johnny let out a whoop.

"Wow!" he yelled. "Come to papa! What's the matter with you birds, anyway? Why don't you all go back to Alabama, where you came from?"

When he got through patting his chips into neat little piles, still grinning, he stood up and said:

"Well, seventh-inning stretch! Wait till I put this gun away—it's gettin' in my way."

He had been riding around the farm that morning, which was a Sunday, and no work, and he had taken his gun along as usual. We all did whenever we went out. This banana farm was pretty near "new" land, right on the edge of the jungle, miles from Rincon, and there was always the danger of some drunken Honduran's taking a swipe at you with his machete for good luck. But Johnny

## Jungle Jim

had been in such a hurry to get into the poker game when he got back that he hadn't bothered to unstrap his gun belt. The holster had been crowding against his side, against the arm of the chair.

Fulgencio, the best-natured Honduran I ever knew, was sitting with his arms spread out on the table in front of him. He looked up at Johnny, smiling, with his white teeth flashing in his brown face, and said:

"What ees thees 'savant' eenning' you say, Juancito? Eet ees new wan to me."

"Oh, that's just something they say at baseball games up North," Johnny said. "It means——"

And just then the gun went off. God knows what caught the trigger as he took it out of the holster.

And there lay Fulgencio, dead.

That was how it happened. But who would believe it?

"Get those cards and chips off the table, quick!" said Honeybee. "Quick, I say!"

"Oh, what's the use?" said Johnny bitterly. He stepped around the table and kneeled down by Fulgencio: "Good-by, *amigo mio*," he said softly. He was crying.

We hid the cards, just the same, just like kids hiding an empty jam pot.

It wasn't necessary for us to discuss it any. We knew two things with certainty, and they didn't need discussing. One was that as soon as Fulgencio's relatives heard that he had been killed they would start shooting. There was no use looking for police protection. In our neck of the woods there weren't any police. The other was that we must get Johnny out of here, pronto, and up to Rincon. It wasn't necessary to take a vote to see whether we were going to stick with him. We always had. We always would.

## Three to Make Ready

"Better see if any of the hands heard that shot," I said. I strolled out of the house and toward the cook's shack. The men were all snoozing around in hammocks.

When I went back in we carried Fulgencio into the bunk room and put a blanket over him. Then we telephoned the fruit company's offices in Rincon and got the manager on the phone. "Johnny's got thrown from his horse," I said. "He's hurt bad—ought to go to the hospital. Can you send down a track car?"

I reckoned it would be better to explain things after we got there.

We waited hours for that track car to get to us. That is, Eel and I waited. I told Johnny to get his horse saddled and get going and told Honeybee to go with him. We could catch up with them with the track car. After they had had time to get a few miles up the trail Eel and I rode over to Fulgencio's farm, leading his saddle horse with us. I told the foreman what had happened—told him Johnny had been showing off his gun to Fulgencio and the thing went off accidentally and that Johnny had gone on up to Rincon to give himself up to the police. The foreman wiped his eyes and said he would send for the priest and come over and get Fulgencio's body. Eel and I went home, feeling sad. We packed up Johnny's things for him, to put on the track car, because we knew that no matter what else happened he would not be coming back to *this* farm.

It was getting dark when the track car finally rolled in, and we had just finished telling the crew what had happened when the gang from Fulgencio's plantation rode in. Fulgencio's cousin, a fellow named Miguel, galloped up ahead of the cart. He was waving a rifle in one hand

## Jungle Jim

and was so drunk that he could hardly keep his saddle. "Where is he?" he was yelling. "I keel heem!"

Eel and I walked over to him and yanked the rifle out of his hands. When Fulgencio's foreman came up I said to him, "Tell this drunken fool to keep quiet or I'll run him off this farm. Tell him there's going to be a fair trial up in Rincon. Tell him to come back and get this rifle when he's sober."

Miguel wheeled his horse, cursing, shouted that he would avenge his cousin if he had to follow his killer to Rincon or the end of the earth. But he galloped off.

Eel and I looked at each other disgustedly. "He'll keep right on Johnny's tail," said Eel gloomily. "We should have slapped him down right here."

"And had a free-for-all, with a couple of more killings?" I said. "No dice. Come on, let's get going."

We picked up Johnny and Honeybee at the siding where we'd told them to wait for us and sent their horses back by the stableboy we'd brought along. The track car got us into Rincon after midnight, and we went right up to the manager's house. He was pretty sore when he saw Johnny come in without a scratch on him, but when we told him the real story it was even worse. "Boys," he said, "We can't get out of notifying the chief of police. We've got to. If we don't Fulgencio's people will get word to him by tomorrow, and it will look worse for Johnny. Don't worry, Johnny. Our lawyers here will get you off. You've got three witnesses to swear to it that it was an accident. But we'll have to go through with it in court."

He dug the company lawyer out of bed, and we all marched down there to the old jail, escorted by the chief of police in person. The turnkey was impressed. He gave Johnny a cell by himself at the end of the cell block near-

## Three to Make Ready

est the north wall. We slipped him plenty of coin, and he promised to see that Johnny got the best meals in Rincon. I don't know whether Johnny slept any that night. I know I didn't, just worrying.

We saw Johnny a couple of times the next day, and the lawyer saw him, and we told the lawyer our story, separately, and the lawyer said there was no doubt but that he would get Johnny free in another day or two. But, then, the lawyer didn't know about the open door.

Johnny told us about the open door the second time we saw him, that afternoon. The jail guard ushered us up to his cell and stood around while we talked to him. Johnny talked to us through the bars. He lowered his voice.

"Say, this is a funny thing," he whispered. "They don't leave this cell door locked."

"You're dreaming," I said. "Of course it's locked."

"I'm telling you it isn't," said Johnny. "I happened to jiggle it while I was standing here waiting for you fellows to show up. It swings open easy."

We looked at each other without saying anything more for a minute. Seemed to me my heart was pounding in my ears. Then I drew a deep breath. "We'll go ask the lawyer about it, Johnny," I whispered. "He can keep his mouth shut. Maybe he's slipped some money to the right people. Sit tight, and we'll be right back."

We told him good-by very loudly, and the guard walked with us back to the outside door. I noticed that he never went near the door of Johnny's cell. Either he didn't know it was unlocked or else it was none of his business. We were worried, bad. Maybe it was just a trick to tempt Johnny into trying to make a breakaway so that they could shoot him as he ran. We didn't know.

We started for the lawyer's office, walking slow, laugh-

## Jungle Jim

ing a lot, not wanting to let on we were worried any, and on the way we ran into old Tom Mellowes, an old-timer who had been in and around Rincon for thirty years. I knew we could trust him.

"Say, listen, Tom," I said. "Don't they ever lock cell doors in the jails down here?"

He stared at me. "Why, sure they do," he said.

"Not always," I said. "I know a man who has been run in on a shooting charge, waiting trial, and they tell me his cell door hasn't been locked at all."

Tom squinted his eyes. "A killing, maybe?" he said.

I nodded.

Tom grinned. "'Tain't a friend of yours, I hope?" he said.

"Why?" I said. I felt cold all of a sudden.

"You ain't never heard of a Honduras pardon?"

"No."

"Common enough. Jest the custom of the country, you might say. Sort of a favor to the friends and family of the de-ceased. Leave the door unlocked and be looking the other way when the friends wander in. Satisfies them and saves the expense and bother of a trial or a execution. Hey, where you goin'?"

We were on our way. There wasn't any time to lose. Maybe it sounds a little heartless, going off and leaving Johnny to be murdered in cold blood, but we decided right there and then that what we three needed most was a fishing trip. We headed right for the water front, to the basin where the little native fishing boats tie up. We went from boat to boat, and it wasn't long till we found a fisherman who allowed it would suit him fine to take his schooner out with a party at midnight or maybe a little sooner. We left Honeybee to stay with him, just to make



## Three to Make Ready

sure that he didn't change his mind, and the Eel and I hurried off to get bait. Killing fish by underwater explosions may not be sporting, but we had an idea we would like to try it, just for fun. We hustled over to the railroad yards and wandered into the office of the foreman of the track-construction-and-repair department. While I was chinning with the foreman about this and that the Eel borrowed the keys to the washroom but happened to get the wrong key and blundered into the storeroom where they kept supplies. He came out with two sticks of dynamite under his shirt.

We didn't want to be lugging the stuff around with us all the rest of the evening, so, just to be on the safe side, we went back to the jail and planted it under a corner of the outside wall at a place that isn't in sight of anybody. The old wall is about ten feet thick, and the stuff couldn't do any damage there even if it got touched off by accident. We didn't want to do any damage anyway.

After that we strolled around to the gate on the far side and went in and told Johnny good-by.

The train dispatcher's office had a message for me when we went back up that way. It said that Miguel, Fulgencio's cousin, and a couple of his friends were coming up to town on the banana train that night.

"What time is it due in?" I asked.

"Oh, a little after midnight."

"That's fine," I said. "I hope they have a nice ride."

A couple of hours after dark I borrowed a banjo and an old car from the boys at the fruit company's clubhouse, and Eel and I drove around town for a while. I let Eel out a couple of blocks from the jail. He had a dry battery and some wire that he had to take to a sick friend, he said. I went on to the jail.

## Jungle Jim

"It is too late for visiting, señor," said the guard at the entrance gate.

"That's all right," I said. "I don't want to visit anybody. I just brought along a little wine with me. You boys have been so polite I thought we might have a little drink."

"Ah, *gracias*, señor!"

There happened to be about a dozen bottles of red wine in the car, and we lugged them into the sentry box. He beckoned to a couple of other guards who were lounging around the corridor inside. They came out and joined us. "*¡Salud!*" I said. "*¡Salud*, señor!" they answered. We had two or three bottles, and then I got out the banjo. We sang very softly so as not to make any disturbance. After a while I hummed a tune we used to sing on the Glee Club back in college. "Oh, Baby, Won't You Please Come Home?" the refrain was. The guards didn't understand the words but they applauded very politely. About that time someone walking along outside the prison walls whistled the same air. I opened the last bottles and passed them around. "*¡Salud!*" they said, one by one. I put the banjo back in the car.

It was just then that there came two tremendous explosions, one right after the other, at the other end of the prison.

"Over that way!" I said. "That's where it is!"

I started to run toward the sound, but they all rushed past me in the same direction, so I stopped and went back to the car. Eel was already sitting in it. I don't know where he came from. We waited a minute, and pretty soon Johnny came strolling out of the empty corridor.

"Taxi, sir?" I said.

He climbed in back and scrunched down on the floor.

## Three to Make Ready

We drove on down to the fisherman's wharf. Honeybee was sitting in the cockpit of the little schooner, drinking wine with the skipper. He scrambled out on the pier.

"He says that if this wind holds he can make Banaca Island by morning," he said. "He says there's always one or two fishing boats there from Tampa. You can easy get from there to Tampa, Johnny."

We put Johnny's things on board—just a couple of suitcases—and shook hands. "Good luck, Johnny," we said.

They threw off the mooring lines, and the schooner began moving away from the pier. We three stood there and didn't say a word. There had always been the four of us, so far.

## CHAPTER VIII

### The Glass Stiletto

**C**HICO HERNANDEZ and I were taking inventory. We came to the cardboard box, the size of a shoe box, which had held the glass-handled stilettos. There was only one of them left in the box, and there had been a dozen of them. We had sold all but this one. It was just the sort of thing that would catch a native's fancy. The steel of the blade didn't amount to much—we had got the whole dozen, wholesale, for a dollar—but the glass handle was bright colored, each one a different color, and they had sold like hot cakes for fifty cents apiece.

Chico picked up the one remaining one. "I will put this somewhere else," he said, "and then we can use the box to put something else in. We are short of boxes."

He lifted the gaudy little weapon by its needlelike point and jiggled it up and down thoughtfully. "It is nicely balanced," he said. "It would be good for throwing."

"Never mind fooling with that, Chico," I said. "Come on, it's getting dark fast. We won't have enough light to finish with pretty soon."

## The Glass Stiletto

He grinned, his white teeth flashing. He was always in gay spirits. He was only seventeen. He was irrepressible but he was also dependable. He was a mighty nice kid. He had done a good business at the store for me because he was always smiling.

"No," he said teasingly. "Let me show you."

At the other end of the counter, which ran the length of the little store, against the unplastered wooden wall a North American calendar was tacked. It was a big one, about a foot square. The days of the month were printed in black, with an occasional red numeral indicating a holiday. The month was July.

"You see the number four is in red, Señor Jeem?" he said. "Good! That is a feast day with you in the States, no? Watch me now."

His hand rose, so swiftly that I had not time to speak, and a glittering thing flickered through the air like the dart of a hummingbird. It struck the calendar and stuck there, quivering. Chico ran down the counter's length and pulled it out. He came back grinning sheepishly.

"*Ai*, what a liar I have made of myself!" He laughed. "It struck the eleven, which is just beneath the four!"

He tossed the stiletto on the breast-high counter, and we went on with our work. We didn't have any too much time to spare. The *revolucionistas* were coming this way.

The store didn't amount to much. The building was merely an old wooden shack that had once served as a small warehouse but which had been abandoned. It had struck me that I might make a dollar or two by opening a store there, without giving up my job as manager of the banana plantation to which the company had sent me. The banana farm was isolated, surrounded with jungle. But scattered through the forest for miles around were the

## Jungle Jim

huts of the laborers working on the plantation, each with its little patch of ground under cultivation. These men would bring in raw rubber, milked from the jungle, or bags of coffee beans or an occasional tortoise shell, all of which I would ship to Dave Lebowitz, the commission broker at La Ceiba, for export. And from him I would get bolts of brightly colored calicoes, cheap boots and shoes, canned goods and a variegated assortment of notions and cheap jewelry. At the beginning I hired an old fellow named Felipe to run the store for me. He did well enough for several months. But then came talk that a revolution was brewing against the government. Revolutions were always the signal for general lootings. Felipe had no mind to be in any store during a looting. He resigned. I hired young Chico.

Chico had been fortunate in his upbringing. He had neither mother nor father—both had died in his childhood. His grandmother, a widow, had brought him up. I say “fortunate” because he was fatherless. To have a father was to have, all too frequently, a bad example. The men of that district were no models of deportment. Ignorant, drunken, bestial, it was inevitable that their sons should follow their examples. Having no such father, Chico, one might say, was singularly favored. He adored the old woman, his grandmother, who had toiled unceasingly for him until he had grown tall and strong enough to do his part in earning their bread. He spent nothing on himself. He took his weekly wages to her cheerfully, and their lives were without a cloud.

Months had drifted by without the outbreak which old Felipe had feared, but now the news came that a “regiment” of fifty or a hundred ragged guerillas had reached a village only a dozen miles from us and might

## The Glass Stiletto

pass by our plantation before another day was over. I had decided to shut up the store at once and to trust to luck that its deserted appearance would induce the marauders to march by without molesting its contents. Chico and I were working as swiftly as we could.

We were all but finished. I was checking the contents of the final shelf at the end of the tall counter. I heard a slight sound. Two men were standing just inside the doorway.

Their bare feet had made no sound on the path outside the door. Neither carried a rifle, but both were armed with heavy machetes slung over their shoulders by raw-hide thongs. Their dirty cotton trousers and shirts were torn in shreds. Plainly, they had approached by some jungle trail thick with thorns. Both were drunk. As they stood there, swaying uncertainly, they seemed beasts rather than men. Their reddened eyes, swollen half shut, roved around the little store greedily.

"*¡Viva la revolución!*" hiccuped one of the pair.

The other thrust both his hands within the band of his own filthy trousers and scratched himself luxuriously. Then, withdrawing a dirty paw, he thumped himself proudly upon his bearlike chest. "Me, I have eggs!" he boasted. "Ask of the women!"

They both laughed drunkenly.

Lurching a step or two forward, they sat down heavily upon the sacks of sugar on the earthen floor. One of the two, unslinging his machete from his shoulder, pointed the blade waveringly at the shelf on which stood the leather boots which we sold to *vaqueros*, the cowboys of near-by ranches.

"Show me the boots!" he commanded, licking his lips. "*¡Enseña mi las botas!*"

## Jungle Jim

Chico crossed to the shelf and handed down a pair. He was smiling as always. "Try these, *amigo*," he said politely. "We shall find a pair to fit you."

The man snatched them from him and cursed him for his trouble. Putting down his machete on the floor, he began tugging to get the boot over his foot. I beckoned to Chico.

"He has not asked the price," I said. "He has no intention of paying for them. Do not show him any more."

Chico nodded. "Have no concern, Señor Jeem," he whispered. "He shall not have them."

But even as he spoke his eyes widened. The boot had stuck; the man could draw it neither on nor off. Angrily the fellow snatched up his machete, thrust it inside the boot, sliced a great gap in the leather and hurled the boot away from him.

I shouted at the brute. "You will pay for those boots, my friend," I said. I took a step toward him.

The man swayed to his feet, and his face darkened. Without a word, but with his bloodshot eyes fixed menacingly upon me and with his machete raised above his head, he advanced, his lips drawn back in the snarl of a wolf.

I was unarmed. On the shelf beside me stood bottles, nice big bottles, quart bottles, full of pink "pop." My fingers closed around one. And as the brute charged head on I hurled it. It caught him squarely on the chin, and he went down like a log.

A bellow of rage burst from his companion, and he, too, rushed at me with his machete. I reached for a second bottle. But someone moved faster than I. Something whizzed past my ear, glittering like a dragonfly. It was a streak of light, traveling straight as an arrow to the man's



## The Glass Stiletto

throat. He stopped short, clutched at his throat, gave a gasping cry and fell. Chico had thrown the glass stiletto. Sprawled on the earthen floor, the man twitched and tossed, then lay still.

I heard Chico's voice at my ear. "I have seen an old hen jump just like that," he said, "when her head has been wrung off and she is to be put in the pot. I did not know that a man would do so also."

He was smiling as always. Why should he not? A moment before we had been men marked for death.

I put my arm around his shoulders. "We have done no wrong, but a good thing," I said. "The law will uphold you. But here, while the comrades of these robbers are loose upon the road, there will be no law. It is better that you go to my country and go quickly."

Chico nodded. "It is better so," he said gravely. "But the grandmother, *la abuela*—you will take care of her until I find work and can send her money?"

"I promise," I said.

La Ceiba, the nearest seaport, was forty miles away. All that night he rode and in the morning delivered the mount that I had lent him, along with a note that I had given him to the friend in La Ceiba whom I could trust. Word came in two weeks more that he had found work in Florida.

But on that morning when he rode into La Ceiba I had gone back to the deserted store on the jungle trail. The man whom I had stunned had crawled away in the night. With him he had taken the glass stiletto.

## CHAPTER IX

### Young Marstuh

**A**N OLD NEGRO MAN came slowly along the trail. It had been a hot day, and I was sitting on the front porch of the boss shack at Recreo plantation, trying to cool off. I watched the old man as he came toward the house, idly wondering who he might be and why he should be walking in such heat.

Hot as it was, he wore a coat, a shabby black Prince Albert that hung to his knees. His shoulders were bent, and his loosely hanging arms seemed as long as a gorilla's. Coming to the front gate, he opened it and came into the yard. I knew then that he wasn't a native Honduran laborer, for a native never ventures to the front door of a plantation. He was probably, I thought, a Negro from the West Indies, for there were a number of them working in the district.

He was halfway to the house when, peering through rheumy old eyes, he saw me on the porch. He stopped short, straightened up a little and took off his wide-

## Young Marstuh

brimmed sombrero, gray with the dust of the road. He was jet black, but around his glistening bare poll was a wreath of snowy-white wool. He must have been about eighty years old.

"Evenin', Cap'n, suh," he quavered in a voice hoarse with fatigue. "Wondah could you be kine 'nough to lemme have a drink of wattuh?"

I told him to go around to the kitchen and the cook would take care of him. As he thanked me and shuffled on I thought to myself that he didn't sound like a West Indian, but like a Negro from the South, where I hailed from. I got up and went through the house to the kitchen where I found him standing at the foot of the steps, drinking thirstily from a big gourd the cook had handed him. He put the gourd down as soon as he saw me and took off his hat again.

"Sho' tas'e good," he said. "Thankee kin'ly, Cap'n."

"Pretty hot walking, isn't it?" I said. "How far have you come?"

"I come from La Ceiba, Cap'n."

"La Ceiba!" I echoed. "Why, that's seventy miles!"

"Yes suh. I been walkin' hit th'ee weeks."

"Three weeks!"

"Yes suh. I done stawped at all de farms an' commisaries on de way, askin' could I git a job, but dey ain' no jobs fo' an old man like me. Mebbe you is got a job fo' me, Cap'n?"

I sat down on the bottom step. "What's your name?" I asked.

"Gawge Mason, suh."

"Well, George, you certainly don't talk like the rest of the boys from Jamaica. You don't sound English to me."

## Jungle Jim

"No *suh!*" he said indignantly. "I'se American. I comes from Mobile, Alabama. Thass my home."

He was the first Negro from the States that I had ever seen in the jungle. "You're a long way from home, George," I said. "How come you got down here?"

"Cap'n *suh*, I reck'n I nevva would o' come down yere iffen old Cap'n Sherriff hadn' died. I wuzzn' no oldah than you is now, Cap'n, an' he wuz might' nigh ez old ez I am now. I belong to Cap'n Sherriff 'case my mammy and pappy belong to him. I wuz bawn befo' the wah."

I saw that he was talking about a war that had ended sixty years before.

"Yes *suh*, I wuz a growed boy when de Yankees come to Mobile," he went on. "Cap'n Sherriff and me, we buried all de silva'wa'e an' de money an' evva't'ing in de cella' befo' de Yankees got theah. I was de onlies' pusson he trus'. He didn't have nobody else, 'ceptin' only me. Young Marstuh, he'd done gone an' got kilt in de wah. Cap'n Sherriff di'n' have nothin' left but me. He tole me I wuz free now, but o' co'se that di'n' make sense nohow. I stayed wid him and I tuk ca' of him till he die', and that wuz 'bout ten yeahs aftuh de wah.

"Well, Boss, right aftuh Cap'n die dey wuz some white gemmen in Mobile. Dey puts up a big sign in a window in Royal Street, says three hundred colored men wanted to tek ca' of race hawsses in Guatemala. So I goes in dee place an' asks one of dee gemmen an' says could I git dee job, 'cause I knowed how to handle hawsses good. Dee gemman tole me all about what a fine place is Guatemala and what fine hawsses they is an' he tole me I wuz jus' dee man dey wants. About a week aftuh dat dey put all us colored boys on a big steamboat, an' we wuz out o' sight o' lan' fo' th'ee or fo' days. Dey wouldn' lemme off

## Young Marstuh

de boat. Fin'ly we come to a long wooden w'arf, an' de boat ties up to it. We wuz all rarin' to git off de boat, but dey wouldn' let us. Dey wuz a big white gemman stan'in' on de dock, and I calls to him, 'Cap'n, where is dem pretty race hawsses? I cain't see nothin' but bush nowhere—no town, no nothin'.'

"De gemman laugh an' he say, 'Wait till you gits down heah on de dock. I'll show you de bes' race hawsses you evva saw.'

"When dey finely lets us off'n de boat I runs up to de gemman an' I says, 'Heah I is, Cap'n, an' gimme de bes' race hawss you got to take ca' of.'

"'All right, boy,' he says, 'you come along with me,' and he picks out th'ee or fo' othah boys 'sides me. An' when we all gits to de end of de w'arf where it jines onto de lan' de gemman shows us some wheelbarrows layin' theah an' he says, 'Theah is you' race hawsses, nigger. Pick 'em up an' staht trainin' um.'

"Well, Cap'n, dey *nevva* had no race hawsses in dat place. Dey wuz puttin' in a railroad, an' dat's de way dey got help, tellin' dey had race hawsses to take ca' of. An' dat's how come I got to Guatemala, suh."

"Well, that was pretty tough. Couldn't you get back to Mobile?"

"No suh. We di'n' have no money fo' de steamboat. Dey only paid us in commissary coupons, dess 'nough to eat on. Lots of de boys died with malaria on top o' dat. But I nevva got sick, praise de Lawd."

"How did you get here to Honduras?"

"I wukked fo' de railroad, fo'ty yeahs, I reck'n, tell I got too old fo' dem. Too old now fo' mos' anything."

Every word he said was like music in my ears. It made me so homesick that I could have hugged the old man.

## Jungle Jim

"Well, George," I said, "I'm going to give you a job as yard boy. A dollar a day, room and board. You'll have to bring in wood, water, tend the flowers, trim the lawn. Think you can do it?"

Tears stood in his tired old eyes. "White folks, I sho' 'preciate it!" he exclaimed. His voice trembled. "An', Cap'n, suh, wut is yo' name, please, suh?"

I told him. "Wheah is you from in de States, Marstuh Jim?" he added.

"I'm from Montgomery, Alabama," I said.

"I knowed it!" he exclaimed. "De good Lawd done led me heah! Den you is been in Mobile, ain' you, Marstuh Jim?"

Old George worked for me for months from then on. I grew to like the old fellow immensely. One thing that amused me about him was that although he had been living in a Spanish-speaking country for forty years he had never condescended to learn Spanish. He was a good, faithful workman. And to a homesick youngster like myself his conversation was a constant solace. Many a night he would come and sit with me on the front steps and ask me to tell him about the changes in Mobile since he had left it forty years before to take care of nonexistent race horses. I would tell him about street cars run by electricity and the fast trains and the bay boats plying between the city and Fair Hope and of the modern buildings, and he never wearied of listening. "My, my!" he would exclaim. "I sho' would like to see dat place once mo' befo' I die!"

But sometimes he would become stubborn about doing things I told him to do, and I would have an argument with him. He was old and settled in his ways, and I would get angry at his forgetfulness and obstinacy. I rode out

## Young Marstuh

to look over the farm one morning after bawling him out with unusual severity. As I rode, I recollected that I had talked pretty roughly to the old man, so when I got back I hollered for George, intending to tell him that I hadn't meant all I had said. There was no answer. The cook came out and said George had gone a half-hour before. He had taken his little bundle and had set off down the railroad track toward La Ceiba.

I ran over to the track. Yes, a mile or so away I could see a speck moving along the track, slow as a snail. I jumped on my mule and went after it. When I got within shouting distance I yelled to him. He was toiling along, back bent, dressed in the same old black coat hanging to his knees. "George!" I yelled. There was no answer. He kept plodding on. A second time I called, and this time he stopped.

"Where in the hell do you think you're going?" I said, reining up beside him.

"I'm goin' to Ceiba, Marstuh Jim," he said stubbornly.

"What are you doing that for?"

"Well, boss, you bawl me out all de time. Doan' look like I kin please you none."

"You're crazy! Come on back to the house. It's time to eat. Here, get up on the mule, and I'll walk. Put your pack up on the crupper."

"No suh, Marstuh Jim, I cain' do dat."

But I made the old man get up on the mule's back. I was sick and tired of his stubbornness. There had to be a showdown.

After that he knew perfectly well he had me licked and he did just about as he pleased. I couldn't bear to scold him. I let him potter around in his own way.

A little later on in the season we began having more

## Jungle Jim

or less trouble with our men. Most of the laborers were native Hondurans, of course, but at that time the fruit company was importing a considerable number of West Indians, mostly Negroes from Jamaica, because they had had more experience in working on banana farms. The Hondurans didn't like this, muttering that the company was giving all the better jobs to the Jamaicans. Some politicians fanned the discontent, accusing the government of doing nothing toward barring this imported labor and of being in the pay of the fruit company. In no time at all a "revolutionary" party sprang up, and the leaders had no difficulty in recruiting a ragged army dedicated to the overthrow of the government and the consequent enrichment of themselves. Its only uniform was an arm band fashioned from a strip of blue cloth. Those who remained loyal to the government wore red arm bands—when they dared. Most Hondurans carried both red and blue strips under their shirts, in readiness to pull out the right color at the right moment. It hadn't come to any fighting, as yet, but there was a lot of skulking around at night. Riding around the plantations of a morning, I would come across posters of cardboard pinned to a freight car or to the door of a commissary, posters upon which had been crudely painted a skull, together with the inscription, "*Mata los Negros y ponga en la mar* [Kill the Negroes and throw them in the sea]!" There was nothing to do but tear them down and ride on.

Old George developed a curious streak during this interlude. He took to watching over me like an old hen. It annoyed me worse than his habitual objection to doing any work except in his own way. He was always hobbling around after me whenever I went out of the house, like an old half-blind watchdog. I had to tell him to quit tag-



## Young Marstuh

ging me more than once. One day, coming back from riding around the farm, I saw George staring at my belt. "What's the matter with you, George?" I said irritably.

"Nothin', Marstuh Jim," he said. "But wheeah-all is yo' gun?"

I put my hand to my belt. The gun wasn't there. "Don' yo' go roun' without no gun," the old man pleaded. I rode back over the route I had taken, looking for it, but couldn't find it. Old George wouldn't give me any peace. I had another one sent down from La Ceiba finally just to shut him up.

It was just as well that I did, after all. A couple of days after the new one arrived I was out at the stable, sitting on a box and talking to several of the men. Old George was there, too, having ambled out after me as usual. The sun was at my back, and my shadow was cast on the ground in front of me. Behind me stood one of the men—I could see his shadow as well as mine. His shadow moved. The shadow of his arm lengthened. The man was lifting a machete. "Look out, Marstuh Jim!" hollered old George. I threw myself forward off the box and rolled over and over on the ground, tugging at my gun. When I got to my feet the man was running down the road.

"I tole you so!" the old man said triumphantly. "Di'n' I tole you be keerful?" He glared around at the other men scornfully. Not one of them had opened his lips in warning or lifted a hand. "Black trash," he muttered. They didn't know what he meant.

A day or two later I went out to the stables to look at some of our pack mules that had gone lame. My foreman, Juan Oliva, was with me, but old George, for once, was not at my heels. I'd forgotten about him.

Down on the railroad track, near the water tank, a

## Jungle Jim

quarter of a mile away, there was a popping of guns and a burst of yelling that came faintly to our ears. We went out into the corral and listened for a moment. Then we caught a glimpse of a straggling body of men moving along the tracks, away from the water tank. "It is nothing," said Juan, shrugging his shoulders. "Some *revolucionistas* celebrating."

We went back to our work. But almost immediately I thought I heard old George's voice calling my name. I ran to the door. Old George was about a hundred yards away, hobbling toward me at a speed I never thought possible to his old legs. "Marstuh Jim, Marstuh Jim!" he yelled desperately. "Come quick! Dey's hung dee men!" Then he pitched forward and fell sprawled.

Juan and I jumped to our saddles. Old George had already pulled himself to his knees as we tore past him in a cloud of dust. "At dee wattuh tank!" he yelled.

We reined up at the tank and saw them. There were three of them—three men who, we might have thought, were standing side by side under the tall posts supporting the water tank and who, with their arms stretched straight upward over their bowed heads, were dancing a soundless jig. This we might have thought, I say, had not our first glance showed us that their feet never quite touched the ground, kick as they would. . . .

A row of workmen squatted along the tracks opposite the tank and stared at them, waiting for their moans to cease.

Juan and I rode our horses on under the tank. With his machete he cut the rawhide thongs suspending them by wrists and fingers to the crossbeams overhead, and one by one I lowered the fainting men to the ground. They were three Negroes, Jamaicans, whom George had saved.

## Young Marstuh

Old George came hobbling up just as we got the third man down. He was panting from exhaustion. His face was so gray that it alarmed me. But he refused to sit down. Instead, he tottered down the line of sullen workmen who had remained squatting by the track. "Go on back to wuk!" he shouted at them, waving his arms. "What de mattah wid you? Go on back to wuk, heah me?" They didn't understand a word he was saying. They only laughed at him and continued to gape at the three Jamaican Negroes who had been strung up by their fingers and who now sat rubbing their hands.

"Go on back to the house, George," I said. "You need a rest."

He obeyed without a word. I would have wondered at that if I hadn't been so busy with other things. It was the first time in his life he hadn't given me an argument.

When we finally got back to the house I looked around for the old man. I didn't see him. The cook came out and said, "Señor Jeem, mebbe you go look at George? I think he is' seeck."

I went over to the shack where he had his bunk. He was lying there flat on his back and he didn't even lift his head when I came in. He was wearing his old black coat. I leaned over him and I saw he didn't know me at all. His face was grayer than ever. I reckon all that running he did to get help and all the excitement had been too much for his heart. But he looked up at me, and his face lighted up.

"Young marstuh!" he whispered. "You is come home, atter all!"

"Hush, George," I said. "Take it easy."

But he was as stubborn as ever. "Yo' daddy gwine be mighty glad to see you," he said in a stronger voice. "He

## Jungle Jim

sho' will! I cain' rightly go tell him now though. He tole me mus' I git this silvuh done buried befo' dee Yankees come. Don' know can I do hit—hit's mighty dahk heah in de cella'. Mighty dahk. Reck'n you all bettah hol' mah hand."

So I held his hand, and after a while his head sank back on the mattress. As I sat there I noticed a picture he had pinned on the wall at the foot of his bunk, a picture I had found in an old magazine and had given to him. I had forgotten about it. It was a picture of a big white house with white columns, and under it were the words: "Residence of Robert L. Sherriff, Esquire; Mobile, Alabama."

I buried it with the old man. He had always wanted to get back home.

## CHAPTER X

### Lola

**L**OLA'S CLAWS GRIPPED the smooth ferrule of wood suspended from wires and she hitched herself along, inch by inch, till her shoulder touched the wire on the right. Then she reversed the operation, 'sidling to the left. "*¡Cara de perro* [Face of a dog]!" she screamed savagely.

It is a fearsome oath in Spanish. I was shocked. Lola was a lady, or supposed to be. Moreover, a handsome one. She was a vivid green from head to claw, if one excepts her beak. Her perch swung in the sunshine beside the door of the thatched adobe hut where it was always placed on sunny days. Her feathers were like a green jewel in the sun. "*¡Cara de perro!*" screamed Lola. It was no language for a lady to use, and I said so to Juan.

Juan hung his head, grinning sheepishly. "She is a bad woman, Meester Jim," he said mournfully. "She is a bad! For too long a time she lived with Manuel, that robber, that thief, that begotten of the Evil One, from whom I

## Jungle Jim

bought her. Poor little one, she learned this of him!" He gazed at her admiringly. "But, *por Dios*, is she not beautiful!"

Lola shook herself up and down in ecstasy and screamed with delight. She was a fool for flattery.

I said for the eighteenth time that year, "Juan, what will you take for her? No foolin', that's the smartest parrot I've ever seen."

Juan shook his head for the eighteenth time. I knew I'd never get that bird. "Meester Jim," he said simply, "she lova me. What lova you you no sell."

That was why I loved Juan. I knew that he wouldn't sell Lola any more than he would have sold Raquel, his wife, or fat little Juancito, their baby boy who, in his birthday suit, was lurching happily around in the grass at our feet, making ineffectual passes at butterflies fluttering by.

Juan smiled down at his son, and from the child his glance wandered to the thatched hut and to his wife, bending over the pot of chicken on the fire. He turned to me, filled his deep lungs with a sigh of utter satisfaction and stretched out his arms in a gesture that took in all that belonged to him.

"Look, Meester Jim," he exclaimed proudly, "I got wife, I got boy, I got fine house, I got fine job with fine boss—I got everything! I no sell Lola."

It was a pleasure just to look at him, he was so happy.

Juan was my foreman. He had been with me for a couple of years, and I wouldn't have let go of him for a million dollars. He was as simple as a child, as honest as the sun. He worked tirelessly; nothing was too much to ask of him. Except Lola. And that was all right with me. She completed the picture of his contentment.

## Lola

We had been together at Recreo, a banana plantation a few miles from Tela, on the north coast of Honduras. Then old man Pinkie, the fruit company's superintendent, assigned me to open up a new plantation in the mountain valleys about seventy-five miles east of Tela. There was the little narrow-gauge railroad they ran the banana trains on that zigzagged along the coast until it got past the town of Ceiba and then turned southward till it came to a village called Jutiapa, and there the tracks ended. Of course I took Juan with me, and he brought his wife and the baby and Lola. From Jutiapa they had cut a right of way through the jungle, for twenty miles or so, to a spot called Entalina where there wasn't even a village, but the railroad tracks hadn't been laid that far. At Jutiapa we had to put our iron cots and bedding and everything else on pack mules, and it took us two days to get to Entalina, less than thirty miles.

Beyond Entalina there wasn't anything. It was hardly twenty miles inland from the coast, and yet if you had kept on going southward you wouldn't have run across one white man in the next two hundred miles of mountains and jungle. Entalina was last stop—all out.

The company had made a clearing of about two acres and had fenced it in with a barbed-wire netting about fourteen feet high so that jaguars or ocelots wouldn't be likely to jump over and get at the chickens we might be raising or stampede our mules. Inside this corral they had built a *bodega*, a long shed, or warehouse, and there was a gate opening into a pasture for the pack animals. Besides this, also in the corral, were two small adobe huts with thatched roofs and no doors—just open doorways. One hut had two rooms and a kitchen, with a lean-to shed opening off the kitchen. The shed had two rooms. Pat

## Jungle Jim

Jones, who was to be timekeeper, and I moved into that hut. We used one of the rooms in the lean-to for a dining room and told our cook, an old woman, to take the other. I told Juan to move into the other hut with his family. He was as tickled as if it were a palace. It had a shed lean-to, like ours, and there was plenty of room for them. Right back of it was a little creek and the gate in the fence that opened into the pasture. The gate in front of my own hut led to the right of way. Except for the two acres of clearing inside the barbed-wire fence everything around us was jungle.

Our first job was to find laborers to work the banana farms the company had taken over. Pat and Juan and I managed to round up a hundred or so altogether, but they were ruffians, if I ever saw ruffians. We built shacks for them up on a hillside overlooking our corral, but what we should have built was a row of separate cells to lock them up in at night. They were bad babies. Every payday they would fill themselves extra full of *chicha* and get into drunken fights. They all carried machetes, of course. I don't know how many of them got killed or chopped up. We would turn in a report to the Honduran police station at Jutiapa, and a squad of soldiers would be sent down, but by the time they got over the trail the men would have ducked into the jungle. And there they would stay till the police went away again. As a result, our plantation work would just come to a stop. That job was a honey.

But we made a little progress, month after month, and in the meantime the tracks got laid as far as Entalina, where we were. After we had been there eleven months some of the first plantings of banana trees began to have fruit ready for cutting and loading. A siding had been



## Lola

built, a mile or so from our corral, at a place we called Violeta Switch, and empty cars had been brought down and run out on the siding, ready for loading. We were all set to begin cutting the stems the next day. Pat and Juan and I had been working like hell because, naturally, we wanted to make a good showing with our very first shipment.

So, of course, the gang up on the hill had to pick out that very night to start raising a ruckus. Just at dark it sounded like all hell was breaking loose up there. I stood it as long as I could and then went to the door and called over to Juan's hut. His wife answered. She said Juan had already started up there to see what the trouble was about. That was the way he was. He had no more hesitation about walking into that gang of cutthroats and criminals than if they had been a party of three-year-old children. I stood awhile at the door, wondering if Pat and I ought to go up and give him a hand, when back he came. He was grinning as he always was and he said:

"Meester Jim, there is much drinking. They get bad. Chiquatin is there. He make trouble. You want him get out pronto? I go back tell him."

Chiquatin! He was the fellow who had given me trouble at Recreo a year before. I hadn't known he was in this neighborhood. He would make trouble.

I didn't like it. "What's he doing here?" I exclaimed.

"His brother Manuel ees weeth heem," said Juan. "They are no good. You say so, Meester Jim, I go back and throw them out."

I thought for a minute. "No," I said, "I'll talk to him in the morning. Let him sleep it off. If he hasn't sobered up by morning I'll run him off."

Juan went back to his house. I went back into the house

## Jungle Jim

and told Pat what Juan had said. Pat shook his head. "That's bad," he said. "Those two birds are bad hombres, Chiquatin and that brother of his. They're killers. Keep your eyes open, Jim."

He had been sitting in his room reading an old magazine. The oil lamp stood on a bracket beside the bed. I pointed at it and laughed.

"You aiming to make it easy for them?" I asked. "That's begging them to take a pot shot from the bush."

Pat put the light out, and we stood outside for a while, listening to the yelling and whooping going on up the hill. Then there was a break—for us. All of a sudden it started raining. It poured down in bucketfuls. The noise up on the hill stopped right away. Everybody had dived for the shacks. There wouldn't be any trouble—not in that pouring rain.

I was tired and turned in early. I had given orders that everybody was to be at work at five-thirty the next morning, the first day of fruit cutting. Pat sat up for a while, reading, but I guess it wasn't for long.

About midnight I was waked up out of a sound sleep by somebody shaking me. It was Juan. "Señor Jim," he whispered, "it is I, Juan! Do not make a light—there are men inside the corral!" I whispered to him to go and wake Señor Pat while I got my shoes on. Pat got up as quick as I did. We both got our guns. Juan had his, a .38 that I had given him a year before. I took a flashlight but didn't turn it on, and we all three slipped out into the dark. Pat and Juan went around one side of the house, and I went around the other. We got to the opposite corner of the house at the same time. We hadn't seen or heard anybody. Just then I heard a little rustle over by the barbed-wire fence. Then I snapped on the flashlight. It made a circle

## Lola

in the dark, and there was the man standing inside the fence, knee-deep in the high grass, with a machete in his hand.

I stuck my gun forward so that he could see it in the light of the flashlight. "*¡Baja el machete!*" I yelled at him. It was Chiquatin.

He was too paralyzed with fear to drop it. "*¡No tira [Don't shoot]!*" he screamed. "*¡No tira!*"

Juan ran over to him and took the machete out of his hand. Pat and I began laughing. Juan was as naked as a jay bird. At the instant that he had heard Chiquatin's machete cutting the barbed wire he had slid out of his house in the clothes he had been sleeping in. We laughed, but I guess it was because we were a little jittery. He had saved our lives.

Juan marched the fellow over to us, prodding him in the back with his gun, and we took him out to the *bodega*. There was a heap of *alberdones*, the blankets to go under the pack saddle on a mule's back, lying on the floor of the warehouse and a lot of the rope used for lashing bunches of bananas to the pack saddles. We tied up Chiquatin with the rope, hand and foot, and threw him onto the pile of blankets. Juan said he would sit up and guard him the rest of the night. We should have taken turns at it—I wish now we had. I don't mean that Pat and I could have made any better job of it but I just don't like to remember that Juan didn't get any sleep that night. His last night on earth. It doesn't make any difference to him now, and still I wish that hadn't happened. It's little things like that, silly, of course, you can think about till you go nuts.

Well, Pat and I went back to bed. We got up at five o'clock and got our coffee and walked out to the *bodega*. Juan was standing guard over Chiquatin, all right, but

## Jungle Jim

he looked as though he couldn't have kept his eyes open much longer. Chiquatin was sound asleep, snoring. Juan grinned all over as soon as he saw us. He jumped up and said, "*Buenos dias, señores,*" just as if this were like any other morning.

I told him to go over to his house and get his breakfast and then to take Chiquatin and escort him to the end of the company land and warn him not to step across the line again. He hurried off and was back in a few minutes. We cut the ropes from Chiquatin and let him stand up. He was a sullen brute. Juan grinned. "As soon as I put this man off the farm I will come back to Violeta Switch and see that the cars are loaded properly," he said. Pat and I watched them set off, Juan walking behind Chiquatin, with his gun in his hand. As they went past Juan's hut the parrot jumped up and down on her perch. "*¡Cara de perro!*" she screamed. Chiquatin scowled at her as if he would like to kill her. He knew whom she was talking about.

Pat and I got on our horses and began the day's work. Pat rode off to Violeta Switch where he would check the men off in his timekeeper's note book as they came in. I rode from one section of the farm to another to see how the cutting of the fruit was progressing and to make sure that the men tied the bunches properly and didn't bruise the bananas. Pretty soon it began raining again. We worked, just the same, in the pouring rain. After I had been riding around for two or three hours I rode over toward Violeta Switch to see how the loading was coming on. On the way I stopped in at our house to get a cup of coffee. I was standing in the kitchen when Pat came galloping up the right of way, yelling my name. I ran out. "Jim, they've got Juan!" he yelled. I hit the saddle run-

## Lola

ning, and we both tore back for Violeta Switch, hell for leather. He hadn't seen how it happened. One of the men had come running after him, he told me.

When we got there we saw fifty or sixty men standing in a group around something on the railroad siding tracks. We shoved them aside and saw Juan.

Blood was streaming down the left side of his face and over his shoulder so that his whole shirt was soaked red. His face was yellowish green. I don't know why he hadn't fainted. But he was still sitting up. He even managed to smile when he saw us. The first thing I said as I kneeled down beside him was to ask him who had done this. "Chiquatin," he said.

Then I saw his foot. His right foot had been nearly cut off. The ground was a pool of blood under it. I began tearing off my shirt and tearing it into strips. I made a tourniquet on his leg to stop the flow. His left arm had been hacked too. Chiquatin had struck three blows with the heavy machete: at the ankle, the shoulder and the head. Juan's head was laid open, and the stroke had gone into his eyelid. He couldn't possibly live. But he wouldn't let go.

"Where is Chiquatin?" I asked while I worked over him. "Where is he?"

Juan was still holding his revolver clutched in his right hand. He wouldn't let go of it. He made a motion with it.

"Over there," he said. "No more trouble, Meester Jim." He smiled a little.

The body was lying near the tracks about fifty feet away. Pat went over and looked at it. When he came back he said, "Drilled through the head."

Juan was bleeding through the bandages. I knew he couldn't last long. But I told Pat, over my shoulder, to

## Jungle Jim

get to the call box at the end of the siding and telephone the dispatcher's office at Jutiapa to send a track car to take Juan to the company hospital at La Ceiba. When he came back he said they had promised to send it as fast as possible. The rain kept on coming down. I held my sombrero over Juan's head to keep the rain from beating down on the cuts in his face. It wasn't any good, of course, but Juan smiled and whispered, "*Gracias, Meester Jim.*"

"How did it happen?" I asked him.

"I was alone here," he whispered. It was hard for him to talk. "All the others were working a little way off. I got into that car to see if the loading was all right. I was standing with my back to the open door. Chiquatin crawled under the car. I didn't see him. He jumped out and struck from behind. At my ankle, as you have seen. I fell. While I was on the ground he struck again—twice, Meester Jim. Then he started to run away. He thought I was dead. I got up on my knees. I crawled on my hands and knees. Then I fired as he ran. One shot, Meester Jim. A good gun, this gun, is it not so?"

"Yes," I said. "A good gun." I couldn't say any more. I smiled at him.

A man came running along the tracks. I knew him. He was a worthless, drunken, quarrelsome native who at one time had been on the police force. He was a sort of cousin of Chiquatin's. When he got to Chiquatin's body he stopped short and began wailing. "*¡Ay, ay, ay!*" he wailed "*¡Mi amigo, mi primo* [My friend, my cousin]!" He worked himself into a rage. Suddenly he picked up Chiquatin's bloody machete which had been left lying there beside the body, none of the natives daring to touch it, and began waving it around his head.

"*¡El mato mi primo; yo voy machetar el* [He has killed

## Lola

my cousin; I will kill him]!" he yelled. And he started over toward us. Pat and I were kneeling beside Juan, supporting his shoulders. Some of the laborers yelled at the man. "No, no!" they yelled. "Don't cut him—he is already dying!" But he kept right on coming.

I jumped up and yanked my gun out of its holster. I was shaking with rage. I shot twice, to the right and to the left of him. If he had taken another step forward I would have killed him.

But he dropped the machete and ran. The crowd scattered in all directions, like a drove of frightened pigs. I went back and knelt beside Juan.

Juan's head had sagged. He lifted it up again with an effort. "Please, Meester Jim, write down my will," he whispered. "I am going to die."

I swallowed hard. I motioned to Pat, and he handed me his timekeeper's book and a pencil. I turned the pages till I found some blank leaves.

"At the store, at Lafitte's, Meester Jim," he whispered, "they keep my savings for me. There is three hundred and eighteen dollars there, Meester Jim. That is for Raquel, my wife, and for my son. And with the company there are my wages. Since the first of the year—seventy dollars. Señor Pat knoweth this. That also for Raquel—and my little son. You will attend to this, Meester Jim?"

"Yes, Juan," I said.

"That is all I have," he whispered. "But you will do this also, Meester Jim? Wilt thou not speak to the company, so that Raquel may be given work? A cook? Ah, there is no one so wonderful! Hadst thou but tasted of our meal last night, Señor Jim! And tonight——"

"I will see to it," I said hastily. "Be tranquil."

Juan's fingers touched my sleeve. "Thou hast prom-

## Jungle Jim

ised." He smiled. "It is enough. And now write this also, my friend—write that thou thyself shall have my parrot, my Lola."

I couldn't bear the look upon his face turned up to mine. There was pride in it and a sort of triumph. He must have meant to do this always.

I tried to smile at him. "What talk is this, Juan?" I said roughly. "Enough of this nonsense about dying. Soon thou shalt be in the hospital, and there they will make of you a better man than thou hast ever been, *Juancito mio*. And thy wages shall be increased—this I promise."

He smiled but did not try to speak again. I felt his weight sag more heavily against my shoulder. We sat there holding him, Pat and I, for two hours. Then the track car came, and we lifted him gently upon its platform.

He died in the hospital that night. The next day they brought him back to bury him on the farm where he had given his life for mine.

When the coffin had been carried in, all the natives came that night to mourn at the house of the dead. Raquel sat upon the edge of the bed, her black shawl over her head, rocking her son in her arms. The others filled the little hut and crowded about outside. All night long we heard the sound of their chattering and talking and from time to time we heard the high-pitched wailing of Juan's widow. "*¡Ay, ay, mi Juancito!*" Over and over, all night long. "*¡Ay, ay, mi Juancito!*" On her perch swinging above the coffin, Lola, the parrot, moved restlessly back and forth.

Raquel kept the parrot until I found work for her on a distant farm, and when the bird was left with me I shipped it home to my mother in Alabama. A year or



## Lola

two later, when I went home on furlough, I found that the parrot's cage was hung in some vines upon the side porch. I could hear Lola screaming as I walked into the house. It was the voice of Raquel.

*"¡Ay, ay, ay!"* screamed Lola. *"¡Mi Juancito! ¡Mi Juancito!"*

I felt sick. "Can't you give that parrot away?" I said.

"Why, Jim," my mother expostulated, "that's a beautiful bird! Don't you like it?"

"It isn't that, exactly," I said. "It reminds me of someone."

## CHAPTER XI

### The Vest of General Sandino

**I**N THOSE DAYS, which were only ten years ago, anybody could travel by boat through Nicaraguan jungles and pass in ten days or so from the Atlantic to the Pacific, seeing nothing but the jungle every day. But practically no one but a native ever does. It is a river voyage which is not particularly dangerous or adventurous. When I made that trip the one person who, among my fellow voyagers, found it exciting was "the man who got himself a vest."

I had arrived at Bluefields, on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua, and was bound for Managua, which is on the Pacific side. There is no railway to connect the two, and the usual method is to go around by way of the Panama Canal. But it struck my fancy to cross the continent, which isn't very wide here, by river.

The boat which was to take me from Bluefields was a dumpy little steamer, only fifty feet long, grandiosely named *L'Impératrice*. She made regular trips up the San

## The Vest of General Sandino

Juan River and was now returning from one of these trips. But she was overdue. I got tired of waiting for her. Two weeks in that grimy and sweltering little seaport had exhausted its charm for me. Ordinarily no other boats were to be had. But by the grace of God I heard of the Elk.

The Elk was a Caribbean fishing schooner, only thirty feet long, with a one-lunged auxiliary engine. Her skipper and her engineer were coal-black gentlemen from the Gran Cayman, which is a British island south of Cuba, and they knew their stuff. That they had sailed her from Havana was a feat in itself. They found half a dozen passengers who, like myself, were fed up with waiting for L'Impératrice and promised to take us up the San Juan all the way to San Carlos where we could count on a boat to take us across Lake Nicaragua.

We had a good breeze that fetched us around Monkey Point and held up all through the night, and we put in at San Juan del Norte at noon of the second day. San Juan del Norte is Greytown, or, at least, it once was. Two generations ago, when Greytown dreamed of becoming the eastern entrance to a canal which was to cross Nicaragua and link the two oceans, it was a boom town. It is a ghost town now. We landed and wandered through the almost empty streets, past rotting piers where ships had never docked and along the wide stone-cobbled plazas, weed grown, where the wheels of loaded wagons had never rumbled. In all the town were only a hundred or two inhabitants—Negroes all.

But, seated at a table in the shade of a water-front cantina, I met two white ghosts. One was from New York, the other from Philadelphia. But neither one had visited the States for a lifetime. They had come to Grey-

## Jungle Jim

town in the days when it was "a certainty" that Uncle Sam's government was going to vote the millions necessary to build the canal. They had purchased thousands of hectares of land along the route of that visionary waterway. They were going to become rich beyond dreams. But Panama's canal came true; Nicaragua's did not. The two dreamers did not give up hope. They stayed on. The years came, the years went. When, at long intervals, a traveler who had strayed off the beaten path of travel blundered into this forgotten port the two white-haired ghosts would have but one eager question to repeat: "You come from the States? What is the news from Washington? What's Congress doing? We hear that the canal appropriation is about to go through. Not a doubt of it, is there?"

And the traveler would stare at them wonderingly and pass on. It is foolish to shatter dreams.

Our tiny boat chugged on, and we turned aside from the glittering blue expanse of the sea to enter the yellow flood of the river emerging from the sandy, empty, low-lying shores. On the desolate sand bars crocodiles sunned their lazy lengths and giant turtles crawled. Ahead of us, astern, on either hand, the surface of the water was streaked with ripples flowing backward from black fins, the fins of unseen monsters crossing and recrossing each other's underwater paths, hunting, hunting, hunting. It was the breeding ground of the tiger shark. The river crawled toward us, winding its way through the sand bars that choked its mouth. Our black pilot searched slowly for the entrance channel.

The passenger standing next to me stirred uneasily. "It is very strange," he murmured, "that the steamer *L'Impératrice* should be so long delayed. I had friends

## The Vest of General Sandino

on board her whom I expected to meet in Bluefields.”

He was a paunchy young fellow, far too stout for so young a man. His name, I had learned, was Señor Quebrada. He was the owner, he had told us, of a store in Granada and had gone to Bluefields to make purchases. Hot as the weather was, he wore beneath his open coat of white linen a gaudy vest of which he seemed inordinately proud. His dark-brown cheeks glistened with perspiration. He mopped them.

“Yes,” he went on, “before I left Granada it was all arranged. My friend is a young lawyer. He has married the daughter of a great friend of mine. I know her well. They were married a month ago, and I myself held the ring for him, which he presented to his bride. It was I who helped him select that ring at the best jeweler’s in Managua. After the wedding they went to Managua but before I left they had booked the finest cabin on L’Impératrice for this voyage. It is a pity that I could not wait longer in Bluefields.”

As he talked on a native fishing boat put out from a cluster of huts at the river mouth and came toward us. Our skipper shaped his course to meet it, intending to ask for information as to the channel. As the two boats came alongside each other Señor Quebrada was the first to shout a question.

“Have you heard nothing of the steamer?” he cried. “L’Impératrice?”

The fisherman made the sign of the cross.

“Sí, señor,” he said sorrowfully. “A week ago. I had gone up the river, and the steamer passed me as she came down. There were many people on her, a great many. It is the truth that I counted more than thirty. Pray for their souls!”

## Jungle Jim

Señor Quebrada's eyes seemed starting from his head. His mouth fell open.

"When I came back down the river there was no steamer," the man went on. "She had struck upon yonder bar. She overturned. Not one on board her was saved. All, all of them, were thrown into the sea. The sharks awaited them. My brother saw them. He has told me the water was lashed white with their rushings. No one lived, not one. But on the day following a woman's arm floated ashore."

He drew a knotted handkerchief from his belt, unfastened the knot and held up to our gazes a glittering ring.

"This was upon her finger," he said.

Señor Quebrada uttered a choking cry. His hands trembled, but he remembered that he was a man of business. The fisherman set a price upon the ring, but Señor Quebrada managed to persuade him to accept a tenth part of what he had asked. The ring, Señor Quebrada assured him on his word of honor, was brass, and its setting was merely glass. He slipped it into the pocket of his gaudy vest and shrugged his shoulders at his own generosity.

By the time we had reached the channel entrance pointed out to us it was growing dark and the wind was rising. Surf broke lazily on the sand bars. I do not believe that anyone on board that tiny boat cares to remember his thoughts during the next two hours. In those two hours, at four separate times, swept forward upon a breaker, the boat thumped heavily upon sand. But each time the following wave swept her off into deeper water. We came into clear channel at last. But the dark fins still convoyed us, waiting.

We tied up that night in slack water near the riverbank

## The Vest of General Sandino

at a bend in the river when it had grown too dark to go farther and listened to the jungle noises through the night. Nobody slept much.

Those who slept at all slept on the deck. It must have been impossible for the señorita to whom the tiny cabin amidships had been given up to sleep in that heat. She was a Cuban girl, a dancer, voyaging from Havana to Managua, where she was to dance in a cabaret conducted by a German restaurant keeper. Señor Quebrada imparted this information. He knew everything. I suppose he had gathered it from the Gran Cayman skipper. I had had only a glimpse of the girl, for she had gone immediately to the cabin when we left Bluefields. Señor Quebrada leered knowingly as he whispered the words, "A dancer." But, he added with a scowl, one must proceed with caution. In all likelihood, he hazarded gloomily, she had already become the friend of that young horse thief—the epithet was his—who had come on the same boat from Cuba and who was continuing on as far as San Carlos. Perhaps after San Carlos——? Señor Quebrada winked.

"That young horse thief," as he had been called, was an unsmiling young man of great taciturnity. His costume was that of a Nicaraguan *vaquero*, or cowboy, and I guessed that he was employed on some cattle ranch near San Carlos. But he showed no disposition for talking. I wondered idly what mission had taken a *vaquero* on a voyage to Cuba.

Morning came at last, and we moved on up the broad river. The green jungle glided by on either hand. Again and again we saw the ominous black triangle of a shark's fin cutting the current. Señor Quebrada pointed to the river bluff.

"There is the spot where General Chamorro became

## Jungle Jim

an admiral," he said. "You have not heard of General Chamorro? He was the greatest master of jungle warfare this country has ever known. Ah, yes, my father has often told me of him. He was my father's personal friend. We have always been leaders in Nicaragua, we Quebradas."

"And this General Chamorro became an admiral?" I asked.

Señor Quebrada chuckled. "This was many years ago," he said, "before any nation made use of submarines. But General Chamorro made himself admiral of a fleet of submarines, and they cost him not a peseta. I will tell you how, my friend. It is very funny. General Chamorro was at Greytown, and with only a handful of men. Word came to him that his enemy, General Diaz, was advancing upon him, coming down this same river that you see with a force of men far outnumbering those of Chamorro. General Chamorro did not wait for him to reach Greytown. He hurried to this point where, as you see, the bluff commands the river and as General Diaz' flatboats, loaded with troops, came down he opened fire upon them and sank the boats. The submarines rushed up to finish off the job. There were no survivors, and it cost General Chamorro nothing. A shark asks for no pay."

He laughed heartily.

The dancer came on deck. I was made aware of it by the sudden cessation of Señor Quebrada's laughter and the change that came over his face. I glanced around.

She spoke to no one but the young *vaquero*, and throughout the day they remained side by side. They spoke seldom, and then only in low murmurs. She was very beautiful. Señor Quebrada gnawed his thick lips in helpless envy.



## The Vest of General Sandino

On the afternoon of the third day we made a stop at a rickety landing stage on the riverbank to get fresh water. We had made such stops each day, for the plantations were separated from each other by a day's voyaging. This was a cacao plantation, growing the seed pods from which chocolate is made. To my surprise, the owner here was not a native Nicaraguan, but an old fellow who told me he hailed from Vermont.

"Come up and set awhile," he urged me. "'Tain't often a body comes along that can speak anything but Spanish."

He led the way to his plantation house and waved me into a cane-woven chair on the shady veranda. "Only house in the hull country with a front porch," he said proudly. "Like to set here, evenings, and watch the river."

A houseboy, answering his shout, brought a wicker tray laden with a tall earthenware jar of cool milk, tall glasses and an assortment of bowls. "Make ye some *pinolea*," beamed the old Vermonter. "'Tain't bad on a hot day." Into a calabash gourd, held between his knees, he measured chocolate grown upon the plantation, sugar from sugar cane he himself had grown, and filled the *xicara* to the brim with the milk. Then, still holding it between his knees, he whipped the mixture with a forked stick twirled between his palms until it foamed. "Fresher 'n anything ye'll get in a corner drugstore." He chuckled.

"You're mighty comfortable here," I ventured.

"Wal, yes, I be." He nodded. "Can't complain hardly." He lowered his voice and hitched his chair nearer mine. "Only thing bothers me a mite is this fellow Sandino. Calls hisself a general, runnin' around and tryin' t' overthrow the gov'ment. Always tryin' to get recruits to join

## Jungle Jim

him in the hills. Took three of my best men off with him last month. Good hands is scarce enough as it is."

"I didn't know he was operating this far east," I said. "I thought he was hiding out only in the hills along the west coast."

"Wal, he is, as fur as I know," the old man corrected himself. "Don't know as he's been hereabouts, hisself. But my men went off to join up with him—that I'll vow."

During the remaining six days of the river voyage I thought of Sandino more than once, wondering what that reckless leader's ultimate fate would be. He was fighting a guerilla warfare against the government and had so far succeeded in terrorizing the country that the United States had considered it necessary to station a force of marines at Managua, the capital. Sandino's enemies called him a bandit; his sympathizers called him a patriot. At most, his "army" could not have numbered more than a few hundred men, and these were divided into small squads encamped in fastnesses of the hills from which they sallied out to indulge in ambushes or to commandeer supplies of food from some luckless village or farm. I wondered how he managed to keep his men supplied with rifles and ammunition. Surely, I reflected, he was fighting a losing battle.

Two days after leaving the old Vermonter's lonely cacao farm we came to the first village we had encountered in sixty miles of almost unbroken jungle, Castilla Vieja, a huddle of huts on the lower slopes of the cone-shaped hill surmounted by an ancient fortress of stone, long since abandoned. Here the river foamed in rapids over its rocky bed, and it was necessary to send to the village to hire men to tow our schooner around the rapids. While the Negro tow men tugged away at the ropes I

## The Vest of General Sandino

went ashore to stretch my legs. I climbed the hill, followed along the straggling street of the village by naked brown children and yapping curs, picked my way through children, dogs, chickens and pigs and sat down on a parapet of the deserted fort to catch my breath. To the north rose the green flanks of the Chontales foothills; below me sparkled the wide river. The boat caught my eye. It was not moving; it had been moored to the riverbank. Perhaps the towing crew were resting. But no, I could see them clustered around the boat on shore and on the deck. They were lifting something from the deck. It was a long pine box and seemed a heavy weight. I saw four men lift it to their naked shoulders and move away with their burden, followed by many of the ragged spectators. The sound of a horn floated up to me. It was our ebony skipper blowing a blast of recall upon a conch shell. I hurried down the stone steps of the old fort, past the abandoned gun pits and the dungeons, came out at the level of the village and reached the boat just as the tow ropes tightened again.

At the end of the towing path where the village porters were paid off I climbed aboard again. "We took off some cargo back there?" I said to Señor Quebrada who, too fat and lazy, had declined to make the climb to the fort with me. "What was it? It looked to me like a coffin."

Señor Quebrada pursed his fat lips. "You are right, my friend—it was a coffin," he said. "*Caramba*, I was not sorry to see it go!" He laughed uneasily. "There is a saying that the boat which carries a coffin will meet ill fortune. But who knew that it was on board! You will not believe me, my friend, when I tell you where it was carried. It had been stowed beneath the bunk in the cabin of our little Cuban! Mother of God, what a sleeping companion for her!"

## Jungle Jim

I stared at him and changed the subject. Señor Quebrada was too talkative. He did not seem to be a man with whom to discuss theories—theories which, after all, were no business of mine even to entertain.

From Castilla Vieja onward up the river the jungle grew heavier, and at one place only did we make a landing. A single house stood there, surrounded by wild orange trees, heavy with golden fruit. I bought a sackful weighing a hundred pounds and paid their picker the equivalent of ten cents. Our skipper promised to return the empty sack to him on the downward journey. We chugged on up the silent reaches of the river, throwing orange peels at the crocodiles sleeping on the sand bars. Black spider monkeys chattered from the treetops overhanging the stream, snowy cranes flapped away from us and swarms of wild ducks would rise from reedy marshes as we rounded river bends.

On the ninth day after leaving Bluefields, having navigated more than one hundred miles, we had reached a point less than ten miles from San Carlos, the village built at the point where the river emerges from Lake Nicaragua. No sign of human habitation was in sight. For no reason that I could guess our skipper suddenly shifted his course from mid-channel and headed for the northern bank. I glanced back at the man, surprised. Beside the skipper stood the Cuban girl and the young *vaquero*, their eyes fixed upon the forest wall past which we were slowly gliding. There seemed no gap in the tangle of vegetation. But suddenly, at a nod and muttered word from the *vaquero*, the skipper checked the progress of the boat and swerved it sharply toward the land. A narrow creek opened up before us. We drifted between the overarching branches of two giant trees that marked the entrance and found our-

## The Vest of General Sandino

selves in a hidden cove. A crude landing stage, constructed of logs, had been built there, and from it a narrow trail led off into the forest. The place was empty.

The skipper lifted his conch horn and blew a blast. We waited in wondering silence. Minutes passed. Then, coming in single file down the trail, a score of men appeared. Only two or three carried rifles; the rest were armed only with machetes.

They worked in silence, needing only a word or two of direction from the skipper and the *vaquero*. Lifting the cover of the shallow hold in which the vessel's supply of gasoline drums were stored, they lifted out the drums one after another. These they did not put ashore. But from beneath them, where they had been hidden, they lifted out with eager hands two long boxes of unpainted pine, the length of coffins. They were heavy boxes.

I stole a glance at Señor Quebrada. His brown cheeks had faded to a pasty gray.

"It is all right," I whispered. "They are not interested in us."

In twenty minutes it was all done. The drums had been replaced in the hold, the hatch cover refastened over them. No one said a word. But as our engine sputtered into life again and we began to move out of the forest-encircled cove the knot of ragged and barefoot men grouped around the two pine boxes on the pier lifted their hands in an awkward gesture of salute to the *vaquero* who had remained standing, with folded arms, beside our skipper. He shook his head with an expression of annoyance.

When we were again moving westward on the open river the *vaquero* made his way to the bow where Señor Quebrada and I had remained from first to last. He came

## Jungle Jim

directly to us and spoke with what I thought an exaggerated politeness.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I trust you have seen nothing of particular interest in the scenery this afternoon?"

"Not I!" I answered promptly and heartily. "I have been asleep upon the deck here, as you know, for the past hour!"

He smiled faintly for the first time. "And you?" he challenged Quebrada.

Señor Quebrada's plump cheeks quivered, and he made inarticulate sounds. "No—no—no!" he managed to gasp.

The young man nodded and turned upon his heel. It was a relief when we came at last to San Carlos late that afternoon. I was beginning to find the voyage too exacting.

San Carlos is, or was, a water-front village of less than two hundred inhabitants, and there was but one hotel, a two-story shack with half a dozen rooms up on the second floor and a long barroom filling the ground floor. It was conducted by a Chinaman. We dined that night in the barroom, Señor Quebrada and I together, the Cuban dancer and the *vaquero* at the other end, with the length of the long table between us. Señor Quebrada drank a great deal of brandy. He seemed ill at ease and had little to say. An unexpected and charming thing happened after we had dined and were drinking our coffee. A little of the floor beyond the table was bare of chairs. The girl, whispering a word to her companion, left her place and danced, alone. There was no music, no orchestra, in that grimy little tavern, but she needed no music. She herself was music. She was fire and youth and all the heat and beauty of the tropics. She danced for no one but the *vaquero* who, with his chin resting in his hands, sat gazing at her with

## The Vest of General Sandino

an intensity of passion smoldering in his dark eyes. The dance? It was her farewell to him, for, as we learned a moment later, he was going no farther with us on this journey.

He came over to us and bowed with his somber politeness. "Señors," he said, "I bid you a good night. We have had a pleasant voyage, but from here I ride to my home. Go with God!"

I had risen to my feet. He held out his hand, and I clasped it. But Señor Quebrada had remained seated, staring at the table with drunken gravity. The *vaquero's* face darkened.

"As for you, son of a pig," he said evenly, "that is a handsome vest which you are wearing. Remember to keep on wearing it, and no other." Quebrada did not lift his head.

The *vaquero* laughed shortly, bowed again to me and strode away, beckoning to the girl. She went with him to the door. I got Quebrada to his feet and up the narrow stairs to his bed, then went to my own. At daybreak the old Chinaman roused me with word that the steamer was to sail in a few minutes. I routed out Quebrada, who had slept in his clothes, and we hurried on board.

The Victoria was an old side-wheeler steamer which made the round of the lake once a week. Her engines had been built in New Jersey in 1893. There were cabins on the upper deck, but most of them were unoccupied. The fare for the three-day voyage, including meals, was five dollars. The natives preferred to sleep on the hurricane deck. The dining room, on the main deck, had two long tables. The breakfast gong sounded as we came on board, and I was almost knocked off my feet by the rush of natives to get to table. We had for breakfast a mash of

## Jungle Jim

hot black-bean paste baked with grease and hot cane sugar. Señor Quebrada ate nothing.

For three days as the Victoria waddled from San Carlos to El Rancho and from El Rancho across the forty-mile expanse of the lake to Omotepe where the volcano glowed red at dusk, from Omotepe to Rivas and from Rivas northward to Granada I watched Señor Quebrada's hungry eyes searching the procession of native señoras and señoritas getting on or off the steamer at each successive stop, but among them all, in their flowing and beruffled skirts of red and blue, and with scarlet flowers tucked in their blue-black hair, there was no Cuban girl. Señor Quebrada insisted on accompanying me to the railway station in Granada to see me off for Managua. I was not greatly touched by this attention. Until the moment that my train pulled out his eyes roved here and there, looking—but looking in vain—for the Cuban girl.

When I alighted at Managua I was not surprised to see, also descending from the train, a bent old peasant woman, her face completely shrouded by the black shawl drawn over her head, whom I had seen hobbling off the Victoria at Granada.

But although she had eluded him for the moment it was not long before Señor Quebrada discovered that the Cuban girl was dancing nightly at the cabaret in Herr Boeckmann's restaurant. He came to Managua at once. I have an idea that he sold out his store in Granada, for he was always at the restaurant. She would have nothing to do with him, and he became the joke of all the town. He began to look shabby. Even his gaudy vest was not enough to smarten up his appearance. One day in a jeweler's window I saw a ring. I recognized it at once. It was the jeweled ring which I had seen him purchase



## The Vest of General Sandino

from the fisherman off Colorado Bar. I wondered what he had got for it.

I dropped in at the restaurant to watch the cabaret with a friend of mine a few evenings later. My friend was a Nicaraguan officer. As we strolled over to the restaurant together he remarked: "We received some very interesting information at headquarters today. Of course, we had to pay out thousands for it to the informer but we know it's worth it. We have been given information as to where we can lay our hands on one of Sandino's most daring officers, a fellow who has been giving us no end of trouble. He's as good as in our hands right now. Confound him, the fellow has been running guns and ammunition into the country for months! Sandino would rather lose his own right arm."

It was still early in the evening when my friend reluctantly rose from the table to which we had been shown. He must return to barracks, he explained in a whisper, to make ready for the raid which was to take place before dawn. The door had hardly closed behind him when a hand fell on my shoulder. I looked up. It was Señor Quebrada.

He had been drinking heavily. Without an invitation he dropped into the chair my friend had just vacated. But what most surprised me was his raiment. He was attired in spotless white linen. His waistcoat, a new one, was even more gaudy than the one in which I had always seen him. On his finger glittered the ring which I had seen in the jeweler's window. He was freshly shaven. Drunk as he was, he was attired as if for his own wedding. I wondered if he had fallen into a legacy.

He leaned across the table. A gleam of triumph was in his bloodshot eyes. He spoke in an exultant whisper.

## Jungle Jim

"Congratulate me, señor," he crowed. "Did I not tell you I would win her? She will be mine tonight!"

I looked at him in disgust. "I don't believe you," I said bluntly. "You are drunk, Quebrada."

He did not resent the words, as I had hoped he would. He fumbled in the pocket of the gaudy *chaleca*, the vest of many colors, and drew forth a crumpled bit of paper.

"You do not believe me?" he demanded. "Regard this, señor!"

I spread the bit of paper out. "When my last dance is over," I read, "I will meet you. You will have an automobile in readiness?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "How am I to know if that is her handwriting?" I demanded as I returned the note to him.

I left him sitting there. Out of doors the evening had grown cooler and the air seemed fresher.

Another two days passed. I encountered my friend, the military officer. "What news?" I asked him. "Did you catch your bird, Sandino's officer?"

He flushed angrily. "The rogue slipped through our fingers," he snapped. "Our only consolation is that the informer who misled us will not enjoy what we paid him."

"You have arrested him?"

"We were saved that trouble. When we closed in upon the hillside it was only him whom we found. He was wearing the vest of General Sandino—*chaleca de General Sandino*."

I looked bewildered. The officer laughed.

"You do not know that expression?" he asked. "Listen, my friend, they had stripped off his clothes and lashed his wrists and ankles to saplings growing on the hillside at just the right distance apart. When they release these

## The Vest of General Sandino

springy saplings which they had bent together this fellow was stretched out rigidly as a drum. And then with their machetes they cut five slashes on his naked chest from chin to waist. It is an extremely gaudy garment, this one which they reserve for informers, this *chaleca de Sandino*."

I saw the Cuban girl dancing at the cabaret that night. A ring glittered on her finger, a ring I had seen Señor Quebrada wearing. She danced well.

## CHAPTER XII

### Holiday

**A**T FIFTY-SIX Miss Amelia Jackson preserved a romantic spirit. Her own appearance was not romantic, nor did she have any illusions on that score. She was tall, heavily built and plain of face. She had never in all her life had a lover, and if she had had any such dream in her youth it had long ago been forgotten. She was a quiet and highly efficient office worker and as such had supported herself in New York for thirty years. Her salary was not large. The room in which she lived, in an upper West Side apartment house, was small, but she had grown accustomed to it. Through its one window and between the walls of adjoining apartment houses it afforded—provided one sat at just the right spot on the edge of the bed—a narrow glimpse of the Hudson River, and this alone, thought Miss Jackson, made the room worth the four dollars which she paid for it each week. In the mornings while she was dressing or as she prepared her toast and coffee upon an electric plate her glance wandered again and again to that slit of river, and if she caught a

## Holiday

momentary sight of a ferryboat or of a freighter on its way upstream or of an oil tanker coming back empty from Albany she was uplifted in spirit. The vessel spoke of distant lands, of adventurous voyages, of landfalls in tropic seas. Sitting at just the right spot on the bed, and with her eyes fixed on that slice of river as she combed her hair, Miss Jackson's lips moved silently. She was repeating to herself the lines she had once come across :

*The same that ofttimes hath  
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.*

There was nothing in Miss Jackson's heavy, more-than-middle-aged face as she looked in the mirror to complete her hairdressing to remind herself of youth. Only her hair, still heavy and dark, without a single gray strand. She sighed and hurried downtown to the office where she worked.

On Saturdays that office was closed. On a particular Saturday in 1937 this was a matter of satisfaction to Miss Jackson, for she had planned what to do with that morning. She had always been a great walker. It was the only form of recreation which cost absolutely nothing and it was undoubtedly health-giving. Besides, it took one away from one's lonely room. Usually Miss Jackson's Sunday walks were aimless, unless the determination to stay away from a room for as many hours as possible can be called an aim. On some Sundays she walked the length of Central Park, with her strong, almost masculine stride, several times over. But on the previous Sunday she had happened to walk northward from her apartment house. A tramp of a dozen miles would not fatigue her. And on that walk she had noticed as she came to 155th Street on

## Jungle Jim

upper Broadway a group of gray-stone buildings surrounding a central court. She hesitated, then, impelled by curiosity, descended the flight of steps leading to the sunken court and read the inscription over the doorway of the first building to her left. She had read, "MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN," and had decided to enter. But, trying to turn the bronze knob, she had discovered the door locked. Then a framed placard by the door caught her attention. It gave the hours during which the museum was open to the public. She would have to come on Saturday, not on a Sunday.

This, then, was her objective on this Saturday morning. She entered the museum—and lost her mind. There is no other way to account for her subsequent behavior. True, she gave no outward sign of her inner transformation. The gray-uniformed attendant in the central hall saw only a tall, seemingly placid middle-aged woman who moved from one to another of the glass cases crowded with examples of Indian handicraft and who peered at each, like any other visitor. But something was definitely happening to Miss Jackson inwardly.

It was on the third floor, to which she had climbed as if a hypnotic command had guided her feet, that the thing happened. She was bending over a glass case in which was displayed a variety of Indian ornaments and implements, headdresses of bright-colored feathers, primitive utensils carved of wood, belts of gaudy beadwork. The card in the case bore only the word, "GUAYMI."

A lady and gentleman, visitors like herself, paused beside the cabinet. She heard the man's voice, slightly amused, saying to his companion:

"This isn't exactly right, you know. They've got this Guaymi stuff along with these other exhibits labeled as

## Holiday

coming from Panamanian Indian tribes, but, as a matter of fact, you'll find more Guaymis in Costa Rica than in Panama. Of course, there are some Guaymis in Panama but they are Caribs really. From the Atlantic coast, where they were seen by Columbus, they retreated into the coastal mountains, the cordillera."

Cordillera! The word echoed in Miss Jackson's brain like a trumpet. She had a swift vision of mountain peaks, knife-sharp above green jungle. The walls of the quiet room seemed to open up; she felt the rush of winds upon peaks a world away. Then the man's voice again, casual, with its note of light amusement:

"You know, these Guaymis are supposed to be a cannibal tribe."

His companion exclaimed, "Oh no, not really, Professor Manders!" There was horror in her voice. "Do you mean to say that any country tolerates such people today?"

The man chuckled. "I said 'supposed' to be," he answered. "*All* the Caribs were supposed to be man-eaters, by Columbus and his men. But that's a long while ago. When *I* saw these Guaymis, two or three years ago, they were a harmless, shiftless-looking lot. I don't think they'd harm a fly. At any rate, I ate as many of them as they ate of me."

The two moved off to inspect other exhibits, and Miss Jackson looked anew at the objects before her in the cabinet with the feeling that in some curious fashion they had come alive. "Somewhere these things are being *used*," she thought. "They aren't just made to be put in a showcase. The people who make them are real. Real. Real! Not just people to be read about in a book. That man saw them."

## Jungle Jim

It was at that instant, and with these words, that Miss Jackson came to the startling decision that (since she had worked steadily for thirty years) it was time she gave herself a holiday.

She had decided that for too long a time she had merely dreamed of visiting exotic lands. Now she would go and see them for herself.

She came out upon the museum steps with an expression of determination tightening the line of her lips and with almost a glow upon her plain features. Slowly wandering through the paved courtyard, deep in her thoughts, she was confronted by a bronze statue. She paused to look at it.

It was the figure of a warrior mounted upon a magnificent horse. The man sat his steed with superb grace, sure of his strength, his bearded face uplifted as if shouting defiance to an enemy. A flag of bronze fluttered from the tip of the short spear which he held lightly in his right hand, and Miss Jackson saw instantly that the flag was one of inevitable victory.

Upon the stone pedestal where horse and rider poised were two words only: "EL CID." "I don't know who you are," whispered Miss Jackson, gazing at the reckless assurance of the horseman, "but I know you're going places. And so am I!"

When she had walked home to her tiny room she took out from her bureau drawer her savings bankbook. She knew perfectly well the amount that was entered there. There was nearly a thousand dollars. But to look at the figures gave assurance. She regarded them now with a sense of indignation. Why had she been accumulating this money? For what purpose? To pay her burial expenses? Half the amount would be enough for that. And what



## Holiday

was to become of the remainder? She had no one to leave it to. She had had only a younger brother, a rolling stone, who had left home when she was still a young woman. One or two letters had come back from him. He had found work on a banana plantation somewhere in Central America. What had been the name of the place? A village near a seaport. Bocas del Toro? Yes, that was the name of the port. And then a letter had come from the fruit company saying that he had died of a fever and that they had given him burial there. She had been alone for more than twenty years.

No, it would be utter nonsense to hoard this money any longer. She had enough, and to spare, for her holiday.

In her noon hours in the following week she began visiting the offices of steamship companies. She planned her holiday methodically. Her employers consented to give her a two-weeks leave of absence in addition to the two weeks to which she was entitled. She would have a month. There was a steamer, she found, which would take her direct to Bocas del Toro. If she could find the village where her brother had been buried she would visit his grave. If the spot were not far from Bocas del Toro she could rejoin the ship on which she had come and go on with it to Cristóbal. Or she could take a later vessel of the same line. The sense that this was a duty troubled her. Her brother had never shown any love for her: Was it right that she should let him interrupt her holiday now, even for a day? In her soul she knew that she must do so and she reproached herself for having felt even a momentary reluctance.

In the latter part of the year Miss Jackson sailed. Her fellow passengers, seeing this elderly, plainly dressed woman, never guessed the joyful excitement burning

## Jungle Jim

within her. Her face was stolid. She was taciturn. She had never learned the traveler's knack of making casual friends. She tramped the deck for hours daily, inwardly exulting, outwardly bleak. The deck-chair sitters, watching her with amusement or with pity for her loneliness, would have been dumfounded had they known that in her own romantic mind she was Christopher Columbus himself scanning the horizon for his first sight of palm-fringed islands.

On the fifth day the palm-fringed coast actually appeared. Day by day the weather had grown warmer, and now the sun blazed in a dazzling blue sky above a sea of glittering sapphire. There, just as she had always dreamed it, was the long sandy beach, the thin line of white breakers and beyond, far in the distance, the dreaming blue ridge of the mountains. This was the coast which the Spanish discoverers had called Costa Rica, the "rich coast." When the ship docked at Bocas del Toro and Miss Jackson found that one merely stepped from the ship to the pier she felt a faint disappointment. She would have preferred to have waded ashore, a drawn sword in one hand, the banner of Spain in the other, and to have shouted: "Long live the mighty monarchs, Don Ferdinand and Donna Juanna, sovereigns of Castile, of Leon and of Aragon, in whose name and for the royal crown of Castile I take real and corporal and actual possession of these seas and lands and coasts and ports and islands of the south and all thereunto annexed. . . ." But her chin was held high, and the umbrella and the handbag which she carried might well have been a sword and a flag.

Her fellow passengers strolled through the sun-baked alleys of the little banana town with aimless curiosity, but Miss Jackson had a definite aim. She must inquire as to

## Holiday

the location of her brother's grave. She thought the offices of the fruit company. The feverish activity occasioned by the ship's arrival made it difficult for her to command attention from the hurrying clerks. One after another shook an indifferent head and hurried on. No, they did not remember a man named Jackson. Twenty years ago? "Sorry, that was before my time, lady." She persisted and at last she found a veteran who recalled him. But at Miss Jackson's question as to how she might find her way to the cemetery he shook his head. He looked at her oddly.

"I'm afraid it will be a little hard to find," he said with obvious hesitation. "Really, I don't think you had better try, lady. No, I don't think anybody could find it."

Miss Jackson's heart sank. She stared at the man. "Why," she exclaimed, "isn't it right here in this town?"

The man shook his head. "I guess the eye didn't explain," he said. "You see, at that time we were opening up a plantation back in here, quite a ways from here, up in the foothills. They sent your brother up there to clear away jungle. 'New-land work,' we call it. That was where he took sick and that's where they buried him."

"But," cried Miss Jackson, "surely they marked the spot!" Her lips trembled.

"Yes ma'am, they did," said the man gently. "But, you see, the company didn't work that plantation very long. The trees got a blight a couple o' years after your brother died. They had to give the whole place up. I reckon you don't know, ma'am, but down here in this climate it don't take no time at all for the jungle to choke up cleared ground. All that plantation has been nothin' but Guaymi jungle for years now. It's too bad, lady, but you just couldn't find that grave no way."

Miss Jackson blinked back tears. "I suppose not," she

## Jungle Jim

said. She stared out of the office windows, unseeing, until she had regained her self-control. When she had done so she asked in a quiet voice:

"Can you tell me just where that plantation was?"

The man looked at her with alarm. "Look here, lady," he said in a tone of concern, "you ain't figurin' on tryin' to find the place, are you?"

"Oh no," said Miss Jackson calmly. She managed to give him a smile of reassurance. "But even if I can't see it I'd like to know—I'd like to have a general idea of where it is. It would be sort of dreadful if I didn't know even that much. I just couldn't go home unless—well, it doesn't seem right somehow."

The man seemed relieved. "Oh," he said, "I guess I can help you out, then, if that's all you want." He drew a sheet of paper to him and sketched roughly. "You cross over to the mainland and you see this road leadin' off in this here direction. That plantation was about fifteen miles out. Uphill all the way. There was a crossroad about here runnin' westerly into Costa Rica. The plantation was just beyond the fork a little ways. But both those roads are grown over by this time, I reckon."

Miss Jackson folded the scrap of paper and put it carefully away in her handbag. "Thank you very much," she said. "It will be a comfort to know even that much."

In her room that morning in the shabby little hotel she had found she wrote two or three postal cards and addressed them. "We are on a tropical island," she wrote on one. "There are islands all around us." On another she scribbled: "Everybody is very polite here. The language is Spanish." She knew that this did not adequately express the excitement she was feeling, but it seemed impossible to say more. She took the cards to the clerk's desk for

## Holiday

mailing and announced to him that she wished to see something of the mainland that afternoon. Could a car and driver be hired?

The question presented difficulties but was solved. ("Everybody is very polite here. The language is Spanish.") A ragged and dull-eyed gentleman who had been asleep in the sun was roused and made to understand what *la señora* wanted. It was known that his cousin on the mainland was the possessor of an ancient Ford. He was to escort her to his cousin and explain that the lady wished to drive for an hour or two toward the mountains, *para la vista*, and then be brought back to the hotel. Certainly, let the lady give herself no fear—his cousin was a driver beyond praise, and the car a miracle of mechanical perfection.

Two Panamanian reals paid the fare of Miss Jackson and her ragged escort for passage in a leaky *panga* across the narrow salt-water lagoon which separated the town from the mainland. The cousin was found and roused from his siesta. The motor of the battered car was induced to give forth explosions, and the whole vehicle shook with its own splutterings. The escort was given his reward, and the car, with Miss Jackson in it, rattled forward upon the road to the mountains, the road to the abandoned plantation.

The road, which climbed gradually, was little better than a stony cowpath. The little car bounced and wheezed. But Miss Jackson gazed at the green landscape with delight. Once as they rounded a turn and she looked backward she caught a glimpse of the sea, a blue immensity under the cloudless sky.

Signs of habitation grew less as they proceeded. At the first they had passed groves of banana trees. Then came

## Jungle Jim

the occasional *choca de un camposino* with its small patches of vegetables, plantains and papayas, and with chickens asleep in the shadow of the thatched hut. Then even these were left behind, and the narrow path skirted stretches of tangled greenery covering ground which had once been cleared for cultivation but which was now the haunt of lizardlike iguanas and of unseen things.

It was midafternoon, and they had come scarcely fifteen miles when the car gave a final cough and stopped dead. "*¡Por Dios!*" muttered the driver. He got out indignantly and gingerly unscrewed the radiator cap. Steam rose, and rust-discolored water bubbled out. The driver shrugged his shoulders.

"*Ay, muy caliente*—no good," he said. He sat down at the edge of the road.

Miss Jackson got out and straightened her skirt. "I will walk on a little farther while you are waiting for it to cool," she announced. "When you get it fixed you can overtake me. Or if you want to wait here I'll walk back."

The driver nodded indifferently, pulled his broad-brimmed Panamanian sombrero over his eyes and settled back for a nap.

Miss Jackson, with her handbag dangling from her left wrist and with her rolled umbrella clutched in her right hand as if it were the naked sword of a *conquistador*, strode on up the road.

For an hour or two the driver snored peacefully. Then as the sun sank behind the hills and treetops and the air grew cooler he awoke. Miss Jackson had not returned. Yawning, he sauntered to the tiny stream trickling beside the road, filled his straw hat with water and refilled the radiator. He cranked the engine, and it caught. Satisfied that it was again in working order, he shut it off and

## Holiday

waited. The road remained empty of Miss Jackson. After another half-hour he cranked up the car once more and drove in the direction she had taken. In a mile or so he came to an intersection. A crossroad no wider than the disused trail over which he had been driving led off forbiddingly into forest darkneses right and left. He stopped the car and honked the horn. Its sound died away, and there was no answering shout. He waited until he could bear the silence no longer. Nervously he made the sign of the cross, then backed the car around and drove off, returning by the way he had come.

There was not a sound in the forest, except the cries of parrots and macaws.

Miss Jackson had come to this same intersection two hours before. She was not in the least tired by her stroll and she was constantly thrilled by the thought that she was adventuring into uninhabited country. An enormous flock of parakeets flitting noisily overhead brought an exclamation of sheer ecstasy from her. Flowers of fantastic shape and size and of exquisite color bloomed everywhere. Clouds of bright butterflies danced in the warm and scent-laden air. Miss Jackson paused, stock still, convinced that by some miracle she had been transported to an Eden younger than time.

The sound of voices startled her. Glancing around, she saw two persons coming toward her along the narrow trail leading through the forest. The one in front was a native woman, a shawl over her head, a bundle upon her shoulder. Behind her walked a plump little man, garbed in a black robe and wearing the flat-crowned hat of a priest. At sight of Miss Jackson the woman stopped short and drew aside to permit the priest to precede her. At the same

## Jungle Jim

moment a miserable yellow dog which had been trotting behind the two darted forward and began yapping frantically at Miss Jackson. The priest shouted at him.

"*¡Silencia, Tigrito!*" he commanded. The mongrel subsided but came closer, sniffing at Miss Jackson's skirts and wagging his tail.

The priest came forward, wiping the perspiration from his plump sun-burned cheeks. There was a look of astonishment in his friendly brown eyes.

"Are you alone, señora?" he asked. "Pardon, but it is strange to see anyone here!"

Miss Jackson smiled. "I came by car," she said. "I have walked only a little way. The driver is waiting for me."

Encouraged by his honest friendliness, Miss Jackson explained the reason for her excursion. Did he, she asked, know where the plantation clearing had been made so many years before?

He nodded. He knew the place, he said, though it was difficult to find now that the old roads had been overgrown. It was not far from here; it would be a pleasure to point out the path. They could reach the spot in twenty minutes more.

They set off, the priest leading the way. "This good woman," he said, pointing at his companion, "is one of my parishioners. Her husband has died, and she is returning to her native village. It is not far from here. Its people are in my care. When she heard that I planned to visit them today she begged permission to walk with me. She was afraid to go alone, poor thing! But there is nothing to fear."

The padre chuckled comfortably and seemed delighted to air his knowledge of English. He had spent his boyhood in New Orleans, he explained, and had been edu-



## Holiday

cated there for the priesthood. If God permitted, he would someday revisit that wonderful country.

Sometimes the narrowness of the path obliged them to walk in single file, and at such times when she brought up the rear of the little procession Miss Jackson thought of the whole situation with the feeling that she was walking in a dream. There, ahead of her, was the rotund priest in his travel-worn black cassock, the stolid Costa Rican woman with her poor bundle of rags on her shoulder, the wretched yellow cur trotting at their heels, around them a wilderness of tropical vegetation. And it was she, Miss Amelia Jackson, spinster, who walked with them in these incredible surroundings! How had it come to pass? Surely it was a dream!

At a scarcely discernible opening in the green wall of foliage the priest left the ruined roadway they had been following and after a moment of uncertainty pronounced it to be the beginning of the long-abandoned plantation road. Little, if any, trace of the road remained. Their progress over fallen logs and between tangles of drooping vines grew more and more difficult. They struggled on for an hour. Again and again the padre stopped to gaze around him with an air of bewilderment.

Miss Jackson, pushing back a wisp of her dark hair and straightening her hat which a vine had pulled askew, said firmly that it was time to return to the road on which her car was waiting. The padre agreed, though apologizing profusely for his failure. They started to retrace their steps.

And in ten minutes they knew themselves hopelessly lost.

The padre mopped his forehead. Suddenly his face brightened. "Listen!" he cried, holding up a hand to com-

## Jungle Jim

mand attention. The monotonous thumping of a drum came to their ears.

"¡*Gracias á Dios!*" cried the little priest. "Now I know where we are! It is the Guaymi village!" And he added joyfully: "Come with me. They will guide us!"

Stumblingly they made their way toward the distant drums. As they drew nearer they heard a singsong chanting. The chorus rose louder. Guttural shouts mingled with the chanting and the thump of the drum. The priest stopped. He looked at Miss Jackson and hesitated.

"What is the matter?" she asked. "Why do you stop?"

The priest's chubby face was ludicrously grave. "They are making *fiesta*," he said slowly. "What you call 'holiday.' At such times the men drink a great deal. At other times these poor Indians have a great respect for women. Especially a white woman, *señora*. But when they drink this *chicha* they become quarrelsome sometimes. Perhaps it would be best if I go on alone and inquire our way of them." He smiled. "A priest has nothing to fear," he added bravely.

Miss Jackson nodded. "You say they are Indians?" she asked. "Of what tribe?"

"Here in Panama we call them Cricamolas. In Costa Rica they are known as Bribri. They are all the same—Guaymi, the descendants of the Caribs."

The noise of the *fiesta* grew louder and louder as they advanced. They struggled to the top of a little ridge, and suddenly the trees and the undergrowth thinned away, and they found themselves looking down upon the village.

It consisted of only a dozen or so huts, thatched with dried palm leaves, scattered haphazardly over the level ground between the bluff on which they stood and the stream which followed the line of the bluffs on the farther

## Holiday

side. The afternoon sun, just above the treetops, lighted up the thatched roofs and the cleared space in the center of the settlement on which twenty or thirty nearly naked men with copper skins daubed with red and purple markings were squatted in a semicircle around several large cylindrical drums of wood. Naked drummers thumped the tightly stretched deerskin which covered these hollow logs, and the squatting men chanted their quavering song in time with the tambor beats. Huge *tortumas*, full of liquor, stood upon the ground. Men left their places in the semicircle and, staggering to the gourds, filled cups carved from coconuts and drank. Women and children, crouching upon the raised platforms of the huts, stared at the men from that respectful distance.

The priest motioned to Miss Jackson and the Costa Rican woman to crouch down. With finger to his lips he cautioned silence. Then with careful steps he circled the ravine, and Miss Jackson caught glimpses of his black-clad figure stealing through the trees upon the other bank. He emerged from the trees, clambered briskly down the slope and walked unhesitatingly toward the circle of seated savages, both arms lifted above his head.

Someone shouted. The men leaped to their feet. Machetes, heavier and sharper than a sword, were instantly in their hands.

Then as they saw the black robe the weapons were lowered. They stood sullenly. The priest's voice, clear, unconcerned, invoked blessing upon them. The dark heads bowed, sulkily obedient.

They clustered around him. Miss Jackson had thought him short of stature, but these men were even shorter. They were chunky, powerful of shoulder, thick of waist. Miss Jackson could tell by the priest's gestures that he

## Jungle Jim

was asking them to point the way out of the jungle. Two or three of the men answered, speaking angrily, she thought. The others, crowding around, jostled the priest. Upon his flushed face she could distinguish a fixed conciliatory smile.

Suddenly, to Miss Jackson's dismay, she saw the Costa Rican woman who, she had thought, was lying hidden at no great distance from her own place of concealment emerge from the woods and descend to the bit of level ground on which stood the huts.

Miss Jackson, lying full length upon the ground, with only her head lifted, stared at the woman in an agony of apprehension. At the same instant the naked men milling around the priest saw the woman. Several ran toward her.

They seized her roughly by the wrists, and the woman screamed, a long-drawn shriek of abject terror which ran through Miss Jackson's heart like a knife. An Indian struck her on the mouth. The scream stopped short. The men dragged her toward the others. The scrawny yellow cur which had followed the woman yelped and snarled at their heels. An Indian kicked at him savagely. The dog rolled over and over but got up. Keeping out of reach of the men, he continued barking.

Miss Jackson could hear the priest's imploring voice as the excited band of dark-skinned men closed in again in a circle which now included the woman as well as the priest. He was still smiling, since he dared not show alarm, but sweat poured down his face. He gestured, pointing at himself and at the woman and then toward the forest, and Miss Jackson guessed that he was begging only for permission to depart in peace. Suddenly there was momentary silence during which the men looked toward one of their number as if awaiting his command. The man hesi-

## Holiday

tated. Evil was in his wrinkled face and age-bleared eyes. His glance wandered from one to another, then, as if having arrived at his decision, he uttered a loud exclamation of command. A rapid sentence or two followed from his lips, and his harangue ended with a broad grin which displayed his filed and pointed teeth, sharp as a dog's.

Evidently obeying his commands, three or four of the Indians hustled the priest and woman into the shadow of a hut standing at a little distance from the council spot, indicated that they might seat themselves upon the ground and remained standing over them as a guard. The rest, shouting, returned to their drinking gourds. Miss Jackson, prone among the concealing grasses fringing the edge of the low bluff, watched with an icy terror at her heart.

The interrupted *fiesta* was resumed. The calabash *jicaras*, filled to the brim with fiery liquor, were passed repeatedly from hand to hand and emptied with cries of exultation. The men moved restlessly about, sometimes staggering in their walk. The slow beating of the *tambores* began again and quickened. The sound hammered on Miss Jackson's heart and brain pitilessly. The men's shouts grew wilder. She could see them glance again and again toward the two captives. The woman sat cross-legged, her face covered by her shawl. She rocked herself back and forth, moaning. Beside her knelt the priest, his fingers moving over the beads of his rosary, his gaze turned watchfully toward the growing frenzy of the celebrants. At his side crouched the lost cur.

Suddenly twilight closed in upon the little amphitheater. As if it had been a signal of release from all control a naked reveler leaped, howled and began running toward the woman. Instantly, at his heels, ran others. Miss Jackson saw the kneeling priest leap to his feet and

## Jungle Jim

take a step toward them, his arms outstretched in useless entreaty.

They knocked him aside. At the same instant the little dog launched himself at the man's ankles, snarling. The man swung his machete. The dog fell, his head half severed from his body. The man leaped upon the woman before she could struggle to her feet, and his naked companions, crowding around him, mercifully shut off what followed from Miss Jackson's view. She heard the woman scream once, no more.

The priest became no longer a priest, but a madman. Miss Jackson saw him scramble up, half dazed. He rushed at the huddle of bodies, screaming. Three knives struck at him at once, the heavy blades clashing. And again he fell.

When Miss Jackson floated up from unconsciousness and opened her eyes again she dug her fingernails into her palms to keep from screaming aloud at what she now saw. How much time had passed since she had fainted she did not know, but now a fire of logs had been kindled on the ground not fifty feet from the spot where she lay shaking in convulsive fear, and its light illumined two figures which were joined in one grotesque and horrible embrace.

One body was that of the priest. It had been dragged from the spot where he had been struck down by the knife and now lay soaked in blood. He was still living. She saw his outstretched hand move feebly along the beaten earth. The black robe was drawn away from his knees. An Indian kneeled beside him, his face pressed close against the thigh. Animal snarls came from him. He lifted his head and drew breath. Miss Jackson saw his face. It dripped with blood.

## Holiday

She pressed her hands against her temples and lay shaking from head to foot. How much longer it was before she again opened her tortured eyes she never knew.

This time the shadowy space beneath her was full of dark moving figures. The fire of logs had been replenished. The priest's body lay where she had last seen it, motionless. At a little distance from the fire men moved to and fro. Crude hoes were in their hands. Miss Jackson saw that they were digging trenches. Two trenches. Shallow trenches. The earth was heaped up on either side. Around the fire lay sprawled the bodies of naked men who snored in drunken sleep.

Out of the darkness where stood the hut into which the Costa Rican woman had been carried four men emerged, carrying her limp body between them. Her head sagged forward drunkenly upon her breast, but she was not yet dead. They staggered with her to the trench and dropped her into it. To the other trench they dragged the body of the priest.

They began shoveling the earth over the two bodies. Midway in the task one of the Indians spied the body of the woman's dog, lying where it had been kicked aside. Grinning drunkenly, he placed it in the woman's grave and heaped the earth around it till only its head remained visible. When all was finished the heads of all three remained visible—the woman and her dog facing each other, the priest's head black with blood and grime. It fell over slightly to one side at that moment. Miss Jackson knew that he was still alive.

Then she fainted.

The moon rose. A little later two men bent over her. They were filled with a great fear. The others still lay sprawled asleep, but these two, who had drunk themselves

## Jungle Jim

asleep before the murders, had awakened to gaze in horror at what their companions had done. They must report this to the authorities at Bocas del Toro or—*¿quién sabe?*—who could tell what vengeance would be issued upon their whole village?

As they started they stumbled over Miss Jackson's unconscious body.

To leave her there was unthinkable. Feverishly they fashioned a litter of poles and placed her upon it.

At Bocas del Toro there is the best of medical care. There came a day when Miss Jackson was pronounced able to resume her holiday cruise.

Those elderly girls, her friends at the office in New York, to whom she had sent postcards were delighted when she re-entered the office one morning.

"Oh, Miss Jackson, how nice to see you back!" they cried. "You must have had a wonderful trip! But your hair—oh, it's so much more becoming white!"

The news came quickly to Ciudad Panamá, where I make my headquarters. We learned that the chief of police at Bocas del Toro, on receipt of the word brought by the two Guaymis, had sent a company of *soldados* to the village and had taken possession of it even before the Indians had recovered from their drunken stupors. My friend Dr Solano, director of the governmental department of medicine in Panama, was immensely interested. From the chief of police he learned that when the soldiers arrived at the Indian village an old man of the tribe was pointed out to them as being the one who had been guilty of cannibalism. This old man had been arrested, among others. Dr Solano arranged to have him brought down



## Holiday

from Bocas del Toro to Ciudad Panamá. Observation of a known cannibal would surely be of scientific value.

Dr Solano, in a high state of excitement, invited me to his office on the day the old man was brought into the city under guard and placed in the jail. "Look here, Jim," he said, "you know all about Indians in the jungle. What do you know about cannibalism among these Guaymis?"

"Well," I said, "I think they're harmless enough ordinarily. I've often visited their villages. But I wouldn't advise anyone to linger around in a Guaymi village when they're having one of their *innas*. That's what they call their *fiestas*. They fill themselves full of this fermented corn liquor of theirs and go crazy. I've heard more than once of their gnawing away at the bodies of their own dead—not murdered, but just dead. They have a funeral feast and drink *chica*, and some old boy with sharp pointed teeth—they file their teeth into points, you know—goes to work on the corpse. They don't roast the flesh, just gnaw it raw, and if the blood hasn't coagulated they suck it like a vampire."

"That's exactly what I've heard!" exclaimed the doctor. "And, by George, now we'll have a chance to test that story!"

We drove over together to the jail in the doctor's car and found a crowd assembled outside the doors. News had got around that an honest-to-goodness cannibal had arrived there, and there were any number of tourists in the crowd, as well as native Panamanians. We went in and got the old Guaymi with his escort. He was wearing a ragged shirt and pants and looked mild enough.

When we came out with him the crowd set up a terrific yelling and booing. We hustled him into the car, and he seemed bewildered and frightened. There was a sickly

## Jungle Jim

smile on his face. He may have thought that the crowd was going to tear him apart.

We drove over to Santo Tomás Hospital, which looks like a presidential palace, and again the old man must have been bewildered by being ushered into such a building. Two newspaper reporters and two high-ranking police officials were with us. Dr Solano led us all into the city morgue. It is housed in Santo Tomás. Stretched out on the marble tables were four bodies. Dr Solano pushed the old Indian into the room and left him there. The rest of us stood peering in at him through the glass doors.

"You see?" whispered Dr Solano. "We can see exactly what he will do. If he wants——"

Just then the old Indian swayed a little, and we got ready to jump in and grab him if he actually started for the bodies. But he didn't. He just stood there staring at them for a few seconds with that bewildered, sickly grin on his face.

And then his knees buckled under him, and he fainted dead away.

Doctor Solano said the old man's mind was completely gone. He has been in Hernandez Hospital for the Insane ever since.

## CHAPTER XIII

### The Cage

I USED to run a little shop in Ciudad Panamá. I kept it open more for the sake of the advertising than for any money I made out of it. That was when I was shipping alligator and crocodile hides up North, by the bale, you might say. But as long as I had to go up into jungle country to get the crocs I figured I might as well bring back Indian stuff at the same time for the tourist trade. You know, woven baskets and carved mahogany stools and ornamented *chacaras*—all that sort of stuff. There's an awful lot of tourists going through the Canal Zone, and most of them want to take home souvenirs, of course. My shop was in a good location, on Calle Viejo, right in the center of town, and the tourists used to come in every day. I had a right smart Panamanian named Felipe Martinez to help me run the shop and I could be off in the jungle for months at a time and know that he would be taking care of it all right.

A woman came into the shop one noon—a young

## Jungle Jim

woman. Out of doors the sun was blazing hot, but the shop was dark and fairly cool. When I first looked up she was standing just inside the doorway. The dress she had on was some thin stuff. The sunlight behind her was so strong she might just as well have been wearing nothing at all. She came on into the shop, and I saw who she was. It was Doellner's girl, all right. I think she had forgotten she had ever seen me before. But I remembered her right away. You wouldn't forget that shape in a hurry, no matter what else you thought of her. Doellner never did.

I remembered the first time I ever saw them together. I had known Doellner for years, ever since he first came to Panama. But the first time I saw her was with him. He came into a restaurant where Vaudran and I were eating dinner. As soon as he saw us he came over to our table, with this girl in tow. God knows where he had picked her up. But he wanted to show her off. He made a big fuss about introducing us, bowing and clicking his heels together the way those squareheads do. He called her Anna. Anna Smith—that was her name. He insisted on ordering drinks. Champagne, no less. Vaudran looked at me and winked.

Doellner was like a baby. He was a big husky German with a chest like a barrel and a fat red face. But he was one of these sentimental krauts. He was crazy for a woman. Staying in the jungle for months at a time didn't help that any. But that was his hard luck. Ever hear of the Marea River? No, of course not. There isn't even a good map of that section. Well, he was prospecting for gold up that way. The Marea is a stream that flows into the Tuira. The Tuira flows into the Pacific, away to the south of Panama, and the tide comes up a hundred miles

## The Cage

or so from the ocean. That's what "marea" means—"height of the tide." All that country is jungle, five thousand square miles of forest. That's where his camp was. He had four or five men working for him, Germans and a young fellow named Fred—I never knew his last name—who was from Colorado. Doellner was the only white man running a permanent camp in all that five thousand square miles of jungle. He would pick up a little gold dust now and then from the Indians and when he had enough of a pile he would bring it into Ciudad Panamá. The first thing he wanted was a woman.

The girl he had with him looked like the usual thing, something he would leave behind as soon as he went back up river. But as soon as they sat down Doellner spilled the beans. He was begging her to come back and live with him. He paid no more attention to Vaudran and me than if we weren't there. He never took his eyes off her. He looked at her, and the water all but dribbled out of the corners of his mouth. He talked to her as though Vaudran and I didn't exist. He told her about his camp. He bragged about how much gold he would take out—next year. Vaudran and I looked at each other and shook our heads. He had it bad.

The girl sat there without saying a word at first. Her eyes got narrow, till they were half shut, and there was a little mocking smile on her lips. Looking at him with her eyes half closed that way she picked up her glass and emptied it. Doellner went on talking.

"Come back with me, Anna," he said. "You come. I make you my queen."

The girl put down the glass and sniggered. "Oh yeah?" she said. "What have you got to show me?"

Doellner looked at her very humbly. He spread his big

## Jungle Jim

hands out, palms up, on the table before her with a gesture of childlike appeal.

"Haf you seen der sun rise ofer a new worldt?" he said. "Ofer a t'ousandt miles of green treetops? Efery morning it iss a new worldt! Of gold und emerald und a million diamondts flashing in der sun! I will make you its queen. Gome, I will show it to you, my Anna!"

She laughed in his face. I felt sorry for him and embarrassed. He was as ridiculous as if he had stripped himself in a public place. There was no mistaking his sincerity. "Oh, forget it," she said. He reddened as if she had struck him. I didn't want to see any more of it. I signaled the waiter and got our check. The girl put her hand on Vaudran's sleeve. "You don't have to go yet, baby," she said. "Stick around. The night's young." Doellner stared at the tablecloth miserably. Vaudran sat down again. "So long," I said. "I'll be seeing you." But it was months before I saw any of them again.

Yes, it was at least three months after that, maybe four, before I came into the Marea River country. I had gone roundabout, by way of the Chucunaqui, and came to it from the eastward, crossing the Tuirá south of El Real.

The jungle between the Tuirá and the Marea is tough going. It had been a week since I had left the last Indian huts, and in all that time I had seen no living person. I cut my own trail where a trail had to be cut and by the time I came out upon the high banks overlooking the Nupa Hole I was nearly exhausted. My rifle and machete seemed to weigh a ton. When I saw the first of the Nupa caves I was damn glad. They are ancient caves, these caves in the riverbank, abandoned long since, their entrances overhung with jungle leafage. But, seeing them, I knew

## The Cage

that Doellner's camp was only a couple of miles away. I figured I would rest up at his place for a day or two before going on down river.

When I came out at the corral surrounding Doellner's place the only person I saw was this young foreman of his, Fred. It was midafternoon and hot. "Everybody's taking a siesta," he said. "I didn't feel like sleepin'."

As I remembered him he had always been a good-looking kid, but I thought he looked sort of pale and jumpy. We went over to the shed where they cook, and he got me some coffee. The other men were all snoring in their hammocks in the bunkhouse. "Where's Doellner?" I asked.

"Oh, up at the house," he said. "He—well, he's sorta watchin' her."

"Her?" I said, surprised. "Who do you mean?"

"His girl," he said, without looking up. He was staring at the ground, poking at it with the toe of his boot.

It didn't sound good to me. If Doellner had got himself some Indian girl in there there might be trouble. They don't like that, their men don't.

"Where'd he get her?" I said.

"Panama City," the kid said, very short. "Brought her here three-four months ago."

"Oh!" I said. But I still couldn't believe it. "It wouldn't be a girl named Anna, would it?" I asked.

The kid looked up. "Yes," he said. His eyes were shifty, I thought.

"You say he's watching her? What do you mean, watching her?" It sounded funny to me.

He didn't like to answer. "She—she's sorta run away a coupla times," he said, not looking at me. "He don't want her to."

## Jungle Jim

"Well, that's natural," I said. "You mean he's got her locked up?"

"Him? Not that boob. He ain't got the guts." His lips pulled back from his teeth, like a wolf grinning. He didn't look so good, that kid.

I didn't say anything. I figured it wasn't any of my business. I looked over at the main house. Doellner had made himself quite a place out of it. It had plenty of rooms, all in one story, built around a square patio. One wing was right on the river and it had a balcony that hung right out over the river. The river was about twenty feet below. It's a deep river, the Marea, but not so wide. On the far side the big trees and the undergrowth and the knotted vines hanging from the trees came right down to the edge of the water. You couldn't have asked for a prettier place.

While we were looking over at the house Doellner came out on the balcony. I hollered at him and walked over that way. He saw who it was and hurried out and met me before I got to the house. He tried to pretend he was glad to see me, but from what the kid, Fred, had just told me, I guessed he would rather have seen almost anybody except me. He looked sick. He always was a big man and he was just as big as ever, but his face wasn't fat and red any more. It was white, and his cheeks looked flabby. His hand was clammy. There wasn't any grip left to it.

Before he had a chance to get himself tangled up in any excuse for not inviting me into the house I told him I wanted to push on early the next morning and all I wanted was to hang up a hammock somewhere near the bunkhouse. It was funny to see the look of relief that came over his face. I almost laughed.



## The Cage

"Oh, sure, sure!" he said. "I will gif orders! It is unfortunate, I cannot ask you to sleep in my house. My"—he may have been about to say "my wife" but he hesitated and changed it—"my friendt iss not well. It iss a great pity. I should wish you to meet her, but it iss quite impossible. At dis time."

I wondered if he had really forgotten that night when he brought her into the restaurant in Ciudad Panamá. It didn't matter. It was all right with me.

"Take a siesta now," he urged. He was trying hard to pretend that nothing was wrong with him. "Rest, my friendt. Choost now I cannot leave her. But later she will be sleeping. Den you and I haf a drink togedder, yess?"

I walked back to the bunkhouse and spread a hammock. I was dog-tired. When I woke the sun was setting. Fred called me to eat. We ate the meal. The darkness came. We smoked, saying little. Voices called from the black depths of the forest, voices of monkeys, voices of birds. The jungle stirred around us. Its day was only beginning.

Doellner stumbled down the unlighted path and called my name. Fred walked with me toward him, then stopped. "Listen," he whispered, "do me a favor, will yuh? If it looks like any trouble will you yell for me? I'll be right close up to the house." "Why should there be any trouble?" I whispered. He turned back without answering, for Doellner was now very near.

When I met Doellner he whispered that it was safe now—"she" was sleeping. I must have a drink with him. We went back to his bungalow in silence. We went into what seemed to be the dining room. An oil lamp stood lighted on a table, its wick turned low. The littered dishes from a dozen previous meals were piled upon the table. Doellner brought two glasses from a cupboard and two

## Jungle Jim

bottles of beer. The beer was warm and foamed. We talked in lowered voices. Doellner glanced nervously from time to time at a door which led, I supposed, into the unlighted room in which the woman slept.

I can't remember what we managed to talk about. The silences were awkward. I thought Doellner a fool to have brought me there at all. I know now that he dared neither to leave her nor to be alone.

I pitied him and I talked to stop the dreadful silences. I asked him idly if his men were still panning gold on Nupa Creek. I had come by Nupa Hole, I said, and had got my bearings when I saw the ancient Indian caves. I wondered about their origin. Had he ever heard the Indians' legend that their gods once lived in those caves?

I stopped. What had I said? Doellner was gesturing wildly at me. He held a finger to his lips. He shook his head. Abject misery was in his eyes.

"What's wrong?" I said, astonished. I blundered on. "Didn't you ever hear that story?"

I heard a drunken giggle behind me. Doellner, with a groan of despair, leaped to his feet. I wheeled around. The girl stood in the open doorway. Her robe slipped from one naked shoulder. Her eyes were bright. She swayed, clinging to the doorpost.

"Sure, he knows it!" she crowed. "I'll tell the world he knows it!"

"Anna, for Gott's sake, lie down!" cried Doellner.

She stamped her naked foot. "Am I a dog that you should tell *me* to lie down?" she snarled. "Down, to my foot!"

Doellner sank down again into his chair and covered his face with his hands.

## The Cage

She advanced an uncertain step into the room and smiled again.

"He knows all about it," she whispered. "I told him. That was where I spent the night—there in the cave. The god came there, the Indian god. I hide there when I run in the moonlight. But he always brings me back."

She looked down at Doellner and laughed.

"But on that night he didn't find me!" she cried exultantly. "I was tired from running so far in the moonlight and I hid in the cave. The dark Indian found me. A god found me! He was young. He was not like this man. I was tired, and he soothed me. He touched me, and I slept. In the morning he was gone, but all the fire in the cave was of sandalwood. And then this man came and brought me back."

She muttered to herself.

Doellner lifted his head and looked at me with haggard eyes. "Gott help me, what shall I do?" he cried. "I cannot kill her—I cannot liff mitoudt her!" And he began to sob.

A light came into the room. The oil lamp on the table paled in it. This radiance was unearthly. This light filled all the room. The full moon had risen. The woman stood there. From the balcony above the river a breeze stole in, heavy with the scent of forest leaves and moist earth and fragrant woods, the breathing of the jungle night.

"Stop her!" screamed Doellner.

I sprang for her, and so did he. But she eluded us. The robe fell from her shoulders as she darted forward. For a single instant I saw her as she sprang to the railing of the balcony and poised there, a silver goddess in the moon's full flood, for a single instant caught the flash of

## Jungle Jim

the silver body falling to the path of silver under the dark river below.

I saw the black water shatter upward into a fountain of silver. Then she came up, a silver leaping fish. She swam strongly down the long path of silver toward the blackness on the farther shore. "Anna!" cried Doellner in the voice of a madman.

He seized a rifle from its rack, and as he lifted it it struck him, and he dropped. . . .

All these things ran in my mind, sharply remembered, when the woman entered my shop. I remembered, too, the swift sequences of that night—remembered Fred as he stood looking down at Doellner's sprawled body, remembered the wolf's grin spreading across his face. He had seemed in no hurry to launch a boat. "Aw, we got plenty o' time," he had said in answer to my angry urging. "By the time he sits up and takes notice I'll be across the river. Let her wait. It won't hurt her none. I wasn't to meet her till morning anyways." And he had added, grinning still more exultantly, "You know what this poor squarehead done? He was so burned up because she tol' him right to his face she would walk out on him if he ever tried to stop her from seein' me that he come around and offered me five hundred bucks to get out and go somewheres else. He even give me a canoe and stocked her. He helped me load her. Everything was all set. This was the night I was to beat it—by myself. He gimme the money. And now she's settin' over there waitin' for me!"

He had laughed then, and, staring at him, I had felt disgust. But I let him go. I heard the splash of his paddle as Doellner stirred and tried to rise.

At sunrise the next morning I had been ready to go. Doellner was awake when I went up to his bungalow. I

## The Cage

told him good-by, and he walked out with me into the patio. For the first time I saw there in a corner of the court, close to his window, a curious object. It was a box, a cage, perhaps, woven from the heavy vines of the jungle. It was taller than a man's head. It had had a lid which could be lashed to it, but the lid lay upon the ground. A narrow mattress lay upon the floor of the cage. I looked at the thing wonderingly. I glanced at Doellner. Tears stood in his eyes. His lips trembled. He had tried to speak, then, suddenly turning, he had rushed back into his empty house.

I went northward by the foothill trail and when I had passed the rapids of the Marea I found villagers who ferried me to Chepigana village, on the Tuira. There was an ancient motor launch for hire there. On it I reached La Palma, where there are forty huts, and from La Palma I found room upon a fishing launch bound for the waters into which the Sambu empties. At sunset, finding the tide at high, we crossed the bar at the mouth of the Sambu and crept up the river. At the edge of night we came to the cluster of huts that marks the entrance into the Sabalo. A piragua stole out to meet us. I lowered myself into it. The fishing launch went back down the broad river and out to sea. The sound of her motor died away in the distance. Then there was no more sound, except the sounds of the forest under a sky spangled with stars and the rush and the spattering drip of water under the blades of the paddles.

Ilipia made me welcome. His hut stood on stilts, its floor of bamboo ten feet above the ground, roofed, but without walls, open to the night. His household, his wife and naked children, though they had waked at the sound of the arriving boat, went instantly back to their sleep,

## Jungle Jim

sprawled around us on the thin mattresses of the bark of the *quipo* tree spread upon the bamboo floor. Ilipia and I talked on. In the glimmer of light from the fire of logs smoldering end to end upon the pile of sand in the center of the floor his dark eyes were luminous with friendliness. Now and then he would stretch out his strong brown hand and touch my shoulder shyly with a gesture of affection as simple as that of a child. We talked of many things. Young as he was—he was not yet twenty-four—he was a person of importance, the chief medicine man of all the Choco tribesmen in the forest. His father had been head chief of all the Choco villages; his uncle, now that Ilipia's father was dead, had succeeded to that headship, and on his uncle's death Ilipia himself would advance to that responsibility. His heart was kingly and without guile. He was strong, swift, fearless. He knew the hearts of his people and, insofar as it is permitted a man to know the gods and face them, he stood as an intercessor, the high priest, between his people and the unseen rulers of river and forest, earth and sky. With his own deft hands he carved the soul sticks of the newborn and in the days of a man's sickness or wounds he stood between the dying and the dark "Taker of Souls." Yet he was young and walked lightly, like a god. In his dark face his white teeth flashed in constant smiles. We talked as brothers. Around us brooded the black mysterious depths of the forest. The moon rose and made silver trceries in the inky shadows. We watched and for a long time were silent, each with his own thoughts. Ilipia said suddenly, pointing out into the darkness:

"Señor Jeem, you have made many camps in the forests beyond even these—where no man builds his house. Have you ever seen the woman?"

## The Cage

I was startled. "There are no women in the jungle, Ilipia," I said, wondering. "That thou knowest better than I. There are no women except in the places where men are strong—in the villages of their men."

"That is true," he said gravely. "But I have heard a tale. It is a very old telling. It has come down from many generations. There is a woman, though no man sees her."

I was silent. "It is on nights of the full moon," he went on after a pause. "It is said that she runs along the trails where the moon looks down through the branches. Her body is white, like the moon."

He leaned toward the fire and thrust the ends of the logs closer together. "Come, we must sleep," he said. "It is a tale that is told."

This, too, ran in my mind, sharply remembered, when the woman entered my shop in Ciudad Panamá. And one thing more I remembered even before she spoke.

I was sitting at a table in Burgstahler's. Burgstahler was an Austrian who ran a beer garden, open air. The beer was good there. I went in there with an old buddy of mine, a man I had known up in Honduras. There was a dance floor there, and we sat there watching them dance while we chinned. You paid Burgstahler's girls five cents a dance. On nights after army paydays on the canal the place was jammed with enlisted men. This was a dull night. Most of the tables were empty. But there were a couple of people sitting at the table next to ours. Some fellow and a woman. I hadn't taken any notice of them until I heard the man's voice getting a little louder. He sounded sore about something.

"Hey, you, what goes on?" he was saying. "What you doin' with that drink? Don't get funny—I saw you spillin' it under the table."

## Jungle Jim

"Yeah, so I spilled it," I heard the woman say. "So what?"

It was an old gag. The girls always ordered fancy drinks whenever they got someone to buy for them. Burgstahler would pay them a commission on every drink. They would collect fifteen cents on planter's punches. The faster they could get rid of a drink and get the sucker to order another the more they would make. This woman had got caught at it. She must have been drunk and looking for trouble. The man didn't make any row.

"What did you want to do that for?" he said. He was sort of whining.

"What the hell do you suppose?" she said. "They don't feed you free in this town."

He thought that over awhile. "Oh!" he said. "Well, why don't you go home? You come here from the States, didn't you? Why don't you go home to your folks?"

She gave a snicker. "They never learned me how to walk on the water," she said. "Anyway, why worry? Get me a planter's punch—that's a good kid."

And now here she was in my shop. It had been a month since I saw her at Doellner's camp. It had been pretty near six months since that night when Doellner brought her into that restaurant. She didn't look like she did that night.

I don't think she had the faintest idea where she was. I think she had just been wandering along the street till the sun had got her. I think she came in just to get away from the sun.

"Hello," I said. "How are you?"

She stared at me. I don't think she had the faintest idea that she had ever seen me at Doellner's camp. But finally she said: "Oh, I remember you! You were——" Then she stopped. "That was a long time ago," she said.



## The Cage

"That's right," I said. "It was a long time ago."

She looked around the shop. She picked up things on the counter and put them down again. I don't think she knew exactly what she was doing. I knew she didn't want to buy anything.

"You working at Burgstahler's?" I said. I didn't know what else to say.

"Sure," she said.

She went on wandering along the counter. There was a little cage there, standing on the counter, a cage the Indians weave out of young *bejuca* vines. I kept a pet spider monkey in it, one I had had for a couple of years. I thought maybe the monkey would take her mind off the heat. So I took the lid off the top and lifted the monkey out. I lifted it up on my shoulder, and it put an arm around my neck and put its cheek against mine. It was sleepy.

The girl was staring at it. First she stared at the monkey and then she stared at the cage. I don't know what was the matter with her.

"Ever see a spider monkey?" I said. "I trapped this one. She's almost two years old now. Want to hold her?"

The girl didn't answer. She just stood there, looking first at the monkey and then at the cage. I don't know what was in her mind. She mumbled something, like she was talking to herself.

"What?" I said.

"I said, put her back in the cage," the girl said, louder. "Put her back in the cage!"

Then she went out into the strong sun.

## CHAPTER XIV

### My Jungle

**D**URING THE MANY YEARS in which I made my headquarters in Panama City I made numberless expeditions into the immense wilderness, inhabited only by Indians, which lies to the south and east of that narrow strip of land and waterway, the Panama Canal Zone. The Zone, with its adjacent ports, is all that the visitor ever sees as he passes from one ocean to the other. But the republic of Panama, which is bisected by the Canal Zone, comprises nine provinces, six of which lie to the west of the canal and three to the east. These three, with an area of fully ten thousand square miles, are largely uninhabited jungle.

Few white men ever penetrated this vast domain. Because of my frequent hunting and trading expeditions into it, often made with none but Indian companions, it was not long before I was nicknamed "Jungle Jim."

The commonest idea of the jungle, held by persons who have never seen it, is that jungle country is always lowland country. They are always surprised to learn that it often includes mountainous country. Indeed, the Spanish

## My Jungle

word for jungle is *el monte*, "the mountain." In these three provinces the mountain range separating the Atlantic coastal province, Comarca de San Blas, from the province of Panama reaches elevations of two or three thousand feet, while the range dividing the province of Darien from Colombia contains peaks reaching heights of five and even six thousand feet. And these are all included in the word "jungle."

To reach these jungles from the city of Colon, at the northern, or Atlantic, entrance to the canal, or from Panama City, at the canal's entrance from the Pacific, I found it best to engage passage on some fisherman's motorboat or some small trading schooner which would land me at one or another village on the very fringe of the jungle or even well within it. These outpost villages are all situated upon rivers which can be ascended from the sea. Here in the remote areas of the isthmus travel is quicker by water than by land, and, in addition, these rivers are navigable at all seasons of the year. By motorboat it usually took me from two to five days to get to these "jumping-off places" at which the penetration of the jungle by canoe or upon foot would begin.

During the rainy season, lasting from five and a half to seven months, beginning in the middle of April and extending to November or the middle of December, overland trails are impossible. In the lowlands there is sometimes many feet of floodwater. At times, after a single day of hard rain in the mountains, the creeks and small rivers overflow their banks; huge trees and logs are seen floating downstream, and these tributary streams, flowing into the large rivers, cause floods through all the valleys, so that the outpost is sometimes cut off from settlements closer to the sea.

## Jungle Jim

My first concern, on arriving at the outpost village, was to find a hut in which to live for a day or two while checking over the stores I had brought with me or added to in the village and arranging for canoes and selecting the boatmen, Indians or bush Negroes, who were familiar with the river I meant to ascend. For a trading expedition which was to last a month it was necessary to obtain two dugout canoes, one to carry my companions and myself, the other to carry our stores for personal use and for trade. I would hire two boatmen for each canoe.

My trade goods always included a case of cheap, sweet-smelling soap of all colors and a case of laundry soap, for Indians love to have soap. Besides cigarettes for our own use I would take plenty for trading purposes. Many is the time when I have given a pack of cigarettes to an Indian and watched him delightedly pass them out one by one to each member of his family, including even his three-year-old child. The children inhaled them like veterans. Every Indian I ever met, man, woman and child, was a smoker. Next, my trading stores would include cotton cloth of varied design and color, cheap knives, glass beads, bright-colored bracelets and necklaces and several long machetes. In return for these we would get from the Indians their bows and arrows, silver bracelets, curious necklaces of beaten silver studded with the teeth of wild boars and their strange "medicine sticks"—small poles with carven heads which the medicine men of the tribes drive into the ground around their huts to ward away evil spirits but which they are always willing to sell. They can easily carve out others just as efficacious!

Our stores of food included bacon, canned hams, flour, salt—plenty of salt, because the Indians crave it and cannot always get it—lard, sugar, jam, coffee and evaporated

## My Jungle

milk. Indians of the jungle love milk with a little sugar in it. It is a novelty to them, as they have never in all their lives seen either a cow or a goat and they haven't tasted milk from the time they were weaned. Whenever I gave sweetened milk to a mountain Indian he would come back for more time and again. Chewing gum is also a novelty to them, though the chicle from which gum is made comes from trees native to the jungle. A jungle Indian to whom a stick of chewing gum is handed always tries to swallow it without chewing it, and when told it is only for chewing he can't see much sense to it.

All these goods, trade goods and those for personal use, are packed in rainproof rubber sacks, and each sack is numbered. It is then easy to find the article you need without hunting through all the sacks.

For hunting, when I was guiding two or three persons through the jungle, our party would carry .38- or .45-caliber revolvers, a 12-gauge shotgun, a 20-gauge and one or two rifles, 32.20 or 30.30 caliber. A .22 rifle also came in handy for small game. We carried plenty of ammunition.

Thus each of our dugout canoes must carry a sizable load, but I learned that one must never select too large a canoe, for one continually encounters rapids or shallows in ascending the rivers, and it is necessary again and again for everyone to get out and, waist-deep in the water, help shove the loaded dugout through the rapids.

When all preparations have been made I push off from the outpost village, headed for some jungle Indian village which we will reach in two or three days of river travel. Our boatmen paddle the dugouts along with tireless strokes and by midafternoon we will probably have covered twenty miles or so against the current.

## Jungle Jim

Now we begin to look out for a good big sand bar on which to pitch camp for the night. We usually camp about four or five o'clock, while there is still plenty of light. While one person prepares supper the boatmen cut poles and rapidly build a shelter, thatching it with palm leaves. After an early supper of bacon and pancakes and coffee we roll up in our blankets on the sand and, unless the sounds of the jungle, the cries of birds and monkeys, the bellowing of frogs and the grunting of crocodiles keep us awake, we sleep till four in the morning. Another day of paddling, another night's camp on a friendly sand bar, and early next morning we come to the mouth of a tributary stream and leave the big river we have been ascending. By midday we reach the Indian village, a cluster of a dozen or so palm-thatched huts, where we will leave our canoes and take to the hill trails leading still deeper into the jungle.

Here we engage three or four or perhaps a half-dozen men to act as pack carriers and, in addition, one who will act as "head man," a middle-aged Indian whom all the others respect. He will carry only his own little personal pack, a few pounds of cane sugar in small bricks, and a *chacara* bag in which are certain feathers and trinkets which will keep evil spirits away. The mountain Indians, especially, carry these trinkets. The valley tribes do not always follow the practice. Those of the mountains are more primitive and superstitious.

Our goods and stores are divided up for carrying, each packer being assigned about thirty-five or forty-five pounds. They carry this weight supported by a strip of supple bark, about four inches wide and eight feet long, which they cut from the inner bark layer of a small tree. This strip is placed across their foreheads, with the ends



El Real, the last outpost of trade in the Darien Jungle, Panama.





## My Jungle

passing over the shoulders and fastened around the pack, so that most of the weight is borne by the forehead and shoulders. I have sometimes tried to get an Indian to use the standard pack harness of leather, but in a few minutes he invariably discards it in favor of the strip of bark. With a heavy pack thus supported, an Indian will go at a slow trot through the mountains for days.

As we set off I always go at the front of the line with the old Indian head man who acts as guide and passes along all the orders and I set the pace. If an Indian is allowed to do this he will set a pace that no white man could follow for very long. Another reason for taking the lead is to be in a position to take a shot at any game we come upon to provide fresh meat.

I always call for a fifteen-minute rest after each forty-five minutes of walking and when climbing especially steep and slippery mountains I call a halt every ten minutes for two or three minutes. The Indians never like this; they want to keep on going. When the Indian head man passes on my order for a halt he doesn't speak but gives a queer sort of whistle, like a wind-broken horse, and the packers answer him with the same whistle.

The camp for the night is always pitched by a mountain creek or waterfall, not later, if possible, than three o'clock in the afternoon. On the valley trails one pushes on as far as he can, only leaving enough daylight for making a camp. In the valleys the jungle is more dense, the trees are larger and the growth of all kinds is heavier. Valley trails are always ankle-deep (or more) in mud, even in the dry season, because, first, there is heavy underbrush, consisting of vines, thorns, small palms and ferns growing closely packed, one against another, then, shooting just above these, the tall palm trees, manaca palm,

## Jungle Jim

coroza palm, cabbage palm, and, third, the giants of the jungle, the ceiba and the *quipo* trees, towering above all else. So there are actually three roofs above the ground, one above another, and the sun never has a chance to get through all this triple maze of thousands of trees and plants to dry the trail. So you slosh on along the valley trails, slapping gnats and mosquitoes with both hands, fording one creek after another, until by midafternoon you are well ready to call a halt. It is always best to camp on a creek or river, but remember that all water must be boiled before drinking it. And it is necessary to have mosquitoproof hammocks to sleep in, for the mosquitos and other stinging insects are more plentiful in the valleys. I've learned never to make a permanent camp in the lowlands, but always at least six hundred or eight hundred feet up in the highlands beside a clear, cool stream. Here the climate is ideal, and the insects don't bother you. Nor are there in the mountains so many bushes, vines and trees that thrust short and long thorns at you.

However, it is just as exhausting to travel a mountain trail as a valley trail. The mountain trail seems to go straight up for hour after hour, and you climb over giant tree trunks, one after another, that have fallen across the trail or sometimes you are forced to cut your way around them, a tedious and wearisome job, as you slip and slide in the thick mat of fallen leaves and branches. Sleeping is no task, however, at the end of such a day, although the ground is none too soft, and there is a palm roof just two feet above your head. It is always necessary to wrap up in two or three blankets. The Indians with you always sleep on the ground without any cover; only if it rains will they climb under the sides of the lean-to.

## My Jungle

Our hunting is usually done at night, and the usual game is deer or wild pig or *conejo pintada*, "painted rabbit." Using a jack light, a small battery bulb worn on the head like a miner's lamp, one waits just off the trail or walks slowly along it until the light is reflected in the animal's eyes, enabling you to aim directly at him. Then you have broiled steak for breakfast the next morning. The Indians with us are always hungry and, in addition, they carry their own supply of sugar at which they nibble constantly. It is pure cane sugar, dark, almost black, made into little cakes. It may account for some of their stamina. It really does help one's wind, as I've tried it myself.

Suppose I point out to you some of the individual trees among these countless trees of the forest, the trees that go to make up the jungle, as we toil along this difficult trail or as we take our few minutes of rest. Then you'll know the jungle!

There's something odd—odd that those three trees over there are cousins, you might say. They all belong to the same family, these three, the *caimito*, the *maméy* and the *sapote*. All three bear a fruit, all three have a large, very dark brown seed and all three have bark that is between rough and smooth.

The fruit of the *caimito* is round, about the size of a baseball, and its meat or pulp is purple, very juicy and sickeningly sweet. The pulp of the *maméy* is red and even more juicy than that of the *caimito*. This fruit is extremely popular with Central Americans and in northern South America, and a most delicious soft drink is made from its juice throughout Central America. The third tree, the *sapote*, is the largest of the three cousins, sometimes reaching a height of one hundred feet. Its fruit is about the size and shape of an eggplant, with a skin much re-

## Jungle Jim

sembling that of a muskmelon or cantaloupe. Its pulp is a dark pink in color, very sweet and juicy. The *sapote* tree is also called the chicle tree, or gum tree, the chicle or gum bled from the trunks of these trees being shipped in great quantities to the United States to be made into chewing gum, but there are hundreds of thousands of these trees in Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama and Colombia that have never been tapped. To obtain the gum a canal is cut down the trunk about twenty-five feet long, and short side canals, about eight inches apart, are cut to lead into the central canal at a forty-five-degree angle. A canvas sack or a homemade rubber sack is placed at the bottom of the main canal to catch the gum.

That smaller tree over there with the splotches of light-colored bark, like a sycamore, is a *marañon*. Its fruit is shaped like a pear but tastes like an apple and is as dripping with juice as a ripe peach. Its seed grows at the bottom of the pear-shaped fruit and is curved like a new moon. When roasted or boiled the seed is known as the cashew nut. The natives always warn you that unless it has been roasted or boiled you must not eat the seed, insisting that it is poisonous, causes sores of the mouth and sometimes serious illness.

That fine handsome big tree just beyond the *marañon*, majestic as an oak, is the one that guarantees food with a minimum of effort to the native of the tropics. That's the *masapán*, or breadfruit tree. It is one of the most beautiful of all the *arboles*, the trees of the jungle. As you see, it is seventy or eighty feet in height, and its branches, which begin eight or ten feet from the ground, spread out majestically until their shadow covers a circle which sometimes reaches a diameter of nearly two hundred feet. Its large dark green leaves glisten and shine as if coated with

## My Jungle

varnish and keep their bright glossiness the year around. The *masapán* makes a wonderful shade tree. Its fruit, the breadfruit, famous in voyagers' tales since it was first discovered, is about the size of a honeydew melon, with a wrinkled skin resembling that of a mock orange. When cooked the breadfruit is very similar to the Irish potato. In all tropical countries the natives depend upon it for much of their food. But you can't get it at the corner grocer's, sliced and in waxed-paper packages. You're in the jungle now!

Want some dessert? Go over to that little tree, that one only ten or twelve feet high, and pick your own melon. That's a *papaya* and its melons, as you see, grow directly from its trunk on leafless stems, while the leaves spread out above them at the top. They're plentiful everywhere in the jungle.

Or if you prefer a salad such as is served in expensive restaurants wait till we reach the next fertile river valley and you can treat yourself to all the *aguacates*, otherwise known as avocado or alligator pears, that you want. They are plentiful in such valleys, and I have eaten *aguacates* in the jungle that were much larger and more luscious than the cultivated ones.

Want a nice cooling drink? Just struggle off there to your left through the tangle of ferns and vines and thorns to *that* tree, that one about thirty feet high, with all those funny little green balls hanging on it, about the size of a backward cantaloupe. You'll notice those green pods have green spines covering them, but don't worry about that—the spines are soft. Just reach up and pick them. Peel the fruit and you'll find the inner pulp full of hundreds of tiny black seeds. Mash the whole business, seeds and all, until all the white pulpy juice has run out and pour that

## Jungle Jim

into your glass. By the time it's ready to drink it's a lavender color. It makes a delightful soft drink and is in great demand throughout the tropics, especially in jungle settlements. It's even better when iced, but I have yet to see any ice in the jungle. What's its name? *Guanávana*.

And there's another type of *guanávana*, much smaller and without the protruding spines on the fruit, which has no name at all. Or, at least, its name is *anom*—which means "nameless," doesn't it?

Want some chewing gum to refresh you on this jungle hike? Well, that plant over yonder, that cactuslike thing, is *tuna*. Split open its leaves and you will see its sap flowing out freely and hardening almost as soon as it reaches the air. It makes very fair chewing gum, you'll find.

Mushrooms, or *hongo* (pronounced "ongó"), are to be found growing in abundant patches in any dense jungle where the rich mold of fallen vegetation, the warm, moist air and the curtain of leafage that cuts off the sunlight combine to give them just the conditions they need.

The innumerable trees, vines and shrubs of the jungle provide the native not only with food and drink but also with his house, his boat, his weapons, his clothing and his fuel. See that corozo or manaca palm over there? The Indian gathers its clustered nuts, which are larger than Brazil nuts, and extracts an oil from them which is used for many purposes. It provides oil for flares for fishing and hunting. I have often read by the light of corozo nuts. It is used in cooking. It is used for salves to be spread on cuts. From the leaves of the corozo palm—a single palm frond averages twenty feet in length—the best thatch for the native hut is made. The *bejuco* vines which festoon every big tree in the jungle are put to numberless uses. They are used for tying the roof and side

## My Jungle

walls of a house together. They are used for nooses to trap game. They are handy for lashing bundles of goods. They are as strong as rope and they are ready to hand wherever you go in the jungle. Just reach up and cut off the length and thickness you want!

For cloth the native goes to the banana tree, which has already yielded him its fruit, but whose usefulness is not over with that gift. From the innermost core of its trunk—the Choco Indians of Darien call it *yagua*—which he dries, then soaks in cold water, then dries again, he makes a fine linen cigarette paper. From other layers of the dried trunk he weaves *alberdones*, or pack-saddle blankets. They make a thick soft blanket for the *aparejo*, or crude pack saddle of the pack mules used on banana plantations, and these *alberdones* are used exclusively by all fruit companies and by all natives of banana countries. A very good strong rope is also woven from *yagua*; dishrags and pot-rags are made from it, and even the roofs of native huts are made from the *yagua* trunk.

Another sort of textile is obtained from the *algodon*, which produces wild cotton for the jungle dweller. It is not a vine, but a small strong tree, twelve or fifteen feet tall, and is not replanted from year to year, as our cotton is, but bears each year. Its cotton is unlike our cultivated cotton, being more of a linter, very short fibers. From it the natives of “the bush” and the Indians weave cloth and hammocks, caulk the seams of boats and bind the points of poisoned arrows to the arrow shafts.

From the tough, resilient wood of the black palm, or *chonta*, the Indian fashions his bow and his arrows, his pronged fish spears and his small *batellas*, or wooden bowls, and it is from *chonta* wood that the chiefs of the Indian villages carve their canes or staves of office.

## Jungle Jim

From the giant cedar, which grows to a height of a hundred feet, the Indian makes his *cayucos*, the dugout canoes in which he goes to sea, and the *piraguas*, the dugout canoes used in river navigation. Their paddles, too, are carved from the giant cedar.

That majestic tree which you see towering head and shoulders above all others in the jungle, excepting only the ceiba tree, is the *quipo*. The *quipo* grows to a height of one hundred and fifty to one hundred and seventy-five feet and is from twelve to fourteen feet in diameter at its base. The Indians of some tribes get their mattresses from the *quipo*. They cut into its bark to a depth of several inches and strip out rectangles of the inner layers of bark. It makes a fine thick and very soft mattress.

But you have not yet begun to recognize a half of the bewildering profusion of fruits and vegetables which crowd around you. Here is the wild plum, the *icáco*, which weights down the large bush with its fruit and which does not need fertile soil for its growth but is found growing luxuriantly in rocky or sandy soil and along uninhabited stretches of beach. The fruit of the *icáco* is of many different sizes, flavors and colors—large and small, sour and sweet, black, blue, pink, red, white. Coffee is to be found growing wild on higher ground at altitudes ranging from four hundred to four thousand feet above sea level. Among vegetables found growing wild as well as in the small patches of ground cultivated in Indian villages there is the *chaote*, a squash, found in many valleys, the *yame*, or yam, a tuber like a large Irish potato, sometimes weighing as much as six or eight pounds, plentiful in fertile valleys and forming a staple food of Indians and natives, the *camote*, a long sweet potato with white stringy fiber found where jungle is thinner and always on



## My Jungle

a hillside, *espinaca*, or spinach, also to be found on hill and mountainsides, from which messes of greens similar to the American child's favorite food are prepared.

Sugar cane, *caña dulce*, is found growing wild in many a fertile valley. Its light green stalk reaches a height of sixteen to eighteen feet and is often from four to seven inches in diameter.

Coconuts, with their refreshing milk and firm white meat, are plentiful on all coasts of tropical America. But the fruit upon which "bush" natives and jungle Indians depend for a great share of their food is, of course, the banana, plucked from trees growing wild as well as those of cultivated plantations. The banana we know is shipped to us from the plantations when it is green and is a little less than three quarters grown, ripening and yellowing before it reaches us. But the Indian and the native use the banana as a vegetable rather than a fruit, baking the green banana, usually in hot ashes, so that its taste is like that of a mealy Irish potato. Other varieties are the small "ladyfinger" or "apple banana," about the size of a man's thumb, which tastes like an apple but is more starchy and the "Indian banana," a red-skinned banana, short and fat, about five inches long and three inches in diameter. A third variety is the *platano*, or plantain, a large banana which is not good to eat unless cooked. It is cooked both when green and when ripe, and when a ripe *platano* is baked with sugar it is delicious, a favorite dish with every native of the tropics.

Gourds from which the Indian and the bush native make drinking cups and containers, called *jicaras*, otherwise calabashes, grow on the *jicara*, a small tree, about fifteen feet tall. The seeds of the *jicara* tree are coated with beads of syrup. They are called *guira*, pronounced

## Jungle Jim

“weera.” When these seeds are boiled they provide a very effective cough medicine. When mashed together with the pulp of the *xicara* gourd and wrapped in a rag of *yagua* cloth they make a good poultice for chest colds and rheumatism.

But there is one jungle growth for which I have never found any good use. It is the mangrove, or *mangle*, a low tree which grows in dense groves in swampy land. The low, swampy country along broad rivers makes it usually impossible to land, and where one finds a landing place on a sand bar one usually encounters a dense mangrove swamp, the *suampo de mangle* of the Spanish discoverers. One must be very careful not to pitch camp beneath these trees or to sit and rest too long beneath them, because the fruit drops from them, and its juice causes the skin to burn and itch. The fruit is about the size of a small plum, dark brown in color when ripe. I once tasted one, swallowing just a drop to see what it was like. It was very sweet and for more than an hour burned like fire.

While we march on along the narrow jungle trail and see all around us the incredible growth of tree and bush, vine and vegetable from the matted forest floor to the summit of the enormous *ceiba* and *quipo* trees one and two hundred feet overhead not a step do we take without seeing this green leafiness adorned with some breathtakingly beautiful flower. Orchids are everywhere. You might gather them by armloads—but to what purpose? On these upland trails of Panama you will see one of the most beautiful of all orchids, the Dove, or Holy Ghost, orchid. Pure and snowy white, its center has the shape of a white dove with outstretched wings. It is scentless, but there is another, called the Lady of the Night, found only in the valleys of Panama and along the valley of the great

## My Jungle

Atrato River, in Colombia, whose fragrance is exquisite. It begins blooming early in November and continues to bloom for about a month. During the day it is scentless, but nightly, from about ten o'clock until three in the morning, the "Lady" puts on her perfume, as if she were going to a ghostly ball, and spreads through the dark colonnades of the jungle the ethereal fragrance of paradise.

This nocturnal festival at which she is the guest of honor is attended, surely, by thousands of unseen dancers, for you can see a thousand lights glowing, fading, dancing through the trees and above the dark floor of the jungle. They are fireflies, of course. Catch one in your hand. It is as large as a beetle, pulsing with mysterious fire. This one gives out an amber light. Another glows like an emerald. In the towns at carnival times girls fasten them to their dresses for jewels.

But here in the jungle there is no woman—except the Lady of the Night.

## CHAPTER XV

### People of the Jungle

**L**ONELINESS IS something that I have never known in the jungle. I have heard that a man can be lonely in a city of a million inhabitants. It is not so in the jungle. Life, fascinating life, in shapes so various that there is no end to marveling moves and stirs all around me. Who could be lonely in the jungle?

Among the smallest of the people of the jungle are the scorpions and tarantulas. They amuse me. There are brown scorpions and there are black scorpions, and to be stung by a black scorpion is worse than to be stung by the brown. They make their homes in the mildewed thatch of old houses but do not disdain the new house which is built by the planter if he provides it with closets suitably dark and humid. When clothing has been hanging in such a closet for a long time it is always best to shake it out well before putting it on. When you have captured one alive it is not necessary to kill him. He will prefer to do that for himself. All that you need to do is to make a wide ring of

## People of the Jungle

crumpled paper on the earthen floor of the hut, set fire to it and drop the *alecran* into the center of the blazing ring. He will cautiously approach each part of the circle in turn, each time backing to the exact center of the ring, then making a fresh trial in another direction. When he has proved to himself that escape in any direction is impossible he will bring his tail over his back and sting himself in the back of his neck. A death without dishonor.

Largest of all tropical spiders is the tarantula. He grows to a diameter of five or six inches. Hair, a quarter of an inch in length, grows all over his dark brown body and his long legs. There is a popular (and mistaken) belief in the States that the tarantula lives in bunches of bananas and that his bite is poisonous. One may occasionally get into a bunch or stem of bananas, but that is accidental. Tarantulas make their homes in the decaying timbers of old houses and in the crevices of rotting logs in pastures on the edge of the jungle. Pack mules and horses grazing in such pastures are frequently bitten by them. The bite is always just below the mule's fetlock, and the tarantula will cling there until shaken off. The mule or horse usually loses his hoof as a result of the bite, and, unless given good care, a well-formed hoof will not grow in its place. The tarantula's bite is extremely painful but not fatal.

Nor are the other people of the jungle truly dangerous. Throughout the forests of lowlands and valleys the friendly white-faced monkeys, the *cara blancas*, follow overhead as you march. The black spider monkeys follow you along the upland trails. These little fellows have no thumbs to their hands. In the foothills the marmoset, or squirrel monkey, the *mono titi*, is plentiful. These tiny little monkeys scamper off in all directions when surprised

## Jungle Jim

and sound very much like squeaking rats. Largest of the monkey tribe is the black howler, a baboon, called the *olingo*, or congo. The black howlers, companies of them, usually wake one at dawn close to camp. The bulls howl and yell at dawn and late in the afternoon and if it is raining they keep up a continual howling. They start their howling with a deep rolling grunt, not unlike that of a hog, and from this the howl rolls on into the sound of thunder. Sometimes it can be heard at a distance of four or five miles. Though the sound is alarming to anyone who hears it for the first time these fellows, too, are harmless. But, full of an unquenchable and stupid curiosity, they are persistent camp followers. One may shoot at them several times before they move away at all, and then only to a little distance. The black howlers are found in jungles throughout Central and South America, and another variety, the red howler, is found south of the Panama Canal. They people the deep, heavy jungles in the valleys and foothills.

I do not lack for company. Sometimes a drove of peccaries, thirty or forty of them, big-headed wild pigs with long tusks, comes trotting through the forest. It is just as well to stay out of their path. Sometimes they will scatter, sometimes not. Red deer are plentiful. That dainty little animal, the *conejo pintada*, the "painted rabbit," is numerous. Crocodiles and alligators sprawl on sand bars in the rivers and on the shores of marshy lagoons. Sometimes an armadillo scuttles across the trail and into the underbrush. Lizards and their big brothers, the goiter-throated iguanas, rustle away from underfoot. Strangest of all the lizards is the irreverently named *lagarto Jesus Christo* which, with its webbed feet, you may see actually running across the surface of a stream. And, most ludicrous of all

## People of the Jungle

the jungle people, the long-haired sloth will sometimes stage for you his inexpressibly languid slow-motion performances. Only seldom will you catch a glimpse of the spotted cats of the jungle, the ocelot and the jaguar. And if you do you need not be alarmed. They are cowardly people and will slink away through the underbrush like shadows.

But the most numerous people of the jungle are the winged ones. The birds are everywhere. The jungle is loud with their voices, glowing with their bright feathers. What census taker could ever count their numbers?

Could you believe in the existence of a bird that seems to swoon and topples over whenever he tries to sing? But in the jungle you will see him with your own eyes. He is the *oro pendula*, the "gold tail," or "yellow tail." He is slightly larger than an American robin. His plumage is light brown, his wings and tail tipped with yellow. His beak is painted like a rainbow. Yellow tails live in colonies in hanging nests. I have seen nearly a hundred nests hanging from the branches of a single tall tree. These nests, which the birds weave from shredded bark fiber, are pear shaped, two or three feet in length and a dozen inches in diameter. The bird enters through a small round hole at the top of the nest. Once a year, during the dry season, the birds abandon the old nests and build new ones, but the old nests can be seen still hanging in the trees for another year or two before the rains and winds finally beat them down. The song of the yellow tail—or, rather, his actions as he tries to sing—has held me fascinated through many a resting period on the jungle trail. As he begins the call, perched upright on a branch by his nest, he cranes his neck upward and opens his painted beak so widely that one would expect a veritable torrent of melody to pour

## Jungle Jim

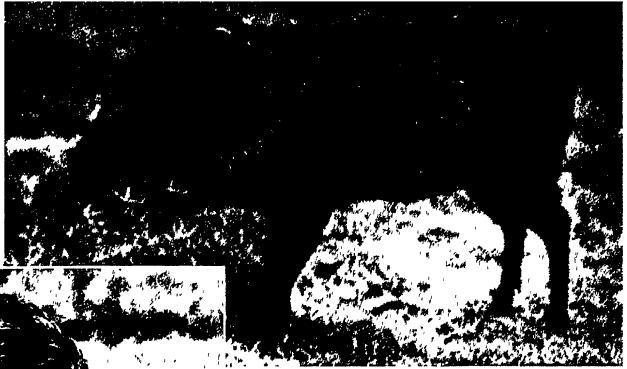
out. The sound that does come out startles the bird himself with its weirdness. It is like the squeak of an old rusty gate swung shut. The yellow tail is petrified with chagrin as he hears it. Still clinging to his perch, he faints away. He topples slowly forward. At the beginning of the song he was upright; at its end he is hanging, head downward. In this position he thinks it over for a while dejectedly. He is humiliated. But after a while hope revives. Surely, he thinks to himself, he will do better next time. He swings himself upright and tries again. It is a pathetic scene, this; you can stand it just so long before bursting into tears.

Pepper bushes grow along the jungle trail, and when their red pods are ripe you will see a most handsome little bird, the peppercorn, feeding on them. He is bright golden, with a black head and with wings and tail tipped with black. He is about the size of our northern redbird and he whistles like the redbird. I have seen him eat four or five sizable red peppers at a time. Where he finds room for them or how he survives them are problems.

Along every river and creek are to be seen hundreds of the small white egrets, beautiful in their snowy plumage, and the stately blue herons and in the marshes and lagoons and tidal basins and bays countless thousands of the *pato real*, the "royal duck." Big as a mallard, its plumage is greenish black, with a white breast.

Of the parrot family the most numerous by far are the little "corn parakeets," of which there are millions in the tropics. They are no larger than a sparrow but they move noisily about in immense flocks, creating havoc with the crops of corn. Besides these one finds six other parrot species numerous in the jungle peopling: the redhead parrot, the yellowhead, the greenhead, the blue macaw, the green and the red macaw. The jungle's loudest people!





Peccaries in droves of thirty or more.



The giant sloth can swim for hours.

Red deer are plentiful.





## People of the Jungle

All parrots and macaws build their nests high in the tops of the tallest trees of the jungle, but their bright plumage weaves patterns of color at every height. I have made pets of all these. The redhead, a bird of medium size, is lovable and affectionate, more so than the others, but does not make a good talker. The yellowhead, plentiful in Honduras, is not so frequently seen to the south but is found occasionally in valleys not too far from the coast. It is not affectionate, doesn't care to be handled very much but makes a fine talker. Some consider the yellowheads to be the best talkers in the parrot family, but I would give first place to the big greenhead parrot whose red shoulder-knot epaulet marks him as a ranking officer. He is not affectionate but he is highly intelligent and seems to understand what is said to him. He can be trained to whistle tunes and to sing fairly long songs and his conversation, in either Spanish or English, can be both sacred and profane. The big greenheads are to be found in valleys and on mountains, in the interior, but are not often caught and are difficult to obtain from the natives.

The macaw, the largest of the parrot family, called by the natives the *guaca* or *guacamaya*, is only to be found in valleys and mountains where the jungle is densest and builds his nest high in ceiba and *quipo* trees, the loftiest trees in the jungle. All macaws, whether known as the "red," the "green" or the "blue," are generally marked with all three of these colors as well as with bright yellow. The "red" macaw is found from Mexico to Brazil; the "blue" and the "green" are rarely found north of southern Costa Rica. Macaws cannot be taught to talk much but they are exceptionally wise and intelligent and can be taught to roll over, to march, to count and many other tricks.

## Jungle Jim

Among game birds of the jungle the largest is the *pavo de monte*, or curassow, the wild turkey of the tropics. The plumage of the male is black, and he wears a crest, or top-knot; the female is brown. They are usually found in groves of corozo palm trees in either mountains or foothills, where they are plentiful. A smaller wild turkey, the *chachalaca*, so called because of its cackling note, is brown plumaged, has the shape and the fanlike tail of the domestic turkey but is not larger than a good-sized barnyard hen. The meat is excellent but not to be compared with that of the *perdis*, or grouse, which is plentiful in all tropic mountain-and-valley country and is unsurpassed as a game bird.

Gentlest of the winged people of the jungle are the doves which fly in flocks and speak a more melodious and softer language than is heard in cities. There is the small wild pigeon, little larger than the English sparrow, and there is the larger dove, *la paloma*, whose voice in the lonely forest is gentler than memories of friends long lost. It is a pity to shoot them even when you hunger.

In the jungle the little spotted cat, the ocelot, is called "the tiger," *el tigre*. He has a companion who goes always with him, a little bird, no bigger than a sparrow, who is called *pajara tigre*, "the tiger bird." I have seen him perched upon the head of a sleepy ocelot or hopping up and down the flanks of the drowsy cat. I suppose he hunts for insects in the spotted hide of his host and is welcome for it. Even though you do not see either the ocelot or his tiny attendant you sometimes hear in the jungle the deep-throated *whoo-a-a-ah* of the little tiger bird and know that both are near at hand.

The winged people of the jungle are easily seen as they flutter above your head or hop from branch to branch be-

## People of the Jungle

side the trail. But there are other people of the jungle that are not so easily seen, for they crawl upon the ground and glide beneath the tangled vegetation.

Among these are the boa constrictors. The boas come in three sizes. Sometimes as you splash along the muddy trail in low inland valleys or through the lowlands of the coast you will see a sinuous light brown shape wriggling out of your path, a something seven or eight feet long and thicker than your arm. Light brown, that is to say, if he is in shadow. When the sunlight strikes him his translucent skin gleams with every color of the rainbow. This is the rainbow boa, and you need fear him not at all. His cousin, the rat boa, is equally harmless to man. He is about the same size, but his coloration is different. He is a greenish gray, with dark markings on his back. Indians of the jungle have told me that the rat boa is poisonous only at certain times: if it is after midnight when you meet him or when he is hunting or feeding. I am inclined to believe he is harmless at all times. The rat boa and the rainbow boa live upon birds, rats and other small animals and smaller snakes.

The largest of the three kinds of boa constrictor is the emperor boa. I have heard many yarns of emperor boas said to have been from twenty to thirty-five feet in length. I doubt them all. The largest of the emperor boas I have ever seen was not over eighteen feet in length. That's big enough. Most of the many I have seen were from eight to fifteen feet long and perhaps twelve to fifteen inches in diameter. His color is a greenish gray, adorned along the spine with black diamond-shape markings. The emperor boa swallows birds, monkeys, small wild pigs, raccoons and such provender but he has no feud with man and is not dangerous to human beings. Often I have permitted a big

## Jungle Jim

fellow to wrap himself around my body, taking care only to keep a good grip on the back of his neck just below his head, and have then slapped his nose with my free hand. When I had slapped him until he was thoroughly angry and had begun to hiss, with his huge mouth wide open, he would begin to squeeze the coils around my body. It was a terrific pressure, feeling as if a wrestler had locked a scissors grip around me. But as soon as I felt it I would squeeze the back of his neck—and he would invariably relax. To say “invariably” is perhaps a little superfluous. If he hadn't I wouldn't be telling this.

There are, it is true, some other people of the jungle who are not so harmless as the boa constrictors. But I have met them all and I am convinced that the danger has been much exaggerated. I do not mean to say that the six snakes which I am about to name are not as deadly as they have been said to be. I mean that one may pass through the jungle unnumbered times without the slightest risk of being attacked by one.

First of the six is the bushmaster, found in Panama and along the northern coast of South America, growing to a length of twelve feet and marked with dark gray crosses on the back. The bushmaster has been called the most deadly of all snakes. I don't agree to giving him this eminence. Five others, the fer-de-lance, the hognose viper, the *barba amarillo*, the little coral snake and the Nicaraguan bull rattler are equally deadly. But the saving fact is this: unless you attack a snake he will not strike at you.

The bushmaster, unmolested, *will not attack* a person or a large animal. He is a slow striker. To be bitten by one it is necessary almost to step on one. The fer-de-lance is as quick as lightning in striking, but unless you are deliberately hunting for one you will never see one. All of

## People of the Jungle

these, with the exception of the Nicaraguan bull rattler, will get out of your way before you can see them unless you come upon them when they are sleeping, and even then they will try to move away from you quickly. As for the bull rattler, he will not move but he will sound a warning that you are coming too close. If you cannot tell from what direction the rattle comes then it is only necessary to stand still for a few minutes and the bull rattler will crawl away. It is true enough that there are dozens of venomous snakes in the jungle, but they are very seldom seen. They take care *not* to be seen and they take care to get away from your vicinity as fast as they can. I have slept on the ground in the jungle countless times. Never yet has a snake crawled over me.

All of the six snakes above mentioned, with the exception of the coral snake, have exceptionally long, sharp fangs. I agree with all the Indians and bush Negroes in their theory that this is what makes them particularly dangerous. A short-fanged snake may carry just as much poison but cannot hold on to the person or animal it has struck long enough for much of the poison to enter the wound. The long-fanged snake can hold on and pump more poison, literally loading its victim with its venom.

Many scientists, including Dr Clarke, of Gorgas Memorial Hospital, at Ciudad Panamá, have asserted that the hog-nose viper, a small dark brown snake which never exceeds a length of two feet, is one of the most poisonous and dangerous of serpents. I have seen quite a number of Cuna Indians who have been bitten by hog-nose vipers. If bitten on the foot or ankle, as is usually the case, the leg swells to the knee and becomes inflamed, and the victim suffers from terrible headaches. Their treatment is to cut a cross into the flesh at the point where

## Jungle Jim

the fangs entered and to cauterize the wound, then to pack a poultice of medicinal leaves around the leg. I have never yet heard of an Indian dying from the bite. In two days they are up from their hammocks and have returned to their hunts in the jungle.

I go again into the jungle and, as always, I find it friendly. If ever I am lost upon its trails I shall wait serenely to hear the voice of its good Samaritan, the *monteador*. The word for jungle is *el monte*, "the mountain," and *monteador* means literally "mountaineer" or "jungle dweller." But the English word for this friend of the lost is "pathfinder." It is a small dark brown bird with a light brown or cream-colored throat. His loud whistle is like that of a person whistling to another. When he sees a traveler who has wandered off the trail he follows him, whistling continually. Indians will hear and follow this excited whistling and bring back the lost.



## CHAPTER XVI

### The Tapir

**T**HE TAPIR moved through the darkness confidently. The jungle belonged to him. He was lord of the night. A sleeping emperor boa, fifteen feet long and as thick as a man's body, felt the trembling of the ground as the tapir moved nearer. The boa stirred himself, hearing without ears, drowsily uncoiled and glided away into deeper underbrush. He, the emperor, relinquished his bedchamber to the tapir's ponderous weight. But the tapir moved on, seeking marshland for his nocturnal feeding. All things living fled aside as he came slowly on.

Daybreak came at last, and the east grayed. Suddenly the full sun brightened a million treetops. The awakened monkeys, moving from branch to branch and swinging from vine to vine, looked down and saw the tapir beneath them, full fed, stolidly climbing the slopes leading to the higher ground where he meant to sleep through the day's heat. They looked down and chattered curses at him in futile envy of his imperial calm. The tapir did not so much as look at them. "Cow!" they screamed at him from

## Jungle Jim

their safe height above him. "Cow! Cow! Stupid, fat cow!" The tapir smiled sourly, trotting on, smashing his way through the undergrowth.

He was not as tall as a cow, that is true. His stubby legs, ridiculously short, brought him close to the ground. But his body was as big, as compact, as heavy and as terrible as that of a young bull. He looked half pony, half pig. He weighed six hundred pounds. His hide, dark gray, covered with a thin bristle, was like a sheet of flexible iron an inch thick. Nothing in the jungle could pierce it. His long snout, drooping over his lower lip, gave him an expression of arrogance and disdain. He feared nothing. Well could he be disdainful. All things gave way before him.

The tapir, advancing serenely through his jungle domain, came then to a stream which here had widened out upon a stretch of level ground into a shallow pool before it resumed its tumbling down the rocky hillside. He plunged into it and swam. When he was halfway across he saw that on the farther bank a jaguar was crouched.

The tapir swam straight ahead, his snout lifted in air.

The jaguar, having come to the water's edge to drink, lifted his dripping jowls from the water and gave a snarl of resentment. If he had encountered the tapir in the woods he would have turned aside to give it passage but here, he thought, he was being unwarrantably interrupted. The long fangs of the great spotted cat gleamed as he opened his mouth to hiss defiance.

The swimming tapir came straight on, felt the ground under his feet, and his dripping barrel rose from the water, face to face with the jaguar. With lifted snout he whistled shrilly, an order to the giant cat to get out of his way.

## The Tapir

Like lightning the jaguar struck with a forearm of steel. His claws gashed the tapir's snout. The tapir flung his huge bulk at him. The impact knocked the jaguar over, half stunned, the tapir on top.

A scream of rage and pain came from the jaguar as he fell with the crushing weight upon him. Pinned to the ground, he struck with both paws desperately, then felt the weight lighten and saw the tapir's body hurl itself into the air. He tried to writhe away, but the forelegs of the tapir dropped upon him like pile drivers.

They fought on. The tapir's snout and shoulders were seamed with gashes from the terrible claws, but he was blind to his wounds. Shaking with fury, the tapir trampled upon the writhing cat again and again with hoofs like iron. The jaguar's hind legs were broken, and he could no longer stand or escape but he still struck until the murderous hoofs broke his shoulder and he lay helpless. The tapir hurled himself in air once more and came down with all four hoofs stiffly out beneath. The jaguar quivered and lay still. The tapir stirred the silent body with his snout. Then, contemptuously, he turned and trotted on.

Silence settled over the jungle.

The tapir, climbing the hillside, came to a ledge of dry earth mottled with shadow and sunlight. Here, a huge lump upon the ground, like a boulder in whose heart burned fire, he slept. What had he to fear?\*

The tapir's enemies were a man, a woman and their children, and the only reason they were his enemies was their hunger.

The man was as much a native of the jungle as the

\*I witnessed this fight between tapir and jaguar in a Honduran jungle, shot the dying jaguar to put it out of its agony and permitted the tapir to escape, victorious.

## Jungle Jim

tapir himself. He and his ancestors since the beginning of time had lived in the jungle. His skin was a dark reddish brown, beautiful to see, and his movements were swift and beautiful, like those of a jungle animal. He was of the great Choco tribe, and his name was Manua.

I entered the jungle and, following the trail through the forest which parallels the course of the Sabalo River, came to the place where this man lives. With me were two Americans, sportsmen, whom I had consented to guide upon a hunting trip.

As we approached we saw the thatched roofs, cone shaped, of the scattered huts. There were forty or fifty of them, not huddled close together, but strung out irregularly along half a mile of the riverbank which here sloped down sharply to the rushing stream. All of these huts were built upon stilts, their floors six or eight feet above the ground. This is to prevent a nocturnal intrusion by a snake or four-footed night prowler coming from the jungle which shuts the clearing in on all sides.

We made our way between the huts. Short, coppery-skinned men, naked except for a strip of red cloth around their loins, women, wearing only a wrapping of cloth from waist to knee and wholly naked youngsters stared at us with shy smiles as we passed. The Chocos are a friendly people but are rarely talkative.

We came to the hut of the old chief, Bigua, and found him sitting upon a low stool of carved mahogany placed upon the grass outside his house, enjoying the warmth of the early-morning sun upon his naked shoulders. A smile lit up his wrinkled face, and he motioned us to take seats on other stools beside him. He was a man of about sixty, powerfully built, heavy of paunch. We smoked peacefully, saying little. These things cannot be hurried.

## The Tapir

He said at last in the blurred Spanish mastered by the Chocos:

"The one who walks by himself has been seen. El Dantor."

I translated to my companions: "A tapir has been seen." Then, to Bigua: "Was this yesterday?"

"The sun has risen five times since then."

"Who shall find him? Is he not gone?"

"The place of his feeding is known."

"These, my friends, have never beheld any tapir," I remarked casually.

Bigua's old eyes appraised my companions. "They are wise," he said dryly. "Who would seek out Death to gaze at him?"

I nodded. "Do you not hunt El Dantor?" I asked.

The old man pointed at his shrunken leg muscles and his swollen girth. "Bigua hunts no more," he said. "It is the young, the swift, the strong, who gladly run here and there through the forest, looking this way and that for the place where Death hides himself."

"But some will go? Some will seek for El Dantor?" I persisted.

The old man smiled and got to his feet. "It is for them to say," he grunted. "I call the assembly."

He moved, slowly and with dignity, and passed between the corner posts of his hut into the area shaded by the elevated floor of the dwelling. From the rafters supporting the bamboo floor above his head hung a rounded section of log, hollowed out, with deerskin stretched tightly over its ends. He lifted it to the ground, picked up the heavy wooden mallet hanging beside it and struck upon the drumhead, three slow, booming notes that resounded through the forest.

## Jungle Jim

We saw the people of the forest stop as if at the sound of a gun. Those who walked stopped in their tracks. Seated men scrambled to their feet. Women, lifting a cooking pot to place it upon the fire, set the pot hastily down again. Running children checked themselves in mid-stride.

The old chief replaced the drum and beckoned to us. "We go to the council," he said.

We followed him along the beaten paths to the council house. It was the largest house in the village, sixty or eighty feet square, and was the only house built on the ground instead of on stilts. Upon the trodden earthen floor were ranged long benches of hewn logs. At one end were benches for the chief, Bigua, and the older men of the tribe. Hurrying toward this house came the people of the village, having dropped whatever they were doing at the sound of the *tambour*. The house was filled—there were more than two hundred there. They took their seats on the long benches quietly. Many gave me a friendly smile as they passed, for all knew me.

The old chief spoke, explained that the meeting had been called to weigh the hunting of El Dantor, the tapir reported to have been seen within five days. If they chose to go Señor Jim and these two *capitanos* who had come with him, mighty hunters, would march with them and place them under the protection of their guns. His gesture, inviting the opinion of all, ended his words. He resumed his seat, impassive.

Two young men spoke in turn. One was Manua; Pipi was the other. Manua, with his brawny arms folded across his deep chest, spoke of the tapir. It was he, Manua, who had seen El Dantor. They had come face to face. It was Manua who stepped aside. He was not

## The Tapir

ashamed. What could he do? But now the Thing should be made meat. There would be meat for all. "It is good," he concluded, and Pipi followed. No man could be injured by El Dantor's fury, he pointed out. The white men's rifles were a wall of safety. "To hunt El Dantor this day is a good thing," he said, smiling.

There was an immediate murmur of assent, and the men streamed from the council house. Some hurried to their homes and returned with their spears, shafts twelve feet in length made of *chonta* wood, the tough and springy wood of the black palm, and with spearheads ground from a two-foot length of iron, sharpened keen and lashed to the shaft with thongs of rawhide. Every man already had with him the machete, the heavy knife, two feet in length, which is his inseparable companion and which he carries to use in cutting a path through the deep jungle. A dozen men and twice that number of boys and youths made up the company. Manua, to whom Bigua had delegated the command, walked up and down inspecting them, ordered some small boys out of the ranks and gave the order to march. Pipi, who had discovered the tapir's tracks the day before, led the way.

The sun was well up now. Shafts of sunlight pierced the green forest roof and shone on the naked brown shoulders of the line of men winding ahead of us along the leafy path. A thousand years ago . . . two thousand years ago . . . five thousand years ago . . . the same leafy trail, the same naked red-brown men. I watched them leave their huts to hunt a prehistoric beast. He slept, and we would find him.

For an hour or more we followed the trail leading along the banks of the Sabalo. We came to a creek flowing into the river through a gash of steeply sided ravines.

## Jungle Jim

Here Manua checked us and rearranged the order of our procession. We should soon be in the terrain where the tapir had been feeding. Manua and Pipi singled out five or six of their men, expert trackers, and with them took the march again. My two companions and I, with our rifles, followed next; the rest straggled at our heels.

We were climbing gradually as we advanced, the terrain rising toward the foothills of the Darien *sierra*. To find the tapir it was necessary to climb, for, although he comes down to the river marshes to feed, he leaves the lowlands for high ground when he has finished feeding. Here the hills sloped down on either side, making the valley of the creek very narrow. Our advance guard of trackers worked their way through the underbrush close to the creek, on the outlook for footprints left by the tapir during the preceding night: prints in the mud as big as a small dinner plate, the forefoot showing four toes, the hind foot three. From the swampy ground where he had fed during the night these tracks would lead us up to the plateau, thick with trees and undergrowth, where he would now be sleeping. He would not like to be awakened.

We had been working our way forward for another hour or two when Manua, in the lead, discovered the first footprints. The word was passed back to the line of beaters behind us, and they spread out and squatted down to wait while we went ahead with our guns. They were to wait there for an hour and then follow us.

We scrambled higher up the hillside and on the ridge overlooking the valley, where the vegetation was less dense, we moved forward, paralleling the stream's course below us. We made as little noise as possible, and our rifles were held ready. We were not anxious to see him at this



## The Tapir

moment—the undergrowth was still too heavy to permit a clear shot at him from a safe distance. We were merely trying to encircle him, to get him between ourselves and the beaters waiting in the rear.

At last we came to a spot which suited our purpose: a comparatively clear space in the forest, a glade, perhaps a hundred yards in diameter, whose carpet of ferns and shrubbery was not too high or thick to permit the animal to be seen as he moved.

At the upper end of this glade we took our positions. Manua warned each one of us to stand near a tree festooned with hanging vines so that if our shots missed we would be able to swing ourselves out of the reach of the charging tapir.

The Indians themselves intended to use lassos. The jungle itself provided the ropes. Clambering like a monkey, an Indian selected two young vines from among the tangle of *bejuca* vines and lopped off a thirty-foot length from each. A running noose was made at the end of each. At the tapir's charge, an Indian would toss a loop over him from each side, hoping to check his rush until their companions could run in upon the animal with spear and machete. When all was ready two of the Indians slipped back to tell the beaters where we had stationed ourselves.

We waited then while the constant stir and movement of the lesser life of the jungle went on around us. Flocks of parakeets drifted through the tall branches, macaws and parrots screamed, companies of the *cara blanca*, the white-faced monkey, looked down upon us from the lofty treetops. An hour went by. It was high noon in the green jungle.

Off in the distance a branch snapped. There, a little to the left! Soon we caught a glimpse of one cautiously ad-

## Jungle Jim

vancing Indian, then another, two hundred yards away, slowly drawing closer toward us. The long line of beaters was strung out in a half circle. Somewhere in that half circle was the tapir. Roused from his sleep, he had been trying peacefully to move away from these disturbers. They were not near enough to him to give him acute concern. Surely, he thought, if he can only get a little deeper into the forest they will pass him by.

But they kept on coming closer. He turned a little to the left. There was a man there. He turned to the right. No, there, too, was someone. He was getting a little puzzled, a little annoyed. But, he thought, the hillside ahead of him was still empty of these enemies. He could shake off these exasperating followers by going straight ahead.

We could see him now. He had trotted out into the glade. What a chunky brute he was! His back would have reached no higher than a man's waist, but his body was a dark gray barrel, big as that of a pony. Topping those short legs were six hundred pounds of solid muscle, compact as a cannon ball. He came forward, slowly and heavily. His short round ears twitched nervously at the sounds behind him. We, with lifted rifles, stepped out into his view, ahead of him. He was only seventy yards away.

He stopped short at sight of us. What went through his mind at that moment is beyond guessing. Certain it was that he went mad. It might have been blind panic or it might have been blind rage. But I'm sure it wasn't fear. A frightened animal would dash this way and that in trying to escape.

But not the tapir. He went berserk. Up went that wiggly little tail of his, standing straight as a ramrod, defiant, dauntless. Up went his ponderous head, the heavy snout held high in air. The shrill whistle he blew was a

## The Tapir

cry of rage, defiance and warning, all in one. It was followed instantly by his charge. Six hundred pounds of concentrated fury were hurtling straight at us.

Nothing could have turned him aside from that straight line. There were bushes in his path, but he did not swerve around them. They went down under his rush. On he came.

The Indians swinging their lassos were dancing with eagerness. The spearmen edged forward, tense, poised like runners waiting for the signal. But Pipi's warning shout held them back. "Wait a moment! *¡Espera un momento!* Give the señors a chance to shoot!"

As I pressed the trigger, seeing only that galloping dark shape hurtling toward us, a memory flashed through my mind. I saw, as once I had seen in reality, a tapir fighting with a jaguar. I saw the jaguar squirming, prostrate and helpless, under the murderous fury of the Thing that had struck him down. The vision vanished as the rifle-shot rang out. And now I saw only the tapir—coming on. I had missed him. Another shot rang out and then another. The bullets struck him, and he was thirty feet from us. They struck him, but he kept on coming. Dying, he kept on coming. What stouter heart is there in all the jungle? Dead, he fell, and at our very feet.

The Indians were upon him in a bound, stabbing as he fell.

The beaters came running up. "*Eeepah! Eeepah! E-e-e-pah! O-o-o-i-e-e-ee!*" they shouted as they saw the fallen brute. The forest rang with their exultant shouting. They swarmed about him with their machetes. Manua and Pipi bid them stand aside, and one man, an old man skilled at this, was called to superintend what followed. His heavy-bladed machete, honed with a stone to razor sharpness, cut through the hide and stripped it off. From loins,

## Jungle Jim

hams and shoulders huge collops of meat were chopped out. These he pierced with holes, and the meat, enough for the whole village, was lashed with *bejuca* vines to carrying poles which were quickly cut from saplings.

We left them to finish this job and started back for the village. Over our heads the hordes of black howler monkeys had gathered and were making the jungle echo with their excited chorus. What better funeral chant could the dead emperor have had?

I was glad that the back trail, clearly marked now and descending, was easier. We reached Bigua's palm-thatched house within two hours, and there we took a siesta for an hour, waiting for the hunters to arrive. When the long line of exultant men came into sight the whole village turned out to welcome them and to gloat over the slabs of meat that weighted the carrying poles.

When they had quieted a little I distributed the presents which my friends and I had brought with us from Ciudad Panamá's market place, the little packages of glass beads, the glittering bracelets and the necklaces and the earrings. Most we gave to the leaders of the hunt but to every man and boy who took part in it we gave a silver dime or two. The reward made every face beam with delight. Not one of those silver pieces would be spent; each one would be promptly bored through and strung upon a necklace, to be worn as its central ornament.

Sunlight still filtered through the green roof above us, and there would be time, we thought, to march the distance to the Sambu River where a boat awaited us before darkness hid the trail. But we were not permitted to walk; the old chief insisted that his village was so much in our debt that we must be taken by canoe, to ride in comfort down the narrow Sabalo River to its juncture with the

## The Tapir

Sambu. We took our places in the chief's own piragua and shot downstream, and a dozen other canoes followed in our wake, a guard of honor. The rapid stream foamed over its rocks, running like a millrace. So narrow was it that at one point where a giant tree had fallen the trunk bridged the river from bank to bank. We ducked our heads as the piragua shot under it. We ran the rapids at breath-taking speed. To tramp that distance on the jungle trail had taken us two hours; we came down in thirty minutes.

On the broad Sambu the sun was still bright. But I remembered, for a moment, the dark glade where the stripped bones of an emperor were lying.



•

## PART II

•





## CHAPTER XVII

### Young Mr Goodvalley

**T**HE PLACE where I first met him was on the shore of a shallow bay on the north coast of the isthmus. I was alone on a fishing trip. That part of the coast was inhabited only by a few natives. I was so tanned by the sun that my skin was as dark red-brown as theirs. We got along well together.

One day, standing on that lonely beach, I looked out over the sea and rubbed my eyes in astonishment. Two sailing vessels, high of stern, square of sail, were coming into the bay from the eastward. They dropped anchor. Bearded men—none of the natives was bearded—showed their heads over the high wooden bulwarks. They wore curious head coverings which, as I learned later, were of steel and were called helmets. They were meant to turn the blow of a sword.

I launched my dugout canoe at once and paddled out to meet them. They were friendly. They spoke a language that I had learned in Honduras, and so I was able to un-

## Jungle Jim

derstand them, though, to tell the truth, they pronounced their words with something of an ancient flavor puzzling to my ears. The first question they asked was about the land. Apparently they hadn't the slightest idea where they were.

"Is not this India?" they said.

"No, this is Panama," I answered. "You're a long way from India."

No matter what I said, I couldn't convince them that they were wrong. They were sure it was India. I began to believe that I had paddled straight into the hands of two shiploads of lunatics, although I must admit that they were sane enough in all other respects. They were just weak on this one point—geography. For their part, they seemed to think *I* was loony on geography. Some of them laughed out loud at what I said, others looked at me pityingly. So pretty soon I gave up trying to set them straight. They were sure they had reached the waters of the Indian Ocean, and I figured that it would be a waste of time to try to convince them they were still in the Atlantic. "Have it your way," I said. "Okay, this is India, and the people who live here are Indians." What else could I say? They had swords two yards long.

They told me that they had sailed here from Spain but had stopped at an island they called Hispaniola, or "Little Spain," which, from their description, must have been Haiti. The chief settlement on the island, they said, was called Santo Domingo, and the governor was a Spaniard named Cristóbal Colon.

Cristóbal Colon, they told me, had cruised along this very coast, where we now were, three years before this. It was news to me. I hadn't seen or heard of him. With him on that voyage had been an experienced mariner

## Young Mr Goodvalley

named Juan de la Cosa. De la Cosa was now here, acting as sailing master for the two vessels. He and his employer, the owner of the two little ships, a gentleman named Roderigo de Bastides, asked me a lot of questions. De la Cosa told me that this little bay in which the ships were anchored had been named Porto de Bastimentos, or "Port of Provisions," by Cristóbal Colon because at that time the Indians had supplied them with plenty of provisions. I said I was sorry, but they needn't expect to get any now, because the village had been abandoned. The Indians had cleared out.

I talked to a good many of the men on board that day, but the one I liked best was a young fellow named Vasco Nuñez.

He was a swell lad, if I ever saw one. He was about twenty-five years old, just about my own age. This voyage was the first he had ever made away from Spain, so the older and more experienced men of the company rated him as of no consequence at all. He showed his good sense by keeping his trap shut when they kidded him. They were a tough, hard-boiled lot, those older men. But he was no sissy himself. He was mighty well built, just about my height and quick on his feet as a cat. He took no guff from anybody. He was fair haired and he had grown a little fuzzy beard during the long voyage from Spain—they had left Spain in October the year before—and the beard had come out sort of red instead of blond. I was growing a beard, too, at that time, and it was red at the tip, like his. So we got a laugh out of it, comparing them, and that was what made us take to each other from the first. We talked a lot together during the two days Bastides' ships stayed in the bay.

Another thing that made me smile was the way this

## Jungle Jim

young fellow pronounced his own name, Vasco. He pronounced it "Bosco," like some Portuguese do. He came from a part of Spain that isn't far from Portugal, so maybe that was natural. He had been born in a little place called Xeres, he told me, but he was always careful to give the village its full name, Xeres de los Caballeros. "Xeres of the Knights on Horseback." It was funny the way he used to roll that out. Prouder than a grandee, he was.

And it was the same way about the rest of his name, Balboa. He got that, he explained to me, from the name of his family's house, or hacienda, or whatever it was, back home. By rights, I think, the name of the place should have been "Valle-Buena," which means "Good Valley." But he pronounced it the Portuguese way, too, so that it sounded like Balboa. He liked to stick it onto his name, like a handle—not just plain Nuñez, but always Nuñez de Balboa. So, just to kid him, I got to calling him "Mr Goodvalley" and "Bosco" instead of Vasco. Bosco Goodvalley!

I sort of figured from what he told me that, no matter how proud Bosco was, his father didn't have any too much money. Anyway, when Bosco was about sixteen and had grown to be a good, husky kid old man Goodvalley sent him away from home to get a start for himself in a coast town named Moguer, about a hundred miles south of Xeres. The old man sort of farmed him out to the Mr Big of that town, a grandee named Don Puerto Carrero, lord of Moguer, to get his schooling. Of course, the only schooling Bosco got in the Don's house was the training that every young lad of good Spanish family was given: how to ride a horse, how to handle a spear and how to use a sword. But in those things the old don trained him

## Young Mr Goodvalley

well. Bosco was a wonder at swordplay. He's got a wrist like steel.

Well, two or three miles from this town of Moguer in southwestern Spain, Bosco told me, there is a fishing village named Palos. It's on a river called the Tinto, opening into the Atlantic, and it's always full of fishermen and sailors. And Bosco had hardly got settled in the don's house when he heard about Palos and the three little ships.

The commander of these three ships was Cristóbal Colon, the same man who was now the governor of Santo Domingo and Hispaniola. But at that time everybody in Spain who had heard about him at all thought that Colon was just plain crazy. He had got these three ships together to make a voyage that everybody was sure couldn't be made. Colon was insisting that if you should sail west across the Atlantic you would come to India, whereas everyone else knew that the only way to get to India was by heading east, overland, or by going around Africa. Colon's idea was so fantastic that Bosco used to borrow one of Don Puerto Carrero's horses once in a while and ride over to Palos just to see them working on the three little ships. Bosco said that this was in July. He used to see old Cristóbal Colon almost every day that month hurrying around and urging the ship carpenters and the riggers to move faster, he was so eager to get started on the voyage before somebody put him in the crazy house.

"Did you ever talk to him?" I asked Vasco.

"*Caramba*, no!" said Bosco. "I was not yet a man."

That's a fact—he was then hardly seventeen. But, being a kid, he was tremendously excited about it all. On the morning of the third of that August, he told me, he got up and sneaked out of Don Puerto Carrero's house

## Jungle Jim

long before daylight to go over to Palos and see the three ships set sail. He saw old Cristóbal Colon go on board. He saw the women of Palos, weeping and wailing, throw their arms around the necks of the sailors and soldiers who were going on the insane voyage and who would never, the women were sure, return. He heard the deck officers and the bos'ns shout their orders and he saw the brown sails spread and fill and he watched the three little vessels slowly disappear from sight—into the unknown.

Well, for more than seven months nothing was heard from them—not one word. It was decided that they had been lost. But in March all three ships suddenly reappeared, and everybody in Palos and Moguer went crazy. Vasco Nuñez, like everyone else, hung around the ships and the wine shops all day long just to be sure that he didn't miss a single scrap of news and he gazed at the returned adventurers in awe. They had actually got to India! Vasco himself saw the nine Indians they had brought back with them to prove they had been there.

Right then and there, Bosco told me, he made up his mind that he himself would go to India someday, no matter what it cost him. Go he must!

But for eight long years he didn't succeed. Cristóbal Colon, who had now been given the title of "Admiral of the Ocean Seas," made repeated voyages, and others followed him, but Bosco could never get a berth on board. But at last he had managed to sign on as a member of Roderigo de Bastides' expedition and here, by the grace of God, he was!

What they all wanted to find was gold and pearls. They were fairly well satisfied with their luck so far because they had already accumulated a fair supply by trading with the natives along the coasts. But they wanted to get

## Young Mr Goodvalley

more and they bombarded me with questions as to where they could find any in this neighborhood. I had to tell them that there were no gold mines nor pearl fisheries in that vicinity. When they were finally convinced Bastides gave the order to hoist sail, and the two little ships left the bay. I was sorry to see Bosco Goodvalley go, for I had grown to like him immensely, and I never expected to see him again.

And ten years went by before I did see him again. I was on another fishing trip, again all by myself. Starting from that same little bay, the Porto de Bastimentos, I had gone leisurely along the coast in my *cayuco*, following the eastward and southward trending of the coast for two hundred miles or so, until I had come well within that broad arm of the sea which is now called, as the Spaniards called it then, the Gulf of Urabá. Here I landed at a prosperous village of Indians, situated on a riverbank upon high ground overlooking the valley, and was made welcome by the chief, Zemaco, a friend of mine.

The Gulf of Urabá is some thirty miles wide at this point, its northern end. On a clear day, from the hills above the village, its eastern shore may just faintly be seen. The gulf has the general shape of a horseshoe, open at the north. At the southern end, forty miles from where I was, is the principal mouth of the great Atrato River, then known as the Darien River. But between the main mouth of the river and Zemaco's village a dozen branches of the river also flowed into the sea, Zemaco's village being on the most northward of these branches which thus was sometimes called "the thirteenth mouth" of the Darien River.

I drifted on toward the southward after a few pleasant days at Zemaco's village and made my first camp when I

## Jungle Jim

was still only a few miles from the village. As I was cutting down some palm fronds to thatch a lean-to shelter for the night, for this was in the rainy season, I happened to glance eastward across the gulf and, to my surprise and consternation, I saw two sailing vessels, one a ship, the other a small caravel, rapidly approaching from the opposite shores of the gulf.

I was sure that they must be Spaniards and, from what I had already learned of their countrymen's attitude toward the Indians, would come as enemies. Launching my *cayuco*, I made my way back to the village as rapidly as I could drive the canoe and gave the alarm. Chief Zemaco at once sent the women, children and old men to hide in the jungle while he himself, with five hundred men, took up his station on the higher ground near the village and made ready to fight. I had scarcely time to conceal myself and my canoe in a narrow bayou screened by marsh grasses, when the two vessels arrived and dropped anchor.

Men poured from their decks into the boats which were at once lowered and came swiftly ashore. In no time at all nearly two hundred men had assembled upon the beach. All wore helmets of steel and breastplates of steel or leather jackets studded with steel. All were armed with long swords, and many carried muskets. My heart sank. I knew the Indians would never be able to resist such weapons as these.

When all had landed the leader of the band commanded all to kneel while he offered a prayer. In a loud voice he addressed himself to the Holy Virgin, imploring help in conquering the savages. He promised to build to her honor in this new land a church and a town and to name the church after the church in Seville, Santa Maria de la Antigua, where she had long been enshrined. A due



## Young Mr Goodvalley

portion of whatever treasure could be seized here, he promised, would be faithfully carried to Seville and presented to her church there. Then, commanding his men to rise, he demanded that they pledge their word that they would continue fighting to the last breath. A shout of assent arose, and at once the assault began.

Zemaco and his men rained a shower of arrows upon the Spaniards as they advanced. Some few were wounded, but in most cases the wooden points struck harmlessly against the steel armor of the invaders. In return the Spaniards lifted their muskets and fired a volley whose very sound struck terror in the hearts of the Indians. Several of the Indians fell, and when the Spaniards pressed forward with drawn swords Zemaco's men were hopelessly beaten and fled into the jungle, leaving dead and wounded behind them.

The victorious Spaniards then ran shouting through the deserted huts of the village, rejoicing when they found many ornaments fashioned of gold, as well as stores of grain and calabashes filled with a strong fermented liquor made from corn. But they were almost at once recalled by their leader to assemble at a central spot to give thanks for the victory and to hear his next orders. From my place of concealment I could see him dispatching his lieutenants to round up the stragglers and as one of these officers, with his squad, passed quite near me I was amazed to recognize in him the man whose friendship I had gained years before—*young Vasco Nuñez de Balboa*.

"Bosco!" I shouted, overjoyed, leaping ashore from my canoe. His companions, with their swords drawn, instantly surrounded me and seized me roughly, but Vasco, after staring at me for a moment, gave a cry of recognition and ordered them to release their hold.

## Jungle Jim

"*Caramba*, it is my friend Jaime!" he exclaimed. And he threw his arms around my shoulders and gave me a bearlike hug. His bearded face beamed.

Delightedly, he at once led me to the commander, Martin Fernandez de Enciso, and presented me. Enciso favored me with a suspicious stare and a gruff word of welcome. "I am too busy to talk to him now, Balboa," he growled. "Bring him to my headquarters later."

Enciso then addressed his sulkily assembled men who were impatient at the interruption of their looting.

"Let us give thanks to the Blessed Mary who has given us this victory," he cried in a loud voice. "In her honor we name this place Santa Maria de la Antigua de Darien! This shall be the capital city of the lands which His Majesty the King has given us, and, in the absence of our royal governor, Alonzo de Ojeda, all obedience shall be given to me, his lieutenant, as chief judge! I decree that all gold or other treasure taken or acquired from the natives of this land shall be yielded up to me, and to no other, from which the lawful part shall be sent to the king, the remainder held until the terms of division are fixed. Who disobeys this, my decree, shall be put to death. Hear and obey!"

An angry murmur swept through the crowd of armed men, and I saw black looks bent upon Enciso from every side. Bosco Goodvalley nudged me.

"Horse feathers!" he whispered scornfully. "He's just heading for trouble. Wait till later, and I'll tell you all about this baby!"

"But who is this royal governor, this Ojeda, that he spoke of?" I asked. "Has the king of Spain appointed him?"

"That's a long story," said Bosco, "but I'll try to make

## Young Mr Goodvalley

it short. I'll have to begin by telling you about Cristóbal Colon, the admiral. Poor old fellow, he died years ago, not long after we got back to Hispaniola just after you and I got acquainted there at Porto de Bastimentos. Well, about three years before that Colon had made a landing a hundred miles or so beyond Porto de Bastimentos at the mouth of a river he named the Belen. Coming back from there, he landed also at a small bay he called Porto Bello, then replenished his supplies at Porto de Bastimentos and went back to Hispaniola. A year after I saw you he sailed again to the river Belen and tried to found a settlement there which he called Veragua. It didn't succeed, and again he started home. Keeping close to shore after passing Porto Bello, he discovered a chain of small islands fringing the coast and named them *Las Barbas*, 'The Fringe.' Like our beards, Jim!"

"I know them well," I interrupted. "They're called the San Blas Islands."

"Well, Colon got back to Hispaniola," Bosco continued, "and died there, as I've told you, about five years ago. Last year a squabble began between two of our leading lights as to which one should take over the lands Colon had discovered. One is a young nobleman named Diego de Nicuesa, and the other is an older man, less wealthy but more experienced, named Alonzo de Ojeda, the man you have just heard mentioned.

"Well, young Nicuesa had been a member of the household of Don Enrique Enriques, the king's uncle, and he had served as an officer with the troops under the governor of Hispaniola. He got from King Ferdinand an appointment as governor of all the coasts lying to the westward of a north-and-south line dividing this Gulf of Urabá where we are now. His territory was to extend westward

## Jungle Jim

from that line to include the site of Veragua where Admiral Colon had tried to make a settlement and from there northward to Cape Gracias á Dios. He outfitted four large ships, enlisted seven hundred men, including an Italian sailor from Genoa named Gregorio, a man who had been with Admiral Colon on the voyage to Veragua, and set sail last year.

“But his rival, Alonzo de Ojeda, who had been granted by King Ferdinand all the territory east of the line drawn down the center of this Gulf of Urabá, got started from Hispaniola even sooner than Nicuesa. He had managed to enlist only three hundred men, as compared with Nicuesa’s seven hundred, but he arranged with a rich lawyer, Martin Fernandez de Enciso, to follow him with another ship. That’s Enciso, right there, the gentleman who is too busy to listen to you. Ojeda promised to make him chief judge of all his territory. I’ll tell you in a minute how I happen to be with him.

“Ojeda got away first, as I have said, and landed at a place on the mainland considerably east of here. He had with him the veteran navigator, Juan de la Cosa—remember him? He was with us at Porto de Bastimentos—and a young soldier whom I think a good deal of. His name is Francisco Pizarro. They landed and called the place Cartagena. But the Indians fought so fiercely that a third of Ojeda’s men were killed, including old Juan de la Cosa. It’s a pity—he was a brave old fellow!

“Then along came Nicuesa. He was generous enough to forget his quarrel with Ojeda and sent two hundred of his men to aid Ojeda’s men. The combined force attacked the Indian village by night. They killed men, women and children without mercy. Personally, I don’t believe in unnecessary slaughter. But that’s what hap-

## Young Mr Goodvalley

pened. Then they burned the huts, seized an immense amount of gold, divided it, and then Nicuesa sailed on, bound for Veragua. He hasn't been heard of since."

"I think I can tell you something about him," I interrupted. "At least, I can tell you what I heard from the Indians north of here. If Nicuesa ever got to Veragua he didn't stay there long, for the Indians at Porto de Bastimentos, where you and I met, told me that about one hundred of your countrymen landed there not long ago and have built a log stockade there. The Indians told me that all of them seem to be starving. The Indians fled into the jungle as soon as the men landed and haven't dared go near them. I steered clear of them myself. I didn't want to get mixed up with them. I shouldn't wonder if they aren't Nicuesa and his men."

"A hundred men left out of seven hundred!" exclaimed Bosco, his eyes widening. "I don't believe we had better say anything to Enciso about this just now. I've got an idea I'd like to think over for a while."

## CHAPTER XVIII

### Bosco Tells a Tale

**B**OSCO and I got ourselves a quiet spot that night where the yells of the soldiers filling themselves up with the corn whisky didn't disturb us, and he told me all that had happened to him during the past ten years since I had last seen him at that little bay.

"We had the damnedest time after we sailed away from there," he began, "that you can imagine. Those two caravels of Bastides' got so leaky that it's a wonder they didn't sink under us. Their planks had got bored so full of holes by these salt-water worms that we had to keep pumping out water day and night. We sailed along the coast for a couple of hundred miles and got as far as this village. It looked pretty good to us, but we didn't dare stop here. We didn't have enough men to put up a fight and we were afraid we couldn't get our boats patched up here. We thought we had better head for home, for Hispaniola, and come back later with better ships and more men. As a matter of fact, I'm the one who is responsible

## Bosco Tells a Tale

for our coming here now, because I remembered this place. But that's getting ahead of my story. I'll come back to that later.

"We sailed for Hispaniola and, believe me, we all thought we would sink before we got there. We barely managed to get to a small island off the coast of Hispaniola in time to patch the hulls up a little. We started on again, got hit by one hurricane after another, and this time the caravels couldn't stand the pounding any longer. We were lucky to get close enough to the mainland of Hispaniola to get ashore and save the chests of gold and pearls we had collected, but the two caravels sank just as we left them. We had to stagger all the rest of the way to San Domingo, carrying those chests along the beach and through forests and swamps until we were no better than sun-blackened skeletons. It was awful!

"And when we got to San Domingo poor Bastides was immediately arrested! The admiral, Cristóbal Colon, was off on his last voyage, as I've told you. Bobadilla, who had taken his place as governor, claimed that Bastides had been trading illegally with the Indians of Hispaniola. I'd like to know how else we could have got a bite to eat! The governor was all for hanging Bastides right then and there but finally consented to take him back to Spain as a prisoner for trial in Spain. Bobadilla himself was going back to Spain with a fleet. But, as luck would have it, the fleet ran into a storm, and the only vessel that managed to reach Cádiz was the one on which Bastides had been placed! With Bobadilla drowned, Bastides was set free and retired rich, even after handing over to the king a quarter of the treasure he had brought home.

"As for me, I had no luck at all. I had had enough of voyaging, I thought. I tried to run a plantation for a while

## Jungle Jim

at a settlement named Salvatierra, not so far from San Domingo, but I couldn't seem to make a go of it. My share of the treasure collected on the voyage with Bastides didn't amount to much. When that was gone I commenced to borrow money and got deeper and deeper into debt. Year after year went by, and I was getting desperate. I would soon be thirty-five years old—an old man! I was ready to grab at any chance that offered.

“Last year those two expeditions sailed from San Domingo, but I didn't succeed in signing on with either of them, neither the one headed by Ojeda nor the other by Nicuesa. I felt bluer than indigo. Then I got word that this lawyer, Enciso, was outfitting a ship at his own expense and was going to join Ojeda. I have never liked him much but I swallowed my pride and offered my services. He smiled an oily smile and said he would be glad to take me along, but hadn't I heard the news? He said that he had been informed that nobody who was in debt would be allowed to go on board. Their creditors were watching, he said, and would arrest any debtor who tried to slip away.

“I had to think quick. I told him that in that case I might be prevented from going but, at any rate, I'd like to sell him a couple of casks of beef from my farm. He agreed to take them, and I went home and ordered my foreman to send three casks to the ship and to tell Enciso that the third cask was sent to him with my compliments.

“When the ship got well out to sea I knocked the head out of the third cask and stepped out. Enciso was wild. He hates to be outsmarted. ‘Damn you, Balboa,’ he said, ‘I'll put you ashore on the first uninhabited reef we come to!’ But I reminded him that he had promised that he would take me along if I could get past my creditors, and



## Bosco Tells a Tale

he finally calmed down. I had plenty of friends on board, and he knew better than to start a ruckus.

“The first landing we made after sailing southwest for several days was a day’s sail west from the mouth of a great river which I remembered entering when I was with Bastides ten years ago. We called it the Magdalena. We didn’t know it, but this was the same spot at which Ojeda had landed a few months before and, with the help of Nicuesa, who had followed him, had slaughtered so many of the natives. Enciso sent two boat crews ashore to bring back fresh water. One of the boats needed repairing which could be done more handily on shore, so we sent the water casks back to the ship by the other boat, and a few of us stayed to help the carpenter repair the damaged one. The job took three days. Every day we could see Indians lurking behind trees and watching us from a safe distance, all carrying bows and spears, but, as they didn’t attack us, we merely kept up a sharp watch and went on with the work on the boat. On the third day, just as the job was finished, another chap and I took water buckets and went to get them filled at a spring we had discovered on the edge of the forest. Just as we got there a dozen Indians jumped out of the bushes and surrounded us, with their arrows pointed at our hearts. They didn’t shoot, but things certainly didn’t look good.

“I told the man with me that if we tried to run we were goners. I had picked up a few Indian words on my previous landing here and, believe me, I talked to them now for all I was worth. The Indians looked surprised and began to jabber, too, and pretty soon they lowered their bows and began to listen to reason. I told them we hadn’t any intention whatever of making a settlement there, we were perfectly friendly, had come ashore only to fix the

## Jungle Jim

boat and get fresh water and were going to sail on immediately. But I wound up by throwing in a few words to the effect that if they did harm us there would be a revenge taken that they would never forget. While we were talking the rest of our boat crew had signaled to the ship and pretty soon another boat was lowered, loaded with men and muskets and began pulling toward us at top speed.

"I was worried to death for fear somebody in the boat would fire a shot and it would be all off with us. So as soon as they got within hailing distance I yelled to them that these Indians were friendly and not to fire. I told a half-dozen of them to come forward without any weapons, with their hands raised, and as soon as the Indians saw this they dropped their bows and spears, and in about five minutes everything was as jolly as a *fiesta*.

"We stayed at anchor for another day or two and traded with them for fresh fruits and vegetables and had no trouble at all. Of course, we were all anxious to get gold, but the Indians here insisted that they didn't have any at all. But, they said, only seventy-five miles or so farther south along the coast there was a province which was mountainous and was so rich in gold that during the rainy seasons the gold was washed down by the floods in such quantities that the natives collected it by merely stretching nets across the streams. The name of this country, they said, was Sinú.

"They went on to say that the custom of the tribes in that country was to place in the burial mounds of their dead all the gold ornaments and precious stones which the dead had possessed in life."

I interrupted Vasco Nuñez at this point. "That is true. It is the custom with some tribes in these parts," I said. "I myself have seen ancient graves dug up and the golden



*At the mouth of the Rio Tuira and Rio Congo, which lead to Pirri Mountain, the Peak in Darien.*



## Bosco Tells a Tale

bracelets and necklaces taken from them. The graves are called *huacas*, and the objects found in them are also known as *huacas*."

"I have never yet seen them," said Bosco. "But as soon as I translated the Indians' words to Enciso I saw his eyes gleam with avarice. He gave orders to prepare the ship in readiness to sail. At that moment we sighted a small vessel approaching from the southwest. Two hours later, when it came alongside, we saw that its occupants, numbering about thirty men, were in a terrible condition. They were gaunt, yellow, hollow eyed and croaked pitifully for water. Enciso, peering at them over our rail, recognized their leader and at once exploded into oaths.

"'What the devil does this mean, Pizarro?' he screamed. 'You sailed with Ojeda—what's become of him? Are you a crew of mutineers? What have you done with him? Answer me or I'll have your life!'

"The haggard leader, a young fellow, laughed at him bitterly. 'I know no more than you where Ojeda is,' he answered. 'All I know is that he sailed for San Domingo, from the settlement we had made, more than two months ago, promising to return with aid within fifty days, leaving me in command. See, here is the parchment! But he never returned, although we waited faithfully for the full fifty days, holding out against famine and the attacks of the hostile Indians. We set off for San Domingo, seventy of us, in this brigantine and one other. The other was lost at sea. We are all who are left.'

"Enciso was convinced but he was in no mood to return to Hispaniola. He announced that he intended to go on, stopping first in the territory of Sinú, where he intended to plunder the graves of their gold, and proceed to Ojeda's deserted settlement—it had been named San Sebastián,

## Jungle Jim

Pizarro said—there to await Ojeda's return. We fed Pizarro and his handful of men, hoisted anchor and sailed on. You'll like this fellow Frank Pizarro, by the way. You'll meet him tomorrow. He's a hard-boiled baby but a good man.

"We sailed down the coast for a couple of days and made our landing. A big crowd of Indians, hundreds of warriors, gathered on the beach as we came ashore. Enciso made them a speech through our interpreter. He's a lawyer, you know, and likes nothing better than to hear himself talk. He spouted on and on. He told them that this land belonged to the king of Spain and from now on they must obey him. When he got through at last they told him very politely that they themselves were kings and that if any other king tried to run them off they would cut off his head. Just to prove they meant what they said they showed us some human heads—horrible-looking things, Jim—that were shriveled to the size of coconuts and said they had taken them from other chiefs who had been rash enough to try to invade Sinú."

"I've seen dried-up heads like that, myself, in that same region," I interrupted. "You must have been in the Motilones' country."

"Maybe so," said Bosco. "All I know is that when these fellows refused to give in Enciso ordered an attack. We drove them back into the jungle, but in the fracas two of our men were hit with little darts from long blowguns. The darts were poisoned, and both the boys died in the most awful agony. It was horrible."

"Now I'm sure you were in the Motilones' country," I said. "They're wicked with those poisoned arrows. They're bad people to fool with."

"That's what we thought," said Bosco. "Enciso decided

## Bosco Tells a Tale

he would give up hunting for the graves full of gold and ordered us all back to the ship. Of course, he didn't admit the real reason. He said that we must get on to San Sebastián to be there when Ojeda got back from Hispaniola with reinforcements. Frankie Pizarro objected and said it would be a waste of time, but Enciso threatened again to put him in irons if he didn't obey orders. So on we sailed, still following the coast line westward.

"Just as we got around the point of land where San Sebastián was supposed to be—it's right opposite here, on the other side of this Gulf of Urabá—we ran into heavy weather, and our ship went aground on some shoals at the entrance of the harbor. She battered herself till she was full of water in no time. We would all have been drowned if it hadn't been for Pizarro who stood by and got us off on his brigantine. As it was, most of the ammunition and stores on the ship were lost, including the horses and brood mares and pigs we had brought along.

"When we got ashore we were no better off. The stockade and the huts that Ojeda and his men had built were in ruins, and we had managed to save hardly any provisions. We scraped along on such fruit and roots as we could find and shot a few wild pigs that came trotting along, runty little fellows no bigger than small shoats."

"*Saina*, we call 'em," I said. "They're not bad eating."

"I know, but we couldn't get enough of them," said Vasco Nuñez. "They would scatter into the jungle too fast. And, don't forget, there were a couple of hundred men to feed. The next thing that happened was that a foraging party that had been scouting around in the jungle came back, with three men wounded. They had been ambushed by Indians and wounded with arrows, and the Indians had then got away in the forest. That took

## Jungle Jim

the heart out of Enciso and a lot of the men. He had lost practically everything and nowhere had he found any of the treasures he had expected. The men were exhausted and angry and were on the edge of open mutiny.

“Things were in this dangerous condition when I decided we would certainly be better off if we could cross the gulf and get to this village where we are now. I remembered it from that other voyage of mine as being surrounded by abundant plantations, with plenty of grain in storage. I remembered that the savages here don’t use poisoned arrows and I reasoned that we ought to be able to defeat them without too much trouble. I painted the picture in the brightest colors, and pretty soon everybody was clamoring to go. Enciso yielded. We managed to float the ship off the shoal, towed it to shore, careened it and patched up the battered hull. And here we are! We’re bound to have better luck from now on. But, just between you and me, something’s got to be done about this fellow Enciso. You heard what he said this morning—issuing orders as if he were the king himself and threatening executions right and left. He’s planning to grab everything in sight, and no one else will be allowed to make a penny. Mark my words, he’s heading for trouble!”

We didn’t get much sleep that night. We tried to, but the yelling and whooping of the Spaniards getting drunk on Indian liquor woke us again and again.

Once when we were lying awake Bosco Goodvalley began to snicker. “What’s the matter?” I said.

“Oh,” said Bosco, “I was thinking how tired I am and wishing those fools would shut up and let us sleep, and that reminded me of some funny animals we saw in the woods over there across the gulf at San Sebastián. They



## Bosco Tells a Tale

were always sleepy—moved like they were in a dream. *Pericos ligeros*, we called 'em. Ever see one?"

"Sure," I said. "Those were sloths. Some of 'em are three toed and some are two toed but they're just as sleepy either way. You see 'em on this side of the gulf too."

## CHAPTER XIX

### Bosco Begins Climbing

**I**T DIDN'T TAKE but another day or two before things came to a head. I strolled around with Bosco and kept my trap shut and my ears open. We would stop and pass the time of day with any squad of soldiers we would run into and let them do the talking. No matter where we went, it was all the same story: they were sore at Enciso for the highhanded way he was running things. Bosco would just listen and chew on a blade of grass but just before we moved on to the next bunch he would say, sort of careless:

"What do you think of Enciso's idea that we have to turn over to him all the gold we can find?"

That touched 'em off every time. They were ready to cut Enciso's ears off. But they always wound up by shaking their heads and saying that, after all, it was a dangerous thing to mutiny. The king of Spain had a long arm, they said.

"Who said anything about mutiny?" Vasco would ask. Then we would stroll along to the next group.

## Bosco Begins Climbing

A day or two later Enciso called a dress parade of the whole outfit. He had written out a set of laws and rules and regulations for the settlement that was longer than your arm and now he ordered the public herald, a man with a voice like a bull, to read the whole list out loud to the assembly.

Bosco Nuñez edged up a little closer in front. "Just a minute, Don Enciso," he said very politely. "Have I your permission to ask a question first?"

Don Enciso glared at him. He had never liked Bosco very much from the day that Bosco came on board in the cask.

"Well, make it snappy," he said.

"It's only a question of jurisdiction," said Bosco very meekly. "Doubtless it is all very simple to you, with your profound knowledge of law, Don Enciso, but I can't get it through my thick head. I'll be grateful if you will explain it to me."

"Get to the point!" roared Enciso. "Don't stand there yammering!"

"It's only this," said Bosco Nuñez sweetly. "About these grants of territory that our royal master, the king of Spain, made to Don Diego de Nicuesa and to Don Alonzo de Ojeda. As I understand it, the king has drawn a north-and-south line through the middle of this Gulf of Urabá and assigned all the territory *west* of this line to Don Nicuesa and to Don Alonzo de Ojeda, who has appointed you his lieutenant governor, His Majesty assigned all the lands *east* of the center of this gulf. Is not that correct, Don Enciso?"

"Certainly!" bellowed Enciso, getting red in the face. "What of it?"

"A mere detail," said Bosco apologetically. "Just one

## Jungle Jim

more question: Is this coast where we are now standing east of the center of the gulf?"

Enciso turned pale. "Enough of this!" he began. "I——"

But whatever else he meant to say was drowned in the delighted roar of the assembled men. "West!" they belted, slapping each other on the back. "West! West! You're out of bounds, Enciso! Pull in your horns! Get down off your perch! Hooray for Vasco Nuñez! Vasco! We want Vasco!"

Enciso tried to make himself heard above the din, but it was no use. His authority was gone; he was a pricked balloon. It was as plain as a pikestaff to everybody—he had no more authority west of the line than any other man there. Bosco had beaten him at his own game, the law. The men clamored for him to speak.

But although Enciso had collapsed the problem of electing a successor wasn't so easy. Different groups rallied, each with its own favorite. One faction favored Bosco Balboa; another shouted for a *caballero* named Valdivia; a third yelled itself hoarse for a man named Zamudio. The arguments went on for hours. Finally it was agreed to elect all three, as a sort of governing board, but that didn't seem to work out well. There was a strong feeling that one man alone should be in supreme command. Many argued that, since the settlement was within the limits of the territory granted by the king to Don Nicuesa, it would be best to search for Nicuesa and beg him to appoint the man. But nobody (except Bosco and me) knew where Nicuesa was. The last person to have seen him was Frank Pizarro, who knew only that Nicuesa, after coming to Ojeda's rescue at Cartagena, had sailed for Veragua. But that had been months before. Veragua was hundreds

## Bosco Begins Climbing

of miles away; the vessels weren't fit for such a long voyage. The useless arguing went on and on, and some began to drift back to the support of Don Enciso, saying that he had better retain the command until further orders came from somewhere—nobody knew just where.

While the bickering was still going on two ships were suddenly seen sailing toward us from across the gulf. When they came to anchor we found they were commanded by a Captain Rodrigo de Colmenares who was bringing supplies for Nicuesa, thinking he was still at Veragua, but had sailed off the right course. He brought word that Alonzo de Ojeda had finally reached San Domingo with the remnant of his men after incredible hardships in Cuba where the vessel which had brought them from San Sebastián had been wrecked. Ojeda, Colmenares reported, had been unable to raise money for a return, and his whole project might be considered at an end. Colmenares had put in at the abandoned settlement of San Sebastián to pick up the little force left there in command of Pizarro but, finding only the ruins, had fortunately crossed the gulf and discovered us.

Colmenares emphatically agreed with Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, my friend Bosco, that this settlement of Santa Maria de la Antigua, which we had begun to call Antigua for short, should properly be considered as being in Nicuesa's territory. Since there seemed no hope of Ojeda's return, he advised all here to swear allegiance to Nicuesa and backed this up with an offer of provisions from his ships. Needless to say, the offer was eagerly accepted. He proposed to go on at once to continue his search for Nicuesa but agreed to take two of Enciso's lieutenants, Albitez and Corral, along with him to invite Nicuesa to Antigua to take over the rule.

## Jungle Jim

At this point I reminded Bosco of what I had been told by Indians whom I had met on my way here, near Porto de Bastimentos, that a number of Spaniards had landed there and built a log fort. It was possible, I said again, that these were Nicuesa's men. Bosco at once interrupted the conference going on with Colmenares to repeat what I had told him and to suggest that as I was familiar with that part of the coast and wished to get back to it I could pilot Colmenares to the place.

This suggestion was eagerly received, and, though I was sorry to say good-by to Bosco, I went on board Colmenares' ship. Cruising slowly to the northwest and keeping the numberless islands of the San Blas archipelago close on our left, we voyaged for a week before we at last rounded San Blas Point and reached the jungle-fringed bay. At an islet at the entrance to the bay we were hailed by some men in a small boat. They were a squad of Nicuesa's soldiers, searching the island for food for themselves and their starving companions. Tears of thankfulness trickled down their cheeks as they realized that help had come at last.

When we went ashore after anchoring close to the stockaded village the joy of Nicuesa and his famished men was delirious. Nicuesa himself was a curious little fellow, very short in stature, but said to be a wonderful swordsman, agile and quick. They told me that when in Spain it had been his job to preside at the banquets given by the king's uncle, and I can well believe it. He ordered a feast of rejoicing to be prepared immediately. Provisions of all sorts, together with casks of Spanish wine, were hurriedly brought ashore from the ships. Huge fires were built, and the ships' cooks worked like mad. Nicuesa was the life of the party. After a few gourds of wine he

## Bosco Begins Climbing

was doing Spanish dances all over the place. The feast went on till dark, and then Don Nicuesa fished a guitar out from somewhere and began to go to town. I don't know how he had managed to keep the strings from snapping, but he had. He could play it like nobody's business. He had a good voice and he seemed to know every Spanish ballad that had ever been written. He was a wonder at it, and we could have listened all night. Once he turned to me and said (and his voice was trembling): "Ah, I do not know how I could have endured this cursed country if I had not had this guitar for consolation!" He went on picking away at it, hunting around for hot chords, and pretty soon he hit on a couple that stirred something in me. Where had I heard those chords before? Or had I ever heard them? I began humming a little to myself. Words that were neither Spanish nor Indian, but some other language. "Baby, won't"—yes, that was it—"won't you please come home?" Don Nicuesa leaned closer to get the melody. He nodded. He followed along. I hummed a little louder:

*"Baby, won't you please come home?  
'Cause your daddy's all alone!  
I have tried in vain,  
Never more to call your name . . ."*

They all crowded around, listening. When I got to the end there was a general yell of applause. They wanted me to sing some more. But I shook my head. Somehow, I couldn't sing any more. I went and hunted me up a place to sleep and I felt mighty blue.

The next day there was a general conference between Nicuesa, Colmenares and the two delegates from Enciso, Albitez and Corral. Nicuesa described the sufferings he

## Jungle Jim

and his men had gone through in Veragua, told how men had died like flies, how he had lost his ships, how he had barely managed to get to this bay, which he had renamed *Nombre de Dios*, and what starvation they had suffered here. Of the hundred men he had arrived with only sixty were left. Albitez and Corral, backed up by Colmenares, then painted a glowing picture of the new settlement at Antigua and of their chances for acquiring gold from the surrounding country. Nicuesa brightened up as he listened. Antigua was in the territory granted to him by the king, and it was no more than his right to take charge there. He began right away to swell up and look important and to talk about how he would do this and do that as soon as he got to Antigua. He wanted to know if there had been any grabbing of gold from the natives by individuals who were keeping it to themselves; if there had been, he said, he would damn soon take it away from them and chop their ears off or else hang them. He would soon show them who was boss!

Albitez and Corral listened to all this, and I could see that they didn't like the sound of it any too well. Nicuesa was talking just like Enciso. Later that afternoon I happened to be with them while they were strolling around the settlement. We came to a wooden hut. In it was a prisoner, one of Nicuesa's own men, chained to the wall. We got to talking with him. Albitez told him Nicuesa was going to be the new governor of Antigua. The man laughed like a maniac. "Look at me!" he said. "I am Lope de Olano, who was Nicuesa's chief lieutenant. I rescued him from death—and this is what I get for it! And you're inviting him to be governor!"

The two delegates from Antigua were considerably worried. They decided they had best return to Antigua



## Bosco Begins Climbing

and, if possible, get there before Nicuesa could arrive. I changed my mind about going on to Porto Bello and decided to return with them. We sailed at once. The report which Albitez and Corral brought to Antigua concerning the character of Nicuesa alarmed everyone. It was perceived that he would be, in all probability, an even worse tyrant than Enciso. The entire community was plunged in gloom, and no one came forward with any suggestion as to a way of escape.

My friend Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, however, was not so easily discouraged. "Why be downhearted?" he demanded. "It's all perfectly simple. If you don't want Nicuesa here all you have to do is to be waiting for him at the beach and forbid him to land!"

Roars of approval greeted this suggestion. For a second time Bosco Balboa had scored. His stock was higher than ever. A lookout was promptly posted so that instant warning of the approach of Colmenares' ships, bringing Nicuesa, could be given, and a reception committee equipped with musket balls instead of orchids was formed. Only Enciso went about gloomily, wondering when his turn would come.

Nicuesa did not arrive for another week or two. When his ships were finally seen entering the river mouth the whole settlement rushed to arms and hurried down to the landing stage. Nicuesa, supposing it to be an assemblage of welcome, was hurriedly running over a speech of acceptance of the honor, when, to his amazement and horror, he heard the public herald bawling from the dock:

"Land at your peril, Nicuesa! We don't want you here! Get back to Nombre de Dios!"

The unhappy Nicuesa, dumfounded by this reception, pleaded in vain to be allowed to land and to remain. To

## Jungle Jim

return to Nombre de Dios, he well knew, was to return to death from starvation or death from the weapons of the savages. But his pleas were useless. With seventeen followers, all who remained loyal to him, he was forced to depart from the shores of Darien and, setting sail in the leaking brigantine, he and his companions were lost at sea or on some savage coast. They were never seen again.

Vasco Nuñez continued to strengthen his leadership in the colony, encouraging his restless fellow adventurers by his own confidence that adjacent regions, yet unexplored, must certainly yield immense treasures. Scouting parties were repeatedly sent out during the months that followed Nicuesa's departure but they returned empty handed, and it grew increasingly difficult for Vasco to check the murmurs of discontent.

More than a year had passed in this discouragement, when, by the capture of two Indians who had unwittingly ventured into the neighborhood of the Spaniards' settlement, a new hope sprang up. The captives told of a rich tribe, headed by a chief named Careta, inhabiting Coiba, a region on the coast some one hundred miles to the northwest. Vasco Nuñez, burning with new eagerness, recruited a force of one hundred and thirty men and, in two small vessels, set off immediately for that province. The *nele cantuli*, or high chief, Careta, instead of resisting the Spaniards with spears and arrows, welcomed them with friendliness. His principal village was upon a fertile island, only a mile or so from the mainland, which was easily reached by the hollowed-out canoes known as piraguas. The Spaniards, deluding themselves with their dream of finding treasure here, called the island the "Island of Gold." But when they demanded of the chief that these riches be shown to them he insisted that his

## Bosco Begins Climbing

people possessed none. If gold was what they sought, he said, it could be found only in the villages of the tribes inhabiting the mountains of the mainland. He described two of these tribes, at no great distance from each other or from the Island of Gold, the first ruled by a chief named Ponca, the other by Comagre. With Ponca he had often been obliged to fight, he said, but Comagre was his friend.

Grateful for the feasts which Careta spread before them and for the stores of provisions which he loaded upon the Spaniards' brigantines, Vasco Nuñez undertook an expedition against Ponca, Careta's enemy, drove him from his villages to seek refuge deeper in the mountains and returned with booty which he divided among his men. The success of the expedition made his soldiers proud of him and increased the friendship of Careta.

When the Spaniards had rested from this foray young Nuñez led them to the province of the friendly chief, Comagre. Chief Careta had not exaggerated the generosity or the riches of this powerful savage. Comagre freely spread the gold and pearls of his house before the wondering Spaniards and assigned to his eldest son, Ponquiaco, the business of assisting Vasco Nuñez in dividing the princely gift among the men. But as it was being weighed out the greedy soldiers fell to squabbling violently over the division of the gold. Young Ponquiaco looked at them with amazement and disgust. Throwing the scales angrily to the ground, he said contemptuously:

"Is this yellow metal so precious in your eyes that you must wrangle over a handful of it? Does not this satisfy you? Then why do you not go to the country where the sands of the rivers are heavy with it and where you may

## Jungle Jim

pick its nuggets from the ground, like fallen lemons? Look!"

He stretched his hand toward the blue range of mountains lying to the south.

"Look!" he repeated. "Beyond those mountains lies another sea more vast than this one over which you have sailed. Cross those mountains and you will behold it. Rivers unnumbered flow into that sea. The sands of all those rivers are of gold. The people of those lands will give you gold for the mere asking. If gold is what you seek go there!"

The soldiers stared at him in disbelief when this had been interpreted to them. Another sea beyond? Nonsense, they had already come to the end of the world. They resumed their wrangling.

But I watched Vasco Nuñez' face. A sudden brightness shone upon it. I saw belief and hope and resolution sweep through his whole being. He gripped my arm.

"Jim!" he cried hoarsely, his voice shaking. "I'm going there!"

I shook my head. Who could believe that story?

But there was no dissuading him from his instant surrender to the fantastic fable. He insisted upon an immediate return to Antigua so that he might recruit a stronger body of men with which to set out upon the crazy expedition. He hurried us back to the Island of Gold. From there, re-embarking in the brigantines, we made all sail for Antigua. There Vasco sought to enlist the whole colony in support. But it was in vain. Not a man in ten believed the fable of a sea beyond the mountains. In desperation he wrote a glowing letter to Don Diego Columbus, brother of the late admiral, painting the certain rewards that must result from the mad adventure

## Bosco Begins Climbing

and begging him to send a thousand men for the great enterprise. A vessel was sent off to Santo Domingo, and Vasco Nuñez sat down impatiently to wait the answer.

But he was too restless to wait for that reply. A new tale had come to his ears, a tale as nonsensical as the other. This story, repeated by Indians taken captive, was that upon the upper reaches of the great Darien River, southward of Antigua, there stood a temple of gold.

This was a vast hall, the story ran, which had been built in honor of a white goddess who had come down to the river valleys in ages past from the summit of the Mountain of the Gods. She was of unearthly beauty. Her name was Davaiva. Where she walked flowers sprang up. The people, rejoicing, built the great temple in her honor, sheathed its walls with gold, heaped its altars with gold. And though the goddess had been seen no more for many generations the temple stood there still.

Vasco Nuñez swallowed this fanciful tale as he had the fable of the unknown sea. He converted Rodrigo de Colmenares and Bartolome Hurtado to his belief. With a small company of soldiers the three set off on a search for the fabulous temple of Davaiva. They came back empty handed after incredible hardships.

The months dragged on, and still no answer came to Vasco's appeal for reinforcements from Spain with which to attempt the search for the visionary sea. At last he could bear to wait no longer. He succeeded in getting together a company of one hundred and ninety men who swore to follow him on the mad enterprise. I joined them.

Nuñez decided to ask the aid of the chief, Careta, in provisioning the expedition. We set sail on this first stage of the journey on the first of September.

CHAPTER XX

**Torgogo, the Mountain of  
the Frogs**

**N**ow that we had arrived at the Island of Gold and stood waiting for Vasco's signal to plunge ourselves out of the world known to men and into a shadowy country which, for all we really knew, was no more than a ghostly hereafter dreamed by superstitious savages the familiar figure of Vasco Nuñez began to grow strangely taller before my eyes.

We were one hundred and ninety strong—a company of men who had already survived such cruel hazards that, you would have said, not one of them cared the flip of a coin whether he bloodily lived or bloodily died. They were loud of mouth, dirty of body, lewd, credulous beyond believing, wolfish, quarrelsome. I have seen two of them fly at each other's throats in a killing rage for no more than a feather. At the sight of gold, a bottle or a woman their bearded lips dribbled water. If you had told any one of them that he might have these things by stabbing a comrade he would have risked the gallows. Against an enemy, to save a comrade, he would rush without shadow

## Torgogo, the Mountain of the Frogs

of fear. But now they had been marshaled to advance against nothingness, against a wall of mist, into a country which could not conceivably exist. . . .

Vasco Nuñez, now their commander, had been one of these men. The difference was that they still believed in nothing they could not see and touch, while he now believed in something he could not see. . . . It was this belief that had changed him. The change had come suddenly. For nearly two years I had been seeing him almost daily. We had marched together, shared our food, slept on the ground under the same shelter of thatch. He had not been greatly different from these men: a good companion, a reckless fellow, a ready fighter, rough of tongue, without fixed purpose, letting the day bring what it would. A single sentence spoken by a savage—"Beyond those mountains lies another sea"—had changed him.

Others had heard the strange assertion, too, but without comprehending, or with disbelief. Vasco believed. Of all Spain's sons he might be the poorest but now he knew that he would discover an empire and by that discovery would make it his. He walked among us like an emperor, unmoved by any fear.

I had little opportunity for conversation with Vasco after we had landed at the island. He was at once welcomed by the chief, Careta, whose title in his native tongue was *nele cantuli*,\* "Lord of the sky-touching-mountain people." When Vasco's men had taken up their quarters in the thatched huts assigned to them Vasco plunged into long conferences with the *nele cantuli* at the chief's own house, discussing with him the route to be taken and the possibility of being supplied with provisions for the long march. But from time to time I was called

\*A more proper spelling is *Quiñi-tuli*, "the mountain-sky people."

## Jungle Jim

in to aid in interpreting some knotty point and to be kept informed upon the decisions reached. As to the existence of the unknown sea and the general direction to be followed in order to reach it most speedily, the *nele cantuli* agreed unhesitatingly and emphatically with what Vasco had already been told by Ponquiaco, Chief Comagre's son. We must go first westward to cross the mountain range, then southward. But Chief Careta, though eager to aid Vasco to the limit of his power, said mournfully that it would be utterly impossible for him to provide food sufficient for two hundred men upon the march or even for more than half that number. He escorted Vasco to all the granaries and storehouses of the island and convinced him that this was the truth. Instead of being downcast Vasco grinned.

"So much the better!" he cried. "I will conquer with only one hundred men!"

To me Vasco now assigned the responsibility of selecting the Indian guides for the expedition. It was an easy matter. Unquestionably the men best fitted by experience for finding a pathway through the mountain jungles were two young men with whom I had already made hunting trips and who were inseparable companions. We had given them Spanish names, Pedro and Rubén. Rubén was of the blood royal, a nephew of the *nele cantuli* himself. Moreover, he was a blood brother of the hostile tribes of Cuna Indians who ranged the mountain ridges which we must cross and knew their language. The two young fellows eagerly accepted my invitation. Their dark, handsome faces shone.

In the twilight of the first day of our arrival a strange music struck upon our ears, the wailing song of many women. Unable to resist our curiosity, we strolled in the



## Torgogo, the Mountain of the Frogs

direction from which it came. The song arose from a circle of scores of women, young and old, who were seated on the ground around a house and who kept up their chant without ceasing. "A girl child has been born in this house," explained Pedro gravely. "All the women of this village have gathered to rejoice."

The chant went on, and now we began to recognize one phrase that was repeated over and over again, a wailing refrain that marked the beginning of each new line.

"*Puna iccua bayai!*" So quavered the monotonous refrain. But what the three words meant I never knew. "*Puna iccua bayai!*" And the whole chant ran:

*"Puna iccua bayai!*

*Yahanua se urba se doge nahe!*

*Puna iccua bayai!*

*Yahanua tacca siqui tigua, buquiba nega se sigui!*

*Puna iccua bayai!*

*Nusela carba dudu nahe gahé si!*

*Puna iccua bayai!*

*Guguli dudu gahé si!*

*Puna iccua bayai!*

*Yahanua sapin wichi gahabi!*

*Puna iccua bayai!*

*Tuhagui noga gahé!*

*Puna iccua bayai!*

*Sique guile gahé!*

*Puna iccua bayai!*

*Sique guile mur wichi!*

*Puna iccua bayai!*

*Sique guile abi gahé!*

*Puna iccua bayai!*

*Sique guile tuque maqua!*

*Puna iccua bayai!*

*Yahanua saili ulu haigahale!"*

## Jungle Jim

When the chant came to this ending it did not end; it began again at the beginning. Over and over, until at last the words, so often repeated, began to fix themselves in my memory. There was, in Vasco Nuñez' company, an elderly Spaniard, a man who had studied in his youth in the monastery but had never taken holy orders. He served as a scribe, a sort of secretary, to Vasco. This man was one of those who had drawn around to listen to the women's chanting, and I now stole a glance at him, wondering if he would attempt to transcribe words from a language unknown to him. He grinned as he caught my eye, and I made bold to ask him to give me a hand the next day in setting down upon parchment as much of the chant as I might remember. This he did, and we set the words down as they sounded to a Spanish ear. "*Guile*," for example, is to be pronounced "goo-ee-lay." Then, with the help of Rubén, the chief's nephew, I managed to work out this translation:

*Puna iccua bayai!*

Daughter, come forth from the womb!

*Puna iccua bayai!*

Daughter, suckle at our breast!

*Puna iccua bayai!*

Daughter, fear not: crushed is the viper's nest!

*Puna iccua bayai!*

Behold our head scarves, gaudy as the parrot's plume!

*Puna iccua bayai!*

See, our sarongs are bright, from many a patient loom!

*Puna iccua bayai!*

Sarong and headdress are for you!

*Puna iccua bayai!*

Daughter, we cluster here, like fruitful maize!

*Puna iccua bayai!*

We bear the brimming gourds, brought for your praise!

## Torgogo, the Mountain of the Frogs

*Puna iccua bayai!*

We fill the cups with the delirious brew!

*Puna iccua bayai!*

We fill, and throw away the empty gourds, and leap!

*Puna iccua bayai!*

Fill them, and of the juice of life drink deep!

*Puna iccua bayai!*

Daughter, woman to be, all shall come forth from you!

It seems hardly necessary to add that this transcript of an Indian chant is not to be found in any of the accounts of Balboa's expeditions written by others. I was the only person who made such records.

Such is the chant sung for the *yahanua*, the newborn girl child, or for the baby girl who, reaching the age of three, has her ears and nose pierced so that she will be able to wear the gold earrings and nose rings of the Cunas.

It rained during the early hours of the morning before daylight, but the rising sun drove away the clouds, and the whole green world of the forest flashed as though with jewels. From the shores of the Island of Gold, looking westward across the mile of sea that separated us from the mainland, we could see, far inland, the misty blue wall of low mountains rising above the green wall of jungle close at hand, the blue-gray wall that shut us off from the undiscovered country. Behind us, in the island village, there was the stir and bustle of unwonted activity. Much of it was occasioned by the preparations for our own expedition, but there was, besides, a great coming and going of smiling women and young girls in the neighborhood of a number of the thatched huts which betokened preparations for a feast. Vasco Nuñez, whose keen eyes

## Jungle Jim

missed nothing, paused beside me to ask me if I knew its meaning.

"They are getting ready for a feast," I explained. "This is the moon in which several girls are reaching the age of thirteen, which is the age of womanhood. Their families are joining together to celebrate. The feasting will go on for several days, the whole, which is called *sabdur*, being divided into three periods. The first, which they call *inna mutikit*, the feast of the cleansing, begins tonight and will continue through the night and for a day. Much *inna* is in readiness, Rubén tells me."

"*Inna?*" repeated Vasco. "Is that their word for feast?"

"Well, yes," I said, smiling. "But the word really means 'liquor.' Do you see those groups of women here and there, sitting on the ground around those big jugs? They are making fresh *inna*, which will take some time to ferment. You can see them taking the grains of corn from the *chacaras*, those woven bags beside them, putting the corn in their mouths and chewing it. Then they spit the chewed corn into the jug. When it is nearly full they will put a cloth over it and set it aside in a corner of the hut to ferment. The *inna* which they will drink tonight was made weeks ago. The parents of the maidens for whom the *inna mutikit* is to be celebrated will ladle it out to all who come to their houses—provided they bring with them their own drinking gourds."

"And this is called the feast of cleansing? What does that mean?"

For reply I pointed to the distant blue ridge of mountains twenty miles away. "In the old days," I said, "when the maidens of the tribe came to the age of womanhood



A Cuna Indian belle. Gold nose ring and disc earrings are worn as adornment.



## Torgogo, the Mountain of the Frogs

they would form a procession and climb those mountains, which are called Torgogo, the Mountains of the Frogs, to bathe themselves in the mountain streams where the frogs croak. They spent the night of purification in the caves in the banks of the mountain stream. But for generations past they have no longer dared to make those pilgrimages. They are too timid. They are afraid of everything.

“So, instead of going themselves, the jungle is brought to them. The father of the girl for whom *inna mutikit* is to be celebrated chooses a number of young men and sends the group into the jungles of the Frog Mountains. These are called *sabdur guini-t*, the feast mountaineers. From the jungle these young men bring back cleansing herbs and the tendrils of jungle vines and the fronds of palms. The herbs and the vines are boiled together to make the bath which is like the waters of the jungle river. With the palm fronds a corner of the bamboo floor of the house is screened off to signify the jungle caves to which the maiden went in ancient days. Nothing is placed within this screen except a hammock, a wooden stool and the great bowl, carved from the trunk of a huge tree, in which the maiden is to bathe herself. And there, all through the night and following day, she performs the sacred rites in loneliness while the chanting goes on outside.”

We heard the chant that night, the “*Sabdur Namaquedi*,” the feast chant for the arrival of womanhood. Thus ran its triumphant wailing :

*“Hey, hey, hey, the maidens! Yonder go they!  
Lo, see them trooping to the distant ridge of blue!  
On the hills behold them dancing,  
Dancing on their way to the Mountains of Yo!*

## Jungle Jim

*Climbing, hey, hey! to the very Peak of Bili!  
Ascending to the Mountain-Mother, see them! Aye!  
Hey, hey, hey, the maidens! There they go!,  
Maids, the jungle trail will muddy all your sarongs!  
Maidens, long and weary is the climb before you!  
But why do you tremble so with fear?  
While ye bathe, ye shall be hidden,  
Seen by no man, in the caverns of the hills!  
Hey, the maidens! Yonder go they, to the Mountain of the Frog!  
Hey, la, lo, lo, lo, they stumble!  
From the frog they flee in panic!  
The maidens, far up yonder, hey, hey, hey!"*

The words, as we heard them, were these :

*"Ye, ye, ye, ta yahuanal ye, naherque!  
Ye, ta la gana bantu arraba que mahu!  
Ye, ye, nua, ye, yo la Yo-guina, yo la gansena bega na!  
Guima he, ye, ya la Guin-Bili que,  
Contu Guini-Nana huiqui, si, ye!  
Ye, ye, ye, ta yahanua! ye, naherque, ye!  
Ta yahanua a ye ani pina tobi guhe,  
Taguerque y biulale cehani pina,  
Tobi kuheguhe dague, ye!  
Uhu mola panuelo, bela anuale sacadi hale na,  
Bega na, que mahu!  
Ye, yahanua, naherque, ya la Torgogo!  
Ye, la lo lo lo, ucumo, la yahanua naque mahu, ye!  
Yahanua, naherque, ye, ye, ye!"*

The whole village took part in the *inna mutikit* which lasted twenty-four hours and which was then followed by the second stage of the *sabdur*, the *inna tun'wi kalet*, which continued for thirty-six hours more. The girls, now considered as full-grown women, might now be sought in marriage. In the event that one accepted a suitor the



## Torgogo, the Mountain of the Frogs

agreement would be celebrated by still another feast, the third stage of the *sabdur*, called the *inna suit*, or feast of courtship. This would last for four days, coming to an end only when the supply of *inna* ran out.

Before the young man is accepted as a suitor, however, his father and the father of the girl must come to an agreement as to the dowry she will bring. The girl's father agrees to bestow with her a plantation of cacao (chocolate) trees—provided that the suitor can satisfactorily pass the test which will prove that he is a strong and competent workman. This agreement having been made and witnessed before the chief's council, the father of the girl takes the young man in his canoe, paddling up some jungle river until they reach a hillside where a large cedar tree is found. Here the young man must cut down the tree singlehanded while the old man watches and must then roll the log, unaided, to the river and float it downstream. He must then carve a canoe from the log. When all this has been done to the old man's satisfaction then, and not till then, he may claim the girl. The old man gets the new canoe.

The suitor's father gets the cacao plantation.

The suitor gets the girl but he also gets the job of providing for two families. From now on his father-in-law retires to a hammock and watches his son-in-law do the work.

But Vasco Nuñez had little interest in the customs of the people. He was afire with eagerness to plunge into his adventure. Having been shown by Careta, the chief, that there were not enough supplies of grain and dried fish for more than one hundred men upon the march, he at once came to the decision to establish a settlement, with half

## Jungle Jim

his men, at the mainland point nearest the island. These ninety men he placed under command of Lope de Olano, who had been Don Enciso's lieutenant on their ill-fated expedition to Veragua and whom Vasco had rescued from imprisonment at the hands of Enciso. Nuñez and Olano at once visited the mainland and selected the site near a small river which the natives called the Agla. The building of huts and a stockade was begun and pushed with feverish haste. Each day Nuñez studied his men with care, choosing from among the whole number the ones seeming best fitted to endure the hazardous march before us.

We had arrived at the Island of Gold on the second day of September. By the end of four days of labor the new settlement at Agla had begun to take form, and Vasco Nuñez decided to delay no longer. He gave orders that the trumpet be sounded the next morning at daybreak and for all to be in readiness.

The trumpet woke us, that morning of September sixth, to a pouring rain. We came out disgustedly upon the little parade ground inside the stockade walls.

Rain spattered upon the steel helmets of the men and ran down their noses as they lined up. Olano drew his men into ranks facing ours. Vasco Nuñez walked along our line, looking us over from head to foot. Rain soaked our leather jerkins. We were already hungry and wet. The harquebusiers, the musketeers, swore roundly as they fumbled with scraps of leather with which they hoped to keep their tinderboxes dry. Already the mud rose ankle-deep beneath our boots. It was a hellish morning on which to start anything. Vasco Nuñez had got from Colmenares four Spanish mastiffs, ugly, big brutes with yellow hides,

## Torgogo, the Mountain of the Frogs

and was taking them along. They slunk around now, soaked to the skins, their tails drooping, and whined. Vasco told off four men to put them on leash. The rain kept on.

Vasco Nuñez, satisfied that all was ready, ended his inspection and splashed to the head of the line. Then he beckoned to Andres de Vara. Father Andres was a young priest who was marching with us, partly to convert the savages, partly to comfort the souls of those of us who died, I suppose. He hurried over, holding up the skirts of his black robe which was soaked with rain and clung around him ridiculously. Vasco said something to him, and the padre turned to us and raised his dripping sleeve.

He held Mass. There in the unholy rain, the rain pelting on our bared heads and streaming down our necks, at that gray daybreak and in that hot, moist air that made us pant with open mouths, like dogs, he held the Mass. The naked Indians, heedless of the rain, stood by and stared at Father Andres, intoning the strange Latin words which we understood no more than they.

The soldier next to me nudged me in the ribs and nodded toward the distant hills toward which we were to march. Their summits were lost in low-lying mists.

"There's nothing there but devils," he whispered. "What good are prayers?"

Vasco Nuñez whipped up his naked sword and waved it in farewell to Lope de Olano. "*¡Adiós!*" he shouted. "Go with God!"

"Go with God!" Olano's cry floated back. He signaled to his gunners to fire a parting salute. The fuses sputtered in the rain, went out.

Vasco Nuñez' lean, bearded face broke into a grin as

## Jungle Jim

he realized that the intended salute had fizzled out. "Salute us when we come back as victors!" he shouted to Olano jovially. "That will be better!"

Then, turning to us who were to accompany him, he pronounced the one word:

"March!"

As we moved past Olano's men a chorus of roughly joking farewells rose from them to which our men replied in like manner. "I will watch over your Indian maid till you come back, Miguel!" shouted one. "Send us word when you are frying in hell!" jeered another. "Trust no man while we are away, little darlings!" retorted one of our men. Guffaws and oaths ran along the line.

The rain stopped abruptly as we left the stockade and swung along the sea beach toward the mouth of the little river Agla. At the river mouth were drawn up the fleet of twenty *cayucos*, canoes hollowed from logs, in which, paddled by Indians, we had crossed from the Island of Gold to the mainland. Here the two young hunters, Rubén and Pedro, whom I had chosen for guides, awaited us proudly.

Rubén and Pedro had told us that although the Agla was navigable for a distance of only ten miles to rapids which could not be passed it would be wise to use the canoes even for this short distance, for the going along the jungle trail would be sure to be difficult. Chief Careta had provided paddlers who would take us as far as the rapids, then return.

Captain Vasco Nuñez gave the command; the canoes were launched, and we took our places in them. Vasco and his chief lieutenant, Frank Pizarro, Rubén and Pedro, the black-robed Father Andres and myself entered the first one. But this arrangement was at once upset by the difficulty which arose over the four tawny mastiffs which had

## Torgogo, the Mountain of the Frogs

been brought along. They were reluctant to enter a canoe, and when they had been at last dragged into one the Indian paddlers were so terrified by their growls that they flung down their paddles and refused to come near them. It became necessary to find a volunteer crew from among our own men and for Rubén and myself to take the paddles at bow and stern. If I had known then what use was to be made of the ugly brutes I could have wished that all four of them had been drowned.

As our little flotilla at last moved away and we passed at once into the shadows of the unknown river over which arched the leafage of the unbroken forest a silence fell over the entire company. Behind us was the known. Ahead—lay what?

But the strong arms of the paddlers kept up their unwearied strokes, and the canoes moved steadily up the dark stream while clouds of bright-plumaged birds moved through the leafy branches and monkeys chattered overhead. In the first two hours we advanced about four miles, but now the stream grew narrower and swifter, and progress became slower. It became necessary for the Indians to rest from time to time, beaching the canoes upon a sand bar in midstream or holding the canoe against the bank by clinging to the tough vines drooping over it. Now and then we encountered rapids where the swift current foamed between rocks. In four hours we had crept only six miles. And now we came to the rapids which Rubén had warned us could not be passed. It was well after midday. We poled the canoes over to the left bank of the river and went ashore.

It would be more strictly true to say we got out of the canoes. We had merely gained a foothold on a narrow strip of sand between water and land. The unbroken wall

## Jungle Jim

of the jungle rose before us with no visible opening in it. "Here the trail begins," said Rubén. Captain Nuñez stared at the tangle of thicket. Then he nodded. "It is a clear road," he said grimly.

We—Nuñez, Rubén and I—explored the length of the sandspit to find the best point of entrance. The men gnawed at soggy loaves they had taken from their pouches and muttered as they ate. Nuñez saw them glancing at the canoes. He stopped abruptly. "That, at least, is easily decided," he said, smiling. "There is no turning back!" Peremptorily he ordered the canoe men to return to their homes at once. They pushed off eagerly. The lightened piraguas danced downstream like leaves in the swift current, and they were gone around a bend. Their mouths open in dismay, Nuñez' men watched them go. Then suddenly they cheered, laughing. "To meet devils one must be led by the devil!" They chuckled. "Come, let us be marching!"

The next three hours remain in memory like a nightmare. We fought the undergrowth to make a path the width of a man's shoulders. Panting, staggering, slipping in the knee-deep muck of fallen leaves, hacking at tangled vines with their swords, the men crept forward. The keen eyes of Rubén and Pedro, who led the way, picked up the vestiges of the ancient path of the maidens to the Mountains of the Frogs. Now and then there would be comparatively clear going for a hundred yards or so. The way followed the crests of the little hills forming the ravines of the river. We climbed those hills on hands and knees; we slipped and slid down them, panting and cursing. In three hours we had advanced three miles. We were on the river bank. Rubén pointed to a brook that joined the river on the opposite bank. We splashed across the

## Torgogo, the Mountain of the Frogs

river, thigh-deep, and stumbled after him along the course of the brook which, clear and cool, came down from higher hills. It was late afternoon. The light was almost gone from the deep forest. We could go no farther that day. Captain Nuñez ordered a halt at the edge of a grove of bamboo overhanging the stream. Men cupped their hands and drank thirstily from the stream, then flung themselves on the fern-covered rocks. A few of them, following the example set by Rubén and Pedro, made themselves couches of dry canes and thatched a roof of poles with great palm leaves; the rest slept where they dropped, exhausted. Rain fell again in the night; it beat upon the upturned faces of the sleepers, but they did not wake. But from time to time one sleeper or another would be roughly wakened to take his turn as a member of the sentry squad which Nuñez posted. From overhead, in the treetops, came unearthly howlings which at times would swell into a roll like thunder, and the sentinels would cross themselves and mutter that the forest was 'peopled with devils. I would have to convince each one in turn that it was the howling of apes or baboons angered at the rain. At daybreak we could see their black shapes flitting from limb to limb, still howling, and the awakened men persisted in thinking them devils.

As we set off again the terrain climbed steadily upward. The sun came out, and the wet forest smoked with mist. Clouds of stinging gnats and mosquitoes danced above the heads of the sweating column of men. Faces were puffed and swollen with their merciless bites. The men floundered on, their shields and swords and heavy boots weighting them down intolerably. Still we toiled upward. By noon we reached the summit of the ridge. But ahead of us there was no sharp descent or any break in the forest

## Jungle Jim

through which any view of the country that lay ahead could be commanded. The forest, inhabited only by birds and monkeys, stretched around us interminably.

We rested through the noon on the sun-dried rocks in the middle of a little mountain stream till Nuñez impatiently gave the order to march on again. The gradual downward sloping of the land became evident. For two hours we wound our way along, stopping from time to time to draw breath. At the end of the third hour after midday, as we plodded doggedly on, Rubén, who was leading the way, suddenly stopped and held up his hand for silence. "What is it?" I whispered. "*Cunas bravas*," answered Rubén. "The hostile Cunas." The word was passed back down the line, and the whole column halted. We listened. I could not hear a sound. Minute after minute passed, and still there was no sound. But Rubén's ears had not failed him. Suddenly from between the trees appeared a line of twenty naked brown-skinned men. At sight of us they stopped short.

Rubén lifted his arms above his head in token of peace. "*Shuramá!*" he shouted. "Peace be unto you!"

There was momentary hesitation, and then the greeting came back from the leader of the savages. "*Shuramá!*" he called. "*Mai nama paya!*"

Rubén and Vasco Nuñez and I went forward, Vasco ordering his men to remain where they were. The Cuna braves gathered around us, staring at us white men in utter amazement. "Who are you? From whence come you?" they demanded.

Rubén spoke for us. "From beyond the salt sea of the north," he answered. "These are gods!"

"Come they in peace?" asked the leader suspiciously.

"They come in peace. They seek the southern sea."



## Torgogo, the Mountain of the Frogs

"*Muhude?*" repeated the leader. "The sea? Then they pass through and molest us not?"

"Of a certainty," Rubén assured him. "Tell us only the way."

The man pointed down the slope. "*Yawala*," he said. "The river."

"Then we follow the river," said Rubén emphatically. "What is its name?"

"*Yawala Sucubi*."

"It flows into that sea?"

"Nay, it joins with a larger river which comes down by Guin-Bili, the mountain from which thou canst behold the sea. But the name of that river we do not know."

"Blessed be God!" exclaimed Nuñez joyously as I translated this to him. "Tell him to lead us to this river and it shall profit him."

But when Rubén had repeated this to the leader the man shook his head doubtfully. "That we cannot do," he said. "This is a hunting party. We go to hunt *saina*, the wild pig, higher in the hills. We cannot turn back, else our village will starve."

Vasco frowned, and his hand dropped to the hilt of his sword. At the very motion the leader of the band gave a curious wheezing whistle. And at the signal he and his men seemed to vanish in air, so suddenly did they fade from sight in the underbrush. The tall ferns swayed with their rush, then all was silent. Vasco made half a move to plunge after them, then shrugged his shoulders.

"It is useless," he said. "We should only waste precious time. Onward!"

We resumed our march. The going was a little easier now, for the way was downward and the path by which the Indians had approached was more clearly marked.

## Jungle Jim

Even so, we had followed the slippery trail for another two hours before it brought us out upon the bank of a river which, we felt sure, was the Sucubti. A little farther, and we came suddenly upon a great village of huts clustered upon the riverbank. Nuñez ordered swords to be drawn and muskets made ready, and the column advanced cautiously, ready to attack if resistance was offered. But not a sound was heard from the village; not a sign of life was seen. We entered. The place was empty. We went from hut to hut, but all were deserted. Fires still smoldered on the ground. The inhabitants had fled without taking time to quench them. Rubén studied the signs and nodded.

"Those we met in the forest fled back here by another trail," he said, "to warn them. Glad am I that they are gone, for this is the village of Ponca, my uncle's enemy. See, yonder are his *suar mimi*, the guardians of his house."

Vasco Nuñez glanced at the two wooden images, the rudely carved and painted figures flanking the door of the largest hut, and his face darkened.

"That unfriendly rogue!" he cried. "He did well to fly, for it was he who tried to trick me when I first came to him upon the coast, so that because of his trickery and my friendship for your uncle, whom he had also wronged, I burned his village to the ground! So this is where he fled to hide himself! *Caramba*, he makes me a present of this camp!"

Rubén pointed at the line of dugout canoes drawn up upon the riverbank. "He did not even dare to attempt escape by way of the river," he said contemptuously, "since those who warned him must have told him that you planned to follow the river's course. He and his people have all fled into the forest."

## Torgogo, the Mountain of the Frogs

We were already a haggard assemblage. Two days of struggle through the jungle had been enough to bring every man to the point of collapse. But Vasco Nuñez kept a semblance of order among them while the village was raided for supplies of food, fires were rekindled and a meal was eaten. Then when guards had been posted the exhausted men threw themselves upon the bamboo floors of the huts and were instantly asleep.

## CHAPTER XXI

### The Sea

**A** MAN CANNOT MARCH when his strength is gone. These men woke in the morning with fever running through their veins, and when they tried to walk their knees tottered beneath them.

Vasco Nuñez had ordered a start at daybreak. But when he went along the line and saw man after man scarcely able to stand his uneasiness deepened. He beckoned to me and drew me to one side.

"I don't like this, Jim," he whispered. "There are men here who are not fit to go on. Turn back I will not! but what am I to do about these poor fellows? Must I leave them here?"

I shook my head. "If they are left here alone," I said, "they will not be alive when we return. Nor can the others be burdened with them if we go on at once. There is another answer—remain here with all your men until all have gained strength. There is food here in this village to last for many days. Do not risk the trail now."

Reluctantly he agreed. Impatient as he was to press

## The Sea

forward, he saw that it would be madness to attempt it until his followers had regained strength. He gave the order to break ranks. We remained in that village for twelve days. The outcome proved the wisdom of his decision. By the end of that time all but eight or ten of the company had shaken off their malària and were in condition to face any hardships of the trail.

During this interval of rest I explored a little of the surrounding country with which Rubén and Pedro were unfamiliar. On one of these solitary expeditions I was so fortunate as to blunder upon the village to which Chief Ponca had fled when he abandoned the one which we were now occupying. I succeeded in convincing him that he had nothing to fear from the Spaniards if he would only supply Captain Nuñez with guides who could point out the path to the unknown sea which he was seeking. With such help, I assured him, the whole company would resume their march, and he and his people could return in peace to their own village.

The prospect of purchasing peace at so cheap a price delighted Ponca. Not only did he give orders for three of his men to accompany us as guides, but he sent with them a number of ornaments fashioned from gold, as presents to Captain Nuñez, telling me that these had come from tribes inhabiting the shores of the sea far to the south.

The excitement which filled Nuñez when I brought back this report to him confirming the story which had already been told him by Ponquiaco, Chief Comagre's son, as to the existence of the ocean which no white man had yet seen stirred him to order an immediate resumption of the march. The ten men who were still too weak to face a journey whose length we could not prophesy were ordered

## Jungle Jim

to return to the garrison left at Agla, escorted by ten others. In another day or two our preparations were complete, and on the twentieth of September, a company now numbering only eighty men, we renewed the march into a forest wilderness.

Our new guides led us in a southwesterly direction down the valley of the Sucubti instead of striking off due south. This gave us no concern, for the course agreed with the story we had already been told by the hunting party which we had encountered before reaching Ponca's village—namely, that the Sucubti would lead us toward the mountain from which the southern sea could most easily be reached.

But the laborious cutting of a path through this green labyrinth of tangled vines and thorny bushes, the continual slipping and sliding through the wet muck of decaying vegetation, ankle-deep, the incessant encountering of barriers of giant tree trunks fallen to the ground and over which we had to climb like ants—all this was torture, merciless and unending. Each day we began the march at the first light of day and crawled onward, gasping in the hot and heavy air, until we dropped exhausted on the ground when the light faded at midafternoon and counted that we had done well when we advanced a mile in an hour, eight miles in a day. Only Nuñez seemed never discouraged. The men had given up hope. They were already dead, they muttered, and were walking in hell. What were those shapes flitting through the trees? The shapes of demons, not of men.

On the morning of the second day we came to the confluence of the Sucubti with a larger river flowing to the south, a swift and turbulent stream fully one hundred yards in width. Our guides said that its name was Chu-

## The Sea

cunaqui and that it exceeded all other rivers in its length. Because its course was southward Nuñez asked if it would not lead us to the sea. But our guides pointed in the opposite direction, saying that the Chucunaque did not lead directly to the sea but joined with still another river and that to follow it would lengthen our journey by many weeks. We struggled on. By the end of that day we had gone six miles. When we made camp hordes of tiny monkeys with white faces shrieked at us from the branches. The men said they were the damned souls of Indian babies.

The next morning's light showed us that another river entered the one by which we had camped, on the opposite side. With infinite labor we gathered fallen logs of a strange wood which our guides called balsa. The logs themselves were light as feathers, but our strength was little. We cut down tough hanging vines and knotted them about the logs, forming crude rafts. By launching them well up the stream we managed, by paddling desperately with bits of wood, to cross the Chucunaqui and make a landing by the other stream which the guides said was called the Artiganti. Two of our men were drowned in the crossing.

Along the south bank of the Artiganti, which flowed into the Chucunaqui from the west, the guides pointed to a path which was clearly defined. For the first time we had come to a trail not overgrown with jungle but one that had been kept open by use. Our hopes sprang up, revived. Our food was nearly gone. "Surely," said Nuñez, "this much-used trail must lead us to some populous village where we shall be fed."

The very thought made the handful of dried corn enough for the night.

## Jungle Jim

Strange music sounded in the camp that evening as daylight faded. Our three Indian guides had withdrawn a little from our camp, as they always did, and were chanting softly in their own language. Nuñez and his men were already sleeping, sprawled in weariness. Only Pedro and Rubén and I kept watch. The chant, scarcely heard above the rushing of the river, rose and fell in a whining sing-song. What were the words?

*"Nele tuinale guingui!  
Nele tuinale guingui!  
Tule buquiba nega!  
Tule buquiba nega!"*

Rubén's fingers touched my arm. "They are singing the snake song of the Cunas," he whispered. "This is the song they sing in war. Listen!"

*"Galu mulu ugaka bali!"*

One of the three Indians sang the line. The others repeated the chant:

*"Galu mulu ugaka bali!"*

*"Eh! Galu bani imahelague, si!  
Eh! Galu bani imahelague, si!"*

*"Ye! Galu bani arbaye, si!  
Ye! Galu bani arbaye, si!"*

*"Ye! Nele di Tule imaque, si!  
Ye! Nele di Tule imaque, si!"*

*"Tule di bali itto sabiesuli!  
Tule di bali itto sabiesuli!"*

*"Ye! Galu pibila bali imaque, si!  
Ye! Galu pibila bali imaque, si!"*



## The Sea

The chant ended with a hiss like that of a snake. Coming through the darkness, it gave me an uncomfortable feeling. "What does it mean?" I whispered to Rubén. "Did you say that they call this the 'Song of the Snakes'?"

"That is their name for it," he answered. "Theirs is the race that call themselves the 'people of the sky.' That is because they live upon the mountaintops. Why, I know not, but they think the snakes of the mountain jungle are their brothers. That is what the song says—that the snake is singing to himself, preparing to strike. I do not like it. We must tell your chief so that he may make ready for whatever happens."

I rose and went quietly through the darkness till I came to the place where Captain Nuñez was lying. I shook him by the shoulder, and he came awake at once and reached for his sword. I told him of the singing and of what Rubén had said.

The night dragged through, with extra sentries posted. Nothing happened. But when morning came our guides had vanished.

Captain Vasco Nuñez smiled grimly. "It is of no consequence," he said. "We do not need them any longer. The trail runs plain enough. When we have come to the next village we can find other guides."

The trail, as I have said, led westward. So plainly did it run, so recently had the wearisome underbrush been cleared away by the inhabitants of the land, that we moved forward at a pace which seemed, by comparison, a wondrous thing. In four hours that morning we actually advanced five miles!

The fifth mile brought us to a sudden thinning of the forest. The river Artiganti, which we had been following upward, had dwindled now to the width of a brook, and

## Jungle Jim

the trail crossed it. Our straggling line splashed through the shallow ford, and we found ourselves upon ground that sloped upward. A few minutes more, and the trees that had shut off any view of the surrounding country had been left behind us as we climbed. The hill that rose before us in a gentle slope was a low one, not more than seven hundred feet at its summit, but by the time we were halfway to its top we were able to look across the tops of the tallest trees at its base and to see the expanse of country to the south.

The disappointment struck us like a blow. A lowland plain, visible for miles, lay stretched out before us. Whether one looked due south or to the southeast—the hill above us shut off the west—nothing was to be seen except marshland, lagoons and swamps seamed with a hundred creeks and inconsiderable rivers, separated from each other by faint elevations of ground that were scarcely high enough to be called hills. Vasco Nuñez' gaze swept eagerly across this vast expanse of empty plain and marsh and forest, and his eyes grew bleak with bitterness. The keenest eyes among us could see no seacoast to the south, no ending of the green plain. On the farthest southern horizon the plain faded from sight in haze. We had not even the hope that some distant range of mountains might there be seen, shutting off the sea from vision. There were no mountains; there was no sea.

I glanced at Vasco Nuñez de Balboa. The look upon his face was one that I do not want to see again. Had any man dared speak at that moment that look alone would have shriveled him. The gods mocked him at this moment—and he flung back mockery at the gods.

Black fury shook him. With his bared sword he pointed upward to the summit of the hill on which we stood.

## The Sea

“Can you move your feet?” he snarled. “Then move them!”

We toiled on up the hill without a word.

We reached the hilltop and stopped stock still, rooted in our tracks. The hilltop was a plateau. Across this level tableland two hundred yards away waited the enemy. A thousand warriors, hideously daubed, were marshaled there. And we were eighty men. A yell burst from them as they saw us walk into their trap.

Vasco Nuñez wheeled round at us. His laugh was like that of a devil in hell.

“Gunners!” He laughed. “Light your fuses!”

I saw the leaping flood of warriors race toward us, shaking their battle clubs and spears. A heart would not beat twenty times before that flood would sweep over us. In twenty heartbeats more Balboa and his men would come to the end of their adventure and I to the end of mine. Well, what did it matter? These were good men to die with if not to live with. I glanced around at them. Oh, those boys of Spain—their bearded faces were wreathed in smiles!

The muskets belched out smoke and flame; their thunder rolled across the plain. Not many in that brown multitude that were streaming toward us now lay writhing upon the ground. But the whole plunging mob recoiled upon itself. They saw their prostrate leaders struck down by dreadful fire. We, whom they had thought to slay, were not men, but gods. They fell to their knees and dropped their weapons, lifting supplicating hands.

I wish I might forget, blot from my memory utterly, what next I saw. “Give them the sword!” Balboa cried, foam on his lips. The long swords rose and fell, like sickles among standing grain. The swords struck and

## Jungle Jim

struck and struck again till the red-dripping sword arm was too weary to lift the blade once more. The naked men crawled to and fro upon the ground, too terrified even to run. Put hands before your eyes; shut out the sight. These gods are thirsty and must drink a warm red wine.

Captain Vasco Nuñez strode through the shambles, picking his way among the slain, and came to a scene of merriment. Seven or eight of his men, running ahead of the rest, had surrounded three or four terrified creatures, not warriors, who had remained at a distance from the scene of slaughter but who had apparently been too horrified even to attempt escape. Bursts of guffawing laughter came from the soldiers who surrounded them. These were strange prisoners. They were men, but dressed in what seemed women's garments, robes of white. Pushed and pulled from one of their captors to another, they were giggling breathlessly. Nuñez shouldered his way into the group. An oath burst from him as he took in the scene. "Who are these fools?" he demanded impatiently. He beckoned to his interpreter. "Tell them that I want the chief of this tribe of rabbits, do you understand?"

One of the white-robed prisoners answered. "I am the brother of the chief," he squeaked. "He was Quaraqua, the great chief. Yonder he lies. You, who are gods, have slain him." And again he giggled.

Nuñez struck him across the mouth. "Then follow him," he said. He turned to his grinning men. "These are not worth the sword," he snapped. "Let the dogs play with them."

A soldier whistled shrilly. The unleashed hounds, those four tawny mastiffs brought from Spain, came bounding to the call.

"At them!" growled Nuñez, pointing at the prisoners.

## The Sea

I turned my head. I could stand no more. A scream of mortal terror . . . When I raised my head again it was all over. Nuñez clapped his hand on my shoulder and laughed.

"Come," he said, "let us go on and find what this Chief Quaraqva has spread out for a dinner. He will not be as hungry as we are."

We limped on into the village and licked our wounds there. They were not many. Not one man had been lost, and scarcely a dozen had been wounded. Women and children had fled at our approach, and in the deserted dwellings we found food in plenty, dishes and ornaments of beaten gold and many jewels. But to Vasco Nuñez, our commander, a word which came to him there was more precious than jewels or gold—the word that from the mountain at whose foot the village stood the southern ocean might be seen!

This we learned from prisoners of Quaraqva whom we found in the village and set free. They were men wholly black in color, with heads of bushy, fuzzy hair, the first black men we had seen in this new world. All other Indians were of red-brown color, with straight black hair. Asking them from whence they came, they answered that for many generations they had lived in the territory only two days' journey southward from Quaraqva's dominions but that their old men kept a legend that they had come originally from a land far across the sea.

At this, the Spaniards, who had seen the black men of the coasts south of Spain, asked if they meant that they had come from Africa, from the eastward. But the black men pointed toward the setting sun. It was from the west, they said, that they had come, across a great water.

## Jungle Jim

Eagerly Nuñez asked them then concerning the width of that sea. They could not tell. They knew only that the legend was that hundreds of years had been required to cross it.

At this hint, the first he had received, of the immensity of the sea toward which he was striving—even though it was no more than a legend—the eagerness of Vasco Nuñez to resume the march flamed up with hotter fire. He gave orders that the men wounded in the encounter and those exhausted by the march were to remain in this village until his return. At daybreak the next morning, with sixty-seven men, he began the ascent of the mountain.

At the head of the straggling line I walked beside Vasco Nuñez in silence. I had slept little that night. The dreadful sights and sounds of the day had made sleep impossible. I could endure no more. I must escape—but how? The merry young fellow, Bosco Goodvalley, who had won my affection at our first meeting—what had become of him? In his place was this man who strode beside me, bloody and merciless, his eyes gleaming with fanatic fire, forever muttering of a sea that did not exist. Where would he lead us next? What fresh horrors of slaughter would he command?

He caught my glance fixed upon him and smiled with a flash of his old lightheartedness.

“What’s troubling you, Jim?” He laughed. “You look as gloomy as a thundercloud. Is the grade getting too much for you?”

“I’m all right,” I answered shortly. “I was just thinking about yesterday.”

“Why,” he exclaimed, “what’s wrong with yesterday? We came through all right, didn’t we?”

“You call that butchery ‘all right’?” I said hotly.

## The Sea

He stared at me in genuine surprise. "What else was there to do?" he demanded. "If we hadn't got them they would have got us. They would have killed us to a man—including you, Jim."

I was silent.

"And, after all," he went on after a moment's pause, "what do a few lives matter? They stood between me and an empire!"

"Have it your way," I said. I felt sick.

We plodded on. That mountain isn't a very high one. It's not more than two thousand, five hundred feet high, I'd say. But the trail was tough going. As usual, we couldn't make more than a mile in an hour. But by noon-day we came out upon a little plateau which was bare of trees and we could see the mountaintop only a little way ahead. We were within half a mile of it.

Nuñez told his men to sit down and rest. We were glad to. We were panting like dogs. Pretty soon the men got some food out of their packs and began to munch it. I would have been willing to sit there forever. But Nuñez couldn't rest. He jumped up. "I'm going on ahead," he said. "Come along as soon as you are ready."

He went on, and I got up and followed him. I couldn't help it.

"Better bring the men along as soon as they finish eating," I said to Frank Pizarro as I got up. He was next in command to Nuñez. He nodded.

I caught up with Bosco, and he looked around and smiled at me but didn't say anything. We went on, side by side. I knew he was crazy. There couldn't be any other sea. The world wasn't big enough for two.

The moss was wet underfoot, and it was slippery going. It had rained some that morning. The leaves had a hot,

## Jungle Jim

spicy smell. It was noon, and nothing much stirred in the woods. There was a brown bird that followed us, hopping from branch to branch and whistling. It seemed excited. Maybe it thought we were lost.

And then we came out on the empty mountaintop. It was there, all right—the sea, I mean. It wasn't more than twenty miles away.

We knew it first when the sun flashed on it. The sun was just a little to the west of south, and we were looking right toward it. The sea flashed with it, like a mirror. We couldn't tell how far the coast ran on to right and left. It just went on as far as you could see.

Between us and that flashing mirror of the sea there was the green coastal plain. To east and west it stretched endlessly. Forests made dark green patches on it, and tiny threads of silver marked the course of streams. The streams ran toward the sea.

We stood there for a long time, just looking. We had left behind us the sea that Cristóbal Colon had crossed and had found another. This one was Vasco Nuñez de Balboa's sea.

He looked around at me after a while and smiled. "Well?" he said. Just that.

"There it is," I said. "It's all yours."

His gaze returned to it. How long we stood there, silent, I don't know. What his thoughts were I don't know. He had come a long way from the door of his father's proud and penniless house in Xeres de los Caballeros in Spain.

His men came up the hill. They stared at the distant sea. I don't think they gave a damn. They were very tired. Did gazing at it bring gold or wine or women? Well, they would plod on if Nuñez ordered it. But if only



## The Sea

there were a wine shop in the neighborhood! The black plague take this endless toiling!

But Bosco Goodvalley wanted to make a ceremony of it. They passed the word down the line and routed out the standard-bearer, a wretched fellow, who had been obliged to stagger through the jungles day after day with never an opportunity to unfurl the banner wrapped around its heavy pole. They pushed him forward now, and the flag of Spain hung listlessly in the tropic heat. Vasco made a speech. This land and sea, he said, to their uttermost boundaries, were now the domain of Spain by right of his discovery. He wound up by promising his men that if they would follow him to further conquests they would become rich beyond their wildest dreams. He couldn't have heard what they muttered under their breaths. But I was standing shoulder to shoulder with them, and I heard.

At the left of the standard-bearer stood the young priest, Andres de Vara, his robe torn with briars and stained with mud and blood. When Captain Nuñez had made an end of his speech the priest lifted the crucifix as a sign for all to kneel and when he had intoned the Latin chant, "To Thee, oh God, we give praise," the commander summoned every man present to come forward and affix his name or his mark to a parchment drawn up by the scribe, testifying that Captain General Vasco Nuñez de Balboa had taken possession of ocean, islands and land in the name of the rulers of Spain, dated, September twenty-sixth, in the year of Our Lord, 1513.

He looked at me and hesitated, wondering whether to ask me to sign also.

"No," he said at last, "you are not an official member of this expedition."

## Jungle Jim

"You never said a truer word," I retorted. "And, what's more, right here and now is where I turn back. This is as far as I go, Bosco."

He begged me to stick along. But I was stubborn about it. "What's the use?" I asked. "You don't need me any longer. There's your sea, right in plain sight. You can't miss it. A blind man couldn't miss it. No, you go ahead. I'll rest here awhile and then hit the trail back. Good-by, old man."

They all said good-by. They weren't altogether bad. They stank of blood and sweat, they were cruel as hawks, merciless as wolves, but they were good men to have with you in a fight or on a march. I wondered how they would die: of fever or of wounds, in green jungle or on the white sands of coral reefs, in tavern brawl or in a quiet bed. I put no wager on the quiet bed.

They said good-by, and one of them, a decent youngster named Alvaro—Alvaro de Saavedra Ceron, of better family than most of them—lingered a moment. "Look here," he said, "when I get back we'll get together, you and I. I've a big scheme in mind. We'll talk it over." But I never saw him again.\*

The trail leading southwestward to the sea wound down the mountainside, and for a time I could see them as they slipped and slid along it. Then Vasco Nuñez turned to wave his arm in last farewell, and one by one they vanished in the forest.

Pedro and Rubén and I got to our feet and shouldered our packs. A little of the day was left, and we had far to go. That night we camped at Quaraqua's hill; the next, striking to the west, we camped by the headwaters of the

\*It was he who was thinking that a canal might be cut to join the two oceans.

## The Sea

Cañaxa; the third, at an Indian village called Pirréa; the fourth night we slept upon a sand bar in the river Bayano and on the fifth we came to Chepo, by the Chepo River, and here Pedro and Rubén turned back to cross the mountains and return to their own people. In Chepo village there stood a curious-looking vehicle with room in it for twenty people. A man who stood beside it told me that I might ride in it for a sum of money. I had no money but I gave him an emerald stone I had picked up on the mountainside, and he was content. "We start at once," he said. "Climb in and take your seat."

"But neither horses, oxen nor mules are yet harnessed to this cart," I said. "How say you that we are ready to start?"

Nevertheless, I climbed in with the others, and the wagon went swiftly. The road was very rough, and we were shaken till our bones cried out for mercy. But in two hours we had traveled fifty miles. To go an equal distance through the jungle with Vasco Nuñez had eaten twenty days.

We came to a great city which was lighted, although the sun had gone, so that it shone like day. "Ciudad Panamá!" said the man who guided the wagon. "All out!"

I got down and went to my place of sleeping. Two friends of mine were waiting there for me—the one who was called the Eel and the one who was called the Honey-bee. They were pacing up and down looking at their watches.

"Where in hell have you been?" they cried. "We've got to get over to Colón by morning! We're sailing for New York tomorrow! What's been keeping you back?"

## Jungle Jim

“Well,” I said apologetically, “I had to show some friends of mine around. We got kind of delayed.”

“I’ll say you were delayed,” remarked the Eel savagely. “Come on, let’s grab a drink somewhere.”

I saw them off at Colón. They were leaning on the rail of the Santa Clara as she pulled out and singing a song I used to sing . . .

*“Oh, baby, won’t you please come home?”*

But I like it in Panama. I stayed on.

## CHAPTER XXII

### Four To Go

**W**HERE do the gods of men live? The instinctive answer is to point upward to the skies. The confident belief that the gods live upon the mountaintops is deep rooted in the heart. The impulse to point upward to the cloud-hidden summits is as old as the mountains themselves.

"Would you like to see the home of the gods?" I asked.

We were sitting at a restaurant table in Panama City. My guests were a young American named Jimmy, his wife Alice and her brother Henry, a youngster of sixteen. They had come to Panama to sample the marvelous game fishing of the Pacific. They had been thrilled by it. Alice had broken the record for all women anglers, landing three monster fighting sailfish bigger than herself. Now they hankered for further adventures.

They looked at me eagerly. "The home of the gods!" repeated Jimmy. "Sounds interesting. Where is it?"

I hesitated. "Are you ready to risk being murdered by

## Jungle Jim

hostile Indians?" I asked. "No white woman has ever gone into that country."

Jimmy looked at his wife. She smiled. "Let's go," she said. "Where is this temple of the gods?"

"It isn't a temple," I said. "It's nothing but a bare mountaintop. It's called Tacarcuna Mountain. It's the highest peak in the Cordillera del Darien, the range that extends from the Pacific to the Atlantic and divides Panama from Colombia. It's about two hundred and fifty miles southeast of here. We can go the first hundred and fifty miles by motorboat, the next fifty by canoes on jungle rivers. But we'll have to do most of the last fifty on foot, climbing the divide, and all that will be through the country of the hostile Cunas, the *Cunas bravas*. They may never let us pass through."

"How high is this mountain where the gods live?"

"A little over seven thousand feet. It's no cloud piercer. We've got mountains in North Carolina and Tennessee almost as high. But if the gods made their home in the Blue Ridge I never heard of it. Tacarcuna may not be lofty but it has its roots in the beginning of the world."

"A seven-thousand-foot climb doesn't sound too difficult," said Jimmy.

"You won't be obliged to climb it at all," I said. "We won't attempt the trail leading over it. Our trail will take us over Tubum Mountain, just south of Tacarcuna, not more than a dozen miles from it. From Tubum you will be able to see the home of the gods."

"Has anybody else ever made that crossing?"

"Not that I know of."

"Okay," said Jimmy. "When do we start?"

Within a day or two we had got together our equipment for the trip and I had found a little coastwise

## Four to Go

schooner on which we booked passage for the first leg of the journey. The four of us went on board the boat in the April evening. It was insufferably hot, and after one look at the tiny cabins and their bunks we decided to sleep on deck and stowed our belongings on the afterdeck benches. It was lucky that we were the first to arrive, for soon our fellow passengers, all bush Negroes, came aboard, and there was a great scrambling for deck space which soon became crowded with the Negroes, their crying babies and their fighting cocks, each family burdened with smelly raw-rubber sacks filled with cheap silks and novelties bought in the city. Just before we cast off a Panamanian customs officer came on board, glanced at our small arsenal of rifles, shotguns and pistols and asked to see our permits. I had secured them both from the mayor and from the Colombian minister to Panama, for we expected to enter Colombia. After counting the guns and studying the permit for some minutes the official said, "The permit doesn't call for a machine gun." Surprised, we all looked at our stack of arms to see who had slipped in a tommy gun. The customs officer pointed at a small rifle. It was a .22, fitted with a telescopic lens sight—something he had never heard of before. Obviously disappointed, he let us go.

By ten o'clock the lights of Ciudad Panamá were fading out astern, and the sea breeze from the Pacific had brought relief as the schooner chugged southeastward across a corner of the broad Gulf of Panama. The night at sea was delightful, hard as our benches were. At six in the morning we were within the Gulf of San Miguel, the wide arm of the sea which extends into the province of Darien, Panama's most southerly province, and soon came to the mouth of the mighty Tuira River which emp-

## Jungle Jim

ties into the gulf and which is twenty miles wide at its mouth. For the next two hours, ascending the river, we threaded our way through its hundreds of oddly shaped small rocky islands, then arrived at La Palma, capital of the province, a town with a population of about three hundred: all black souls, all happy-go-lucky, all smiling and chattering and all, even the smallest of children, greeting us with a friendly "*¡Buenos días!*"

The thatched huts of La Palma are spraddled upon a steep hill, with the lowest ones overhanging the river, their narrow, rickety piers propped on tall poles. There's a big rise of tide. The tide was up when we arrived, and we walked right into the back door, or front door—whichever you want to call it—of a one-room trading store run by a Chinaman. It was more like a warehouse than like any store you ever saw, the floor heaped with country produce to be shipped to the city by boat, and the shelves filled with canned goods. The Chinaman made us some coffee and cooked some eggs for us, and we bought some canned goods for our lunch. We climbed the hill and got a magnificent view of the surrounding country across the wide river. There was nothing but forest stretching on and on. You began to realize here, only a hundred miles or so from Panama City, that from now on there would be no more cities, no more towns, nothing but thousands of square miles of green forest and blue mountain, with, at the most, a cluster of thatched huts miles away from the next cluster. From here on it would be the country of the Choco Indians, friendly Indians, until at last you would come to the country of the hostile Cunas. After that—only the gods, whom no one sees.

We got back on board the trading schooner and went on up the river for almost fifty miles, passing only one



## Four to Go

village, Chepigana, in all that distance until we came to Darien's last outpost of trade, the village of El Real. We anchored in midstream, for El Real has no pier. Black people, sketchily clothed, gazed at us from the high bank of the river on which their huts are built. I shouted for Chico. Chico was a small Negro who had acted as boatman for me in the past. Chico instantly made his appearance on the bank but yelled back that he had no piragua, or dugout canoe. However, he soon borrowed one, a canoe so long that it seemed too much for one small paddler to handle, and pushed off up the river. "Where's he going?" demanded Henry. "Why doesn't he come straight here?" "Wait and see," I said. Chico knew his business. When he had got a little upstream he shot out into the swift current and let it bring him alongside us in midstream. The current did most of the work.

We lowered our traps into the dugout, and Chico brought us safely to the shore. My first question was for Pablo Othon. Someone ran off and fetched him. Pablo is the most important man in this frontier settlement. He hurried up, all smiles, for he is an old friend of mine, but when we told him that we intended to go into the forbidden country of the Cunas he crossed himself.

But Pablo was a great help to us. He welcomed us to his fine house and for the next two days accompanied me while I tried to find boatmen who would be willing to take us at least as far as the first village of the hostile Cunas. We argued, offering better and better pay, with one man after another, but all were afraid. They knew that Cunas don't like anyone, especially Negroes like themselves, to enter their country. But Pablo persisted, and at last we found two men, each one the owner of a

## Jungle Jim

canoe, who agreed to take us as far up the Tuirá as the mouth of the Cupe River, Boca de Cupe.

We made our start the next morning. A few miles up the river I shot a *conejo pintada*, the "painted rabbit," and we broiled it that evening for supper. It tasted like a mixture of turkey and pork. A little farther on as we turned a bend in the river we saw a deer on a sand bar. Jimmy fired, and the buck bounded into the air and fell into the water, thrashing about as if badly wounded. But just before we got to him he bounded into the thick undergrowth along the bank and vanished.

At times the river grew very shallow and rocky, and we were obliged to get out of the canoes and help the boatmen push them along until we reached deeper water. Late in the afternoon we made camp on a sand bar and slept that night, as well as we could, in the canoes. Overhead the black howlers, huge black monkeys, kept up their deep bass bellowing until late in the night.

We made an early start the next morning. After an hour or so of *palancando*, or poling the dugouts upstream, rounding a bend, we saw several Indians encamped on a shady sand bar ahead of us. We were still in the country of the friendly Choco tribesmen. I told our boatmen to pull over to them. There were two in the crowd whom I had known for many years, Behu and Simión. We shook hands all around. While I was powwowing with the Indians Henry gathered firewood and built a fire. Jimmy cooked a breakfast of ham, pancakes and coffee. Behu, the older of my Indian friends, asked politely where we were going. I told him we planned to go through the Cuna country. He grinned broadly, and all the others whispered excitedly to each other at our audacity. Behu said only two words: "*Indios malos* [Bad Indians]." The Choco



A fire that never ceases in the home of a Tule-Cuna.



## Four to Go

doesn't dare enter the Cuna country, but the Cunas come down from the mountains whenever they feel like it and pass through the Choco country unmolested.

Breakfast over, we shook hands again and started on up the river. After poling and paddling all morning we came to Yapi, the last Choco village before entering the Cuna domain. Its houses were built upon poles, with the floor of the single large room lifted eight or ten feet above ground. The floors were of split giant bamboo, so springy that each step upon them seemed about to break them through. The village seemed deserted, but by climbing the long notched beam that serves as stairway from the ground to the living quarters I soon discovered that there must have been a fiesta of some sort the night before. The whole village had got drunk on corn *chicha* and was sleeping it off, stretched out on their mattresses made from the inner bark of the giant *quipo*, or cottonwood, trees. We rested in the shade for an hour and then went on our way up the Tuira. That night we slept for the second time in our canoes, fighting mosquitoes and listening to the weird jungle noises from night birds and animals.

At the first crack of dawn we built a fire and breakfasted, then set off. After hauling the piraguas over many rapids we reached the mouth of the Cupe in midafternoon. We were well into Cuna country now, and our Negro boatmen refused to go any farther. They unloaded everything from one piragua into the other and headed for home, down river, at once. We four decided to camp for the night on the sand bar where we had landed and, accordingly, pitched our tent for the first time and hung mosquito bars up.

After supper Jimmy wanted to go crocodile hunting

## Jungle Jim

with a flashlight and shotgun. I told him he would find both crocodiles and alligators this far up the river and that if he wanted to shoot only crocodiles he must notice the color of their eyes when the flashlight shone on them. If they shone red they were alligators. If they shone yellow or golden they were crocodiles. He thought at first that I was joking but he later found this to be the fact. "But it might be better if you put off hunting for a while," I added. "I'm pretty certain that there are Cuna Indians somewhere in the neighborhood along the riverbank."

Jimmy grinned and said he guessed he would go anyway. Henry looked worried. He was just a youngster and he didn't say anything, but it was plain that he was a little alarmed. Jimmy wandered off down the riverbank. After a while we heard him fire, twice. We were wondering if he had hit anything, when there was a rustle in the undergrowth on the bank near us and two well-built Cuna braves, naked except for red loincloths, stepped into the circle of our firelight. *Chacaras*, woven bags, bows and arrows were slung over their backs, and each one carried a single-barreled shotgun. They said not a word.

Henry, who had been sitting on a log with his back to them, seemed to sense their presence without looking around and was on my side of the fire in less time than it takes to tell it. "Sit down, Henry," I said, smiling, "and pay no attention to them. Remember what I told you?" His sister kept her seat and nodded understanding. I had told them many times before we got here what to do and what not to do. I had explained that a jungle Indian will always try to put you into the position of making the first move, but that my experience had been that it was always best to make him speak first. Curiosity will soon get the better of him. So we waited.

## Four to Go

Soon Jimmy came back, glanced at the Indians and then at me. I motioned him to a seat on the log and whispered, "Don't say a word." We four just sat and stared into the fire. In perhaps three minutes—although it seemed more like an hour—the Indians came forward, still without a word, and stood beside us.

I took out a package of cigarettes and offered one to all present—including the Indians. Of course, they each took one. No Indian ever refuses a cigarette. Then I struck a match and lighted theirs first. The younger Indian smiled and sat down on the log next to Henry. I thought Henry would faint at any moment. He was game though.

We smoked in silence until the older Indian's cigarette had got so short that he could no longer hold it. Then, in very bad Spanish, he spoke.

"You cannot go any farther," he said. "I would like to have you come to my house, but our laws say no one can come into the Tacarcuna Mountain, our country."

"That is because you do not trust the white men, is it not so?" I asked him. "You are afraid our men will steal your women, is that not the reason?"

"Yes," he answered.

I turned to Alice. "Stand up and take off your helmet," I said.

Then, pointing at her, I told the Indian that she was my daughter and Jimmy's wife and that Henry was my son.

"This woman is ours," I said. "Why should we want one of yours? We will not even look at your women. Go to your chief and tell him to bring his wife here if she wants to see this white woman, my daughter. My daughter will have beautiful presents for all who come."

"I will tell him," he promised.

"How far is it to your village?" I asked.

## Jungle Jim

"You must go two more turns on this river," he said, "and then, on the left, you enter the Pucro River. Pass twelve bends of the Pucro and you will come to the village on the right bank."

Then I handed a pack of cigarettes to each of the two men. As silently as they had come they vanished into the jungle, heading for the hidden trail by which they had come.

I grinned at Henry. "Well, son, that wasn't so bad, was it?" I said.

We all let out a sigh of relief but wondered what the next day would bring. The next day would be the critical one.

I think we all managed to get some sleep, and at four in the morning we broke camp and pushed off again in the piragua. We rounded two bends of the Tuirá, entered the Pucro and began counting the turns of the smaller river. Rounding the twelfth bend, there, sure enough, was the village of Tapalisa. About forty men and boys were standing on the riverbank watching us as we paddled slowly toward them. They were expecting us, all right. Doubtless we had been watched during the night, and the outposts had brought word we were on our way. We paddled up to the shore and grounded the canoe, and still no word was said on either side.

"Wait a second, Jimmy," I said. "Show them what you can do with a rifle."

About fifty yards up the river, standing on a sand bar, was a long-necked white crane. Jimmy picked up the .22-caliber Mossberg with the 4-power lens sight, aimed and hit the crane in the neck. There was a murmur of awe from the Indians behind us as the white bird flopped in



## Four to Go

the sand. It was plain that the feat had given them something to think about.

"All right, Alice," I said. "Do your stuff."

As we had planned it Alice stepped out of the dugout and waded ashore by herself. The young Indian who had visited us the night before pointed at her, and all the Indians began jabbering excitedly as they watched her come toward them. She was the first white woman they had ever seen. Jimmy and Henry and I pulled the dugout up on shore, unloaded it and followed Alice up the bank. She was already the center of a crowd of naked little boys and she was laughing and pushing them gently out of her way. They tagged at her heels and crowded in front of her, enchanted. We walked through the center of the jabbering mob to the biggest of the fifteen or twenty thatched huts which made up the village. I opened the door, and we all stepped in. An old Indian woman was sitting on a carved wooden stool by a fire of two logs burning end to end on the earthen floor. Alice pulled up another stool, sat down beside the old woman and said cheerfully, "Hello! How are you?" and at once held up her wrist watch to the old woman's ear so that she could hear its ticking. The old woman laughed and patted Alice on the arm. And inside of three minutes every woman of the village who wasn't already in the house was trying to squeeze in to see this white woman with blue eyes and listen to the thing that ticked. Alice had made friends for all of us.

We wanted to go on our way the next morning, so I tried to make arrangements for guides who could take us over the trail to Paya, the Cuna village from which we would begin to climb the mountain passes. Not one Indian would agree to help us. Finally an eighteen-year-old boy,

## Jungle Jim

the chief's son, said that his father was on a hunt in the mountains and would not return until the following night and that we could not go on until his father gave permission. They made us comfortable enough but doubted that the chief would let us go any farther.

Alice remained the center of admiring inspection, and during the following day several Indian families from up in the hills came in to see the white woman with hair of gold. Everyone fell in love with her. Late in the afternoon the old chief, Castillo, came back from his hunting trip and, like all the rest, at once became her friend. He was extremely courteous, gave us the permission we had so anxiously awaited and rounded up ten men to carry our packs over the foothills. That night after the whole village had taken to its hammocks at the customary hour, seven o'clock, and the candles of corozo nuts had been put out in every hut the chief began singing a chant to entertain us. It was the chant called "*Naibe Namaquedi*," the snake song.

Like an orchestral conductor who raps his baton to command readiness, he shouted from his hammock a single word, a loud cry of "*Wa-i!*" which echoed through the village. Then there was silence for three or four minutes to give time for all candles to be extinguished and every villager to come to attention. The chief then again shouted "*Wa-i!*" Instantly, from every darkened hut, came an answering chorus of "*Wa-i!*" As the shout died away the chief began the chant, intoning one line at a time and waiting after each line for the men to repeat it after him in their high singsong.

"*Nele tuinale quingui!*" he sang. "High in the mountains of the snakes!"

"*Nele tuinale quingui!*" came the answering chorus.

## Four to Go

"*Tule buquiba nega-a-a!*" *Tule*—that is what the Cunas call themselves—"the people of the sky." *Buquiba nega*—that deadly snake, the hognose viper, small, dark brown, never more than a foot or two in length—the death lurking in the house.

"*Galu mulu ugaka bali!*"

"The snake lies hidden everywhere!"

"*Eh! Galu bani imahelegue, si!*"

"Yea! The deadly one sings to itself as it drowzes!"

"*Ye! Galu bani arbaye, si!*"

"Yea! The snake rustles its dry skin!"

"*Ye! Nele di Tule imaque, si!*"

"Yea! I, chief of the sky men, sing this!"

"*Tule di bali itto sabiesuli!*"

"We, the sky men, shall destroy the den of the snake!"

"*Ye! Galu pibila bali imaque, si!*"

"Yea! Of the snakes of every color we sing!"

The chant ceased as suddenly as it had begun. The village slept.

I lay awake for a while, wondering where I had heard that chant before.

Early the next morning we were ready to start on. The ten pack carriers shouldered their loads and set off ahead. "How long will it take us to reach Paya?" I asked Chief Castillo. "Not long—about two hours and a half," he answered. "Yes, two hours."

He summoned a man who, he told us, would act as our guide. This man, Castillo explained, was a sub-chief. His name was Goya. With him was a woman who from the first moment of our arrival had never left Alice's side. Her humbly adoring eyes were like those of a spaniel. I am sure she was convinced that the white woman was a goddess. Now she refused to be left behind. We gave her

## Jungle Jim

a little something to carry. Her brown face was radiant with joy.

Castillo shook hands in farewell. "Come again," he urged me. "Bring more of your women so that our women may see them."

The whole village waved us good-by.

After we had been tramping along the narrow trail for three hours, instead of two, I asked Goya how much farther it was to Paya. "*No es muy largo*," he replied. "Not very far." We went on. At noon we forded a rocky river and came to a deserted hut, mud floored, without side walls. We were hungry, but all our supplies had gone on ahead with the packers. We had counted on being in Paya village by noon. All we had with us was a package of pancake flour—but no frying pan. We picked some small apple bananas and washed them down with river water.

After resting for a while we took to the trail again. During the morning we had forded the river twice and had taken off our boots to do so each time. But during that afternoon we must have crossed that winding river a half-dozen times. We didn't bother to take our boots off any more. Hour after hour we toiled along, and still no Paya. Were we lost? At four in the afternoon we came to a village of three large and well-built bamboo houses.

"What's the name of this place?" I asked Goya.

"Goya," he said proudly. He tapped himself on the chest. "Goya," he repeated.

It was his own village.

The whole population—fifteen or twenty men, women and children—came pouring out and gathered around Alice. Goya showed her off as proudly as if he had invented her himself. Nobody paid any attention to Jimmy

## Four to Go

and Henry and me. We hadn't got to Paya, but here at least was a place to sleep, and we were all four of us dog-tired. Goya provided us with grass hammocks, and we tumbled into them early. But Alice had to remain on exhibition as long as she could keep her eyes open, for fresh delegations of Indians of all ages and both sexes kept arriving from the surrounding hills to stare at her. Just before I turned in I asked Goya again how far it was to Paya.

"*No es muy largo*," he replied reassuringly. What a cheerful liar he was!

As we departed the next morning Goya's wife presented each of us with a hen's egg. We were touched. And if we didn't reach Paya soon we would need them badly. We carried them like priceless treasures. I held mine in my hand all the way from Goya to Paya—eight hours of hard travel. When we tottered into Paya late that afternoon we were all in. Our ten packers were there, all our packs stacked neatly in a house they had got ready for us. I asked the head packer what time they had arrived there. "Yesterday morning," he said. "What!" I exclaimed. "Why has it taken us two days?" "Oh," he said, "that was because Chief Goya wanted his women to see your woman."

We could have got there in two hours, and Goya had taken us on a two-day hike merely to show off our Alice! I told Jimmy the story. "Looks as if the Indians are doing most of the sight-seeing on our tour," he remarked.

We paid off our packers with pieces of cheap cotton goods, glass necklaces and cheap jewelry, and they set off happily for home. Two of them agreed to stay on with us to act as guides.

The Indians of this village, which was on the banks of

## Jungle Jim

the Paya River, showed no more hostility than those of Tapalisa had. They were smiling, good-natured fellows. When we went down to the river next morning for a swim several Indian girls and boys came along. The women escorted Alice to a sand bar a little downstream from the men's swimming place. As the Indian girls reached the sand bar they would unwrap their sarongs and step into the water naked. Alice, of course, wore a bathing suit. We wore shorts, the Indian men nothing. None of the Indians would go in much more than knee-deep. We soon found out why. The water was full of small fish, the *parai*, *piranha*, or *paraña*, which are flesh-eating. They were hardly more than four inches in length but will attack anything and soon drove us from the water. They pinched viciously, and Jimmy had several teeth marks on his legs. I hadn't realized that the *parai* are to be found on the Panama side of the divide. In other parts of northern South America they grow to a much larger size and have been known to devour animals and men in the water.

That day I tried to hire ten or twelve Indians to pack our goods over the mountains into Colombia, but without success. We were obliged to remain in Paya for five days. We found out afterward that we were being held there until a runner could go to the village of Tigre, on the Colombian side of the border, and return with word from the *lele*, or chief medicine man, that we could pass through.

We filled in the time as best we could. The first night we decided to go hunting for deer or wild pig with jack lights. Jimmy and Alice took one trail, Henry and I another. The moon was shining brightly, which isn't a help to night hunting. Henry and I walked up the trail a half-mile and came to a place where we could hear the river

## Four to Go

roaring down through a deep gorge. I had a strong head lamp, so from the edge of the bluff I focused it upon the rocks on the far side of the river about sixty feet below. Two gleaming green eyes were caught in the glare. "There's a big snake, Henry," I called. Not having a flashlight, Henry couldn't see it. "Where?" he gasped, and jumped to get alongside of me, almost knocking me off the cliff. He thought the snake had been close beside us.

Going back to the trail, I found a fallen log a few feet from the trail, and after poking around it to dislodge any previous tenants we sat down on it to wait for whatever game might come along the trail. I shut off my light and told Henry to be very quiet, for we would probably have to wait quite a while before anything came along.

The boy kept quiet as long as he could but soon he began to get restless, and I could feel him fidgeting around on the log. Finally I whispered to him, "What are you doing?" "I'm worried about that snake you saw," he answered. I assured him that by this time all the snakes had got far away from us. A few minutes passed in silence. I thought I would have some fun. So I reached quietly around Henry's shoulder and pinched him on the bare arm. He jumped straight up into the air and yelled, "Oh God!" Naturally, I was tickled, but not Henry. "Jungle," he said earnestly, "please don't scare me like that again. I've never been in the woods before."

Henry's yell of terror had made it useless to expect any animals to come that way, so we started back for the village. Halfway back my flashlight caught the eyes of a baby deer, and it stood frozen in the glare. I shot it.

Jimmy and Alice came back with the report that each had shot a large rainbow boa constrictor. Rainbow boas

## Jungle Jim

grow to a length of seven or eight feet. In the shadow their color is brownish, but in sunlight they gleam iridescently with all the colors of the rainbow.

A day or two later as we were walking along the trail we saw several men beating about the underbrush with sticks. Near them a little boy lay in the trail, crying. One of the men told me the boy had been bitten by a *buquibana*, the poisonous hog nose viper. I asked why they didn't take the boy into one of the houses while we sent back for some snake-bite remedy we had with us. "No," answered the Indian, "we must kill a snake or the boy will die." So they were letting him lie there while they beat around in the bushes to find a snake.

But Jimmy doctored the little fellow for two days, and he got well. Indians seldom die from snake bite.

Late in the afternoon of our last day in Paya some eighty or one hundred Indians, men, women and children, gathered around our house to say good-by. Several of them had come from great distances to see our white girl. We handed out little presents to all of them. Everything was proceeding in the most friendly fashion. I was talking to one of the old men, and quite a number of men had gathered around us, some standing, some squatting, Indian fashion, when a well-built youngster of about eighteen pushed through the circle and stood just at my right. His long hair grew right down over his eyes; his face and body were hideously painted, and he carried a war club of ironwood in his hand. Without the slightest warning, and for no reason, he suddenly lifted the club and struck me across the stomach, a blow that almost bent me double. I straightened up and gave him a shove, at the same time tripping him. He rolled head over heels and scrambled to his hands and knees, still clutching the club.



## Four to Go

Why, I don't know, but I pointed my finger at him and laughed very loud. At this, all the Indians began laughing and pointing at him. In return the fallen Indian pointed his finger at me and screamed with laughter. So for the next hour Jimmy and I were kept busy showing them how to trip a man up.

The runner had come back from Colombia with the word that we might come ahead, so we now had no difficulty in hiring ten men for pack carriers, in addition to the two men who had come with us from Tapalisa. We set off early the next morning and now began the most exhausting trek I have ever made in all my twenty years in the jungle. The trail led straight up and down, from ridge to ridge, always ascending toward Tubum Mountain and the divide, and although we struggled on for ten hours each day, walking forty-five minutes, then resting for fifteen, we seldom advanced ten miles in a day. Soon we threw away our tent and other things too heavy to carry. The Indians hid each discarded object in the bushes off the trail and said they would pick them up on their way home. At the end of each day's march they would build small shacks thatched with *manaca* palm leaves for us to sleep under. We slept on the ground, rolled up in our blankets, for the nights were cool on the mountainside.

On one of these nights on the mountain it rained violently. I have never known such a downpour. It came down like Niagara. We dug a trench around our little shack to carry the water off, but it didn't do much good. The Indians had usually slept on the ground, with nothing over them but the sky, but this night they all crept under the overhanging eaves of the thatched roof. One of them was sitting on a rubber pack bag, just at Henry's head. Henry was half asleep. The Indian dozed off, and his hand fell

## Jungle Jim

on Henry's face. Henry bounded up, shouting that something had crawled over him. He fell over several Indians in trying to get out of the place. When he came back he decided to put up his mosquito bar. There are no mosquitoes at that altitude, but Henry didn't want things crawling on him. After all had settled down to stillness again I said, "Are you asleep?" "Not yet," they said. "Don't anybody move," I whispered. "There's something cold crawling over my legs."

Henry went right through his mosquito bar, bumped into the corner post of our hut, and the palm roof caved in on all of us. I didn't dare to laugh. Alice was very wet and cross, so I was afraid to confess that my cold crawling friend was only imaginary and that I had just wanted to see what Henry would do. I found out. Our blankets were wringing wet, and, to make things worse, when daylight came we found that all but our two Indians from Tapalisa had deserted us, taking with them several sacks of food and trade goods.

We reached the summit of Tubum, 5280 feet above the sea, that day just as the clouds cleared away. The Indians halted and pointed northward. A dozen miles away we could see the dark flanks of an even higher mountain, its crest still swathed in clouds.

"Tacarcuna," said the Indians.

"There it is," I said. "That's the home of the god who made men."

"Oh yeah?" said Jimmy. "What was his name?"

"Olo-kupi-lele. Gold-Silver Medicine Man. There was once a flood whose waters covered all the earth, excepting only that mountaintop. Olo-kupi-lele came down from the skies and created lesser gods. He and his wife had bodies of shining white, like silver, and their hair was bright as

## Four to Go

gold. First they created Aoba and his wife, who were red brown of skin, and from them all the Cunas, the sky people, are descended. And next they created Suiñapa and his wife who were black skinned."

"And do the Cunas still believe in this white god?"

"I'm afraid they lost a good deal of faith in him three or four hundred years ago and haven't trusted him so much since. That was when the Spaniards came. The Spaniards killed them by hundreds, made thousands of them toil in the gold mines as slaves, brutally treated their women. But the Cuna has never forgotten that he himself was created a 'sky man' and was born to do right. No Cuna ever steals from another. No Cuna ever mistreats a woman. You have seen them in their villages, happy and contented. But someday, of course, the white man will force himself in upon them once more and show them what it really means to be civilized."

For a long time we stood gazing at the distant mountain where only the gods have ever lived. And then it was time to resume our weary march once more.

As the farthest slope of Tubum Mountain was reached we had run out of water. We had hoped to find water bamboos growing along the trail, as elsewhere, but now we could find none. We grew more and more tired and thirsty and had to stop to make camp long before dark. One of the Indians took six empty canteens and went ahead to search for water while we built our shelters for the night. In two hours he came back, with all six canteens filled with fresh water. No drink ever tasted so good as that!

The next day, still descending the mountain trail, Jimmy turned his ankle and skidded on his back down the steep trail for about seventy-five feet. He was afraid to grab a bush to check his fall, as most of the trees and bushes of

## Jungle Jim

the mountains have long thorns and some are very poisonous. He hobbled all the rest of the way to the village of Tigre. We finally got to the village, the divide crossed, all of us very tired and footsore, wringing wet and ravenously hungry. We had nothing left to eat but a quarter of a pound of bacon.

The chief's family was so large that he had two bamboo houses—one for cooking and eating, the other for sleeping. He himself was very sick with malaria. I tried to establish friendships by giving him a double handful of five-grain quinine capsules, worth their weight in gold, but he didn't even grunt any thanks. I asked him to sell us a chicken, some green bananas and some breadfruit. "The breadfruit and bananas are mine," he answered, "and I will give you some for some of your trade goods, but the chickens belong to my wife."

I spoke to the woman, and she pointed out an old hen. I pleaded for another, but she wouldn't listen. "Catch the chicken," commanded the chief. No one offered to help, so I picked up the .22 rifle and blazed away. The bullet hit the old hen somewhere in the stern, and she took off through the wild coffee bushes, but Henry proved his worth by outrunning her.

In the big cookhouse there were two fires, one at each end, but they wouldn't let us use either of them. So I told one of the women we would give her a fine piece of cloth if she would stew the chicken until it was tender and bake the green bananas and breadfruit for us. She put the old hen in a big iron pot and dumped the bananas and breadfruit on top of it. In about ten minutes she said it was ready. Jimmy, Alice and Henry did themselves justice, but I managed to eat a half-raw thigh and no more.

I asked the chief to let us sleep by the fires to dry out

## Four to Go

our wet clothing, but he replied that the dogs slept there and we would have to sleep in the other house. Our bedding and blankets were soaking wet. They offered us nothing to sleep on, so we put our wet blankets on the red clay floor and fought mosquitoes all night.

A walk of an hour and a half the next morning brought us to Unguia, in Colombia, the first civilized village we had seen in weeks. When I say "civilized" I mean that there was one store there. We bought canned salmon, sardines, tomatoes, beans and crackers and we all agreed that if we could have a banquet such as this every day life would be worth living. We slept in the store that night and left the next morning for the Atrato River.

About fifty years ago the people of Unguia dug a canal from the village to the Atrato River, a distance of ten miles, and this canal which is only from four to six feet wide—just wide enough for a canoe—remains the only way in which the Atrato Valley may be reached. We hired a piragua which our two faithful Cunas from Tapalisa would take back to Unguia and embarked. The canal was so matted with water lilies that progress was exceedingly slow, and we did not reach Palo Blanco, on the Atrato—one little palm house—until seven that night. For the last two hours the mosquitoes kept us continually busy. Their hum was like a brass band. As we came out on the river we saw, to our unutterable relief, a boat owned by a friend of mine in Panama City. It was anchored about three hundred feet off shore.

"Ahoy, Deborah!" I yelled. A searchlight from the bridge picked us out, and the voice of Bill Surgeon, chief engineer of the Deborah, came booming across the water.

"Mister Jungle Jim Price, by all that's holy!"

She looked like the Normandie to us. We stayed on

## Jungle Jim

board her as guests of her captain and owner for a week of solid comfort and plenty of food. On the eighth day the captain took us down the Atrato to its mouth on the Atlantic, where we luckily found a trading schooner to take us to Colón.

As we floated down the wide and silent Atrato, "a region of marshes and shallow lakes," I remembered that this was the river which had first been known four hundred years ago as the River of Darien. This was the river that Vasco Nuñez de Balboa and his lieutenants, Rodrigo de Colmenares and Bartolome Hurtado, had ascended in their vain search for the fabled land of the white goddess, Davaiva, and the temple of gold which had been erected in her honor.

Jimmy looked at his wife thoughtfully. "Do you remember that Indian woman," he said, "who followed you around as if you were a goddess or something?"

"What's funny about that?" laughed Alice. "Don't you too?"

"I mean, I'm trying to think what it was she called you," he persisted. "She had some queer-sounding name for you, don't you remember?" He turned to me. "Don't you remember, Jim? What was that name?"

I nodded. "I remember now," I said. "It was Davaiva. Davaiva, the goddess of the ancient jungle. That must have been where her temple was—there on the Mountain of the Gods. No wonder you felt right at home!"

We laughed. But all four of us fell strangely silent then for a while. The jungle was all around us, still, and in its depths were mysteries.











