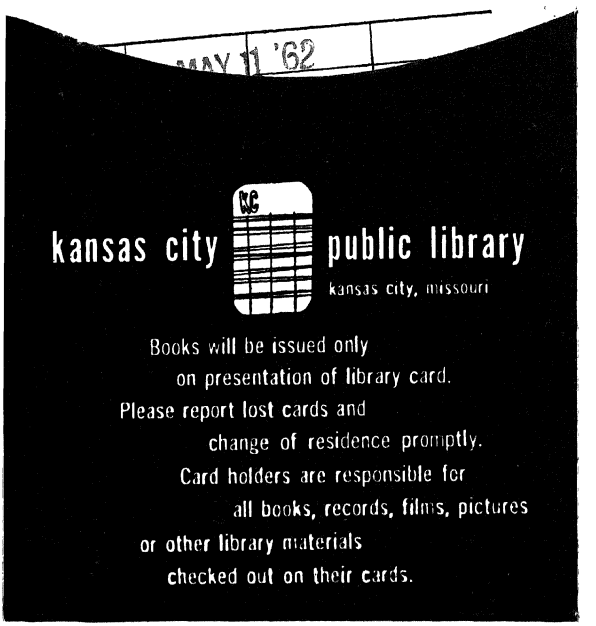

Throw Me a Bone

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WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU MARRY AN ARCHAEOLOGIST

by

Eleanor Lothrop

WHITTLESEY HOUSE
McGRAW-HILL BOOK COMPANY, INC.
NEW YORK : TORONTO

THROW ME A BONE

The quality of the materials used in the manufacture of this book is governed by continued postwar shortages.

PUBLISHED BY WHITTLESEY HOUSE

A DIVISION OF THE MCGRAW-HILL BOOK COMPANY, INC.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FOR SAM

When Eleanor Lothrop swore to "obey," she had no idea her new husband would soon be giving her orders to "clean out that smashed skeleton in Grave No. 27." In this gay and adventurous book, she tells just what can happen when you marry a famous archaeologist and decide to go along with him for better or worse. There isn't much that doesn't happen, and it is all exciting, new and continuously amusing.

Preface

ACCORDING to the dictionary, "archaeology is "the study of past human life and activities, as shown by the relics, monuments, etc., of ancient peoples." What the dictionary doesn't explain is that you've got to get at the relics and the monuments before you can study them—unless, of course, you restrict yourself to studying what someone else has found and that, according to Marquess of Queensbury rules, isn't done. You'd think that an archaeologist would sometimes be willing to accept the conclusions of his fellow scientists but he doesn't seem to have much confidence in human beings (except dead ones) and has to find out for himself.

Monuments of ancient peoples are overgrown with brush and covered with earth while relics are buried deep in the ground. If someone has already cleaned them off or dug them up it doesn't count, for the game consists in finding your own, and although any archaeologist worth his ancient salt is interested in examining the discoveries of others he must turn up something himself before he can actually score.

And this is no longer easy. The supply of monuments and relics is by no means exhausted but those archaeologists first on the scene naturally grab the best places so that, except for a question of luck, anything good that's left is apt to be in out-of-the-way spots and far from the comforts of home. In fact in all the years in which I've tagged along on archaeological expeditions not once did we settle down to work within walking distance of running water or a bed with springs. There is one school of thought which claims it unsporting to be comfortable but I've never subscribed to it.

Ancient ruins or monuments are somewhat easier to find than relics. Many now dead cities and their locations are mentioned in historical accounts and there seems to be no rule against using a history book as a "trot." In addition, monuments are bound to be

above ground, and although they may be covered with earth and rubble, at least they do stick out in plain view. The only trick is to be able to distinguish between what is a natural geographic feature and what is an artificial excrescence. I myself have mistaken everything from Mount Popocatepetl to a small bump in a back yard for an ancient mound, but archaeologists seem to have a special gift for spotting the real thing and don't make these humiliating mistakes. Once you've made a discovery, all that's left to do is hire a group of workmen to clean off the top layer of rubbish, find a place near by to live, take typhoid shots and collect a snakebite outfit, plenty of quinine, toilet paper and whisky (medicinal). Everything is then set for the real work which consists of giving a spit and a polish to what comes to light after the dirt of ages has been removed.

Relics take more searching for. These evidences of ancient civilization, whether ornamental or practical, are buried on or with their one-time owners; but the big question is "where?"

Archaeologists sometimes look for a cemetery near the ruins of an old city, arguing that the people who once lived there must have done something with all the bodies that accumulated over the centuries. Unfortunately, however, there is no sure way of telling just where they tucked them away or whether they carted them off to some spot outside the city limits, so this is somewhat of a hit-or-miss procedure. A more reliable method is to look for a piece of ground that has bits of prehistoric pottery scattered on top. The broken pottery may be just ancient rubbish—in which case, though, you're "warm," as this is a definite indication of a former civilization—or it may mean that someone in plowing a field or making a road has struck scientific pay dirt. In the latter case it is most probable that untouched graves are to be had for the digging, for unless the erstwhile plower or road digger happened upon gold or precious stones he undoubtedly shrugged his shoulders and went home.

Once a site has been selected the same preparations take place as in attacking a monument. Here, though, you are apt to run up against the problem of getting workmen, for many natives have superstitious feelings about digging up the bones of their ancestors.

This can be got around either by not telling them what you hope they may find or, if that won't work, by giving them extra money. A little cash goes a long way in laying a ghost or, rather, bringing his remains to light, and the native's opinion of you will not be affected in any case, as he is convinced from the start that you are crazy.

In any scientific expedition the workmen, unless specially trained, do only the heavy work. The moment they strike a skeleton or the objects which were supposed to accompany it to a better world they are moved on to virgin ground; and the archaeologist takes over with a whisk broom, a paintbrush, a little shovel and a knife. His resemblance to an infant playing games doesn't seem to bother him; and he will contort himself into unmentionable positions while he flips off dirt with his knife and blows and brushes until the entire grave is cleared.

Even if something wonderful turns up, you've got to let it lie until the whole works are exposed and photographed, and then it is usually snatched out and concealed from envious eyes so that you don't see it again until it turns up in some museum. There's nothing to do, however, but swallow your sense of frustration and hope that next time you'll spot something good and can slip it in your pocket before anyone notices.

Archaeology, though, can be a great deal of fun—especially if you don't take it too seriously and can ignore the technical parts. That way you turn it into a treasure hunt—with the single difference that you can't keep the prize even if you win it. What's more, nobody can say that you don't go places. And what if they are sometimes the wrong places and more than you bargained for? At least your life is never dull.

ELEANOR LOTHROP

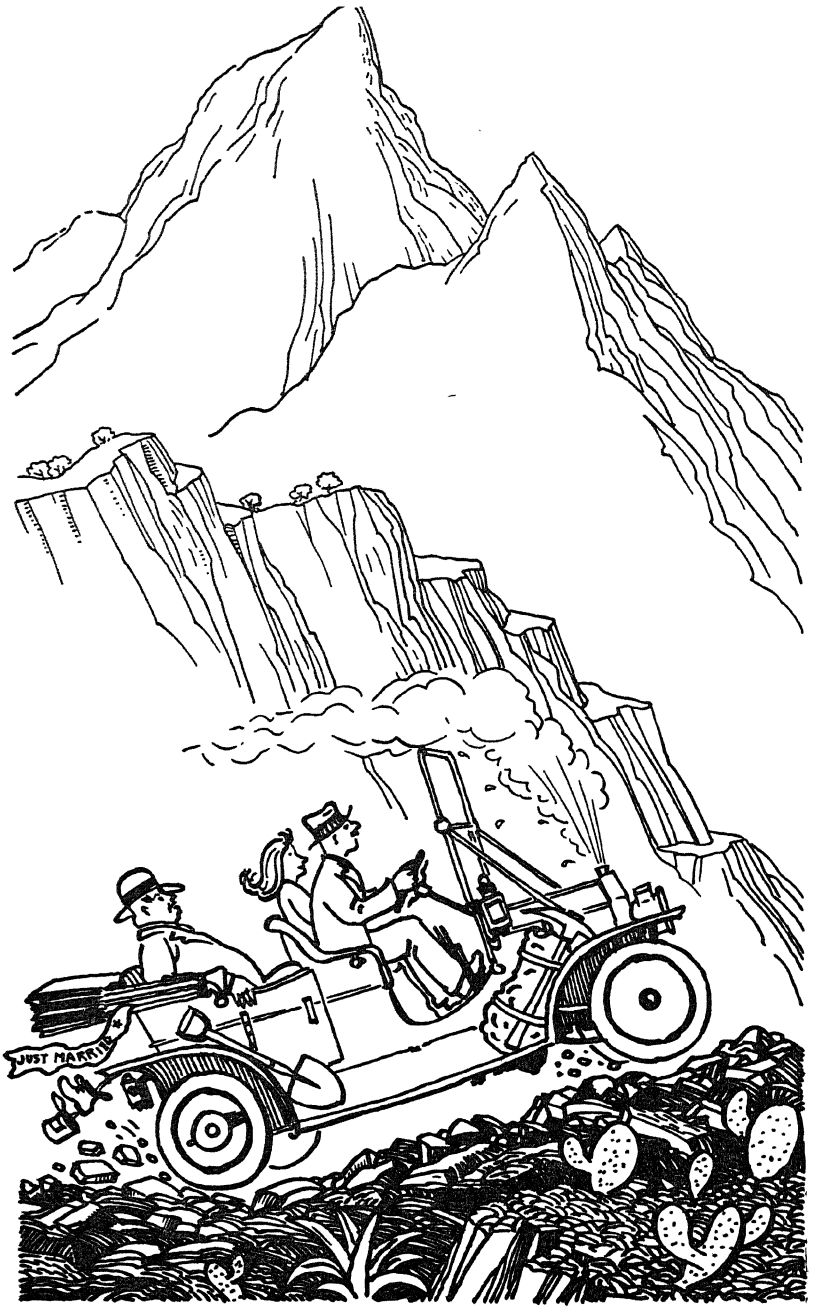
Part I

Chapter 1

MOST people say that honeymoons are overrated events. Diane, my best friend, warned me about mine. "You feel awkward," she told me, "and uncomfortable. While your husband is courting you, so to speak, you strain to be at your best every minute and only relax when he goes home. But on your honeymoon he doesn't go home and you let your skin dry out and strain your eyes because you're afraid that the shock of seeing you with grease on your face or reading glasses on your nose will be too much for him. Not that you can do much reading," she added bitterly. "You may be bored as hell—after all, nobody can be entertaining twenty-four hours a day—but if you should pick up a book, you get a guilty feeling that it looks as if you weren't having a Good Time. You'll see," she said grimly, nodding her blond curls in superior fashion. And I was deeply impressed, for Diane had had two honeymoons and was in a position to know.

But Diane was wrong about me. My honeymoon wasn't all fun, I'll admit, but it certainly wasn't dull and I never had time to be bored. I married an archaeologist!

It was as much a surprise to me as to my family and friends, for I had long had other plans. When you're very young you generally have a definite idea what you want to do with your life; it's only as you grow older that uncertainty sets in. Some girls are bent on having careers; they are barely out of kindergarten before they begin to


JUST MARRIED

think of themselves as the Jane Austens, the Florence Nightingales, the Sarah Bernhardts of the future. Some girls are less ambitious; all they want is to get married, have children and live happily ever after.

I thought of marriage too, but that was to be only the beginning. What I wanted was to travel and see foreign countries. And the best husband for such a life, I decided, was a diplomat.

Night after night I dreamed of exotic out-of-the-way lands, of luxury liners and Oriental express trains, of brilliant dinner parties where many languages held sway. And though I could hardly dare hope to capture anyone over the rank of Third Secretary, in my dreams my husband was always The Ambassador. "Mr. Ambassador"—I could actually hear the third butler say it—"the car is waiting." "And what will you wear tonight, Madame?" my imaginary French maid would ask, and I'd be so busy thinking up an answer that I could close my ears to Mother, as she sternly told me to pick my socks off the floor. I even mentally designed my clothes—from the hostess gown in which I would graciously pour tea for a few specially invited Cabinet Ministers, to the formal evening dress (with train) to be worn at the reception in our honor at the Royal Palace. For years I continued to play the game of travel and of glamorous sojourns in foreign lands. Well! I have traveled and I have seen out-of-the-way places. And if it wasn't exactly in the manner of my dreams, at least I've covered more ground marrying an archaeologist than I ever could have as an ambassador's wife.

At the time I met my then future husband, I suppose I knew as much about archaeology as most persons who had no special interest in the subject. I'd studied ancient history and could talk about the Acropolis (which I'd never seen) and the Roman Forum, where I'd been dragged at the age of seven. In addition, my aunt's sister-in-law had married an assistant to Lord Carnarvon, which made me feel that I had a personal link with Tutankhamen's tomb and the royal curse. So when my hostess at a gay cocktail party presented me to "Sam Lothrop, the famous archaeologist," I was not particularly impressed but only surprised—that he wore no beard, that he was

drinking cocktails and that he was quite young. (I suppose I believed that archaeologists were kept locked up until they were fifty or so and then suddenly released on an unsuspecting world.) Anyhow, I led right off with the Acropolis, the Forum and King Tut and was startled when my companion, rudely interrupting, said, "I am an *American* archaeologist."

"Of course," I answered, irritated that my conversation had failed to impress him. "I know the Lothrops come from Boston. So what?" But it seems I had missed the point. An American archaeologist, it was explained, is an archaeologist who specializes in the archaeology of the Americas—North, Central and South.

Now in these days of continental solidarity and good neighbor policy, most people north of the Rio Grande know more about Latin Americans than these people know about themselves. Newspapers and press agents have highlighted the villainy of the Argentine, the gay life of Mexico, the incomparable flavor of Chile's wines. Donald Duck has flown down to Rio, good dancers must perform the samba, and the Incas and Aztecs are more or less household words. Until fairly recently, however, we arrogantly thought of ourselves as Americans, not *North* Americans, and all roads (archaeological) led to Rome.

It might thus seem that I had made anything but an auspicious start toward impressing a man of science. Sam Lothrop, though, must have been attracted by my ignorance, for he acted as if nothing could give him greater pleasure than to correct popular misconceptions and fill in the vacant spaces of my mind. He went even further. He married me.

Our honeymoon was different from the usual honeymoon; it was also an archaeological trip. It was different in other ways, too, for it turned out to be a honeymoon for three.

The third member of the party was Mr. George G. Heye, and although he went along only in spirit he was in many ways the most important of the trio. Mr. Heye was Sam's boss at the time, head of a museum which boasted the ponderous name of Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, and you would no more think

of leaving out "Heye Foundation" when you mentioned the title than you would omit the G. from Mr. George G. Heye's name.

Mr. George G. Heye was not an archaeologist—he was an executive—and his great passion was collecting the art of the American Indian. For years he had lived in a sumptuous apartment on Fifth Avenue where he dispensed wonderful food and drink and which was filled to overflowing with archaeological specimens. Gradually his collection grew so large that the American Indian threatened to displace Mr. Heye, and at that point, in self-defense, he sought another home for his trophies. Thus, the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation.

Sam had talked to me about his boss before we were married and had mentioned, rather casually, that he was interested in our trip. Interested? It was *his* trip. I found out later that everything had been arranged before our departure. The Museum had received a grant of money and had decided to blow it on sending Sam to Chile. (The fact that he had acquired a wife was incidental, purely incidental.) He was to do a little digging, a lot of collecting and, in general, travel through the country and see what was what.

It wasn't that I didn't like that kind of trip. It was just that it was my HONEYMOON, and I'd pictured spending it as we pleased and not as Mr. Heye pleased. The fact that Mr. Heye and I liked lots of the same places was fortunate for me, but it had nothing to do with the principle of the thing.

It would have been all right if Sam had occasionally been willing to cheat a little. Like spending Christmas with friends instead of in a dirty little hotel in the Chilean backwoods. It couldn't be done, said Sam, because there was some sort of Indian celebration going on in those backwoods, and Mr. Heye might be interested in Sam's seeing it. "If the Indians can celebrate Christmas, why can't we?" I asked, but this got me nowhere. Sam had a conscience.

As a matter of fact, all archaeologists have consciences. The trouble is that their consciences are one-track affairs and are directed only toward their work. There is no use in getting upset or pulling any "darling, you don't love me any more" kind of talk, because an archaeologist just doesn't understand. He may love you madly, but

a disappointed wife, ailing child or personal desire is pushed aside when the JOB rears its head.

I've often wondered why this is so and have come to the conclusion that it must be because an archaeologist cares terrifically about his profession. God knows he'd never have picked it otherwise. He's invariably sent to unhealthy tropical climates, his body is a continuous exploring ground for insects and, at best, what can he hope for?

Fame? Only among fellow scientists. I'm willing to bet that ninety-nine persons out of a hundred don't know the name of a single archaeologist. Or of any archaeological discovery. With the possible exception of Tutankhamen's tomb—and that only because there was a curse and a lot of mystery and scandal connected with it.

Money? Certainly not! That's something reserved for bankers and bookmakers and movie stars. A good archaeologist won't starve, but unless he has an income on the side he had better accustom his stomach right from the start to boiled beef and bread with oleomargarine, rather than squabs, or mushrooms under glass.

At the beginning of our trip I didn't know all that. At the beginning of our trip archaeology meant little more to me than an impressive word that was difficult to spell, and I expected archaeological life to be like my dreams of diplomatic travel—with adventure attached.

We spent one glorious unscientific week in Santiago, capital of Chile. The hotel was good, the people we met attractive, and we went to the races, danced, ate gigantic lobsters from nearby Robinson Crusoe Island and, all in all, were typical newlyweds. One week! Then the honeymoon ended.

I didn't know it was over. I was still starry-eyed. Even when Sam said, "Have you ever heard of Taltal?"

"It sounds like a disease. Like beriberi," I added. I didn't realize at the time how psychic I was.

Sam laughed. "Taltal is a port on the north coast," he explained. "Used to be a flourishing nitrate center until nitrate began to be

made synthetically. It's no longer quite so flourishing, but there's some archaeology I'd like to check on. The boat leaves tomorrow."

"I'd love to go," I said, looking at my hero with complete confidence.

"The boat's not very big," said Sam. "Not like the Grace liners."

"Why don't we take a Grace liner then?"

"The Grace liners don't stop at Taltal. This is the only boat for the next week that stops. You see, Taltal isn't so flourishing any more," he repeated rather lamely.

"Oh, that's all right," I said. "A smaller boat will be fun." I was the scientist's wife. His helpmeet. Until I saw the boat the following day. It was called the S.S. *Huemul* after some Indian. Drab and dingy, it huddled defensively at the pier, as if recognizing its own limitations. It was about the size of a small yacht, but there the similarity ended. The S.S. *Huemul* looked just like a cattle boat. That was because it *was* a cattle boat. But I didn't realize that at the time.

We had a gay send-off, with presents. One friend brought a can of bedbug powder, another, a new roach remedy. The Chileans have a wonderful sense of humor, I thought, although not very subtle. By some lucky chance, however, I kept the powder.

Not that I was any novice at traveling. I had made eight trips to Europe with my family and had nothing but scorn for the type of American who talked about the French as "frogs" and the Italians as "dagoes" and who thought the little old U.S.A. was good enough for him.

I loved going places. We always crossed on the French line because of the food, and most of the stewards were my friends and gave me special service. I felt entirely at home at the Hotel Crillon in Paris, Claridge's in London and the Excelsior in Rome. To say nothing of the Hotel de Paris at Monte Carlo and the Negresco at Nice. The family agreed that you sometimes got more atmosphere in small hotels but, as my father said, "Why not have a comfortable base and go out to find your atmosphere from there?"

And we did need large rooms as we always had so much luggage.

We carried an extra supply of shirts for Father and extra underwear for all of us, as it was agreed that you couldn't be sure of having anything washed properly unless you were in London or Paris. Father couldn't sleep except on his own pillow, which was of giant size and made of especially soft feathers; so that was carried along too. Then there was the leather kit which held two hot-water bags (Father was subject to occasional attacks of dyspepsia), plus a sterno stove to heat the water. And the drug case, which was enormous and contained, among other things, aspirin, rhubarb and soda tablets, three remedies for heartburn, and two different mouthwashes which Mother claimed she couldn't do without. There was a small suitcase for linens which held outsize pillow cases for Father's pillow, and a supply of linen hand towels, as Mother thought hotel ones were apt to be scratchy. She didn't like the soap you got in hotels, either, so she used to provide herself with a large assortment of cakes from Roger & Gallet (Violette or Fleurs d'Amour). And an extra supply of wash rags and always two Kent nailbrushes.

Hotel managers were apt to be quite upset when we arrived, but Mother would look pathetic and helpless (she was by far the most efficient member of the family) and the gallant manager usually ended up giving us a larger and better suite than the one that had been ordered, at the same price. Especially in France.

A psychiatrist would have had a field day with Mother, who had an obsession about cleanliness. She washed her hands before meals, after meals and at least six times in between. She always carefully examined the beds when we first arrived in our hotel rooms (even the Ritz!), and she upset the chambermaid by pulling the sheets all the way out each morning to make certain that the beds would be entirely remade. In the dining room she would wait until the maître d'hôtel wasn't looking and then quickly wipe off her plate and cutlery with her napkin, and if she spotted a waiter's thumb closer than an eighth of an inch to her food, the food was sent back or left uneaten. Father and I laughed at her, but I could hardly help but be influenced.

I thought of Mother all the way to Taltal. And after we got there.

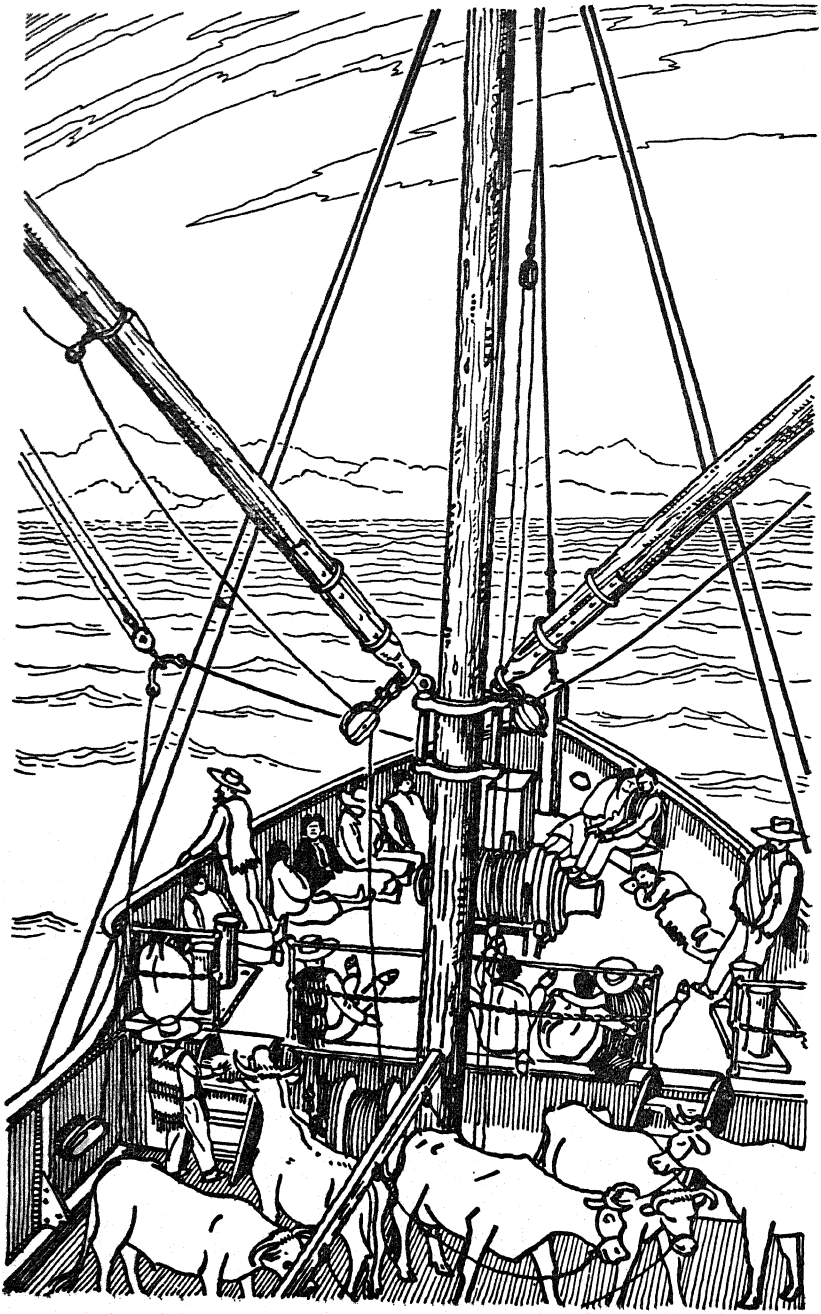
Chapter 2

I THOUGHT I was prepared mentally for almost anything that might happen on an archaeological trip, but traveling in a cattle boat was something I had failed to take into consideration. I'm glad, though, I had the experience. Now that it's over. It is funny what preconceived ideas one has. I used to think that a cattle boat was a boat for cattle. I even believed that Sam had had to wangle special permission for us to be on board, thus cheating a couple of cows out of their trip. "Move over, Bossie, and let the lady look at the ocean," I expected him to say.

As a matter of fact, a cattle boat *is* a boat for cattle, but it is for everything else too. The cows come first, as indeed they should, but where they won't fit, any other animal or piece of freight that has the right angles is tied up or deposited. What space remains is given over to passengers.

The S.S. *Huemul* was so crowded that I don't believe the agents would have dared sell another ticket to a mouse. The passengers were mostly *rotos* or half-breeds, with a few Indians thrown in, and they occupied the deck. Not in deck chairs, wrapped up in steamer blankets, with stewards serving hot consommé, but sitting or lying squashed up against each other. Like pressed caviar.

Bow and stern were filled with cattle, about two hundred in all, and from the heartbreaking moos that came forth they were evi-



dently in the last stages of agony. Crates of chickens were piled frighteningly high, the inmates adding to the din. Goats and pigs were tied up in every convenient spot, protesting bitterly, and additional strange noises which I couldn't identify increased the madhouse atmosphere.

We had been allotted one of the two passenger cabins; which was lucky, as there was not an inch of room on deck. The cabin was too small for both of us to stand up at the same time, so Sam remained vertical and I stretched out on the narrow berth. "How about reversing positions?" I asked, after the first half hour. "I'll stand for a while and you lie." But just then a little man appeared, like an angel out of the sky, with an invitation from the captain to lunch in his quarters.

We rushed out on deck and came up against a solid phalanx of bodies. A fat Indian woman clutched me as I tried to wiggle through, and one of her little darlings grabbed my ankle. I leaned down to disengage it and Mama let out a deep belch. A combined odor of garlic, sweat and general filth hit me in the face. "Help," I yelled at Sam. "Minnehaha stinks."

Sam has endless ingenuity, and instead of arguing or trying to pull me loose, he threw the child a penny, which she promptly put in her mouth and swallowed. Minnehaha began to whale her for losing the coin, and in the ensuing excitement I managed to free myself and we advanced to the bridge of the boat.

The captain met us with a flourish and introduced himself—"Santiago Galindo Mendez, at your orders"—and there was more name than captain. His five feet and few stray inches barely reached my shoulder, and the biggest thing about him was his stomach, which came to meet you before he did. He got around himself very well, though, and when he ushered us into his cabin it was with the grace of a Fred Astaire.

That small room contained two moth-eaten but comfortable chairs, a kind of couch, which obviously turned into a bed at night, and a wooden bench, placed in front of an immovable table, on which three places had been set. In a corner stood a phonograph,

vintage of 1910, and a pile of records. Nothing more. A far cry this from the captain's quarters on the *Île de France,* but to me it spelled heaven.

Dust overlaid everything except the phonograph which was polished within an inch of its life. It was the type with horn outlet and detachable handle which the Victor Company used to advertise by a picture of an unpleasant-looking dog listening like mad to His Master's Voice. The handle here, however, had been discarded and the machine connected by an elaborate and confusing system of wires to a small electric fan which, minus fan blades and protecting cage, managed to run it electrically. Wooden pulleys had been attached to the motor of what-had-been-the-fan to gear its speed to the speed of the phonograph, making the tempo of what came forth somewhat erratic. It did work, though, without having to be wound by hand, and Rube Goldberg could have done no better. The captain's pride as he showed us his creation was like that of a father exhibiting the latest photograph of little Willie, and finally, unable to contain himself any longer, he bowed to Sam and murmured a question in Spanish of which I distinguished the word "dance."

"Sam," I giggled, "he's asking you to dance with him."

"Idiot," said Sam, "he's asking me if he may dance with *you.*"

So Sam accepted with pleasure (for me), and the captain—"call me Santiago," he said—put on the top record and, clutching me as close as his stomach allowed, bounced me around the room to the strains of "I Can't Give You Anything But Love, Baby." It was like dancing with a rubber ball.

When the record ended he moved the needle back, reset the electric fan and off we galloped again. With Sam's permission, of course. After three more rounds and three more permissions I got slightly desperate. "Please, please, refuse me," I begged Sam. But he was having a wonderful time, and I'm sure his generosity would have held out indefinitely had lunch not suddenly appeared.

This was a four-course affair—soup, fish, chicken and dessert—and it was delicious. Not because it was served in a stuffy cabin in a miserable little hulk on the Pacific; it would have been delicious

anywhere. Whoever had cooked that meal would have been able to take a piece of bark and some grass, add a sprinkling of herbs, and turn out a dish of Cordon Bleu quality. No wonder the captain's stomach was out of proportion to the rest of him.

The food was literally smothered in garlic, but I enjoyed it so much that I never thought of the consequences. After we left the table, however, I was seized with a most terrific itch. Scratching gave some relief but was inadequate, and Sam glared at me each time I applied fingernails to body. "Garlic always gives me hives," I whispered, but he kept on glaring and shaking his head.

Now I'd been brought up right, too. I'm sure Mother wouldn't have approved of my scratching in public, but the problem had never arisen, for every time I'd come out in hives I'd been whisked to bed and a skin doctor had been called in to apply a soothing pink lotion and assure the family that it was really nothing serious. Sam didn't seem at all worried, though (except about my manners), so I kept right on scratching and he kept right on glaring.

Except for the itching, I was very happy in the security of the captain's cabin and hated to contemplate a return to our cell. After all, I would have itched wherever I was. What's the outside limit, I wondered, that guests can stay after lunch is over? And still be reasonably polite, of course. Then the solution came to me. I would charm the captain so that he would lose all track of time. What if the ship did hit a rock? I was willing to take a chance.

I'd go right on dancing to his antiquated phonograph if necessary. And I'd make my conversation so interesting and amusing that he couldn't bear to let me go. Unfortunately I'd overlooked the fact that it is difficult to charm anyone with conversation when you don't speak the same language.

I did know a little Spanish. As a matter of fact, I'd studied at a language academy for three weeks before we'd left New York. It was a very modern academy. The instructor either spoke no English or didn't feel like doing so. He stood on a platform back of a large table on which a lot of different objects were placed. First he picked up a pencil and, holding it high so that all the class could see, said

in sing-song tones, "el lapeeze, el lapeeze." Then he hit the table a smart blow. "Maysah," he said. "La maysah." That over, he laid down the pencil and told us it was on the table, which we already knew.

Next he picked up various other objects—a pen, ink, a book—and went through the same routine. Suddenly, pointing straight at me, he asked, rather harshly I thought, where the pencil was. I knew, of course, and the question was idiotic anyhow; but when put to me that way I couldn't say a thing and just goggled at him. Someone in the back of the room yelled "MAYSAH" and the instructor nodded his head and gave me a nasty look. That was the end of the first day's lesson.

The second day we went on to colors and numbers, the third day to animals and household effects, and by the end of the week we got more personal and discussed the family and family relationships. After three weeks, I had acquired a vocabulary of perhaps a hundred words, a collection of useless phrases, and was out twenty dollars.

I'd done better when we reached Chile. There were the practical expressions I picked up like "Where is the toilet?" or "Run away you dirty little squirt," the last of which worked like a charm when whining children accosted you on the street. But obviously neither of these sentences was going to get me to first base with the captain.

Then, too, I could say "*Te quiero*" ("I love you"), which was the title of a Mexican song I'd heard on the radio, but this seemed like a pretty strong beginning for any new relationship and might give him the wrong idea. Anyhow, it was shooting the works all at once.

So we all sat down and smiled at each other. Sam, who spoke fluent Spanish, evidently felt he had nothing to say. Call-me-Santiago was equally silent. I knew we'd never last long at this rate, so in desperation I fell back on my school days. "Little Spanish, me," I said. "Want to hear?" He nodded enthusiastically. "The pencil is on the table. School Spanish," I added, so that he wouldn't think me crazy.

But the captain only looked puzzled and dug a hand into his

pocket where he thought he had put his pencil, and where, of course, it was. "Ah, Americano joke," said he. "Ha, ha, ha."

If he's that easily amused, I thought, it's going to be a cinch. And I asked him where the cat of his grandmother was.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha."

This unexpected triumph intoxicated me. "Mrs. Brown does not like her brother-in-law," I stated, pulling out my trump card.

But apparently I'd struck the wrong note. "Who is Mrs. Brown?" asked Call-me-Santiago. "Do I know her?" He looked reproachful, as if to rebuke me for being a gossip.

"It's no use," I said to Sam. "We might as well give up." It was clear that no three weeks of lessons could turn me into a Spanish-speaking siren. But before we left I made up my mind to get some practical information. "Taltal, good hotel?" I inquired.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Sam, you ask him," I said desperately.

"Captain Galindo," asked Sam, "has Taltal a good hotel?"

"Three hotels," he answered. "The Palace, the Grand and the Olympia."

This at least sounded encouraging. "But which is the best?" Sam pursued.

"Ha, ha, ha, there is no difference. Ha, Ha."

I didn't like the way he laughed, although I later discovered the reason for it. It was only three o'clock, but Sam and I stood up and murmured our thanks and glumly set out for our cell. "At least stop scratching," he said irritably, as we emerged on deck.

"Sam," I said pitifully, "I've got hives."

"Nonsense. They're fleas. I've got 'em too. What do you expect on a cattle boat?"

Up to then I'd known only one flea. I'd known him intimately. Our mutual contact had taken place in Biarritz, where my family had reluctantly been persuaded to leave me for an extra ten days of sun and amusement while they returned to Paris to shop. When

they departed I moved out of the ocean suite we'd been occupying and took a room in a small hotel off the beach, close to a villa where friends were living. The hotel was unpretentious and not very comfortable, but I spent virtually no time there except to sleep.

One morning I felt something in bed with me and, peering under the sheet, discovered a large, fat flea. Shocked, horrified and ashamed, I grimly gave chase. I finally managed to get my thumb over his body and press him down on the bed, but this, unfortunately, did not finish him off and when I tried to pick him up he escaped. Three or four times I covered him with a finger, but each time he got away and hopped over to another part of the bed, where he sat laughing at me.

The following morning, there he was again. And every morning from then on. I was never able to kill him. The closest I got was catching him between thumb and forefinger, but when I tried to squeeze him to death he slipped out.

I was brought up very strictly. "Be courteous and honorable," my mother used to tell me. "If you make a mistake, admit it. If you break something, don't try to hide the pieces and let someone else take the blame. And be considerate of other people if you expect them to be considerate of you." So when I was ready to leave Biarritz I thought of the next occupant of the room, and even though it humiliated me, I confessed to the proprietor that I was leaving a flea in my bed. "I'm dreadfully sorry," I said weakly, waiting for him to turn on me.

"Bless your heart, Mademoiselle." He laughed. "Only one? Why the hotel is full of fleas. I've got cats, you know."

He was nice about it, all right. But I couldn't get over the feeling that I'd gotten into the wrong kind of hotel. A dive, probably. Anything might happen in a place like that. Thank Heaven the family didn't know to what I'd been exposed. So I never told them or anyone else about my flea.

Looking back on this experience, I think it's funny. The intense and unsuccessful work I put in to kill *one* flea strikes me as pathetic.

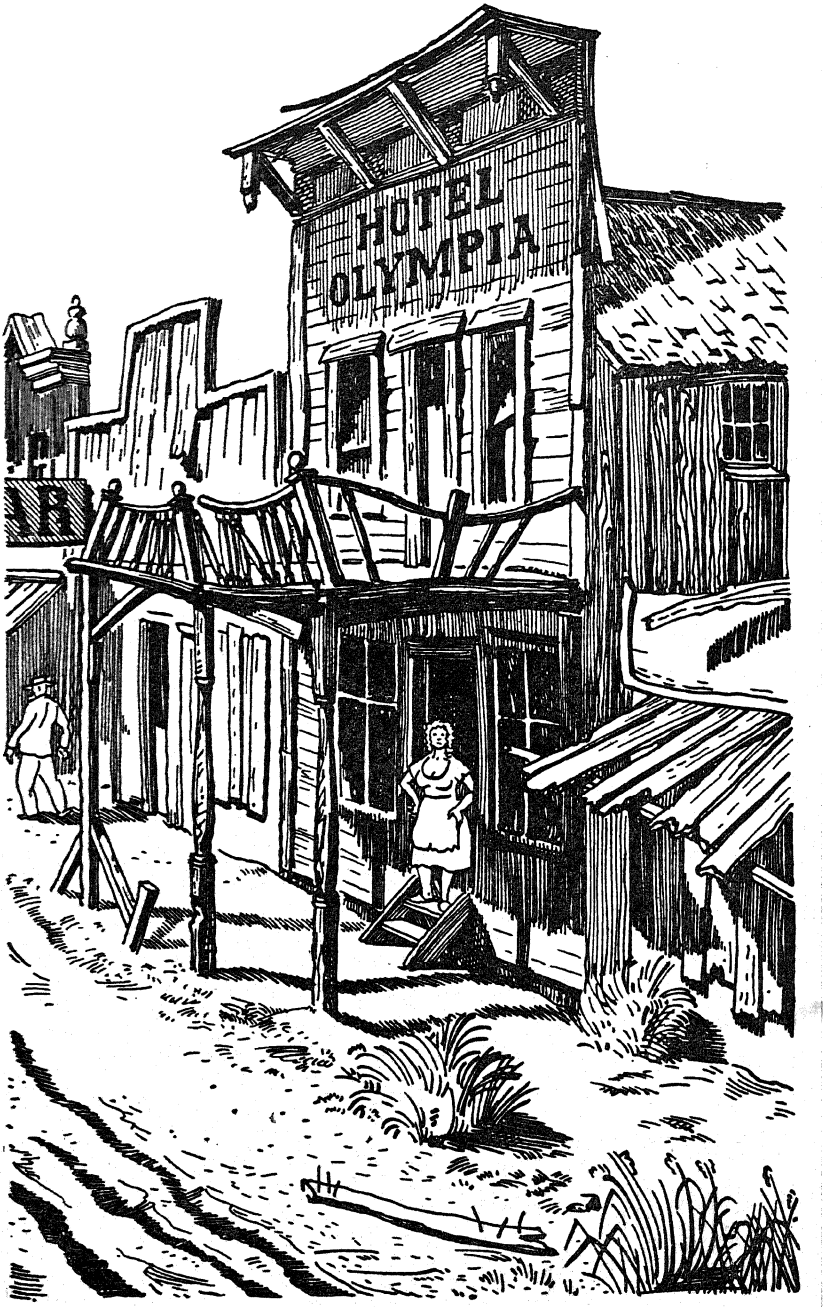
Now, of course, there is absolutely nothing about fleas that I don't know.

In the first place, the sooner you realize that fleas are made of rubber, the better. There is no such thing as squeezing them to death. It is sometimes possible to squash them between your fingernails, but there is always the risk of their escaping. There is only one sure method of getting rid of a flea.

After you spot him—whether on the floor, the furniture, or on you—wet a finger with your tongue (the forefinger works best) and dive for him. The flea, once covered with a wet finger, is out of luck. He can't hop until the finger dries. Here's your chance, then, to pick him up and hold him between dampened digit and thumb. Don't waste time trying to smother him. It can't be done. But if a flea's body is made of rubber, at least, thank God, he can drown. And there's your solution.

If you're lucky enough to have plumbing, there's nothing to it. Just drop him into the washbowl, the tub, or the toilet and run the water or flush. If there is no plumbing, he can be deposited in a glass of water or other liquid, where eventually he'll drown, or you move on to another place, leaving glass and flea behind.

Of course I knew none of this, that day on the S.S. *Huemul*. It was one of the few occasions when the knowledge wouldn't have helped much anyhow. The plumbing, so-called, or "WOMEN," was something only to be approached for dire necessity. Sam claimed that "MEN" was equally bad. There was no glass in our cabin, nor room for one. And we had each acquired such a parade of fleas that the simplest thing was to brush them off as well as possible. This is what is called fouling your own nest. But we were too miserable to care.


HOTEL
OLYMPIA

Chapter 3

WHEN I was fifteen, I fell in love with an umbrella salesman and I spent most of my time squinting at the sky and gloomily predicting rain, then suggesting to my friends that they go to Snellenburg's store to buy umbrellas from Jim. And after I was married I yearned to do the same kind of promotion for Sam. So when the *S.S. Huemul* dropped anchor in the harbor of Taltal I was breathless with excitement. This was it. My first chance to practice being a scientist's wife. Through me Sam was going to be the best-known archaeologist in the world. (I already thought he was the best.) I've learned since that it is a great deal easier to promote umbrellas than archaeology and that the greatest help an archaeologist's wife can give her husband is negative—just not being an impediment. But at the time I was all set to find lost Spanish treasure and a new civilization (for him), and even now, after years of painful discovery that it is the pottery you don't break and the skeleton you don't move by mistake that endears you to an archaeologist, I still dream hopefully of being a power behind the scenes.

The cattle got off at Taltal before we did. We waited two hours after we had anchored, watching while belts were placed around the cows' middles and they were hoisted into the air by some sort

of derrick and then let down into a lighter. There was no use complaining, for, as Sam said, a cattle boat is run for cattle, not passengers. And when we finally did land, I wondered why I'd ever been in a hurry. After fifteen minutes on shore nothing would have made me so happy as to be back with the cows.

Taltal was born out of the desert which runs along the entire northern coast of Chile. Shaped literally out of sand, for no sprig of green had relieved the monotony of this arid wasteland until pipes had been installed to bring down the necessary water from the melting snows of the Andes, some hundred and fifty miles away. Taltal was built as a shipping port for the nitrate which was found far inland, and in the days when the mines were spewing forth their precious salts it was a boom town, rich and gay and lively. Millions of dollars of business had been conducted in its busy center, and crowds of miners came there each week end to enjoy themselves. Bars and dance halls and hotels lined the streets. Stores sold luxury goods. Money was made to spend, not to keep.

When we saw Taltal all this had changed. The invention of synthetic nitrate had killed the value of the mines which, though still productive, lay almost idle. When we saw Taltal it had become a phantom town. The streets were still enormously wide. The houses, constructed of expensive Oregon wood, still stood, topped by corrugated iron roofs. Stores, bars and boarding houses still crowded each other.

But the wide streets were unpaved and at the mercy of the shifting sand. The houses, paint peeled off and roofs sagging, rotted in the sun. Most of the bars and stores were closed and those that were still functioning had pitifully little to offer. Poverty overlaid everything, like a damp cloth. Taltal, in short, resembled a once elaborate but since abandoned movie set which had become drab and dirty with disuse.

We first tried the Grand Hotel. But after one look we grabbed our bags and trudged on to the Palace, which was nearby. Then the Olympia. The captain had said there was no difference between them ha, ha, and he was right. So we stayed at the Olympia.

This was a small two-storied building, wedged in between two

similar ones. The bedrooms were on the second floor and lined both sides of a narrow corridor which ended in a covered porch, just large enough to hold a couple of chairs. Each bedroom had one window looking out on the corridor. The windows had no curtains. There was no air, no light and no hope.

The frowzy proprietress, who resembled a Madam, showed us our room and asked for a deposit. Sam paid her, and she swished off, leaving us to musty horror. I quickly opened the window which, being on the corridor, left the atmosphere unchanged. Two little girls chased each other screaming up and down the hall, and one of them leaned on the sill and poked her face inquisitively into the room. I closed the window.

In the dimness we could just recognize the shape of two sagging beds, a couple of early early-American chairs and a bureau with the drawers missing. In a corner hung an electric light bulb, suspended from the ceiling. "Let's see the worst," I said bravely, and turned it on. Nothing happened. "Sam, the light is out of order. Go tell Madam Pushbottom."

He was gone only a moment. "The Madam's compliments," he announced in a tough falsetto voice, and he put his hand on his hip and wiggled his behind the way she did hers, so that in spite of my misery I had to laugh. "The Madam says 'what do you expect for twenty-five cents a day with food?' The Madam says 'the lights are turned on at 7 P.M. and off again at 10 P.M. and if you don't like it you know what.' "

"You're making it up," I said, giggling. And then sat down on my bed and burst into tears. "Can't we please get out of here, Sam. Please. Please."

"There's no place to go," remarked Sam practically.

And there wasn't. When we walked out on the porch to look around, we could just make out the lines of that queen of the Pacific, the S.S. *Huemul,* disappearing into the horizon. Our last friend had deserted us.

"Cheer up," said Sam. "If things aren't better tomorrow I'll see about hiring a car and motoring down the coast." But things were worse, not better, and we didn't get a car.

Sam had been right about the lights. They, or rather it, did go on at seven. This made practically no difference, though. The bulb was the size of a golf ball—probably half a watt, I decided, although I could never see well enough to check on this—and gave just sufficient illumination to keep us from running into the furniture.

It wasn't strong enough for us to see the insects, so we never did know just what bit us. We could guess, though. Fleas, of course,—both the ones we'd brought with us and a new lot. Bedbugs, almost surely, for life in bed, in spite of the powder we sprinkled about, was a series of hypodermic injections. And some sort of winged creatures that from the noise they made must have been the size of hummingbirds. An entomologist with a flashlight would have had a wonderful time.

I spent most of the first night sitting up on a rickety chair, with a pillow back of me and my feet where the bureau drawers had once been. Sam, irritatingly enough, was able to sleep. So I waited until five o'clock to wake him and then asked what time we could leave.

"Leave?"

"You know, that car."

"Darling," said Sam, "we can't leave yet. We have to stay at least a few days to examine some archaeological sites. I told Heye. . . ."

"Sam," I interrupted, "do you think Mr. George G. Heye would be willing to spend *one hour* in this hellhole?"

"Maybe not. But he's paid for the trip. . . ."

"I'll pay him back."

"No."

"I'll pay a hundred dollars extra."

"No."

"Two hundred. I'll use Uncle Walter's wedding check."

"NO."

The days were considerably better than the nights. We'd get up early, take a picnic lunch and walk some two miles south, where the archaeological sites were located. These were right on the ocean,

and we'd first tear off our clothes, dip them in the water to drown any insect life still extant and spread them on a rock to dry. Then hurl ourselves into the ocean to be deloused.

"This Florida resort life is wonderful," I said happily the first morning, as I floated on my back, gently scratching bites.

"A little cold," Sam countered. "Probably a bit early in the season. How about getting out and going up to that elegant hotel, the Bellavista-Miramar-Seaside, to warm up with an apéritif?"

"I could stay here forever," I answered lazily, "and, anyhow, I don't think the hotel would let us in without clothes."

"Eleanor," said Sam, gently but firmly breaking up the game, "how about a little archaeology? You know, what we came for."

Reluctantly I left the water and we applied ourselves to the archaeology. Somehow it wasn't my idea of what archaeology should be. I had never seen this science on the hoof, so to speak, but I'd pictured it clearly in my imagination. There would be a number of workmen tearing up the ground until they hit upon a lot of tombs, after which Sam and I would be carefully lowered into the grave to pull out gold and emeralds. When my hands and pockets were filled, I would signal "ahoy," like a diver at the bottom of the sea, and the waiting workers would pull me up.

The archaeology in Taltal wasn't like that at all. Along the beach, as far as the eye could see, was a pulverized mass of sand, ash, carbonized material, shells, and broken and discarded stone implements. At intervals deep trenches had been sunk into this gritty mixture, apparently by some previous digger, and scattered through the holes as well as over the adjacent surface were hundreds of pieces of broken pottery. The pieces were of all sizes and shapes, faded and dull. They didn't even fit together.

"What," I asked Sam, "is all this?"

"You might call it prehistoric swill," he answered romantically. "An ancient refuse bed or garbage dump. Also a cemetery."

"A cemetery in a garbage dump?"

"There were no sanitary laws in those days," said Sam. "No garbage collectors. No incinerators. The trash was thrown right out

the door. And the custom in many places—here, for instance—was to bury your deceased relative either under the floor of your house or to dig a hole outside in the refuse and put him into it."

"You mean Poppa was put right in with the slops?"

"*Under* the slops," corrected Sam consolingly.

After all, I decided, what they did in the old days was their business. And garbage after the first hundred years can't be very repellent. It would be well worth going through it to get at the gold and emeralds. "When do we start digging?" I asked eagerly.

"We're not going to dig," said Sam. "Lots of archaeologists have dug here. I just want to check their conclusions."

"You mean this whole ghastly trip is just to see what someone else has already found?"

"Exactly," he answered, and his eyes lit up with that gleam which only pure science can arouse. "You see, I don't agree with the archaeologists who worked here. They called the stone implements they found paleolithic and I believe that's a mistake. I'd like to prove it."

I gaped at him. "Paleolithic" was a word I'd vaguely classed with such other unreal terms as "Neanderthal man" and "dinosaur," and I didn't know a thing about any of them except that they were all TERRIBLY OLD. Why oh why had I wasted four years at college studying such useless subjects as French and psychology and English literature?

Sam must have noted my expression. "Paleolithic," he explained kindly, "is a very early culture found in Europe which is characterized by rough stone implements. Now the stone implements here are similar in style, which explains why the archaeologists who worked in Taltal called them paleolithic. But if that were true it would make this site more than a hundred thousand years old by European standards. And I don't think that's possible. Do you?"

The site might have been any age as far as I was concerned, but I was so flattered at being consulted that I wrinkled my brow and then consideredly said, "Well, I would imagine. . . ."

But Sam wasn't listening. He'd already disappeared into the

bottom of some pit. Suddenly he gave a cry of triumph and emerged with a handful of broken stone and a few bits of clay. "I've got it," he shouted. "I've got it!"

"What have you got?" From the excitement in his voice it might have been the Kohinoor diamond.

"My proof," cried Sam happily. With a flourish he helped me down some six feet into a partly filled-in trench. Here, apparently, had been an ancient grave, although its contents had long since been removed. The walls, however, were untouched, and in them could be seen layer upon layer of virgin trash—broken pottery, some old stones, corn cobs, and a few dried beans. Poppa, it is true, had been dug up, but the garbage dump that had surrounded his grave remained intact.

"See?" asked Sam.

"See what?"

"The trash is in layers, and there are bits of stone and pottery in the same layer. As pottery didn't exist until comparatively recently, the stone can't be paleolithic. Isn't that clear?"

"No."

"You wouldn't find the stone and pottery together if they weren't the same age."

"Why?"

"Oh, God!"

"Sam," I begged, "pretend I'm the idiot child who should really be in an institution. For some reason you've got to make this idiot child understand. Now start all over again."

"All right," he said, with unflattering agreement. "The wall of this trench is made of earth. The earth contains all sorts of ancient refuse. The ancient refuse is in different layers, one on top of the other. The deepest layers are the oldest and so on up. Get it so far?"

"Of course. You must think I'm an idiot!"

Sam went right on speaking in short sentences and pronouncing each word slowly as if it stood by itself. "The paleolithic age existed a hundred thousand years ago. Pottery didn't come into existence until thousands and thousands of years later. Here, though, you

find pottery and stone in the same layer. And near the top. Sic! The stone can't be paleolithic." He looked as if he had pulled a couple of rabbits out of a hat. "Do you see now?" he pleaded.

"Of course. Nothing could be simpler," I lied. "And that's what we came to Taltal to discover?"

"Just that."

"Then we can leave. Hooray!" I threw my arms around his neck.

Sam quickly disengaged himself. "Not at all," he said, rather coldly. "I've found only one example. It will take several days to go into other trenches and find additional proof. I'll have to take detailed notes. You can help me," he added quickly as he noted my dismay.

"It's not my idea of archaeology," I wailed. "I don't want to go burrowing after a lot of secondhand swill."

"We'll put in our own dig," promised Sam, "after we leave here."

That afternoon we celebrated by visiting the Club Social of Taltal. This, we'd been told, was the gathering place for the town's leading citizens, where they convened for cocktails, dice-throwing and gossip. At one time the Club Social had boasted a membership of nearly fifteen hundred, but when we were there the active members had apparently shrunk to five.

The barroom was immense and seemed quite gay, what with rattling of dice and clinking of glasses; but I'd no more than set willing foot within its door when a little waiter swept me out and into something called "Ladies Lounge." It seemed no women were allowed in the bar.

Ladies Lounge was furnished with a plush sofa, which had been consumed by moths right down to its skeletal frame, several equally decayed plush chairs and a table holding a copy of the *Saturday Evening Post* for December 1923. The walls were painted a jaundice yellow, patterned by the life-blood and squashed anatomies of what had once been mosquitoes. On one wall hung a gigantic painting of a group of cherubs, ascending into a fleecy-clouded bright-

blue heaven. Murillo Junior had given the cherubs cute little chubby bodies and lovely golden curls, but something had soured his brush by the time he reached their faces. It may have been the light; but to me those little darlings had expressions of unmitigated evil and resembled nothing so much as a bunch of precocious rapists.

From the close, musty atmosphere I guessed that no one had entered Ladies Lounge during the last year. Clouds of dust arose as I sat down on the plucked couch and waited for Sam to bring me a drink. Sounds of revelry emerged from the bar, but no Sam. After ten minutes, I bravely walked back into the forbidden room and managed to call "hey" before the same little waiter bore down on me.

Sam was in the middle of a dice game and apparently winning, for he didn't look particularly pleased at the interruption. Nevertheless he appeared in Ladies Lounge a few minutes later, bearing a partly consumed highball and followed by the leading citizens of Taltal. There were five of them, and although they were of all sizes, shapes and nationalities, a general seediness and an expression of frustration linked them in indissoluble brotherhood. It was obviously curiosity that had impelled them Ladies Loungeward—probably, I decided, to see what a white woman looked like, for I was sure that any wives or non-native girl friends must have fled Taltal long ago.

I was presented first to a tall, lanky American named Jim, then to a Norwegian, who for some reason was known as Fish, a German-Peruvian called Don Oscar, and a little Chilean who spoke no English and whom everyone addressed as Stay. And, finally, to the Colonel.

The Colonel might have stepped right out of the pages of Kipling or Somerset Maugham. A few stray hairs were plastered to the top of his head, and a white walrus mustache, slightly yellowed by tobacco, hung down from a face that was frighteningly red. He brought to mind all those peculiarly fascinating British expressions like "tiffin" and "safari" and "pukka sahib" (not quite he!). I could picture him drinking his whisky and splash in some remote

colonial outpost. He had that unmistakable British look that no Englishman, even if he has not touched home base in forty years, can ever lose.

The Colonel advanced upon me with military if slightly unsteady steps, and it was apparent that he hadn't gone thirsty; not for the past three hours, anyhow. In one hand he held a whisky and soda and in the other a cocktail glass filled to the brim with a concoction of a color that Schiaparelli has since christened "Shocking Pink." "I've brought you a little drink," he announced, bowing deeply and thereby spilling some of the pink liquid on a suit already so spotted that it was hard to guess what the original color had been.

"How nice," I said, and reached eagerly for the highball.

"No, indeed," protested the Colonel coyly. "That's a man's drink. No good for a lovely little lady like you. I had José shake up a special cocktail in your honor." With that he handed me the rose-tinted horror.

If I'm ever foolish enough to come to this club again, I decided, I'll wear pants and a false beard. But in thirsty desperation I downed the cocktail, which, from its taste, I guessed to be one third grenadine, one third gasoline and one third rubbing alcohol. "Delicious," I managed to say when the burning in my throat subsided.

Fish, Stay and Don Oscar had returned to the bar, and Sam, eyes begging forgiveness, started after them. "Sam," I said firmly, my eyes glued to his empty whisky glass, "bring me back a drink. You know, a *drink*."

The Colonel beamed. "I'll get us some more," he said gaily and staggered off after Sam.

I was left with Jim. "How do you like Taltal?" he asked politely.

"Does anyone?"

Jim laughed. "You get used to it after a while."

"Heaven forbid. But why should you? Why do you stay? What do you do? And what do those other men do?" I was determined to discover one good reason for any civilized person living in this rotting ex-metropolis.

And Jim puzzled me most of all. He had a look of general neglect

which cried for a woman to take care of him. His suit was unpressed and dirty, with two buttons missing, his shoes were scuffed, and his hair must have been cut with manicure scissors. But his deeply tanned face held warm blue eyes under bushy brows and a smile that in spite of the uncared-for teeth it exposed was a contagious one. Of all the Taltal relics I had seen, he at least was human.

According to Jim, he had come here when very young. He had signed as crew on a South American cargo boat in order to see the world, and when the boat reached Taltal he'd found color and gaiety and excitement. So when the ship sailed on, it sailed without Jim. When his money ran out, he got a job on the lighters that were used to load and unload the ships which anchored in the harbor, and after a few years' hard work he was made manager. Wealth rolled into his pockets in a steady stream and his future, he thought, was assured. Then came the discovery of synthetic nitrate. Almost overnight, Taltal and its brisk shipping trade collapsed. But Jim stayed on. He still managed the lighters, which sagged in their berths waiting for the occasional small boats which touched at Taltal. The rest of the time? Jim shrugged his shoulders.

The story was the same in almost every case. The Norwegian, Fish, was employed by the railroad which had been built to carry men and supplies to and from the mines. The railroad was almost idle now, but Fish remained. Don Oscar, too. He had owned large nitrate interests and had lived in the biggest and best house in Taltal. It was still the biggest and best house in Taltal, though sagging and woebegone. And Don Oscar still lived in it.

The Colonel had been in Taltal since anyone could remember. No one knew just what he did, although he spoke vaguely of mining interests. He always seemed to have plenty of money, though.

"Remittance man," I said immediately. "Probably cashiered out of the army." We were back with Kipling and Maugham.

Jim merely raised his eyebrows. The disintegration of Taltal, he continued, had affected the Colonel less than anyone. He apparently still had enough money to spend and he still spent almost all of it on liquor.

"And Stay?"

"Stay?"

"The little Chilean."

"Oh, you mean Julio." Jim laughed and explained that Julio was addressed as "Usted," which is Spanish for "You," and that in Chile people have a bad habit of not pronouncing their final *d*'s. Julio, it seems, was a mining engineer who had come up from Santiago in boom times. And he, too, had failed to go home.

It was difficult to understand. None of these men seemed really to be friends. Only adversity and desperation had drawn them together. Each afternoon they met at the Club Social for a dice game and some drinks, after which they ate their supper at one of Taltal's inferior restaurants and then looked for a woman, or a gambling game, or just got drunk. Except Don Oscar, who always went direct from the club to his once elegant house and his plump little German wife.

"But *why?*" I asked. "Why stay? Why not get the hell out?"

Jim shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know," he finally said. "We're used to it here, I guess."

It was the Lotus Eaters over again. Only in Taltal there was no lotus.

When the Colonel returned he seemed even unsteadier than before. But this time he had not trusted the drinks to his shaky hands. They were on a tray. And there were four of them. Two highballs and two shocking-pink horrors. Jim repaired to the bar to get reinforcements for himself, while the Colonel parked the tray on the table and, handing me a glass, tried not too successfully to sit down next to me.

"That's me, not the sofa you're sitting on," I remarked, gulping my drink before he could spill it. And I moved to one of the chairs.

"Damme, that's good," he said. "Damme if it isn't." He picked up one highball and downed it. Then the other.

I quickly grabbed the remaining cocktail before the Colonel could. By this time it was beginning to taste a little better. As I was

putting the empty glass back on the tray he reached for my knee and pinched it. I kicked him in the shin and he let go. "Damme, but you've got spirit, girl. Damme if you haven't."

Where was Sam? Where was Jim? Where was anyone? I looked desperately around the room and caught the eye of the third cherub from the left. He gave me a lecherous wink. There was no help there.

Suddenly Don Oscar poked his head into the room. He was the captain who rescues the shipwrecked mariner, the St. Bernard who finds the traveler fallen in the snow. "*Hello,*" I said. "*Do* join us." I even thought in italics.

Don Oscar looked slightly astonished. "I just stopped by to see if you and your husband would like to come to our house for supper tomorrow night."

"We'd *love* to."

"We eat at eight. Come early if you like and take a bath."

"How *wonderful,*" I said. It never occurred to me to be insulted. I realized that Don Oscar must have seen the bathroom in the Hotel Olympia. It was a bathroom in name only. The last plumber had undoubtedly left Taltal years ago, leaving the once shiny fixtures choked up and useless. They had now been put to other purposes. The toilet gaily housed a growing cactus plant. The washstand was used as a wastepaper basket. And the bathtub was a storehouse for everything for which no other place could be found. In it, when I'd last looked, were potatoes, cloves of garlic, dirty wash, a Flit gun, a hammer and some dried beans. Over the sides a bunch of babies' diapers had been hung to dry. "How did you *know*?" I asked Don Oscar. I was choked with emotion.

"I've lived here a long time," he said matter-of-factly. "Well, I'll see you tomorrow."

"*Don't* go," I begged. But he'd already set forth toward home and wife, and I was back where I'd started.

The Colonel remained quietly on the couch. Trickery, no doubt. I prepared for a sudden lunge. But nothing happened. I looked at him more closely. He was asleep.

Jim finally removed him. Apparently it was something he was used to doing, for when he and Sam returned to Ladies Lounge he didn't seem very surprised. "It's a little early for it," was all he said, looking at his watch.

"We'd better go, too," suggested Sam.

"Sam, please, I need a drink first."

"Poor darling, of course. I'll get you a highball right away."

"Sam," I said, "I want a double cocktail, one of those nice pink ones."

He looked at me with concern. "Do you feel all right?"

"I feel fine."

After the drink arrived I felt even better. I sat back on the couch and looked at the cherubs, all of whom were now giving me provocative looks. Their attention pleased me. I was warm and content.

"Eleanor," announced Sam, "we've got to get back to the hotel."

"I *won't* go back to the hotel. Ever. I'll stay right here and sleep." I was slightly hysterical.

Just then a roach the size of a rat walked across the floor in my direction. "All right," I cried quickly, "let's go." At least our hotel room was too dark to disclose the animal life.

Sam helped me to my feet as I took a last look at the cherubs. The third one from the left gave me a final lecherous wink. "Goodby, Colonel," I said, and we were off.

Two days later we left Taltal in a hired Ford. As we started on our way Sam relaxed in the back seat and counted the flea bites on his right arm. "Seventy-three, seventy-four, seventy-five. . . ."

"Sam, isn't it wonderful to be leaving?"

"Yes. Seventy-six, seventy-seven, seventy-eight. . . ."

"Just where are we going?"

"Don't make me lose count. Seventy-nine, eighty. . . ."

"But where *are* we going?"

"To La Serena. Eighty-one, eighty-two, eighty-three—I've got a hundred and four bites," he finally announced. "Just from elbow to wrist. That's a record." He seemed genuinely pleased.

"Sam, tell me honestly," I asked. "Wasn't Taltal the worst place you've ever been—in all your life?"

"Honestly," said Sam, holding my hand, "it was the worst place I've ever been to in my life."

Warmth and happiness flooded me. Marriage was a wonderful institution. Sam and I had shared adversity and it had brought us closer. I felt the last four days had been worth all the misery we'd suffered. Especially as they were behind us.

I don't know what Taltal is like now. With the terrific demand for nitrate during the recent war, it may again have become a boom town. The Hotel Olympia may have repaired its plumbing. The electric lights may work all day. I'll never know. Neither God nor Mr. George G. Heye can ever drag me back to see.

Chapter 4

I USED to feel that Mr. Heye took a fiendish pleasure in picking out the most villainous spots in Chile for us to cover. Whenever we were at our lowest ebb I would torture myself by imagining him comfortably ensconced in his magnificent apartment with a box of specially imported Havana cigars and some newly acquired first editions. Or sitting in one of New York's luxurious restaurants washing down breast of guinea hen *sous cloche* with a bottle of Montrachet, 1911. "Poor Lothrops," he would undoubtedly be saying, as the waiter filled his glass for the third time. Actually, of course, Mr. Heye did not direct our itinerary. It was Sam who decided on the places he believed Mr. Heye would like us to visit. But when the choice proved to be a miserably uncomfortable one, I preferred to blame Mr. Heye.

I was happy as could be, though, when we reached La Serena. La Serena was a large town, capital of the province of Coquimbo, which nestled a mile or so back from the ocean in an attractive green valley. It was clean and modern with remarkably well-stocked stores and a pleasant club, or casino, where we went for our evening cocktail. Atmosphere in La Serena had no doubt been sacrificed to sanitation, but to us this was more than made up for by a holiday from scratching and a feeling of confidence that a cheese sandwich would be a cheese sandwich, and a bed a bed—instead of home

grounds for insect life. Atmosphere can be a fine thing if you don't have to get involved in it personally.

The leading hotel, called the Grand, was nothing like the Hotel Crillon in Paris. But it wasn't like the Hotel Olympia in Taltal, either. The rooms resembled cells, clean and bare, and were just large enough to contain a bed, a chair and a chest of drawers. A small window, high up in the wall, gave light but no view. In fact the air was one of such thick celibacy that when I went to see Sam in the adjoining cell I felt like a nun visiting a monk.

Sam had picked La Serena because, from what he had seen in the museum in Santiago, he knew this region to be rich in archaeology. What he wanted was to put in his own dig, in a spot near enough to a town to make it unnecessary to establish a camp to live in, and La Serena seemed to fit the bill. Unlike Taltal, it had never been dug professionally; what specimens had come to light had been the result of accidental discovery by the natives.

The problem, now, was to find the exact spot which would produce ancient graves. After all, a cemetery can be just so large, and to hit it right on the nose takes a good bit of doing.

People are always saying, "*How* did you happen to know just where to dig? Your husband must be psychic." As if it were magic that leads an archaeologist instinctively to the right spot. Unfortunately it's not that easy; as a rule tedious and hard work is necessary in order to bring in the prehistoric bacon. The technique most commonly and most successfully employed is to ask questions, with the idea that if you do so long enough you will eventually find someone who knows something. You make a nuisance of yourself hurling inquiries at everyone you see—chambermaids, bartenders, businessmen—because sometimes someone has a friend who knows a man who has a friend who dug up an old bone by mistake. If this fails, your best bet is to chase directly after the men who farm the land, for in ploughing or tilling they are apt to turn up remains of another era. Heaven knows what archaeologists would have done without agriculture.

We drew a complete blank with the waiters and the bartenders

and the local gentry of La Serena. So we hired a car and made a tour of various estates in the vicinity, stopping at the small huts in which the workmen lived. The first four calls proved fruitless. The natives were polite and disinterested and obviously thought us crazy. The conversation, so called, went something like this:

Q. "Have you lived here long?"

A. "Yes."

Q. "Have you done any ploughing or digging around here?"

A. "Yes."

Q. "By any chance have you come across any ancient skeletons or pottery or ornaments?"

A. "No."

Q. "Do you know anyone who has?"

A. "No."

You could hardly accuse the Chilean peon of being expansive but at least he was definite. The fifth try, though, brought results. Our unenthusiastic host—his name was Jaime—had returned the same brisk answers as his predecessors, but as we were leaving Sam noted a fat pig guzzling his dinner out of a delicately painted prehistoric bowl. "What's that?" he asked, trying to control his excitement.

Jaime looked at us pityingly. "A pig," he said finally.

"I mean what is he eating out of?"

"A pot."

Calvin Coolidge had nothing on Jaime for taciturnity, but after we had softened him up with a couple of packages of Chesterfields, a chocolate bar and two pieces of chewing gum, he admitted that the pot had been found in a field a mile or so away. Yes, he could show us the spot and he would be willing to dig for us if Don Luis, owner of the land, gave permission. Jaime even consented to sell the pot for the equivalent of ten cents, and in a burst of cordiality he pulled out his shirttails and cleaned out what the pig hadn't.

We found Don Luis at home. He was a shriveled little Italian, almost a hundred years old, who had come to Chile some eighty years before. We had been told he owned thousands of acres of land, but his wealth had certainly not made him a spendthrift, for he

lived in a tumbledown one-story house, alone, except for four dogs, three cats and a goat which, from the atmosphere that rose to meet us, must have been the indoor type. Don Luis greeted us enthusiastically, but as we soon discovered he was stone-deaf and spoke no English I didn't count on my relationship with him getting very far.

Any intimacy between him and Sam was foredoomed to failure, too. If there is anything on four feet (or even two) that Sam loathes, it is cats. A cat does to him what a spider does to me. His hackles rise and he becomes almost physically ill at the very thought of one. I myself have no feeling one way or another about cats, although for smartness and meanness I don't know their equal. The instant a cat-hater enters a room, Pussy senses his reaction and slyly attaches herself to him. I admit there's something to be said on her side as her feelings are undoubtedly hurt, but the revenge she takes is out of all proportion.

Don Luis's cats were not of the most attractive variety and they were even meaner than the general run. Just a glance at Sam sitting unhappily in a corner and they rushed his way, one leaping to the arm of his chair while the others rubbed themselves affectionately against his leg. I could see him flinch and perspiration beaded his forehead, but he sat rigidly still, with a smiling-the-boy-fell-dead expression. If we'd been visiting the Prince of Wales he would doubtless have gotten up and left, but this was archaeology. And we had come to ask a favor.

The question of communication was slightly difficult. Sam almost burst his lungs asking Don Luis for permission to dig on his land. No result. He repeated his request in a normal voice, pushing his mouth into strange shapes in the hope that our host could read lips. No result. Finally he repaired to the car, cats at heel, and carried in our recently acquired pot, at the same time making digging gestures with his free hand. At this, Don Luis nodded genially and, escorting us to the back door, pointed out the outhouse.

Sam looked discouraged, so I decided to try. I adore all sorts of quizzes and guessing games, and my favorite dream for some years has consisted of being tapped for action by one of Dr. I. Q.'s radio

henchmen. "I've got a lady in the balcony, Doctor," he says with rare perception, and then the good doctor brings forth a quotation, flubbed by other contestants week after week, which, if answered correctly, will net me fourteen hundred dollars. The quotation is an obscure one, but in my dream, of course, I know the answer. "John Donne," I state modestly but firmly, and to the envious plaudits of the audience, I give my name and walk off with the cash.

When we were in La Serena, of course, radio quizzes were still a thing of the future, but I had been brought up on such minor teasers as anagrams and Twenty Questions. "Let's play charades," I yelled at Don Luis, and although he obviously didn't understand a word, he looked interested and willing to play anything. So I hid the pot under a straw mat which decorated the living-room floor. Then I collected a shovel I had seen leaning against the back door and, holding it in both hands, I dug at the mat until I finally scooped it up and exposed the pot.

Don Luis guessed the answer right away. "Dig," he beamed. "Of course."

I'm still convinced that he thought we wanted to dig for an outhouse, but his "of course" was all we needed, and we quickly thanked him and said good-by. As we reached the car Sam relieved some of his frustration by doing a beautiful piece of leg work on the cats, which had followed him out. I'm glad the S.P.C.A. wasn't there to see.

Everything was now set. We had a site that was likely to bring results, permission to excavate and a workman to do the dirty work. Sam was in charge and I was his willing if ignorant assistant, and nothing could stop us. I wouldn't have been surprised if we'd turned up a second Rosetta stone.

When Sam and I first became engaged, I offered to study archaeology. "Good Lord, no," said Sam. "I think that would be a great mistake. You stick to your field and let me stick to mine."

I didn't dare confess I had no field. What I did have was a talent for knowing a little about a great many things and an even greater

talent for giving an impression that I knew a lot. I could generally sense what the answers should be. Thus I'd groan over the banality of Tschaikowsky's *Pathétique* (although secretly I loved it) and rhapsodize over Marcel Proust when, actually, he bored me stiff. And if I was uncertain just how to react—if, for instance, someone asked what I thought of Dali or Gertrude Stein—I could always say, "Oh, Dali," or "Oh, Gertrude Stein," in a middle-of-the-road tone of voice, so that it could be interpreted either as enthusiasm or scorn, depending on what my companion wished to hear.

This technique, of course, was no good for archaeology. And, besides, I was sincere about wishing to be a little helpmeet to my husband and all prepared to grasp archaeology to my bosom. So when Sam discouraged my taking on this science any more deeply than a "learn as you go along" procedure, I was genuinely disappointed. Even if it meant he could have no comeback when I turned out to be a scientific dud.

What I had the greatest difficulty getting through my head was that you could put on a dig without scores of workmen. Somewhere I'd read an article about an expedition to Egypt, illustrated by a series of intriguing photographs. One of them, I remember, showed a titled Englishman in a topee and khaki shorts, smugly watching while hundreds of busy natives filed by, carrying off earth from the excavations in baskets on top of their heads. Another pictured Lord Pishposh holding up a jeweled crown while the same flock of natives watched goggle-eyed in the background. When I told Sam about this he remarked somewhat wryly that the article had probably been a fiction story, the photographs, drawings by a popular illustrator, and that we'd be lucky to get one workman without a basket.

Which was just what we did get. Jaime, carrying spade and pickax, appeared at the hotel the following morning to direct us to the spot where the pig's pot had been discovered. It was arranged that in future he would meet us at the site promptly each morning at seven.

After a ten-minute drive we reached a large open field, which was IT. IT looked just like every other field except that bits of pottery and cow dung were scattered thickly over its surface. The cows, ap-

parently having consumed everything in sight except the pottery, had fortunately been diverted to greener pastures. Jaime waved his arm in a vague gesture, and Sam, employing, as far as I could tell, the "eenie, meenie, minie, mo" system, outlined a square on the ground and Jaime swung his pick.

There's no use pretending I wasn't excited. You don't have to have a scientific viewpoint or a particular desire to increase the knowledge of the world to be spellbound by a dig. In the earth are things that have been buried for hundreds of years. You may find them. You may not. They may be dull. They may be spectacular. A dig is something like a treasure hunt, like waiting for Santa Claus to come down the chimney, like the mailman approaching your door. Anything can happen.

I stood, hands clenched, eyes glued to the ground which Jaime was attacking so spiritedly. Remember, it was my first dig. What happened, of course, was that nothing happened. "Relax," said Sam. "He's hardly started. Nothing can turn up yet."

But I couldn't relax. I was afraid if I moved my eyes away for one second I would miss out. And then, after an hour, it happened. There was a sudden scrunching noise. Jaime's pick had struck something solid.

Before I could say "ah," Sam had leaped to the spot, waving Jaime out of the way. In no time at all he had grabbed a small shovel and a knife and was busily at work. No surgeon could have wielded his instruments with more dexterity, and while I, speechless, watched the operation, the outline of the grave was gradually exposed.

When this stage was reached Sam generously pointed to a second knife and said, "You can help me clear." I was so excited that my hands shook and I was sure I'd make some disastrous mistake, but I bravely flipped away the earth as I'd seen Sam do. When everything showed up clearly, we climbed out of the pit and quietly surveyed our handiwork.

In the center of the grave lay a skeleton, knees drawn up to his chest, as if he were the victim of a bad case of cramps. And placed around him in no particular order were two red jars, one cracked

pot and some stones which had been rubbed smooth by use. "Isn't he WONDERFUL?" I said rapturously.

Later on in my archaeological life I got so spoiled that I groaned at the sight of a skeleton. I would sniff if a pot wasn't decorated and feel personally put upon if the poor dead Indian wore no jewelry. But that was later on. The first grave you dig up is something special. Like your first evening dress or the first time you go to the theatre or your first date with a boy alone. You can never repeat the sensation. To me that moldy bunch of bones surrounded by a few coarse clay pots and some hunks of rock was Alexander the Great, King Midas and John D. Rockefeller all rolled into one. I've never felt that way about a skeleton since.

As a matter of fact, we'd been extraordinarily lucky. Archaeologists often spend days before they find something. Or find nothing at all. And we had struck pay dirt after only an hour's digging. What's more, in the next four weeks we unearthed more than seventy burials. Let Lord Pishposh in Egypt with his hundreds of workmen do any better, thought I!

According to Sam, this was a very *significant* dig. That was because there were three layers of burials and each layer was of a different type. The skeletons in the top layer were flexed, which is the technical term for the position I had interpreted as a case of cramps. The second layer contained stone tombs, in which the bodies were buried full length with their possessions set right in with them. Either the Indians of that era had been lazy, or their families had been enormous, for the tombs were filled to overflowing. Skeletons were squashed down one on top of the other like a sandwich, and you could rarely tell whose arm or leg belonged to whom.

All that had gone before was simplicity, though, compared to the bottom layer. Here the burials were bundle, or what is called "secondary," burials—actually just a pile of loose bones heaped together. Along with them were skeletons of llamas, the South American camels, that had been sacrificed to accompany the dead and whose bones were intermingled with theirs. And elaborate pottery and occasional objects of gold and silver and turquoise. But none of

this hodgepodge appeared at first sight. An underground flow of water had covered everything, and it was only by baling that you could get an occasional glimpse of what was there. Or you could put your hand down into the mushy ooze and pull out almost anything. Like a prehistoric grab bag.

The site was so packed with ancient remains that it was thoroughly confusing. There were so many bones. Sam patiently tried to teach me their names but as I could never even manage to remember whether leg bones were called tibia and fibula or fibia and tibula, I soon gave up.

In general, though, I was getting wiser. You can no more be exposed to an archaeologist without acquiring some knowledge than you can fail to get a cold if someone consistently sneezes in your face. I learned the hard way, just the same.

When you're young you tend to exaggerate the importance of your failures and for years they come back to haunt you. Two occasions still stick in my mind as spelling heartbreaking misery: my unpopularity at my first big dance when I spent the evening hiding in the dressing room, and the night My Hero of the moment took me out and I was in such a state of excitement that I threw up in front of him. To these earlier fiascoes I can add a third, no less painful to think back upon: what I did to Sam's best grave at La Serena.

It was the second week of the dig. We had spent the previous day uncovering and cleaning the skeletons and surrounding objects in the middle layer of what apparently was a very important grave. "You go on ahead," Sam had told me that morning, "and meet Jaime. Get him started breaking new ground. I have some business in town and I'll be with you in a few hours."

So I had gone to the site and, after picking what I hoped was a good spot for Jaime to work on, I looked around for something else to do. And there was yesterday's grave, spick and span and bulging with remains. "Ah!" I said to myself, "I'll surprise Sam. I'll show him what an apt pupil I am." So I grabbed a handful of paper bags which always accompanied our digging paraphernalia

and carefully, lovingly, I extracted each pot, each bit of stone, each skeleton, and placed them in separate bags. Nothing broke. How proud Sam will be of me, I thought, feeling the anticipatory warmth of his approval.

When everything in sight had been removed I took my little trowel and dug down until I reached the burials in layer No. 3. Here things were more complicated, as you could only feel, not see, what lay beneath the water. I worked feverishly, though, immersing my arms in ooze, pulling out a mess of bones, pottery, a beautiful turquoise bracelet, and putting away each trophy neatly, as I had seen Sam do. The grave was almost cleaned out when he arrived.

"Darling, look what I've done." I beamed happily.

Sam looked. I don't believe I have ever seen such dismay on a human countenance. "You haven't. . . . You couldn't. . . . You didn't . . . *pull the grave to pieces,*" he fairly moaned. "Everything is gone. Now I have no records of any kind."

"I thought. . . ."

"Don't you know that the procedure is to clear away the earth until the contents show up sharply so that you can take notes on the burials and photograph them. Until that's done, *move nothing.*"

"I didn't. . . ."

"It's the only way an archaeologist gets a chance, later on, to study the material as it was buried and to work out its relationship to other objects. It's the only way he can reconstruct the story of how ancient peoples lived. And this is what *Really Matters.*"

"I tried. . . ."

"This is what *Really Matters,*" he repeated. "The meaning of each piece, not the piece itself. A bone can be as significant as an emerald, a pottery fragment as important as a turquoise bracelet."

"I found. . . ."

"Of course, if you happen to find gold or precious stones it's all to the good, but it isn't the *Main Consideration.*"

"I'm sorry," I finally managed to say, inadequately enough.

"I guess I didn't make it clear before," said Sam, becoming kind, which made things much worse.

"I'll never never do it again," I promised fervently. "Just try me."

"Maybe you'd better watch me work for a few days," he suggested, dashing my hopes to the ground. "You'll catch on quicker that way."

I did watch and I did catch on, although I made more mistakes in the process. Fortunately they were never again as serious as the first one.

There was the time I was removing the contents of a grave (a grave already recorded and photographed!) and I put an archaeological specimen in my pocket. It was nothing but a dirty hunk of something with a few tiny blue stones showing. I hardly looked as I slipped it into my pants pocket in order to have a memento of my first dig. And then forgot about it.

That night in the hotel, as I was shaking out my pants to get rid of the dirt, out fell the hunk. Sam pounced like a kitten after a ball of wool. "And what," he asked accusingly, "is that?"

"Oh, *that*." With a sinking feeling I realized I had sinned again.

"Yes, *that*. Where did you find it?"

"Why, Sam, it's nothing. You know I wouldn't have taken anything that was any good. This is just an old hunk I kept as a souvenir. An old hunk with a blue bead or two that I found in the ground."

"I see," said Sam, meaning he didn't. "It just so happens that that old hunk is a bone figurine with inlaid turquoise eyes." He fondled it as if he were fondling a baby and then wrapped it tenderly in toilet paper. That was the last I saw of it.

But it wasn't the last I heard. I never had a chance; the odds were four to one. How could I, alone, win an argument against Sam, What-Would-Mr.-Heye-Think, God-How-Could-You, and SCIENCE? This was another lesson I never forgot.

I learned other things, too. About skeletons, for instance. I'd never known that a skeleton had sex. To me skeletons were just a bunch of bones of neutral gender. I even used to call a skeleton "it." So that when Sam, busily clearing the remains of a long-dead

Indian, remarked that he was working on a girl of about eighteen years of age, I looked at him as if he were Sherlock Holmes. "How do you make that out?" I asked admiringly.

"There are hundreds of variations in the bone structure of a male and of a female," he answered. "A woman's jawbone is usually smaller and more delicately constructed. Her eye sockets are apt to be rounder and her two central incisors wider. She has less chin and a thinner brow ridge. There are other differences, too, although no one of them is conclusive in itself. But when you find several of these characteristics true to form, you can make a pretty good guess."

"But how can you tell she is eighteen years old?"

"I can't. Only approximately. The teeth are the best clue. If you spot baby teeth, naturally you have a baby. And the more worn the teeth, the older the person is. The sutures in the skull are significant, too. As you grow older, the sutures close up." Having finished his lecture, Sam again applied himself to his eighteen-year-old girl.

The game sounded like fun. "Sam," I said, "I want to play, too. Three to one I hit the right answer." With great care I pulled a skull from the mire where I was working and examined it for at least five minutes. "It's a woman," I said. "She's forty-seven years old and, from the strange shape of her head, looks mentally deficient. Come quick and tell me if I'm right."

Sam reluctantly abandoned his bony charmer and picked up my skull. He looked it over from every angle, no trace of expression on his face. "That," he finally pronounced, "is a male llama."

Gradually, though, I was being whipped into shape. I lapped up information as intensely as a participant in a lifeboat drill in wartime, until finally I felt certain that if I didn't know everything one *did* do, at least I knew what one *didn't*. I even got smug about my knowledge. "This," I said to myself, "is easy." And then TROUBLE started and it wasn't easy at all. All the rules I'd learned were off.

TROUBLE started with a little boy who wandered into the field and stayed to watch us work. He was the type of child who stares

continuously and who won't or can't talk. He must have used sign language after he left us, though, for in the afternoon, back he came with three little friends. They didn't talk much either, just giggled inanely, which was disconcerting if nothing more.

The real onslaught began several days later. There were young girls, there were women—some pregnant, some nursing their babies—there were able-bodied men with apparently nothing to do but gawk, and there were more children between the ages of five and fifteen than any self-respecting community has a right to beget in ten years. Some of them toddled along, attached to Mama's skirts, and some, the tough ones, came in gangs; but the majority drove up in busses, three hundred strong, accompanied by their teachers. School had been suspended in our favor. We were an educational free-for-all—a combination zoo, museum and nut farm—and the kiddies had a wonderful time. We didn't.

The teachers, having delivered their charges at the new playground, disappeared. Chaos followed. One of the children stole my sweater. Another stole one of Sam's pet skulls and organized a ball game with it, and by the time the skull was recovered all that was left was teeth. We had been in the habit of going back to the hotel for lunch until, on our return one day, we found a game of leap frog going on and the contents of the trench in which we'd been working smashed into small particles. After that we brought sandwiches and ate them in the hot sun, bitterly guarding ancient bones.

What was so maddening was that we were helpless. Each evening Sam lodged a complaint with the local authorities, and each evening they promised that the matter would be attended to the following day. And each day was just like the day before.

We couldn't even count Jaime on our side. During the first two peaceful weeks of the dig, we had followed archaeological rules. Each time that Jaime struck evidence of a burial Sam and I immediately took over, and Jaime, with pick and shovel, was shooed off to start a new trench. This was no longer possible. We didn't dare leave anything exposed when we were not on hand. Thus only one burial could be kept going at a time which, when cleared, could

be quickly photographed and taken up. Until then no other could be started. As a result, Jaime spent most of his time sitting under a distant apple tree, smoking cigarettes and consorting with the enemy. He, naturally, was very happy about this arrangement, and at times we suspected him of having hatched up the entire hideous plot.

After a week, school finally returned to its own home grounds. This didn't eliminate visits from anyone of non-school age or from the covey of curiosity seekers that had been raised by the publicity of our official complaints. They were fairly silent watchers, though, and their behavior was better. We were weak with relief. And then I had the misfortune to find a gold earring. One puny little gold earring. It was ugly. It wasn't even pure gold.

The earring was one of a number of objects which I extracted from the ooze, and the instant I spotted it I concealed it; but it was too late. "*Gold. Gold. Gold.*" You could hear the word tossed in whispers from one end of the field to the other, like a football. "They're finding *gold*. It's *gold* they're after. They're robbing us of our *gold*." The whispers became frenzied.

The next morning when we came to work, the site was one mass of excavations. The treasure-seekers must have been digging all night. Pulverized bone and smashed pottery were sprinkled like confetti over the earth. "The such and such so and sos," said Sam, indignantly letting forth a series of unmentionable words. "ROBBING OUR GRAVES!"

As far as I could see it was a question of dog eat dog, but I thought it wiser not to say so. "Do you suppose they found any gold?" I asked.

"How should I know," said Sam, shrugging his shoulders resignedly.

We never did know, either. We didn't stay on at La Serena long enough to find out.

Chapter 5

UNTIL I went to Chile I always thought the Indians were poor oppressed creatures, noble and brave but gullible. (After all, hadn't they been persuaded to give up the island of Manhattan for twenty-four dollars' worth of trinkets?) I felt ashamed and sorry and wanted to show my sympathy. So when Sam announced that we were going to visit the Araucanian Indians in southern Chile, I was pleased as could be. No one could have accused me of being a great success at digging, but here was my chance to make good. Here was where I could apply the psychology I'd studied in college. Personal contacts had always been my forte and I could hardly wait to try my talents on the Indians. "The darling Indians," I said to myself. "They may be difficult but I'll win them over." I pictured myself dandling sweet little brown babies on my knee. I fully expected to be adopted into the tribe.

Sam tried in vain to quell my enthusiasm. The trouble was I had never known any real Indians; all my experience had come from books. My friends were Pocahontas and Hiawatha and the warriors who peopled the novels of J. Fenimore Cooper. They were romantic and inspiring and just what I expected the Araucanians to be. I was wrong. The Araucanians are without doubt very famous Indians. They've been the subject of books and poems, too, and they too must once have been romantic and inspiring. But when we saw them

they were about as romantic as the characters in *Tobacco Road*, and the only thing they inspired was pity. After a few months we decided they were more interesting to read about than to meet and better admired from afar.

There are still more than a hundred thousand Araucanians living in southern Chile, and Sam's plan was to study their civilization and to make a collection of its material evidences. This isn't as easy as it may sound. To learn about the Indians' customs you often have to sneak up on them to see what they are doing, and you are as apt to be received with a carving knife as with a smile. And in order to acquire a collection of what they wear and use, you more or less have to pull the earrings from their ears, the clothes off their backs and the chamber pots out from under their bunks. This is called ethnology and it is an uncomfortable science for all concerned. It is true you are dealing with live subjects, not dead ones, but after a few weeks that doesn't seem to be an advantage. After a few weeks we decided that "Lo, the poor Indian" might well be changed to "Lo, the poor Lothrop."

The Araucanians proved to be tough, independent and unfriendly. It is not surprising. They are the real fighting Indians of all time, and their life has been one continuous struggle. The Incas in their heyday attacked them and got soundly trounced. The Spanish conquerors in the sixteenth century were more successful, but only for a short time; and after a series of revolts the Indians managed to free themselves and remained free for almost three hundred years.

This is now changed. In 1883 the Chileans, having gained their independence from Spain, finally licked the Araucanians—but it took machine guns to do so. The Indians were incorporated into the Chilean government and most of their property was confiscated. However they still continue to raise food and sheep on the little land left them. Few of them can read or write and few speak anything but their own language.

They keep to themselves. They weren't glad to see us. They took Sam's money and gave as little as possible in exchange, and there

was no dandling of little brown babies, no initiation into the tribe. In fact they hated the sight of us.

This, of course, did not affect Sam's program in the least. For months we chased after Araucanians, collecting what we could and taking rebuff after rebuff in our stride.

We first made our headquarters in Temuco, a town almost twenty-four hours by rail from Santiago. Temuco had been founded during the wars of the nineteenth century as nothing more than a frontier post, but it had grown rapidly and, in contrast to the towns of northern Chile, seemed modern and progressive. The streets, though made of cobblestone, boasted sidewalks and gutters, and real trolleys and taxicabs rattled up and down their length. The main hotel, except on the various occasions when the plumbing faltered, was excellent. In fact Temuco seemed too comfortable to be true—at least for scientific research.

Luckily, though, it was the center of the district that held the Mapuche Indians, main tribe of the Araucanians, and that was why Sam had chosen it. A fifteen-minute drive in almost any direction would take you into Indian territory.

Starting work in a new place is always something of a problem. And although it is easier to find ethnological specimens than archaeological ones—for their owners at least are above ground—you've got to go about it right in order to get results. So we inquired as to who might help us and were told of a Frenchman who had lived in Temuco for many years. He was a teaching brother, Brother Claude by name, and he was interested in the Indians and had even learned a little of the Mapuche dialect. We decided to pay him a visit.

Between him and me it was dislike at first sight. Brother Claude was soft-spoken and smooth, and he was swathed in a heavy cloak of piety which might have been made of cellophane for all it failed to conceal. When I remarked on this to Sam he was shocked and rebuked me, so it was with pardonable satisfaction that I received the news some years later that Brother Claude had run off with a young French girl and had been expelled from the Church. At the time, though, I strained to treat him with politeness, for

in spite of the fact that he turned out to be an unworthy pillar of the Catholic Church, he was of great help to Sam.

As a matter of fact, our relationship if not pleasurable was mutually beneficial. The order to which Brother Claude belonged was a pathetically poor one and provided him with nothing beyond bare necessities. While he served as our guide, his expenses were paid (by Mr. Heye) and he had a wonderful time. Time and again I gagged over food that tickled his palate and bruised myself on beds that to him apparently seemed equipped with Simmons mattresses. Insects passed him by for more succulent subjects, and when we traveled together he would appear each morning, rosy and rested, to face my hollow-eyed and itching envy. But he was a good guide and he knew just where to take us.

We started our collecting by going to the Indian agencies which flourished in Temuco. These were a combination of old-fashioned general store and Indian trading post (like those in the western U.S.). The Indians came from long distances to pawn their possessions or to exchange them for such commodities as hoes and shovels, pots and pans, knives, needles, nails, or staples such as rice and flour. A special room was devoted to exhibiting articles that the Indians had left behind and contained silver jewelry, saddle blankets, woven saddlebags, ponchos and even, occasionally, a worn pair of pants. The pawning of these, we were told, represented a complete low in an Indian's financial state. How he could manage to get home, pantless, I never quite understood.

The agencies treated the Indians well. They were usually given three months in which to redeem their possessions, and no amount of verbal persuasion or even bribery would induce the agencies to break their word. Sam used to browse around among smelly ponchos and saddlebags until he found what he wanted. "I'll take this," he'd say to the shopkeeper who would then pull out his little book and, after an interminable amount of calculating, say "Very well, sir, you may have that in twelve days—*if*. Or this one next Tuesday—*if*."

There was a silver necklace I had coveted for weeks, and on the magic day when it was to be mine I discovered that "if" had ma-

terialized the night before and claimed it. Lots of objects, of course, had passed their time limit, and Sam bought cases and cases of woven articles as well as some lovely silver ornaments, but the things we wanted most remained tantalizingly unavailable, depending on that potential "if." So we decided to try the direct approach.

This meant going after the Indians on their own home grounds. Sam therefore hired a car, and one bright morning, full of enthusiasm, he, Brother Claude and I set forth on our hunt. We left the car at the edge of a large field and walked toward a cluster of small huts that were scattered over the landscape like flies on flypaper. The huts were called *rucas* and they all looked alike. They were one-room affairs with heavily thatched roofs and eaves that came so close to the ground that it was impossible to stand up beneath them. A tiny aperture in front took the place of a door. There were no windows.

Every *ruca* was guarded by two or three emaciated, flea-ridden, mangy dogs which rushed at us fiercely when we approached. I stuck close to Brother Claude, the lesser of various evils, for he carried a camera and a fully extended tripod with which he warded off canine attention.

Brother Claude, we discovered, had been an expert fencer in his youth and he had forgotten little of this art. "*En riposte,*" he would cry, assuming the classical posture of left hand above head, right arm stiff, as with unerring aim he pricked a snarling dog in the shoulder. "*Touché,*" I expected the dog to howl as he ran out of our way.

Unfortunately we could not use a tripod on the Indians. At the first three *rucas* we were received with (1) a hiss, (2) a spit, and (3) a curse. All three—they were women—then turned their backs and swished into their homes. If there had been such a thing as a door they would have slammed it.

After a good deal of effort we wheedled our way into a *ruca.* The single room measured about fifteen feet by twenty and was crowded with inmates. At one time or another I noted Papa, Mama, Grandmama, an indeterminate number of relatives and about nine kiddies,

although it was so dark inside I may have counted the same ones twice. There were similar difficulties totting up the score on the pigs, chickens and dogs which nosed about underfoot.

Wooden bunks for sleeping lined the walls and were the only articles of furniture, except for some little wooden seats about a foot high which served for guests and for the head of the family. Everyone else sat on the dirt floor. In the middle of the room the dirt had been hollowed out to make a fireplace, and smoldering logs supported a large caldron from which emanated an odor that spoiled my appetite for the next week.

Papa Indian was spokesman. Brother Claude officiated for our side. The conversation was in Mapuche, a language which sounds like a drawn-out whine. As is often the case when someone does not know a language well, Brother Claude spoke in a slow singsong, as if he were addressing a child of three or a congenital idiot. The Indians obviously disliked him as much as I did.

Sam had made a list of things he was interested in buying and Brother Claude chanted through them one by one. Papa Indian was evidently set on being as difficult as possible. If he was asked for one article he would shake his head and counter with something entirely unrelated. It was as if you were to go into a grocery store and request flour only to be told there was none but that you could have a mousetrap instead.

"Have you any earrings to sell?" whined Brother Claude.

"Corn," Papa Indian whined back.

"Spears?" Brother Claude continued to whine.

"No. Ponchos."

"Silver necklace?"

"No. Earrings."

"Yes, yes, earrings," said Brother Claude eagerly.

"No earrings," whined Papa Indian with deadpan expression.

"Let's go," I suggested, after this brisk repartee had been translated.

"Patience," said Sam. "You can never hurry an Indian. It takes time."

Heaven knows we had plenty of time, and I wouldn't have minded waiting if it hadn't been for the atmosphere of concentrated venom which surrounded us. Not an ounce of friendliness was exhibited except by the pigs, the dogs and the children.

For the benefit of those sentimentalists who gurgle over anything under the age of seven, I should like to state that there is nothing either sweet or cute about the young Indian fry of Latin America. They are rude, they are incredibly dirty, they whine. You may feel desperately sorry for them as it isn't their fault—they've been brought up that way—but that doesn't make contact with them any more enjoyable. The poor kids are friendly enough, but you suffer in direct ratio to their friendliness. "Gimme, gimme," they whine pathetically about anything that catches their eye, and if that fails, they resort to their invariable habit of applying sticky hands to your dress or purse or whatever you happen to value most, making it next to impossible to detach hand from article.

This, though, is to be expected. After all, any children anywhere whose families are not in the upper brackets and who have no Mademoiselle or governess in attendance are apt to put their little fingers in every sort of mess. Particularly disconcerting about Indian children, however, are their continuously runny noses. They either sniffle or drip. Or both. And until a child is old enough to wipe his own nose (and decides he wants to do so), it stays as is. Mama herself may be clean as can be (although she usually isn't), but nothing will induce her to touch Junior's nose. This is a superstition that exists all over Latin America and has existed for centuries.

I once asked a distinguished ethnologist what it was based upon, and he got very technical and went into long explanations about body functions and anal complexes and other unpleasant psychological terms. So I gave up trying to be well informed and bent my energies to staying as far away from the South American papooses as possible.

In this I was licked from the moment we stepped into our first *ruca*. Out-of-doors you at least stand a chance of dodging them, but try sitting bunched up on a midget seat with endless little creatures suddenly appearing out of the darkness and pouncing on you. There

was one particular pest who could not have been more than three, although his face had the crafty wisdom of forty, and who kept making strange noises with his mouth that might have meant something to Mama and Papa but which sounded to me like "glug, glug." Glug first make a dive for my hair and pulled out a hairpin, which he pensively sucked and then handed back. I shook my head and waved a hand in a "keep it" gesture.

That was my mistake. He had now smelled victory and was out for better things. While I was busy fending off a pig Glug managed to get his hand into my pocketbook, and when the hand emerged, my compact was attached to it. Papa Indian mumbled something unintelligible, and Glug shook off the compact which fell to the floor and broke, spilling bits of powder in all directions. One of the pigs immediately poked his head into the mess and emerged with his snout coated with Guerlain's best. I suppose it was funny. Sam and Brother Claude laughed. Glug gave me a winning smile. I didn't smile back.

It took us over an hour even to get started. Brother Claude kept on chanting Mapuche and Sam accompanied him with a rattle of coins, specially brought for the occasion. These last finally succeeded in flushing out various pieces of wearing apparel, a wooden spoon, some rather inferior silver jewelry and the wooden seat, which by then I considered a permanent part of my anatomy. When the business was transacted we said good-by with relief. All I wanted was to get home quickly. The way Papa Indian and family looked at us, I gathered our departure would make them equally happy.

In the next three weeks we picked up a lot more specimens. We managed to crash about one *ruca* in every four, and although our reception was never what you might call enthusiastic, we did get along better, and the antagonism shown us was not so great. Except for the woman who chased me with a carving knife.

I was only trying to be helpful. Mama Indian in this case was fat and swarthy and apparently very vain. Her neck, ears and wrists were loaded down with silver, and although she was anything but a Lorelei, she continuously combed her long, black and rather

greasy hair. At one point she put down the comb and scratched her head with both hands (probably lice I decided), and I picked up the comb, which was a curious one and obviously homemade. Sam, I was sure, would be interested in adding it to his collection. With that, my fat friend stopped scratching and picked up a knife. I could see she meant it too. I dropped the comb and all dignity and ran like hell out of the *ruca.*

Sam and Brother Claude joined me almost immediately. I was still shaking as we slunk to the car. "What did I *do?*" I asked Sam.

"You picked up her comb and it probably had some of her hair in it. The Indians believe that if you get hold of hair clippings or nail parings or any other parts of themselves, it puts them in your power and you can practice witchcraft on them."

"I don't want to practice anything on them," I said bitterly. "I've decided I prefer archaeology to ethnology. I like my Indians better dead."

Sam was lost in thought. "And just as I was working up to buying some of her silver," he said sadly.

This episode didn't stop our collecting activities, although I never again touched anything unless it was handed me. Sam's fever of acquisition lasted until he had exhausted all the *rucas* that we were allowed to enter. He was interested in every material object that came into the Indians' daily lives—implements for eating, for cooking, for farming, gear for their horses, fighting instruments.

We bought pots and cups and spoons. Ponchos and mirrors and looms. Silver bridles, stirrups, bits and spurs. Drums, whistles and jewelry. Bags by the score—made of net, calfskin, lambskin, horse head, calf head, horse leg, as well as of the unmentionable parts of the cow and bull. Wooden masks, trumpets and pipes. Baskets. Burial poles. "From cradle to coffin," might well have been our motto!

Sam's fever only subsided when he had practically cleaned out the Indians. There were boxes and boxes of specimens. There was so much, in fact, that I was sure the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, would have to build an extra wing to make room for their new collection.

Chapter 6

WE WEREN'T through with the Araucanians by any means. Collecting was only part of Sam's job; he was equally interested in studying the customs of the Indians and in witnessing some of the ceremonies they still practiced. And, above all, in taking pictures.

We had brought along a movie camera from the States (courtesy of Mr. Heye) which had all sorts of trick gadgets that completely baffled me and, as it turned out later, even confused Sam. Mr. Heye had also supplied thousands and thousands of feet of film—enough, I was afraid, to turn Sam into a second Burton Holmes. Wherever we went the film went with us, filling at least six suitcases to overflowing. We also carried a tent, although we never used it. And camping equipment and excavation materials. All this, combined with the bags that housed our modest personal paraphernalia, made quite an imposing array of luggage.

I was reminded of a summer spent with my family at Aix-les-Bains, when the outstanding event of the season had been the arrival of the Aga Khan at the hotel where we were staying. Literally mountains of trunks and elegant Vuitton bags preceded him and his entourage, which consisted of his latest wife (or concubine) and a couple of dozen valets and French maids. When he entered the lobby I could barely see him for the nauseating bowing and scraping.

that surrounded him. "Who is it?" I inquired of one of the bellboys, who said something in awed tones that sounded like "Thaggakon."

That afternoon I described the excitement I had witnessed. "Who was it?" asked Mother, always ready for a juicy piece of gossip. "A Mr. Kahn," I answered. "Some famous Jewish banker, I believe." "Not Otto?" asked Father, suddenly interested. "I guess so," I said, wishing to please.

We were soon enlightened as to the identity of the famous guest. The personnel of the hotel continued to bow and scrape, as was only to be expected with a man whose subjects pay him his weight in gold and jewels each year. The Aga Khan and his wife (or concubine) sat at a table nearby to ours in the dining room, and we used to watch, fascinated, while he guzzled the exotic foods specially prepared for him by the chef. "Disgusting performance," remarked Mother, delicately wrinkling her nose. "Why not?" said Father mildly. "It pays him to eat!"

In a small way I compared our trek to obscure Chilean towns with the Aga Khan's triumphant descent upon European watering places. Sam's entourage, it is true, only consisted of a wife and a French cleric (no handmaidens or handmen), and our ample luggage held utilitarian articles rather than creations from Chanel or Savile Row, but to the hotelkeepers in the obscure towns we visited I expected us to appear as awe-inspiring as the Aga in Aix. It didn't work that way. Chilean hotelkeepers received us with stunned amazement, all right, but they neither bowed nor scraped, and our impressive entrance didn't improve either the rooms or the service. The extra suitcases were a nuisance, that's all, but they continued to go with us.

A camera is a mysterious thing and can be as temperamental as any artist. To me who was weaned on a sweet and gentle Brownie, which turned out good results even when I forgot to focus it, our movie camera was an absolute monster. He obviously didn't like us. He wouldn't cooperate. Whenever Camera's performance was of no particular importance he reacted like a lamb, but if something

exciting was going on which we wanted to record for posterity, Camera got coy or sick.

In Temuco Sam got into his photographic stride by taking pictures of me and of the scenery outside town.

Having tried out his wings on me, so to speak, he now prepared to focus on Indians. Unfortunately they weren't as keen as I to be photographed. After a good deal of effort he persuaded an old crone to let herself be filmed while weaving a poncho. Preparations were made with great care. Grandma was induced to wear all her jewelry and her most picturesque costume. The loom was moved out-of-doors so that there would be plenty of light. The bench on which the old lady was to sit was placed in such a way that each stage in the process of work would show up clearly. Then the camera was tried out at endless different angles until the perfect one was found. Finally all was set and Sam started the machine running. At this point Grandma ran too. "She probably thought she heard a swarm of bees," I said helpfully, trying not to laugh at Sam's expression of dismay. "She'll come back." But she didn't. Nor were we ever able to induce anyone else to take her place.

It was some consolation when Brother Claude and Sam's ever-flowing stream of coins combined to obtain us permission to film some of the Indian girls making *mote*. *Mote* is a sort of corn meal which is made by soaking the corn in water and lye and then putting it into baskets and trampling it. This performance is obviously not suitable for anything but a short short, as there is little if any variation in tramples, but Sam thought it would be interesting to record it photographically. He did.

But the tramplers were almost as shy as the weaving lady, and although they did not run away, they refused to face the camera and did their trampling with backs turned. Each time Sam moved the camera they reversed. Thus, except for the fact that they were standing in baskets, which gave a slightly mad aspect to the scene, they might have been any group of fat-hipped brunettes anywhere, waiting for a bus on a midwinter day and stamping their feet up and down to keep warm.

None of these small discouragements counted, though, in the light of our one great triumph. "I've arranged to photograph a *machi* ceremony," Sam exulted one night as he and Brother Claude returned from a special Indian hunt. "Are you *listening*, Eleanor? I'VE GOT A MACHI!" He sounded as if he had just caught a four hundred pound swordfish. But I was excited too. A *machi* ceremony was something few outsiders had ever been allowed to see—much less record photographically. Sam had succeeded in crashing the inner circle of Indian life. The holy of holies.

A *machi* is a witch doctor. She—for *machis* are almost invariably women—is looked upon with tremendous reverence and is believed by the Araucanians to be the interpreter of their most important god, known very simply as the Supreme Deity. Some of her functions are to discover the sorcerer who is responsible for death; to bring rain; to predict hidden or future things; and, above all, to cure the sick. This is a big order, and to be a *machi* is the greatest thing a woman can aspire to, but there is apparently no percentage in trying for the profession as it is imposed on her supernaturally, either by the Supreme Being himself or by a spirit through interior revelation.

There is no use in her saying to herself, "I want to be a *machi*." Either she is tapped from above for this exalted work or she goes on leading her normal life as a wife and mother. No one seems to be very clear as to how the tapping, so to speak, takes place: the Indians, even if they know, refuse to discuss it. My first thought was that an enterprising female would have a wonderful opportunity for cheating. "A spirit came to me last night," she can so easily say, and there she is, fixed for life. But when I mentioned this, Sam told me I had a suspicious nature and that the Indians were too superstitious to indulge in such chicanery. However I still have my doubts.

Once IT has happened to her, the potential *machi* is taken in hand by an older and more experienced *machi* and is trained over a long period before she is consecrated and allowed to practice. The *machi*'s job is obviously too important to take any chance on her fumbling it. Once set, though, she is at the disposal of all in need. The unhappy bring their troubles to her door. The ill come to her

for treatment. For simple sickness she usually prescribes herbs, which she prepares in some secret way, but with something more serious, or in case of catastrophe, she resorts to a ceremony.

Each *machi* owns what is called a *machi* pole. This is the long and massive trunk of a tree which is sunk into the ground and into which steps are cut, making it into a kind of ladder. The upper part is carved in the semblance of a face, the top of which is leveled off to form a platform about two or three feet wide, and green branches are tied to the back and sides of the pole to carry out the illusion of a tree. During the ceremony the *machi* ascends to the square-cut top and dances on it, at the same time steadying herself by holding on to the branches, which quiver and shake as if animated by the tree's spirit itself. As she dances, she prays and chants—sometimes to cure sickness, sometimes to bring on rain, sometimes so that children may be produced.

The *machi* Sam had netted was a big fat woman of forty-odd years whom we called Lupe because her real name was unpronounceable. She had been a *machi* since she was seventeen and was either more intelligent or more venal than the majority of Mapuche Indians. At any rate, she had agreed to let us attend, with camera, a ceremony at which she was officiating to pray for some badly needed rain.

Unfortunately, God got ahead of Lupe, for on the day the ceremony was to take place it poured steadily. I took one look out of our hotel window and suggested a game of Russian Bank. "How can you think of such a thing?" asked Sam reproachfully, as if I were responsible for the downpour. "We are going to Lupe's house."

"But how can she pray for rain when it is already raining?"

"You can't tell," said Sam, without much conviction. "Maybe it's not raining out there."

It was raining "out there," all right, and we got thoroughly wet and knee-deep in mud, but the trip was worth while, for after a consultation and promise of an extra financial bonus Lupe agreed to have a ceremony, anyhow, on the next clear day. Just what she was going to pray for this time we weren't sure, but it didn't make any difference.

The following day was bright and sunny, and Sam, Brother Claude and I arrived at dawn at Lupe's *ruca*, in back of which the *machi* pole was planted, all dolled up for the occasion in a fresh set of branches. Sam deposited a suitcase of extra film in the shade and set up his camera, fiddling around with light meter, tape measure and other appliances until everything was fixed to his satisfaction. Then we waited.

"Do find out what's wrong," Sam said impatiently to Brother Claude. "I'd like to get started while the light is good." But Lupe was apparently in no hurry. She combed her hair, she put on a new pair of earrings, she smoothed down her skirt and, finally, all spruced up, she dove into the *ruca* and reappeared with a baby which she proceeded to nurse.

"Why not film this maternal scene?" I suggested. But Sam wasn't interested. His camera was all set up for the big event and he wasn't going to risk getting it out of line, even by an inch. So, waiting unhappily while potential storm clouds raced across the sky, we watched Lupe until she had fed the baby enough nourishment surely to give it indigestion.

After what seemed like hours, an audience of some thirty men, women and children gathered around the pole, and Lupe disposed of the baby, gave her hair a final pat and prepared to start. Sam took his stance, like a golfer addressing his ball, but before he could so much as touch the camera, Lupe had shinnied up the pole with lightning speed and was safely on top. "Make her come down," he yelled agonizedly at Brother Claude, and after a hasty dialogue Lupe descended, quite good-naturedly, and began to climb up all over again.

This time Sam caught her at the takeoff, and everything was going fine until Lupe had reached the halfway mark, when the film stuck and the camera stopped working. Sam gave it a rather unprofessional shake to loosen it, and Lupe was again lured down to repeat her ascent. By now she had lost some of her good nature, and you could hardly blame her as she was undoubtedly developing a Charley horse. The audience, too, had begun to give us baleful

looks, and I was scared that Papa wouldn't be cured of his piles, or that Mama would stay sterile and we would be blamed.

So when the camera broke down again—this time for good—we pretended all was well and watched the ceremony with smiles on our faces and exasperation in our hearts. When the dance was over Lupe climbed down and collected her money, Sam collected his suitcase of unused film and we went home. "At least we *saw* the ceremony," I said rather weakly, trying to cheer up Sam. "No one you know has ever got that far." But he refused to be consoled. "That Lupe," he kept muttering. As if she had let him down purposely.

Sam immediately sent the camera to Santiago, urgently requesting a quick repair job. In the meantime we continued to carry the film and various gadgets with us from town to town, hopefully wiring the repair shop our new address each time we moved. The camera was returned—in perfect condition—three days before we left Chile for good.

Of the thousands of feet of film which had traveled around South America, fifty feet had been used. These were developed in New York. They showed a two-second view of a panic-stricken Indian woman weaving and a brief exposure of the behinds of five or six girls jigging up and down. The rest of the film consisted of pictures of me against a beautiful scenic background. They were excellent. "Oh, Mr. Heye," I laughed to myself when I saw them, "this one is my round."

Chapter 7

ALL in all, we spent not quite three months in southern Chile. Half of this time we were in and around Temuco, a town hardly to be described as brimming with entertainment or luxury but one which I thought of nostalgically each day we traveled farther from it. The other six weeks were spent visiting little towns in the south—towns so uniformly miserable that, looking back, it is hard to distinguish one from another. Fortunately I kept some sort of record.

The entries in "My Trip Abroad" (a wedding present from a second cousin once removed) are anything but comprehensive. I am afraid they describe a state of mind rather than a country. Here, then, is what I find:

Dec. 21. Truf Truf: (Left Temuco this morning). Stayed in Pensión. Outhouse falling to pieces. No seat.

Dec. 23. Labranza: Bathroom but no tub. Toilet clogged. Fleas.

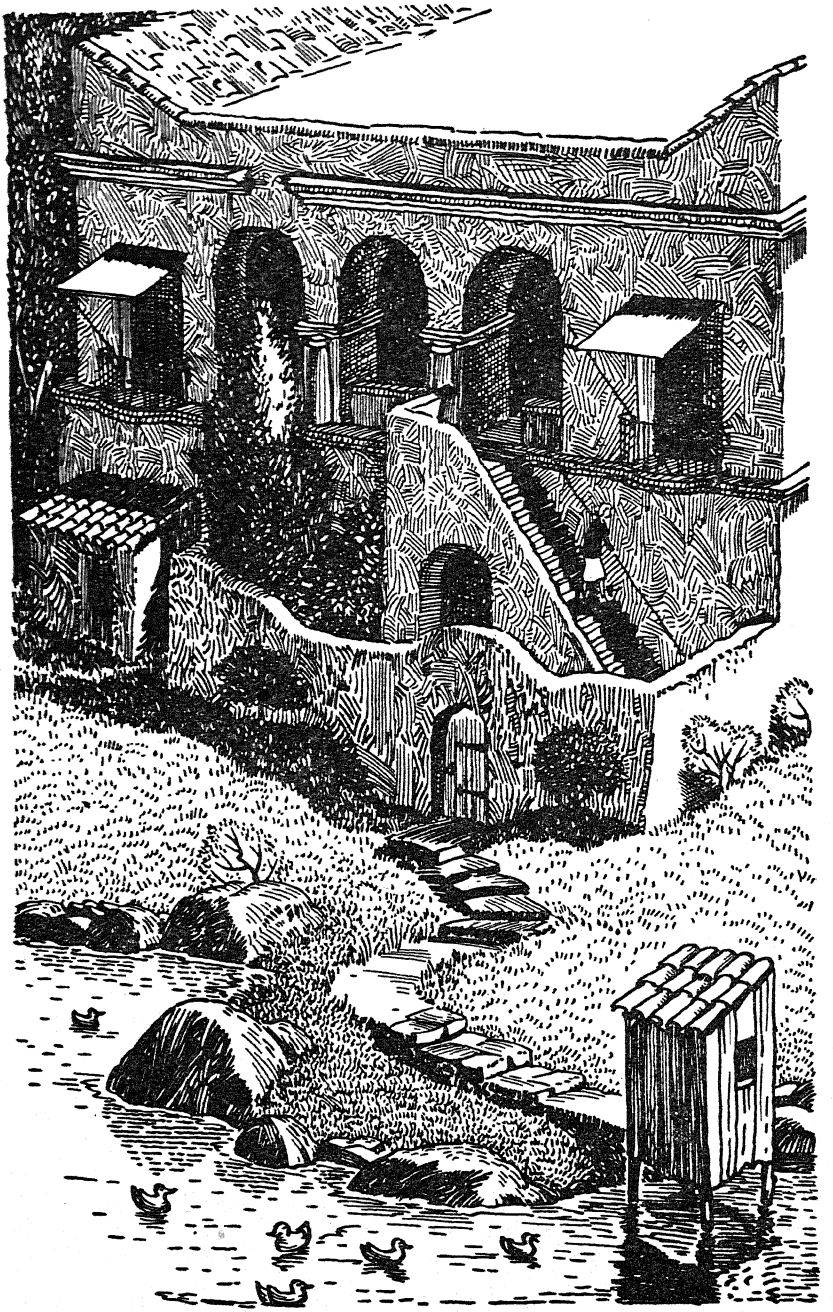
Dec. 25. Nueva Imperial: Hotel France (nothing like)! Asked manager where I could wash. He escorted me to plaza and pointed out public baths. What a Christmas!

Dec. 30. Carahue: Grand Hotel! No sleep. Bedbugs.

Jan. 1. Puerta Saavedra: Beautiful scenery. No bath.

Jan. 3. Collico: Fleas. Bedbugs. Roaches. Indians.

Jan. 4. Hacienda Lanalhue: Estate belonging to millionaire engineer.



High hopes. Fooled. Bathtub used for storage. Outhouse built over stream. Ducks in stream. Very disconcerting.

Jan. 7. *Purén:* Eighteen days since I have had a bath.

Jan. 9. *Los Sauces:* Brother Claude is beginning to smell.

Here the diary ends. It doesn't matter. The remaining weeks of one- and two-night stands followed the same pattern: Dirt. Indians. Insects. Dirt. There were occasional variations. Like Ancud. I don't need a journal in order to remember that experience.

Ancud is a tiny port on the very lovely island of Chiloe, northernmost of the Magellanic Islands and directly off the coast of Chile. At the other end of the island was our objective—a town named Castro, which was thickly settled with Indians. It was necessary to spend a night in Ancud on the way, and we had wired ahead to the only hotel asking for the best room available.

We arrived by boat, and although the trip had been both rough and wet I was in a cheerful frame of mind, for we had finally shaken off Brother Claude. The Hotel Chile, as it was called, was a one-story building and contained six guest bedrooms. The architectural arrangement was somewhat curious. Each bedroom opened into the next, so that each had two doors—except for No. 6, which was a dead end and had only one. Thus, to reach your room you started from the lobby and worked your way through No. 1, No. 2, etc., until you struck your own particular haven. We had been allotted No. 6.

This meant a long walk and seeing life in the raw, so to speak, but it was the best room and the only one to have privacy. At least that's what we thought until the manager escorted us there and we discovered that three people besides ourselves had No. 6 too.

The other tenants were all men. As a rule I prefer men to women, but these were as evil-looking a bunch of specimens as I'd ever seen, and I was certain that if I dared go to sleep I'd be murdered. The manager wasn't at all sympathetic. It was only after an outburst of tears on my part (genuine) and Sam's promise to pay for three extra board-and-lodgings that our roommates were transferred. One of them, who resembled pictures I'd seen of Jack the Ripper, gave me

a look which made me regret I'd married an archaeologist instead of a policeman.

The room itself was large and light, with a nice view of the sea. It contained six beds, the best of which, next to the window, the manager indicated was mine. The room was a shambles. The only bed that boasted clean sheets was Sam's. I smiled at the manager. "When can my bed be fixed?" I asked pleasantly. The four spares could stay the way they were, I decided. It wouldn't do to be too fussy.

The manager gave me a smug look. "The Minister of the Interior slept here last night," he announced proudly.

"How nice. But when can I have the bed made up?"

"You don't understand," he insisted. "The Minister—the Minister of the *Interior*—slept in that bed."

"I know how it is," I said soothingly. "He probably left here late. So inconsiderate. But if you could just send me the chambermaid."

"Madam," he said, "I thought you would like everything left just as it is. It was the Minister of the Interior *himself*."

I looked at the dirty sheets, at the ashes scattered over the counterpane, at the chamber pot under the bed. "No," I said firmly, "I would like the bed made fresh and the place cleaned up." The manager appeared shocked but resigned. I could see I'd made two enemies already.

When the chambermaid arrived, we decided to take a walk and embarrassedly sneaked through Rooms No. 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1. The hotel was jammed—each room had its quota of guests to correspond to the number of beds, and in two of them an extra cot had been set up. The occupants were mostly men, although there was a flashy blonde in No. 2 and there were a couple of little girls in No. 1. Having worked our way through several rather intimate scenes, we decided to stay put until we were ready to retire, so as not to disturb our fellow guests any more than necessary, although the situation seemed to bother us more than it did them.

We went to bed early. At 4:30 A.M. I woke up from a nightmare that I was lost in the desert. My throat burned from our highly

spiced supper; I was feverish with thirst. There was no sign of water in the room. "Sam," I whispered, "could you please get me something to drink." Sam slept on. "SAM!"

Sam opened one eye. "I didn't kill Brother Claude," he mumbled.

"Sam, *please* wake up. I need you."

"Of course, Aggie."

At this I jumped out of bed and shook him. Aggie was a pretentious little bleached blonde who had been after Sam for years. "What about Aggie? Tell me, did you ever . . . ?"

"I dunno. Gotta go sleep now or Brother Claude won't like." Sam turned on his back and began to snore.

I gave up. There was nothing for it but to make a trip to the dining room, at the other end of the hotel. So I put on my shoes and a top coat over my nightgown and started on my trek.

Dawn was beginning to break, and its dim light helped me on my way. All three occupants of No. 5 were asleep. I reached No. 4 without incident, to find that Bed 4A, the bed by the window corresponding to mine, was occupied by my friend Jack the Ripper in a nightshirt. He was awake and grunted as I hurried through. In the next room the flashy blonde (who belonged in No. 2) was just getting out of 3C's bed. I rushed on. Room No. 2 was quiet and normal, except for the blonde's empty couch. No. 1 was equally quiet until I tripped over a toy go-cart and one of the children woke up and howled.

The return trip was engineered in double-quick time. As I entered Room No. 4, I heard giggles emerging from the bed of 4A and I realized that the blonde (2B) must have graduated from 3 C. I ran like hell back to 6B and Sam before the blonde could.

On our way back from Castro, a week later, we arranged to reach Ancud in time to take the boat back to the mainland the same day. We had three hours to spare, but we sat on the dock and waited, quite happily.

I didn't really feel clean until we reached New York, and even then, although I had spent most of my time both in Santiago and on

the boat sitting in a bathtub, I felt that the scars of our last six weeks in darkest Chile must be there for all to see. So when we were invited to dine with the Heyes a few days after our arrival ("We'd like to meet the bride," said Mrs. Heye coyly), I wasn't very enthusiastic. But one doesn't turn down the Heyes lightly (said Sam), so we arranged to go.

We were greeted cordially. Mrs. Heye, a handsome if somewhat overpowering woman, wore an evening gown which, I decided, had first seen light of day in the atelier of either Lanvin or Patou. Her wrists and hands bristled with jewels. She swam in a sea of Chanel No. 5. I felt shy and awkward in last year's flowered chiffon, like a country girl on her first visit to New York. Chile was too recent: I had barely removed its soil from under my nails and its flea bites still itched.

We were ushered into the drawing room and introduced to our fellow guests. A butler served ice-cold cocktails, and another passed a tray on which reposed a five-pound tin of fresh caviar, garnished with the appropriate hard-boiled egg, onion and lemon. The caviar was passed three times.

Then dinner. A handwritten menu adorned each place. "Green turtle soup—sherry. Oyster crabs Newburg—Johannisberger, 1893. Saddle of mutton, *pommes soufflés, petits pois à la française*—Chambertin, 1906. Fresh strawberries Chantilly—Veuve Clicquot, 1911." Not a lengthy dinner but surely an adequate one (oh, shades of Taltal!).

Coffee and liqueurs for the ladies were served in the drawing room. "Now tell me *all* about your trip," said Mrs. Heye, drawing me down next to her. "Imagine!" she stated to the assembled group of expensive-looking women. "Mrs. Lothrop has just come back from a year in Chile. In the *wilds*. Living with Indians and other strange people. So courageous." She sniffed daintily at her Napoleon brandy. "Poor child. It must have been awfully hard on you," she added, echoing my own sentiments.

"It was a *wonderful* trip." I heard the words come forth, clear and definite. To my surprise, it was I who was saying them.

Part II

Chapter 8

WHEN I broke the news to my family that Sam and I were going away again—this time to Guatemala—they sighed deeply and said, "Well, anyhow, it's not as far as Chile." That was true enough, but where we eventually landed, in an Indian village on the shores of Lake Atitlan, was more or less the end of the world. At least it seemed so.

Lake Atitlan is in the highlands of Guatemala, some six hours by car from the capital, and it is a storybook lake. The water is deep blue, shot with occasional green, and an unbroken chain of mountains encircles it. Huge volcanoes tower in the background—purple and brown cones with cottony clouds covering their tips—and twelve small villages, named after the Twelve Apostles, dot the rocky slopes as they meet the water. Of these, Santiago Atitlan is the largest. It is also the most colorful, the most charming and the most frightening place I've ever lived in.

Sam had visited Lake Atitlan some years before and, not satisfied to relax and enjoy the scenery, had traveled around the lake sniffing for ruins. He'd found some beauties, too, on a steep hill called Chuitinamit, and then and there he made up his mind that some day he would return to excavate them. And return he did, although it was five years later. An archaeologist is like an elephant. He never forgets.

When I first saw Lake Atitlan I understood why no one could

forget it. It was a warm day in January (in Guatemala the seasons are reversed and January is like our June), and the lake and the mountains and the sky were all so bright that they looked as if they had been freshly painted on a piece of cardboard. A modern hotel for tourists clung close to the water, shiny white in contrast to the blue of the lake. Here we spent the night. "It's got everything," I said happily. "Hot water, good food, superb view. There must be a catch somewhere. Archaeology was never like this." "The catch," said my husband drily, "is that this is nowhere near where we are going to work. The ruins are on the other side of the lake."

So the next day we took a launch and for an hour and a half we chugged across the water to the village of Santiago Atitlan, which is directly across the harbor from the ruins of Chuitinamit, and where Sam hoped to find some sort of house to rent. Francisco, the boatman, was anything but encouraging. "This is an Indian village," he said. "There will be nothing fit for you to live in."

"It's clear to see he's not used to archaeologists," I protested.

"We'll manage," Sam declared hopefully.

All of us were right. Francisco was *not* used to archaeologists, there *was* nothing fit to live in and we *did* manage.

Santiago Atitlan, or Atitlan as it is commonly called, looked as unreal as its surroundings. Built on a tongue of lava that slopes down from the side of the volcano, it extends far into the lake, water lapping three sides. The surface of the lava had been eroded into boulders of all sizes and shapes, and where the boulders weren't, the village was. Houses, their walls partly stone and partly vertical bamboo poles topped by roofs of thatch, had mushroomed wherever there was sufficient level ground.

The streets, actually nothing more than stony paths, wandered at random from the highly perched plaza down to the water. In spots where they were too steep for anything but a mountain goat, stairways had been cut. The over-all effect was that of an unpatterned fortified hill, and as you twisted your way up and down the crooked streets you had a feeling that anything might be waiting round the corner. Like a nursery rhyme, I thought at first, and I wouldn't

have been surprised to run into Jack and Jill or to see Humpty Dumpty perched on a wall. But after we had lived in Atitlan for a while, I realized that the character of its inhabitants was very far from being simple or like a nursery rhyme.

I have never felt so much a foreigner as I did in Atitlan. The Indians were generally polite, occasionally belligerent and always inscrutable. At best you felt an undercurrent of passive indifference beneath their deliberate calm. After a while you realized that even their politeness was a parody. "Very well," they usually answered to whatever you asked of them, and you could only sense that they were adding under their breath, "We'll do it, you lug, but only because we damn well have to." This attitude didn't make for any deep friendships. In fact, of all unfriendly Indians these were the most so. Their past history and isolated position probably had a good deal to do with it.

Santiago Atitlan is a village of some ten thousand inhabitants. Of these, about two hundred are *ladinos*, a mixture of Indian and Spanish. The rest are pure Zutugil Indians, a branch of the Mayas. Long before the advent of the Spanish they were fighting for their existence against neighboring tribes, and as a result, they developed a dependence on each other and a distrust of anyone else. The Spaniards conquered but were never able to assimilate them; nor could they break through this defensive armor. The Indians accepted the fact that they had been defeated, but they stuck together even more closely and, except for a certain amount of trading with nearby peoples, had little contact with the outside world. Foreigners were frankly unwelcome. To them you were either a Zutugil Indian from Atitlan or you were poison.

The Church had obtained a small foothold, but it wasn't a very secure one. As far as the Indians were concerned a little Christianity went a long way, and although officially they had been converted to Catholicism and had their own church, they used it for rites that were certainly not according to Hoyle or the Vatican. Nobody, they had decided, was going to tell them how to conduct their religious life, and when the local priest in the eighteenth

century tried to do just that, the Indians showed their disapproval by killing him. After which they were left pretty much alone, except for an unfortunate visit by the Bishop of Guatemala, who came to make shocked protest at the news that the Indians were worshipping Judas. The visit was unfortunate for the Bishop, who was chased out of town by his would-be flock brandishing machetes, and barely escaped with his life. The Indians had decided that Judas was holy, and not even a bishop was going to tell them different. Nor did anyone try to interfere with their special brand of Catholicism again.

I suppose I was naïve to think we could ever become pals. We never stood a chance. Except for a handful of men, the Indians had had no education and spoke no language but their own dialect. We were up against the basic mistrust of all uneducated people for something they do not understand. Here were two white intruders in funny-looking clothes who could only communicate with them through an interpreter and who apparently had come to buy the costumes off their backs and to dig up their ancestors. All Indians are superstitious—those of Atitlan particularly so—and afraid, above everything, of witchcraft. Maybe they thought we would hurt their crops. Maybe they believed we would ruin the peace of their buried kin. At any rate, they did their best to make things so unpleasant that we would be forced to leave.

Of course no one in his right mind except an archaeologist would ever have gone to Atitlan to live. To visit, yes. For a short visit Atitlan was wonderful and one of the most picturesque sights in Guatemala. So much so that it was a drawing card for all American tourists in the vicinity.

Every week a boatload or two of people would ride over from their comfortable hotel on the other side of the lake and clamber up the dock, squealing with delight and breathless at their daring. The women, usually in high heels, would stumble along the stony street up to the plaza, carrying elaborate picnic lunches carefully wrapped in wax paper, and oh-ing and ah-ing about the scenery and the town. "How quaint," they used to murmur and, when they first saw the Indians, "Gee, aren't they cute."

The Indians, wised up to the ways of the world by the *ladinos*, soon learned to take advantage of this windfall. Meekly, tongue in cheek, they would offer goods for sale at outrageous prices—goods that usually had been obtained by trade from Guatemala City—while the children would run along with hands extended, whining "pennylady, pennylady," the only English they knew. In the afternoon the tourists would go back to their comfortable hotel, loaded down with "Indian" goods and atmosphere, and the town would relax and compose itself for the next onslaught.

A visit to the Lothrops was part of the tourist program. I think they expected to find a cross between Mr. and Mrs. Robinson Crusoe and Admiral and Mrs. Byrd. Generally we were lucky enough to be away working, but occasionally we were caught. "What fun it must be living in this wonderful place," the tourists usually said. And invariably, "The Indians are the sweetest things, aren't they? So nice and friendly!" To which we smiled and said nothing.

At first, of course, I, too, thought the Indians sweet and friendly. "They're just shy, poor things," I said to Sam when the women looked the other way instead of returning our greeting. "They'll get used to us," Sam agreed hopefully. That was before we'd heard the stories about the Priest-Who-Was-Killed or the Bishop-Who-Was-Chased, and before we found out that no foreigner had dared live in Atitlan since seventeen hundred and something. Until we came along.

On our first visit, house-hunting, I was full of optimism. If anyone had tried to tell me what these Indians were really like, I wouldn't have believed them. They looked so attractive. And so gentle. They were rather small, as if built on a slightly reduced scale, and they were handsome and clean and held themselves erect and proud. The women wore white cotton blouses, with a red scallop embroidered deep at the neck, and bright red skirts, set off by touches of yellow and white. Their shawls were red and blue. Headbands, usually of orange, green and purple, were interlaced in the braids wound around their heads, giving the effect of a halo. The men wore white knee-length trousers, striped in yellow and purple and

embroidered with small figures. Their shirts, either red or blue, were held in at the waist with wide red belts patterned in black.

It was an amazing sight to see hundreds of Indians massed together in the market place. There never were such brilliant colors—reds so red or blues so blue or yellows so yellow. "What a combination for a dress!" I said to Sam. But he discouraged me. "You'll never see these colors in modern industry," he explained. "They're too expensive for commercial use. The red is cochineal, obtained from an insect; the blue comes from the indigo plant; the yellow is made from bird droppings and the purple from the juice of shellfish. Hardly practical for manufacturing on a large scale."

The *ladinos* flitted through all this native color like a few sparrows mixed in with birds of Paradise. They wore conventional and drab clothes and looked like any ordinary laborer. But it was a *ladino* named Diego who finally consented to rent us a house.

The procedure was simple. There was no bouncing up and down on mattresses to try them out or indulging in "How many closets are there?" and "How large is the icebox?" kind of talk. It wasn't necessary. The house we were taken to see had no mattresses, no icebox, no closets. It did have four walls and a roof. And as they were the only four walls available in all of Atitlan, there was no problem of choice to confuse us.

Diego's house had been a bar, and it was only on the market because he had decided to go out of business. It stood in a large yard right off the main thoroughfare, doubtless brooding on more amusing days. The entire house would have fitted into an ordinary living room, and it was divided into two sections, one of adobe and one of boards, topped by a tin roof. The adobe room, to be used for sleeping, as its walls were better able to keep out the cold, had a door which gave onto the yard; no window. The other room had a large window opening on the street, which had served as invitation to the bar and through which drinks had been dispensed. A wooden shutter was attached to it and could be hooked either up or down—no doubt to conform with the hours designated for drinking.

For furniture, the house contained one large table, which had

held bottles and on which we planned to eat, a wooden stool and three feeble wooden chairs. We would have to bring our own cots. There was plenty of room for them.

In one corner of the yard was a tiny shack made of stalks of bamboo. This was the kitchen. A block of adobe reached to working height, and on it were piled several pieces of wood. This was the stove. "And the toilet?" I inquired.

"The toilet?" echoed Diego politely. He looked around his miniature property as if he himself had forgotten where it had been placed. Finally he waved his hand vaguely back of him, where no building of any kind defaced the landscape.

"That won't do," I said. "Insist, Sam, please." So Sam insisted.

"You mean you want an outhouse?" asked Diego. "A real outhouse?"

"Yes," chorused the Lothrops.

"Very well, I will build you one," said our future landlord, "but it will double the rent."

"How much?"

"Five dollars a month instead of two fifty. That's furnished, of course," added Diego quickly, indicating the decrepit chairs and table and obviously worried by our startled expressions.

"Outrageous," Sam told him, "but I suppose we will have to pay it."

As we climbed back into our launch we were smug with triumph. "I told you," said Francisco, "there would be nothing fit for you to live in."

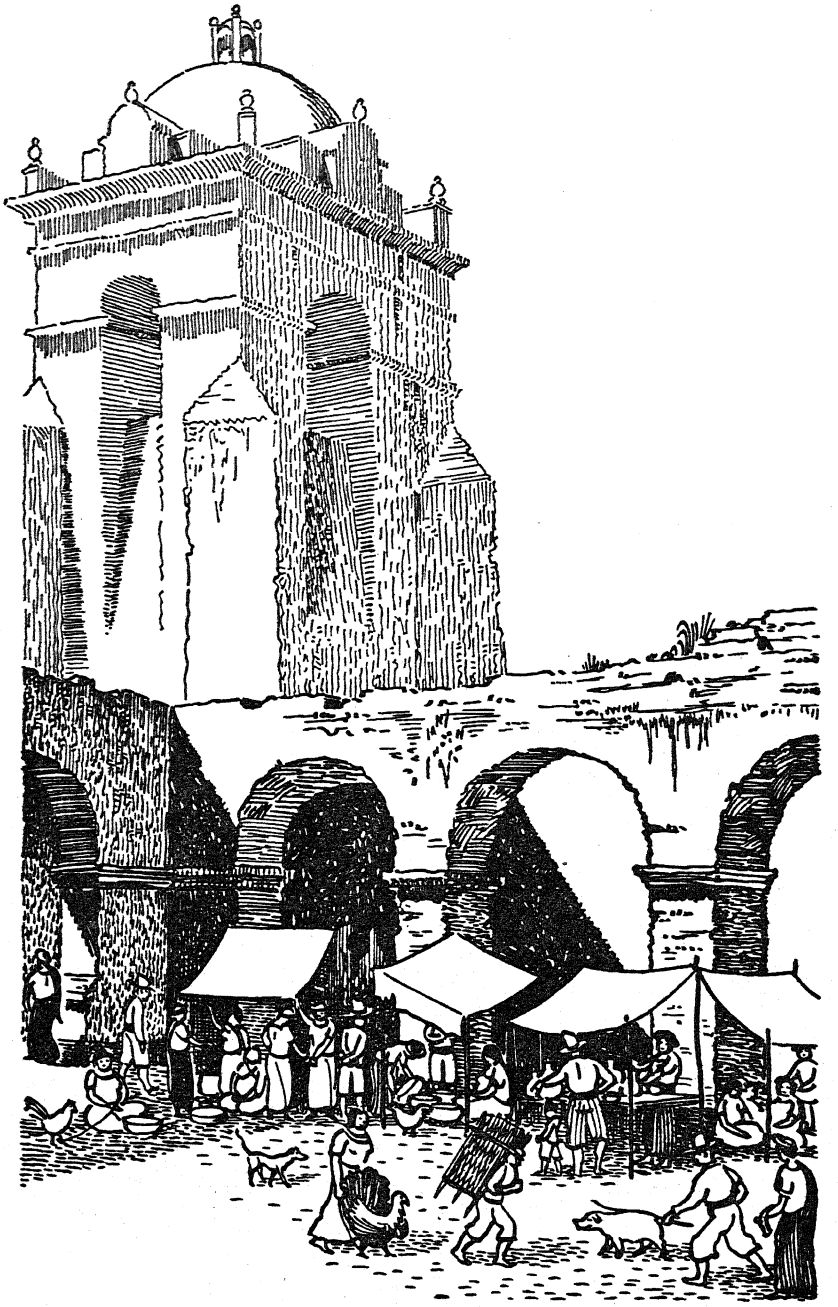
"Ha," we said, "that's where you're wrong." We meant it, too. The outhouse was to be constructed without delay, and our landlord had promised to wash down the floors with kerosene and to nail down the wooden shutter, as any bar we ran was going to be for our own consumption. Our new home was to be ready in a week, and we planned to return, cots, baggage and cook in tow, to take over occupancy. We could hardly wait.

Chapter 9

I HAD thought so much about Atitlan I was almost afraid to see it again, for fear it might have changed. But as our loaded launch glided up to the dock I sighed with relief. Everything was just as before. The town still perched precariously on its rocky slope, as if holding its breath to keep from sliding down into the lake. It was as beautiful as I remembered it. The Indians splashed the wharf with the same extravagance of color. And if they failed to give us a rousing welcome, I was too excited to notice.

We approached our new home with as much awe as if the grounds had been the gardens of Versailles and the house the Petit Trianon. Diego had done a good job. Our mansion had been neatly swept and the yard cleared of the pig and chicken droppings that had decorated it on our last visit. And, triumph of triumphs, a brand-new outhouse had blossomed into being.

The outhouse was constructed of reeds, on top of which a rusty piece of corrugated iron perched crookedly, like a beret on a woman who has had one drink too many. The reeds had been tied in bundles and fitted together with great care, so that not even the most curious eye could find a peephole. After which, I suppose, Diego had gotten tired. At any rate, he had failed to construct either door or protection of any kind for the gaping entrance which sociably faced the street. "We'll get to know our neighbors in no time at all," said Sam. "Just the other way round," I corrected him.



It is usually quite a hurdle to make a complete change in your mode of living, but in Atitlan we slid painlessly into our new existence. What helped, of course, was that we were comfortable and well looked after.

There was Maria, whom we had brought with us from Guatemala City. Maria was our cook. She was also chambermaid, waitress, laundress, nurse, as well as a friend on whose ample shoulders I leaned when I became discouraged about life. Maria was pure Indian. She had been brought to the capital from her native village when very young, and there she had stayed, working hard and only returning home when, for some strange reason (the words were hers) she suddenly found she had produced a child.

"I certainly didn't expect it," she would say, as if the baby had dropped from a tree, "but it is the will of God, and my mother will be happy. She is old now and has no little ones of her own."

And Maria would work a little harder and send back more money to take care of her ever increasing brood.

"Why not get the father to contribute?" I once asked her.

"The father!" she retorted, looking unutterably shocked. "There is no father!" And she was so definite that she almost convinced me.

As a matter of fact, it was because Maria loved children that we happened to get her. She had been working for American friends of ours who had a little boy of five. His name was Robin, but to Maria he was *el rey* (the king), and the king could do no wrong. Unfortunately *el rey*'s mother and father were unable to agree with her, and when the little king was naughty he was duly punished. This shocked Maria, who believed he should enjoy the same immunity that is accorded royalty.

The climax came when Robin, left alone one day and idly searching for trouble, came across a bottle of glue and happily poured it into his father's shoes. When Papa discovered this—unfortunately only after slipping his foot into a leather boot, which subsequently had to be cut off—he whacked hell out of his offspring, and Maria announced flatly that she could no longer work for barbarians who lacked appreciation of such a superior being. Maria was a wonderful

servant, and for a weak moment Mama was tempted to spare the rod and spoil the cook, but she decided it would be easier to find a new cook than a good psychiatrist for Robin later on.

So Maria was turned over to us, who had no children, and she transferred her affections to me. I never quite reached the exalted position of the little king, but if Sam, justifiably annoyed at times by my mistakes, spoke to me harshly or impatiently, Maria would frown and begin to look fierce. It got so that he never dared criticize me. At least not until we were alone.

There was Jesús. Jesús, a pretty young Indian girl, had been engaged to help Maria. Her principal duty was that of water girl. As all our water for drinking, washing and cooking had to be brought up from the lake, a distance of about two hundred yards, Jesús made at least seven trips daily, carrying the water on her head in a jar which she emptied into one of the large clay containers set up against the shady side of the kitchen. All Indian women in Guatemala carry water (and just about everything else) in this way, and although water jars boast two handles, these are only used to hoist the jars up and down, for no self-respecting female would dream of holding on to or even touching her burden once it has been placed on her head. This naturally makes for a wonderful sense of balance and magnificent posture.

Every time I looked at Jesús I automatically pulled in my stomach and my chin, threw out my chest, stood on the balls of my feet. I even practiced making a porter out of my head, beginning with an empty tin cup and graduating to a cup filled with water. But after several days of getting drenched and catching a severe cold, I resumed my accustomed slouch.

There was Cristina. Cristina was the spinster daughter of Diego, our landlord. I don't know whether her home life or an unhappy love affair was responsible, but something had frozen her face into a permanent mask of disapproval which even her rare attempts to produce a smile could not break through. She was an indispensable part of our household, however. Maria and Jesús were both hard-working and agreeable, but they were unable to communicate with

each other as their respective dialects had about as much similarity as Hebrew and Chinese.

On Cristina, then, who could speak Spanish to Maria and Zutugil to Jesús, devolved the duty of being interpreter. She did little else. Like most *ladinos*, she was allergic to manual labor and she spent most of her time sitting on a stool in our yard, a queen holding court, occasionally deigning to tell Jesús that Maria needed more water or wood, or to ask Maria what she wished Jesús to do next. For these services she received the equivalent of $3.50 a month.

Maria was the highest-paid member of the household, earning eight dollars monthly. She did most of the work and she worked hard. She cooked three big meals a day. She waited on the table. She kept the house in order. Although the house was small it was an effort to keep it clean, both because of the dust that blew in from the yard and because of the insects which, before we came upon the scene, had run unmolested about the premises.

Our first act on arriving had been to resweep the dirt floors, splash them lavishly with Flit and finally cover them with pine needles in lieu of a carpet. Even so the goodly heritage of fleas that Diego had left behind persisted, and twice a week fresh pine needles were obtained from up the mountain and Maria swept the old ones (plus fleas) into the yard. Sam believed that exposure to the sun would kill our little friends, but I was sure the warmth only caused them sufficient discomfort to inspire them to hop back into the house, healthier and hungrier than before.

Maria was in complete charge of the kitchen. It was her home, her castle, and in spite of its deficiencies she was so proud of it she rarely allowed anyone else inside. Which was sensible, for the room was tiny, and with Maria in it, plus kitchen implements and a large and elaborately constructed figure of Christ in the manger, which accompanied her on all her travels, there was hardly an inch of space left over.

Maria slept on the floor, though how she managed to sleep I never understood. Her bed was a thin straw mat, the bottom of which protruded (as, therefore, did her feet) from the opening

which served as an entrance. When I first saw the mat I was shocked. "Don't you want a cot?" I asked her.

"And where would I put it, Señora?" She laughed, as if it were a great joke. Nor did she ever complain, although cold winds swept through the unprotected room each night, penetrating her blankets and leaving her covered with a layer of ashes from the top of the stove.

The stove was a feeble affair, but miraculously Maria breathed life into it. She was a natural cook, and as the food in Atitlan was good, we ate well. In the beginning, until digging started, I did the marketing. The market was held in the plaza, a ten minute walk from our house, and each morning I set forth, accompanied either by Maria or by Jesús with an empty basket in which to bring back our purchases. At first I used to take Cristina with me as interpreter, but her obvious scorn of my shopping technique depressed me so much that I decided to depend on the universally understood methods of pointing at an object (I want that!), fingers tentatively stretched out (how much?) and hands protestingly raised high (too much!).

The market was held daily, from early morning well into the afternoon. In the main square, dominated by the ancient church, hundreds of Indian women squatted on their haunches, their wares piled in front of them, the massed color of their costumes almost too bright for the naked eye. Here were sold brooms, brushes, gourds, women's headbands, and materials for their skirts (the textiles brought in from neighboring towns and regularly sold or traded for articles and food native to Atitlan).

Also turkeys, chickens, dried fish, black beans, potatoes, bananas, plantains, alligator pears and other local produce. The turkeys and chickens were held by a string looped around one leg, the other end of which was attached to the owner's wrist, and they were sold alive. Sometimes they rested apathetically on the ground; more often they nervously scratched the sun-baked earth, flapping their wings and pecking at your hand if you tried to examine them closely. They had my complete sympathy (for who can blame a chicken for

objecting to having its breast pinched or tickled?), and as a result I did my buying by instinct, depending in most part on whether the look on the chicken's face appealed to me.

Unfortunately this was no good as an indication of age or condition, and after I had twice brought home painfully scrawny and antique specimens, Maria decided I needed help. Not being as softhearted as I, she prodded and poked her way right through the market until she found what she wanted. After which the poor chicken or turkey, both legs now tied tightly together, was placed protesting in her basket among less active purchases.

Eggs presented a different problem. Sam has always said that there is no such thing as *one* egg. "You must eat two," he insists, "or three, or even four if you feel so inclined, but one egg just doesn't count. After all, you don't talk about one twin," he is apt to add triumphantly. Here, of course, is my chance to say that you don't talk about three twins or four twins either, but I've always refrained, as I know what he means.

The Indian women, however, didn't understand this. They were poor, and few of them owned more than one laying hen apiece, and the moment the hen let loose an egg it would be rushed to the market. This made for a fine degree of freshness, but to pick up enough eggs for a couple of breakfasts was apt to take a good half hour of searching and bargaining.

To bargain is routine with the Guatemalan Indians. It is a game they play and enjoy, and a game they expect you to play with them. The first price mentioned is automatically discounted. You might offer fifty cents for an article for which the seller hopes to get twenty-five but he (or she) will turn you down flat. By the same token you must not accept the seller's asking price, even if it seems low. After three or four offers and counteroffers both sides reach a sum approximating the most the buyer will pay and the least the seller will take. At this point hand over your money, grab your purchase and run, before the Indian's pathetic wails about being done in the eye (all of which is part of the game) upset you too much.

The food in the market at Atitlan was very reasonable. Reduced

to average terms (after haggling), a chicken cost twenty or twenty-five cents, a turkey thirty-five. Eggs were a cent apiece. Vegetables were scarce and (except for very inferior corn) were mostly imported from neighboring towns, but even so, forty cents would get you enough squash, tomatoes, onions and peas for four meals. The most spectacular buy was alligator pears. These were large and tender and full of flavor. The price varied according to the season, but the highest reached was four cents apiece, while in ordinary times you could buy twelve dozen for a dollar, a little more than half a cent a pear.

We always seemed to be hungry and we ate extraordinarily well. Except for meat. This was sold in a little shop facing the plaza, and because there was no ice it was painfully fresh. We did manage to buy an occasional tenderloin of beef that wasn't too hard on the teeth, but as a rule we stuck to chicken or turkey or meat out of cans that were part of the supplies we ordered from the other side of the lake. Butter, too, came in tins, as well as certain fruits and vegetables. Most of our food, though, was bought locally, and rice, potatoes and black beans—the latter made into a smooth purée, crisp on the outside and served with fried plantains—rounded out our menus.

Because we had no ice, turkeys and chickens had to be eaten freshly killed, too. So freshly killed, in fact, that they were practically rushed from deathbed to oven. This didn't seem to interfere with the succulence of the chickens but turkey meat was apt to be so tough that neither knife nor molar could dent it. Until Maria solved the problem. "Why don't you get him drunk?" she asked one day.

"Get WHOM drunk?" I said, startled, looking at Sam.

"Why, the turkey, of course," she answered. (The bird in question was a lady, but to Maria all fauna were masculine.) "It's simple," she continued. "I've done it before. You give him some *aguardiente* (the local rum) and he will pass out. Then, when I get ready to chop off his head, he will be relaxed and, in consequence, tender when you eat him."

Sam and I both laughed but we decided to humor her. So while Maria held the turkey, Sam opened its mouth and I poured down the

rum. One good slug and "he" was out like a light. Maria wielded her ax and all was over. "I don't suppose it will work," I told Sam, "but at least the poor turkey has had a pleasant end."

It did work, though. Our bird had apparently relaxed into a state of delirious tenderness while in its cups. "Wouldn't the Temperance Society be shocked?" we laughed as we happily stuffed ourselves.

But when the American Ambassador's wife came to lunch it wasn't quite so easy. We had received a letter from Guatemala City announcing her projected visit to Atitlan with two friends and asking if they could all come and picnic with us. "Don't go to any trouble," she wrote. "We can bring our own sandwiches and maybe you will give us coffee. I know you must be living very primitively."

"We'll show her how primitive we are," I said to Sam. "I'll serve her as good a lunch as she can get in her old Embassy. And we will have a *turkey!*" So I wrote Mrs. Ambassador and told her to leave her sandwiches at home and we would do our best to see that she and her friends did not go hungry.

The day before the luncheon, Maria and I went to pick out our main course. Maria must have poked and tickled every turkey in the market. She inspected their eyes, their crops, their feathers, their toenails. With the possible exception of the knee-jerk, she gave them a complete neurological examination. After one hour she picked out her victim—an enormous turkey gobbler which she claimed had passed every test. Because of his size and special qualifications he cost half a dollar, but to hell with the extra fifteen cents, said I, we don't have an ambassador's wife to lunch every day.

"Look at Goliath," said Sam, when we brought him home. "Isn't he superb?" Maria and I beamed, and the turkey arched his back feathers and strutted around the yard.

At seven the next morning we started activities. "Where's the liquor?" I asked.

"You're not going to give him a drink this early in the morning?" Sam shuddered. "That's carrying depravity too far."

"The turkey doesn't know the time." (I would have felt more sympathetic toward poor Goliath if his gobbling noises hadn't kept

me awake most of the night.) "Let's get started. Where's the whisky?"

"Why whisky?" asked Sam. "Rum does the trick just as well, and we only have one bottle of Scotch, which we need to serve before lunch."

"This is a very special turkey," I insisted. "And it will only take one small jigger. We'll have plenty left." But I was wrong.

Goliath was hard to handle. He scuffled about madly, in spite of Maria's and Sam's restraining hands, and at least a jigger of our precious whisky watered the ground before I managed to pour a good-sized drink down his throat. Goliath did not take to it kindly. He sputtered and choked, spilling some of the liquid on his feathers and some over Sam, then broke loose from Maria's grasp. After some minutes we jockeyed him back into position and I gave him another dose. This just seemed to add to his strength and again he broke loose. Now, though, he was slightly unsteady and easier to recapture. After four drinks he began to stagger. Two more and his legs gave way. "There he goes," I said, but he managed to pull himself together and was up at the count of five.

"What a turkey," said Sam, admiringly. "What capacity!"

"He's wonderful," I agreed and tipped the bottle toward his open mouth. At long last Goliath was down for good. A smile seemed to settle over his face. He was finished. So was the bottle of whisky.

The party was a huge success. Never, agreed everyone, had a turkey been so tender. Or had such a wonderful flavor. Before lunch Mrs. Ambassador handed me a package. "You wouldn't let us bring food," she said, "so we brought you some Scotch. I hope you can use it."

"*We can,*" Sam and I chorused fervently.

Chapter 10

WHEN you move into a new community, you count on building up some sort of relationship with the inhabitants. In an Indian town, of course, it is more difficult. I hardly expected the Zutugil matrons to call on me and invite me to dinner, but I did think that eventually we might develop at least a nodding acquaintance with our neighbors. The Indians of Atitlan, however, didn't go in for nodding. The only reaction we got was resentment from the men, curiosity from the women.

The women's curiosity was so strong it overcame even their shyness. We were hardly settled before they began to stream into our yard, babies in arms, the rest of the family trailing behind. They were grave, silent and interested. Our home was given a terrific once-over. They examined the kitchen, in spite of Maria's dark looks. They examined the blankets on our cots. They fingered a dress of mine which hung from a hook on the wall.

"Hello," I said.

Silence.

"Cute baby," I said, poking a finger at a little bundle one of the women was carrying under her arm. Mama quickly pulled the red cap Baby was wearing down over its face.

"They always do that," Sam explained, "if you get too close to their babies. They're afraid you've got the Evil Eye." I quickly backed up.

"Nice day," I tried next, in a kind of pidgin Spanish.

Silence.

"They won't talk," I announced rather unnecessarily.

"They don't speak Spanish," said Sam. "At best what would come out would be 'Ug, ug.' "

"Even that would be better than nothing," I said. But in the days that followed, although we were the subject of constant visitations, not even an "Ug" was loosed our way.

The men were a little more communicative but hardly more affable. They resented us from the start. And showed it. The day we moved into our house I bought some of the gay red material at the market out of which women's skirts were made, and Maria and I tacked it up as a curtain on the gaping outhouse. "Privacy and local color in one," I announced. "It will be an inspiration." The next morning our inspiration was gone. "Some mistake," we decided. "The Indians wouldn't steal. The wind must have blown it away."

So I bought more material, and we rigged up another curtain. The next morning curtain No. 2 was gone. There was nothing to do but buy curtain No. 3 (or give a free exhibition), but from then on we took it to bed with us each night, rehung it each morning.

Other things disappeared, too. A washtub we had left in the yard, a tin cup, a pair of stockings I had hung out to dry. "It couldn't be the Indians," I insisted, unwilling to admit these seemingly nice and simple and unworldly people could have an impure thought. "Who else?" said Sam unhappily. And after that, when we went out, Maria or Cristina were always left on the premises to protect our property.

I still don't believe the Indians stole for any other reason except to annoy us. They never took things for which they had any use. They drank out of gourds, not tin cups; their laundry was done in the lake, not in washtubs; and no self-respecting Indian woman would have been seen dead in a pair of stockings. Their pilfering was an irritation campaign, nothing more. We were outsiders, interlopers, mysterious strangers who were obviously cooking up trouble; and the sooner they could get rid of us the better.

We worked and worked to break down the shell of distrust in

which the Indians enclosed themselves. We gave them presents—trinkets to the women, cigarettes to the men, canned goods to stock the family larders—and the presents were politely and unenthusiastically received and their attitude remained unchanged. We offered to help in cases of sickness or emergency, and our help was accepted and their attitude remained unchanged. I once read a book called *How to Win Friends and Influence People,* but I doubt if the author would have had much success in Atitlan. We didn't try to influence anybody. We never got as far as winning friends.

There was one exception. We made one friend among the Indians. Just one. His name was Pedro Mendoza and he lived in a house almost directly back of ours. One windy morning a rather intimate article of apparel swirled across the back fence and landed on the kitchen roof. ("About time something blew in, not out," said Sam.) Five minutes later a worried-looking individual came in our front gate to retrieve it. "I'm Pedro Mendoza," he announced. "That"—pointing sheepishly toward the kitchen roof—"belongs to my wife."

"Sam," I said. "Did you notice? HE SMILED!"

It was the beginning of a beautiful friendship. Unfortunately it was a friendship that didn't improve our standing in the community, for Pedro was an Evangelist (a term used in Latin America for all Protestants) and he was as much of a pariah in Atitlan as Sam or I. We once asked him how he had happened to become converted.

"I had heard about the Bible Institute which had been organized in Panajachel, across the lake," he told us, "and one day out of curiosity I visited it. Stories from the Bible were being read and explained in Indian dialect (I, of course, have always been able to speak Spanish," he announced proudly), "and classes were being formed to teach my people to read and write. It was a good thing," he added simply. "So I became an Evangelist and now I too try to spread the good word."

"Have you had much success?" we asked interestedly.

Pedro shook his head. "Very little so far. There are few of us here in Atitlan, too few. We try to teach the rest, but they are not

receptive. 'You think we should learn to read and write,' they say. 'What for? Reading and writing will not produce good crops.' 'You tell us God wants us to stop getting drunk,' they say. 'Why, our rum is God's gift to us. Why shouldn't we use it?' 'You are a traitor,' they say. 'You are selling yourself for the foreigners' money.' It is difficult," he continued, "but they will learn in time. And I have already converted my family," he added triumphantly.

Converting Pedro's family meant converting a large portion of the population of Atitlan. There was Lucha, his wife. There were Consuela and Juana, married daughters with children of their own, and Pepita, still single. There were Salvador and José, the older sons, and six or seven younger Mendozas ranging from thirteen years to two. By all indications another little Mendoza was on the way. Birth control had apparently stopped short of Atitlan.

All three generations lived together. The house, fortunately, was a large one, for by Atitlan standards Pedro was rich. He was a man of property, a big landowner, and his numerous scattered holdings, on which he himself worked, yielded enough produce both to feed the enormous Mendoza clan and to bring in a comfortable income on the side. When I first saw Pedro's house I was surprised. I had expected something out of the ordinary, but except that it was about double the size and very clean (the usual pigs and goats and chickens were not allowed inside), it was like all other native houses.

There were the regulation walls of stone and bamboo topped by thatch, and the regulation yard enclosed by stone boundaries. Inside, the house consisted of one very large windowless room with an alcove used as a kitchen. Hammocks hung from the beams, and chests for clothing and small squatting stools were scattered generously about.

But although the Mendoza family lived in native style they were much more advanced than most of the Indians of Atitlan. They spoke Spanish. They had learned to read and write. Pedro, as a matter of fact, was well educated and had even traveled about the country. On one of his trips—to Guatemala City—he had taken Consuela, his oldest daughter, with him. That had been seven years

before we knew her, but she still talked about her experience to anyone who would listen. "*Imagine!*" she would say. "I have seen the biggest city in Guatemala—the biggest city in the whole world. There were automobiles all over the streets, and the streets were *smooth!* And enormous houses. And"—the climax was always the same—"*I rode in a streetcar!*"

"That streetcar," said her mother, laughing. "She will never forget it." But there was a bit of envy in her laugh, for Lucha had never been to the capital, had never seen an automobile, had never *ridden in a streetcar.*

Next to Pedro, we got to know Pepita best. Pepita was seventeen and, by Atitlan reckoning, an old maid. This was not because she was unattractive, but because her father had been so inconsiderate as to become an Evangelist before she had reached marriageable age. As a result the boys and girls she knew had been told to stay away from the family of "that traitor Mendoza." Pepita was philosophical, however. "Even if I am too old to marry and have children," she said, "there are other things. Father has promised to take me to Guatemala City on his next trip. And in the meantime I will go on with my weaving."

Pepita was the best weaver in town. She made most of her family's clothes and she worked with speed and skill and grace. So when she consented to weave a blouse and shawl for Sam to buy, he was inordinately pleased. Sam was trying to make a collection of all the different articles of clothing worn in Atitlan and until we met the Mendozas had had very little luck. The women made clothes for themselves and for their families to wear, not to sell; so that in order to acquire a costume it was usually necessary to buy one already worn, if not right off the owner's back.

Nor was that easy. An Indian's wardrobe is a limited one—when a blouse or shirt begins to wear out someone in the family weaves a new one—and even in cases where there were "spares" at home, the owners weren't anxious to let us have them. We were The Enemy, after all, and it was perfectly possible (so they argued) that we would practice witchcraft on them if we had their clothes in our

possession. Occasionally a more enlightened Indian, or one in need of money, would disregard this risk, but such individuals were few and hard to find.

Sam kept on trying, though, and his technique was generally the same. He would go to the market place, accompanied by Cristina as interpreter, and pick out a likely prospect—usually a woman, and always a well-dressed one. "I like your costume," he would say (through Cristina). "Haven't you another like it at home? If so, do let me buy this one."

The woman as a rule either shook her head or giggled at his proposition and ignored it. In which case Sam would go right on to the next smartly dressed individual and repeat the procedure.

When I was along I was thoroughly embarrassed by this approach, although to my surprise the Indians didn't seem at all insulted. It was as bad, I told Sam, as if I were to go up to a comparative stranger at home and say, "What a beautiful dress, Mrs. Snodgrass. Where *did* you get it? I want one just like it. How about selling me yours?"

But Sam told me I was wrong. "The Indians," he said, "are used to selling their blouses or shirts or coats secondhand. Whenever they need to raise money—for parties or for Easter ceremonies or to pay a witch doctor—they pack up their extra clothes and anything else they may own and travel to the nearest town that boasts a pawnshop. There they either borrow money on their possessions or sell them outright. That doesn't mean," he added quickly, "that they will be willing to let *me* have them, but it can't hurt to try. At worst, they will only ignore me." Which is just what they did do.

The Mendozas were therefore a godsend. They were helpful and generous and they stripped themselves to add to Sam's collection. "I don't need this shirt," Salvador would say. "Take it, and Pepita will weave me another." "Would you like a shawl?" (This from Juana.) "It is a ceremonial one which I won't use until Holy Week, and by then Pepita can make me another." "Take this coat, this handkerchief, this belt, this bag." The offers poured in from all sides. And always, "Pepita can make me another."

Poor Pepita! Although she didn't seem to mind. She had attached

herself to us, her new friends, and our interests were hers. When Sam told her he wished to photograph the different steps in weaving, she was delighted. "Good," she said. "You will take my picture and then you will not forget me." And conscientiously, whenever the blouse or the shawl on which she was working called for a change in process, she would stop her work until Sam could be there to take photographs or to make a sketch. Sometimes Sam was busy, and Pepita would have to wait days before she could continue her weaving. "Poor Salvador," I said. "When will Pepita find time to make his shirt? Or Juana's shawl? Or Pedro's belt?"

But Sam was so captivated by his growing collection of textiles—to say nothing of the documentary evidence he was amassing on the technique of weaving—that he paid scant attention. "Poor Salvador, poor Juana," he repeated dutifully. But without much conviction.

The friendliness of the Mendoza family merely served to highlight the surliness of the other Indians. If only they had been willing to let us alone! Night was the worst time. Almost every night, just as we were getting ready to sleep, loud voices would be heard on the street side of our house. Then a knock on the boarded-up window in the next room. "Open up. We want a drink." The first time this happened we tried not answering. But the knocks became blows. "Open, do you hear. Open. We want rum."

"This is no longer a bar," Sam finally called out.

More blows on the window, this time with fists. "*We want rum! We want rum!*"

"Go away," I yelled, when I could stand it no longer. Although the yell was more of a quaver.

"Ah! A woman," came back from outside. "Open the window, little one, and serve us." And the shouts and the pounding continued until, finally, the would-be drinkers got tired of waiting. After they had gone we lay in bed, wakeful, until the next lot came along.

This performance took place at least three nights a week and was more or less the same each time, although the language of our persistent visitors varied according to their state of intoxication. On occasions when we were left in peace it was almost as bad, for each

time we heard steps coming up the street we waited, tense, for the steps to stop and the pounding and yelling to begin. "Do you think they will ever learn that Diego has given up his bar?" I asked Sam. "Or are they doing this purposely?"

"I doubt it," said Sam. "The news must certainly have got about, but when the Indians are drunk or thirsty they probably forget everything except that they want another drink. And their feet bring them here automatically."

But if the disturbance on the street side of the house was accidental, that on the yard side wasn't. This took place at night, too. Almost every night. It was a quieter attack and, just because of that, more frightening. It usually started with a shuffle of feet, no voices. Suddenly the handle of our door would begin to turn, and although the door was always locked on the inside, it was a flimsy lock and gave but little reassurance. "Sam," I would say, trembling, each time this happened, "they're going to break in."

"Don't worry," he'd answer, patting my hand. "They won't break in. They only want to annoy us."

"*How can you be sure?*" I'd ask desperately, and I'd wedge a chair under the doorknob, like a young girl trying to defend her honor.

Sam was right, though. They never did break in, and I don't believe they tried very hard. But the nightly invasions—shuffle, shuffle, rattle, rattle—continued. Sometimes Maria would wake up and fearlessly, broom in hand, chase the invaders. And they would go away. Only to return later.

In desperation I consulted Pedro. "That is bad," he said, shaking his head commiseratingly. "Very bad. Although I am sure the Indians would do no harm. They are like children. It isn't that they dislike you personally; it is that they dislike anything strange to them. But if you are nervous," he offered, "Salvador or I can sleep outside your door."

Dear Pedro. I sighed with relief. But to my dismay Sam turned He-Man. "Of course not, Pedro," he said. "We wouldn't think of such a thing." And then, the "we" becoming even more editorial, "The Indians don't frighten *us*."

Chapter 11

THE reason for living in Atitlan, of course, was to be near Chuitinamit, the site which Sam planned to excavate. It should have been easy to get started. The usual technique is to (1) pick your site, (2) get permission to dig, (3) engage workmen, (4) get yourself and said workmen to the site, (5) make some holes in the ground and (6) pray that you will find something. This sounds simple, and up to the point where you find something (or don't) it usually is. But in our case, the only part of the program that was simple was picking out the site, and this had been done five years earlier. We had permission to dig, it is true, but between a contract signed in the capital and enforcing that contract in an Indian town many miles away there is a big difference.

All formalities had been attended to. We had gone to see the Minister of Education in Guatemala City for our permission. We had played the HOW game with him. In Latin America it is considered good form to disguise or at least sugar-coat all business dealings. This is done by obscuring the issue with polite chitchat in order to see how long you can take before coming to the point, so that when you do finally reach it, it seems almost like an accident. Hence the HOW game.

The Minister of Education played so well that Sam and I were almost whitewashed. He started in as we were shaking hands.

"HOW are you Señora? HOW are you Señor?" "HOW are you Mr. Min—" we managed to get out just in time before he countered with "HOW is your mother? HOW is your father?" (As these questions were addressed to each of us separately, he scored four points.)

"Very well, thank you, Mr. Min—"

"HOW are your children?" he interrupted (a question which in my opinion should have penalized him), but noting my expression he quickly corrected himself. "Ah, that's right. No children. Too bad, too bad." The way he said this made us feel so guilty that we lost our turn and the Minister got back into his stride with "HOW was your trip down? HOW do you like Guatemala? HOW long do you expect to stay?"

Three times Sam tried to break in with "HOW can I get permission to dig, Mr. Min—" but the Minister paid no attention, and it was only after he had won the game by a score of eighteen to two with a final "HOW can I be of service to you?" that Sam got his chance.

Once the game was over, there were no difficulties. The Minister agreed it would be a good idea to explore the buried treasure of the Mayas (especially as by law anything we found would be kept by the Guatemalan government), and he scrawled a few lines to the political chief of the department in which Atitlan was situated, saying in effect, "help Lothrop." We shook hands once more and off we went.

"Mr. Min was certainly helpful," I commented. And, mistakenly, "The rest should be easy."

The political chief's headquarters were in Sololá, a town some twenty miles from Atitlan. We called on him three days later and it was a repetition of our call on the Minister. We again played the HOW game. Mr. Chief also won (although by a less imposing score) and he, too, gave Sam a "help Lothrop" letter, this one addressed to the *Alcalde* or Mayor of the town of Atitlan.

The Mayor was apparently not the type who cared for games. "What do you want?" he grunted as soon as he saw us, and without waiting for an answer he called in his assistant, Mayor No. 2, who

was an Indian and who eyed us with more distaste, if possible, than had Mayor No. 1. So without preliminaries Sam handed over the latest "help Lothrop" letter, which was digested in silence. The Mayor, it seemed, was not anxious to help Lothrop. Neither was Mayor No. 2. What they both wanted was for Lothrop to get the hell out and not bother them. Naturally they didn't say so, but as time went on it became more and more evident.

It was grudgingly conceded that we might dig—"as long as the political chief says so, although what you'll find besides weeds I can't imagine," stated Mayor No. 1, in a way that made it clear he hoped the weeds would choke us.

"The first round is ours," whispered Sam, and he quickly sealed his victory by requesting an interpreter and eight workmen, the latter to be paid the unprecedented sum of twenty cents a day, which was five cents, or twenty-five per cent, more than the current wage.

But when we returned to the town hall to interview our prospective helpers, we found just one—a puny little guy named Nicolas. Nicolas, it turned out, was the interpreter, and he insisted on being put on the pay roll immediately although there was nobody for him to interpret.

The Indians were not anxious to work for Sam, even at increased pay. To prove this, Mayor No. 1 requested No. 2 to round up various individuals from the street, and he put the question to them then and there. Each one emphatically shook his head, and No. 1 shrugged his shoulders and tried not to look pleased. Of course, as the language used had been absolutely unintelligible to us, No. 1 might very well have asked the unsuspecting Indians such questions as "Did you take a bath this morning?" or "Have you been stealing eggs?" or even "Would you like to work for this dirty foreigner-if-you-say-yes-God-help-you?" The expression on Nicolas' face seemed to bear this out.

"What can I do?" asked the Mayor smiling happily. "Everyone is busy. You had better go back where you came from."

I was beginning to agree with him, but Sam's face took on that

"archaeology here I come" look. "If you can give me no assistance," he threatened, "I shall have to get in touch with the political chief."

"Come back tomorrow," said No. 1 quickly, "and I will see what I can do."

After two weeks of daily visits to the town hall and threats of communicating with the political chief, the Minister of Education and even the President of the Republic, we collected a group of eight workmen. I don't know where Nos. 1 and 2 had discovered them, for in no way did they resemble the good-looking if unfriendly Indians around Atitlan. These men were villainous; next to them the average run of American gangsters would have looked like choir singers.

The foreman was named Fernando. He was surly and insolent, and his right eye drooped in frightening fashion. I called him Dillinger. The other men were uniformly evil-looking, except for one rather effeminate creature of the type of Pretty Boy Floyd. But, gangsters or not, they were able-bodied men and we were at last prepared to start work.

Chuitinamit is the Indian name for the steep and rocky hill projecting from the flank of the volcano San Pedro, across the harbor and about a mile from the town of Atitlan. On this hilltop fortress, surrounded on three sides by the waters of Lake Atitlan, are the remains of the ancient capital of the Zutugil and the residence of their kings. The royal family had picked themselves a wonderful site—both from the point of view of scenery and of defense—and here, according to tradition, they had lived for fifteen generations before the Spanish conquest.

Life for the Zutugil had been a constant struggle. By pure chance they had settled on lands that contained quantities of cocoa, and when, later, the cocoa bean became general currency throughout Mexico and Central America, those lands turned out to be immensely valuable. Trees literally oozed money. It was as if you had an orchard that produced dollar bills instead of apples and, as might be expected, everyone around you kept trying to take away your

money-making plants. The Zutugil, however, had managed to ward off all onslaughts up to the arrival of the Spaniards, and until then their rulers prospered, secure in their impregnable fortress.

Chuitinamit now is a jumbled mass of lava blocks whose shape defies description. Called the "child of the volcano," it is an excrescence in miniature of its father San Pedro, except that it has no crater. And in the center of this hunky blob stand the remains of the ancient citadel—all that is left of the former grandeur of kings. Here are bits of pyramids, falling temples, demolished plazas, and walls of what once were palaces and other buildings. Here, too, are stones and boulders, some carved, some with holes cut into their upper surface to collect the blood of human sacrifice.

Outside the ruins, wherever rocks permit, the ground is under cultivation. This ground belongs to the Indians of Atitlan, who depend on farming for their subsistence. Atitlan itself is too rocky to produce anything, and its inhabitants have therefore turned to the fertile slopes of surrounding volcanoes. On these, every bit of earth has been used. Corn, peas, peppers and beans crop up between rocky boulders, sometimes in plots so small that one out-size growing pepper would probably smother its neighboring vegetables right out of existence. The Indians certainly made the most of very little. If they had ever been let loose in the rolling fields of a state like Kansas they would undoubtedly have gone crazy.

Chuitinamit, like the adjacent volcanoes, was planted within an inch of its life. And it was in this ground that Sam wanted to dig, for, where the rocks weren't, the buried Indians presumably were. Unfortunately that was also where the corn grew. And the peas and the peppers and the beans. This made for complications.

Few of the landowners were enthusiastic about having their vegetables dug up, even when paid three times their value. As a rule each little plot belonged to a different person—sometimes four or five stalks of corn constituted an entire holding—although occasionally some capitalist had several bits of land scattered about the slope. Thus if we found a skeleton in the plot of willing landowner Jones,

the skeleton's feet might be under the sod of unwilling landowner Smith. And Sam refused to subscribe to the theory that half a skeleton is better than none.

Legally, of course, we had a right to dig anywhere. That didn't help much. Legally you have a right to walk along any public road in the United States. But if a vicious dog goes after you, you're not going to stand on your legal rights. You're not going to stand at all. You'll run. And if an Indian comes toward you brandishing a machete, you're not going to say, "Look here, old man, my contract permits me to dig up your property." What you'll do is get the hell off his property. Which is just what we did. In fact we hopped so many times from one plot of ground to another, we might have been a couple of fleas.

Our first job was to study the ruins. These had been pretty well pulled to pieces by treasure seekers, but there was still a majestic pattern to what had once been a flourishing city. "I'll make a map," said Sam, "of the principal buildings. That, plus photographs, should give a good idea of the layout."

So while I held one end of a long tape measure and Dillinger unwillingly held the other end, Sam ran around with a surveying instrument and jotted down angles and measurements. Dillinger had a nasty habit of jerking his end of the tape whenever I took my eye off him, which was apt to throw me off my feet and make the measurements inaccurate. Each time this happened we would have to start over again.

"Keep your eye on that bastard," shouted Sam, "or we'll be here forever." But he exaggerated. We hadn't been there two days before a couple of little brown men appeared out of nowhere and murmured something which I took to be Zutugil for "Good day."

"Good day to you," I said pleasantly.

"They say get off their land," stated Nicolas, barely suppressing a grin.

"But why?" asked Sam. "We're doing no damage and, if necessary, I'll pay them."

More grunts and mutters.

"They say," Nicolas repeated, this time grinning widely, "Get off their land and *quick*." We got.

"I'll have to make some sort of map from the photographs," said Sam sadly.

Digging had its problems too. All digs (where archaeologists are involved) are scientific in purpose, but this was a superscientific one. "What I'm interested in," said Sam, "is finding, first of all, objects which can be identified as belonging to the centuries just before the Spanish conquest. Then, *under* these. . . ."

"Sam," I interrupted excitedly, "GOLD?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "Maybe. Or clay or obsidian or bone. It doesn't really matter. As long as it is older material from which I can reconstruct an earlier and entirely different culture. It's depth I'm looking for," he continued enthusiastically. "Depth will tell the story."

But "depth" wasn't easy to find. As a start, Sam decided to cut a series of test trenches from the water to the summit of the hill and then concentrate on the areas that promised the most important results. It was slow work and at first the results were negligible. Not that they were unexciting. After all, your reaction to what comes out of the earth is comparative. If you've been finding gold and emeralds, a turquoise bracelet seems like an anticlimax, but if for hours nothing but roots or worms have turned up, even a coccyx can give you a thrill.

The workmen didn't subscribe to this theory. "Blah blah blah," said Pretty Boy Floyd.

"What did he say, Nicolas?"

"That he thinks you're both crazy to waste your time and his."

"Blah blah blah," said Two-gun Mahoney, kicking at the earth with his bare toes.

"Nicolas?"

"He says he's sure those bones he's just found will bring you bad luck."

"Tell him to leave THOSE BONES alone," shouted Sam.

Just then the landowner appeared, irately pointing to one sickly,

uprooted stalk of corn ("my vegetable garden!" he protested), and ordered us to move on. "Blah blah blah" and "ha ha ha" from all the workmen this time. We didn't bother to ask Nicolas to translate.

We advanced one ridge. Here the ground was lying fallow (no stalk of corn, no pod of pea) and it seemed safe to excavate. But we had failed to take into consideration a nearby cave, formed by a mass of volcanic boulders. It was no ordinary cave. When we crawled into it we found, heaped in neat rows, some twenty odd armadillo shells and a dozen or more skulls of sheep and goats.

"It's a sacrificial cave, a shrine," said Sam, "where the Indians of today make offerings to their gods. We'd better get back to work and leave it alone."

There was an ominous feeling in the air; the workmen seemed more restless and even more insolent than usual. We returned to our digging, but the damage was done.

"Don't look now," said Sam, "but there's Ali Baba."

I couldn't resist looking. Ali Baba was a small and, at first glance, unassuming Indian, sitting just beyond the cave, as if guarding it. On his knees rested a machete which he was quietly sharpening. Every few minutes he would look over at us, then continue his sharpening. He never said a word. He didn't have to. We left.

Ridge by ridge we worked our way up the hill. Sometimes we found nothing, sometimes bits of skeletons, pottery or stone. Frequently we were ordered to move on. When this happened, the workmen looked cheerful and joked together; otherwise they were surly and bored. All in all, we managed to extract from the unwilling earth one obsidian lance point, some squared stones, one stone ax-blade, one stone chair, a piece of an incense burner, one globular jar, the bones of three humans. Surely a discouraging lot of junk (thought I) and hardly worth daily exposure to Dillinger & Co.

Dillinger himself was becoming constantly more menacing. He had apparently singled me out as his particular victim, doubtless because he realized I was frightened of him. Unfortunately he gave me no outright cause for complaint. After all, you can't chastise a man for leering at you when it may be his regular expression; or

for spitting in your direction so expertly that he manages to miss your big toe by one eighth of an inch. Nor, as we climbed toward the top of Chuitinamit and stones and rubble came rolling down my way, could I do more than continue to dodge them, for how could it be proved that they were not dislodged accidentally?

If I could have spoken to Dillinger direct, without an interpreter, I would have thrown myself on his mercy. "Dear Dillinger," I would have said, "my husband has the mistaken idea he wants to work here. You and I, dear Dillinger, realize how silly this is. But if you'll only humor him and do us no bodily harm, I'll try to get him to leave as soon as possible."

However when we reached the summit things looked brighter. Here the ground was flat and less rocky, and the landowners, who as usual seemed to spring up out of the earth like mushrooms, were apparently willing (for a consideration) to let us dig. Endless possibilities stretched ahead.

Graves turned up right from the start—so many and so varied that Sam plunged enthusiastically into a study of the burial habits of the Zutugil. There were adults buried in a sitting position with their knees bent up against their chests. There were adults lying stretched out in conventional fashion. There were children buried under an inverted bowl. "Bones, bones, nothing but bones," I complained ungratefully. Until we discovered a grave full of decapitated skeletons. More bones, it is true, but these were intriguing and puzzling. Like a detective story. "The Case of the Headless Bodies," I called it.

The grave was five feet by seven. At a depth of about two feet were a mass of skeletons around which had been placed twenty-one pieces of pottery, various stone objects and nearly a ton of rock to tamp them down. In spite of the fact that the rock had played havoc with the bones, Sam surveyed them carefully and pronounced them to be the headless bodies of eight individuals and the bodiless head of one, minus its jaw. "Curious," was his only comment.

After frenzied digging, the missing parts turned up—in a corner of the grave, several feet lower down. Here, piled up like so many

eggs, were seven skulls and the missing jawbone. Sam fingered this grisly find with professional skill, like a doctor examining what was left of the victims of a holocaust. "We've got an aged male and female," he announced, "two adult males, two adult females (one of them with her jaw disarticulated), one young female, and one young adolescent, sex uncertain. And all buried at the same time. Probably related."

"Just one big happy family," I contributed. "Do you suppose they murdered each other?"

Sam became wildly scientific, but his deductions unfortunately were negative. "It might be human sacrifice," he stated, "which was quite common in those days. The usual method was to cut through the abdominal cavity and tear out the heart which, with its blood, would then be offered to the gods. When this was done the bodies were sometimes decapitated first. But," he admitted sadly, "if it was sacrifice, the bodies would have been found close to an ancient temple, and this site is almost half a mile away from the nearest ceremonial center." So that idea was disposed of.

"Maybe they had been punished as a group for some crime," he went on. "But no." Again he shook his head. "If it had been punishment, they would have been shot with arrows or cracked over the head with a stone, not decapitated. And they would have been thrown into an unhonored grave. Instead of which all their possessions were carefully buried with them."

"Sam, you're telling me what *didn't* happen. I'm dying of curiosity about what *did*, particularly how the lady lost her jaw."

"I'll examine the grave again," said Sam agreeably, "and see if I can come across more evidence. Maybe when we take up the pots and stone objects we'll find something significant underneath." But we never had much chance to see what was underneath.

I wouldn't have believed that anything more in the way of obstructions could have come our way. We had had to fight the official powers of Atitlan before we could start digging. We had undoubtedly acquired the worst-mannered and most inept bunch of workmen who had ever carried pick or shovel. We had been chased off more

land by more landowners than the population of Atitlan seemed to warrant. Even the vegetables were leagued against us. An ear of corn that was a fledgling seed one day would spring into full flower the next if it happened to be in ground we wished to explore. (This, in fact, had happened so often that I suspected Dillinger & Co. of carrying around vegetable props to drop on promising archaeological earth.) But there was one more disaster awaiting us. A snake!

We had gone to Chuitinamit as usual. As we reached the summit and prepared to walk the half mile further to our excavations, we stopped a moment to admire the ruins. Pretty Boy Floyd, who was idly whacking at the ground with his machete, suddenly gave a cry. Strange sounds emerged from his mouth, like a death rattle. Grabbing Nicolas, who was about to run the other way, Sam and I rushed to see what was wrong. And there, peering out from under a rock while Pretty Boy cowered nearby, was a small but deadly fer-de-lance.

"Did it bite him?" Sam asked Nicolas, who shook his head. "Well, kill it," said Sam, but no one volunteered, and he was finally forced to kill it himself, while I stood on the sidelines and cheered him on. When he was sure there were no further signs of life, he sighed with relief and we looked around for the workmen. They had gone.

"The sissies," I exclaimed, "to be scared of a snake."

"I'm afraid that's not all of it," said Sam. "To them the snake is holy. It is the principal religious symbol throughout Central America and represents a god. And, unfortunately, this particular snake appeared at the foot of the main temple—to defend it, they probably argue. It is very unusual to find a snake this high up, and the Indians are undoubtedly convinced that it is a sign we have no right to be here. We'd better go home and hope they will be over it by tomorrow."

The next day not one workman—not even Nicolas—turned up. They were sick, we were told, when we inquired at the town hall. "All of them?" asked Sam. "All of them," said Mayor No. 1 firmly.

"My headless bodies," I mourned. "My jawless head. Now I'll never know."

"Never mind," comforted Sam. "We'll finish them up alone.

After all, there is no more heavy work to be done on that grave."

But we had hardly taken the possessions of the family Headless out of the ground before the landowner appeared, flanked by an army of cohorts. His eyes glistened. He yelled. We didn't need Nicolas to tell us that what he was yelling was the equivalent of "scat." "The word must have got round," said Sam. "We might as well give up and take our trophies home."

"Poor Sam," I said sympathetically as we climbed down the hill. "All this for nothing."

"*Nothing!*" exclaimed Sam. He looked ready to explode. "NOTHING! Why, this has been an immensely important dig. I found just what I wanted."

"You mean those few old pots and stones?"

He gave me a pitying look. "It isn't *what* I found. It's what it means."

"Of course," I said quickly, realizing guiltily that I'd already forgotten the lesson taught me in Chile on what Really Matters. "And what does it mean?"

"It means that I now have a good idea of the types of civilization which existed here and how far back they go."

"How did you dope that out?" I was genuinely impressed.

Sam warmed to my admiration. "I don't know if I can explain it to you," he said, explaining it to me. "What we found in the very top graves was material from just before the Spanish conquest, for, through historical records, we know that these cities were occupied at the time the Spanish came. And what we found in the graves underneath are obviously earlier cultures. As a matter of fact, you can date the very bottom ones back nearly fifteen hundred years before the Conquest."

"*How?*"

"Remember the sherds we sorted? Remember the Usulutan ware?"

I nodded. A sherd is the name given by the archaeologically initiated to bits or fragments of pottery. We had dug up thousands at Chuitinamit, all colors and shapes, few of them fitting together.

Thus when Sam had ordered them stuffed into bags and transported to our back yard, turning it into an ancient garbage dump, I was surprised as well as unenthusiastic. "But why?" I'd asked. "I don't believe any of these fit. I'll bet you don't get as much as one complete pot out of them."

"That's not the point," Sam had said. "We are going to sort them and count them."

It had sounded like the dullest kind of game, but I'd played it anyhow. We had made eight piles, according to color—brown, orange, red, black, cream, chalk, black on red and a peculiar-looking ware which Sam, for some reason unknown to me at the time, had named Usulutan. Now, however, he was letting me in on the secret.

"Remember those Usulutan sherds?" he again asked. "I gave them that name because they correspond exactly to pottery that comes from the Department of Usulutan in Salvador. In fact it's the same ware, and the pieces here, if not trade pieces, are at least of the same age. What's more, it is the earliest painted pottery now known from Central America."

"How do you know that?" I asked, to slow him up.

"Because various archaeologists, including myself, have found Usulutan ware in Salvador buried beneath early Maya remains. And as the Maya remains were dated, we were able to give an approximate date to the graves under them."

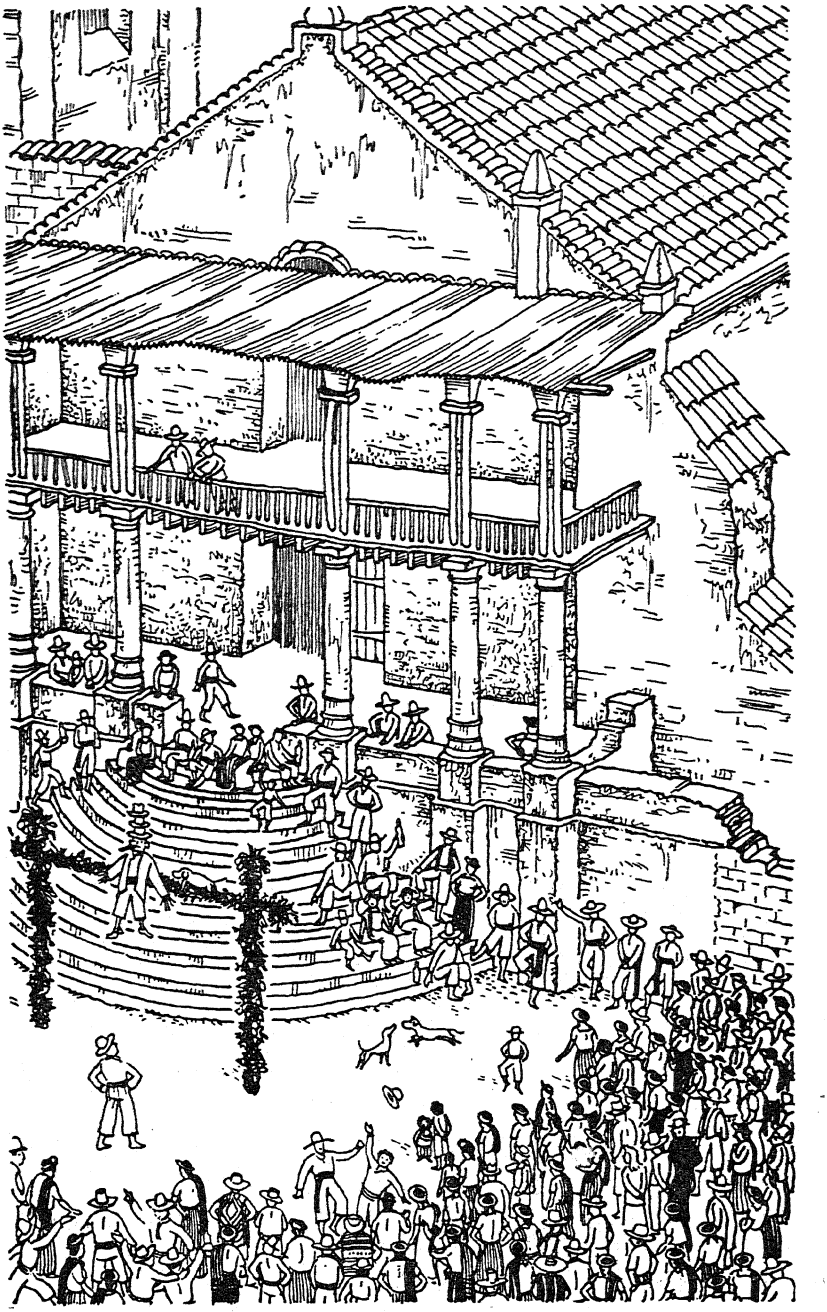
"And the graves here?"

"The earliest graves here, as I've explained, must be the same period as the early graves in Salvador. And since the Salvador graves can be dated back about fifteen hundred years before the Conquest, so can these." Having reached his climax, Sam relaxed triumphantly.

"That's terrific," I pronounced.

"Have I made it clear?" asked Sam, obviously pleased.

"Sam," I said weakly but proudly, "I've learned so much that I've got archaeological indigestion. I feel just as if I'd swallowed a Maya."



Chapter 12

DO WE GO?" I asked Sam.

"Go where?"

"Home. Or Afghanistan. Or the Fiji Islands. Even the South Pole. Anywhere at all where there are no Indians."

"When Holy Week is over," said Sam. "After all, it starts in a few days, and we might as well stay and see what goes on."

"I've seen enough," I stated. "The Indians have snarled at us, spit at us, done everything but murder us. I might as well admit I'm scared to death. The lock on our bedroom door gets weaker every night."

"Nonsense," said Sam. "This is one time you'll be perfectly safe. The Indians will be much too busy to bother about us." Somehow this didn't comfort me as much as it was supposed to. But we stayed.

Now that it's over and we managed to get out of Atitlan unharmed, I'm glad we did stay. For whatever I may have felt about the Indians, I couldn't help but be fascinated by their attitude toward religion. It was so practical. I'm one of those people who doesn't believe in much of anything until I'm in a jam, when I go through a deplorable performance of "Oh, God, please get me out of this mess. Just this once, dear God, and I promise to be good in the future." But the Guatemalan Indians go me at least seventeen better. They pray to God and Jesus Christ and the Twelve Apostles and their ancient

gods and the feathered serpent and anything else they believe might bring in results. What they're looking for is good luck and protection against the powers of evil, and any divinity who fills this need is good enough for them. I suppose they argue that if one fails, another may crash through.

During Holy Week in Atitlan there were no holds barred. Any and every god, religious figure or symbol was cause for celebration. For the Indians it was an occasion for genuine fun coated with holiness; everything went on from religious ecstasy to drunken roughhouse. According to Pedro, the principal objects of worship were Christ and the Maximon, although it seemed to me that the god Bacchus had an edge on both of them.

We had heard a great deal about the Maximon, although no two versions were the same. This fabulous being exists for only four days a year, and no outsider knows just what he stands for, except that he is presumably a special god or the essence of several gods. When we asked Pedro about him he shrugged his shoulders. "I am a Christian," he rebuked us. "I do not go in for these pagan customs. However if you wish to see the Maximon, I will take you to the house of Diego Ramirez, the witch doctor, on the Tuesday night before Easter. There he will be made up."

"Made up?"

"Put together. Dressed," said Pedro.

"But what is it that is dressed?" asked Sam. "You can't just dress the air."

"Nobody but the witch doctor and his special assistants know what is the core of the Maximon. Some say it is a silver image. Some say it is an image of wood. I myself have no idea. After all, he is not exhibited until he is fully clothed." Pedro's tone was thick with virtue. He sounded as shocked at the notion of the Maximon appearing on the scene sartorially deficient as I might have been at encountering a friend emerging from the Metropolitan Opera House in his underwear.

"Clothes or no clothes," I told Sam, "I'm going to find out what makes the Maximon tick."

So on Tuesday night before Easter, a foursome consisting of Maria, Pedro, Sam and myself set out for Diego Ramirez's house, Maria with a frying pan concealed under her sweater—"in case those drunks should molest you, Señora." But the drunks and even the occasional sober individuals we encountered were much too engrossed in the creation of this year's Maximon to pay any attention to us. The streets were seething with people. Everyone seemed to be celebrating, including children and babes in arms. "Does this go on all week?" I asked Pedro.

"More or less," he answered. "There are processions almost every day. Tomorrow, Wednesday, is devoted to the Maximon. Thursday is a general celebration, on Friday will be the big ceremony when Christ is taken down from the Cross, and on Saturday and on Easter Sunday there are more religious ceremonies and more processions. What you will want to see," he continued, "is the Good Friday procession which is a very special one."

"What we want to see," I said, "is *everything*," and, disregarding Pedro's shocked expression, "especially if it has to do with the Maximon."

Crowds filled the street in front of Ramirez's small house, and though with the help of Pedro and Maria we managed to push our way to the door, we were allowed no further. Pedro kept a firm hand under my elbow. "Don't think of trying to go in, Señora," he admonished. "That might mean *real* danger."

"But I want to see his innards," I said bravely, feeling like the heroine of an adventure story.

"You'll be satisfied to see his outards," retorted Sam, "and don't try any tricks."

We had waited over an hour when finally the door was thrown open and the Maximon exposed to the public gaze. Lines formed, as in a wedding reception, and we were allowed slowly to file by IT. I don't know just what I had expected to see. A male angel, possibly, with wings folded back. Or a martyr with benign if suffering expression. Maybe a prophet, the wisdom of ages upon his face. At the very least some mysterious godlike being, robed in velvet, crowned

with jewels. But what faced us, propped up against a corner of the house, was a scarecrow, a misshapen bundle, clothed in the customary short pants, shirt and coat of the Atitlan Indian. Two thin sticks represented his legs, to which a pair of shiny new shoes had been attached. His face was a leering wooden mask painted in bright colors and crowned by three felt hats, from which hung a number of varicolored handkerchiefs. And stuck jauntily between the painted lips was an enormous cigar!

Maria quickly crossed herself. Sam and I were much too startled to move, until the pressure back of us forced us on. "Does he—*always* look like this?" I asked Pedro when we finally found ourselves in the fresh air.

"Why, yes," said Pedro. "His mask and costume are invariably of this type, although they are entirely new each year. After Holy Week his clothes are stored away in chests and never used again."

"But how can he afford such extravagance?"

"Gifts," said Pedro simply. "All gifts. Different individuals present him with suits and shoes and hats, and the best of these are picked out for his yearly appearance."

The Maximon was spending the night in the same house where he had been created, so we unwillingly left him to the awed admiration of the multitude and went home. Early the next morning we returned, just in time to see two Indians, distinctly unsteady in spite of the hour, bearing our friend high upon their shoulders, while a parade of frenzied worshippers brought up the rear. Then into the town hall, while Sam, Pedro and I followed close behind. Inside, though, it appeared that something had gone wrong. The man who seemed to be in charge of Maximon activities began to yell at a little brown replica of Caspar Milquetoast, while everyone else stood around helplessly and muttered. "What has happened?" we asked Pedro.

"The mat has been forgotten. The mat on which the Maximon is to be laid."

This oversight turned out to be the fault of Caspar Milquetoast who was supposed to be Mat Man, and he promptly burst into

tears, then ran into the street as if the devil himself were pursuing him. Meanwhile the two bearers kept balancing their burden as well as possible, but the alcohol they had consumed made the task difficult, and each time they staggered the Maximon's three hats would drop off onto the dusty floor and the cigar would fall out of his mouth.

Head Man was yelling at everybody now that Mat Man was no longer there to take the blame, and I was beginning to be afraid that the entire performance was going to end in a riot, when suddenly Caspar returned, a large straw mat clasped to his bosom. There was an awed hush. The mat was deposited on the floor, and with exquisite care the Maximon laid on top of it.

Several hours later, after the Maximon had had his siesta, he was carried to the church in the plaza, in front of which a pole, adorned with massive branches of green leaves, had been sunk into the ground. The Maximon was lashed by a cord to this artificial tree and there he remained, leering genially at his humble subjects and at anyone else who paid him heed.

"And that's all that happens?" I asked Pedro, disappointed.

"Just about. Until Friday afternoon, when he is taken back to Ramirez's house and dismantled." The relief in Pedro's voice was overwhelming.

Pedro had actually been having a miserable time. He was more than willing to act as our guide, but he obviously disapproved of the pagan ceremonies and ignorant beliefs of his fellow townsmen and he was embarrassed to have us witness them. Each time we asked a question about the Maximon, he flinched visibly. "But Good Friday," he beamed, "is a wonderful sight. There will be a ceremony in the church and a procession to commemorate the crucifixion of Christ and the descent from the Cross. You will be very interested."

"It sounds thoroughly conventional," I complained to Sam. "We didn't have to come all the way to Atitlan to attend Good Friday services. We could have seen the same thing right at home." But I was never more wrong.

On Good Friday the population of Atitlan seemed to have

doubled. The crowds in the plaza were so dense that we were unable to get through to the newly erected platform from which Mayor No. 1 was to read the death sentence upon the image of Christ. But in the afternoon, long before the ceremony of the descent from the Cross was to take place, we managed to squeeze into the nave of the church where the image of Christ, now nailed to the Cross, had been set up.

In spite of the early hour, every inch of space was filled. The Indians were like no churchgoers I had ever seen. Everything but smoking seemed to be permitted. Many of the men carried bottles of rum which they passed around freely, both men and women spat at will, dogs ran in and out, and two little boys sat on the floor playing a game with dice that had a strange resemblance to "craps." At a few minutes before three, however, there was a sudden hush and four men with blond curly wigs and beards, dressed in white ceremonial robes, approached the Cross. They looked like sunburned unshaven Harpo Marxes.

Pedro leaned toward us. "The Judases," he whispered.

"Four of them?" I whispered back. "That's too much of a bad thing."

"In Atitlan they worship Judas. Judas is supposed to be holy, so they honor him by representing him four times." Pedro looked thoroughly unhappy as he tried to explain.

"Never mind," I started to console him, when my attention was distracted by Judas No. 3, who seemed faintly familiar. "Sam!" I clutched his arm. "Could it be possible? Number three! Look! *It's Pretty Boy Floyd!*"

We craned our necks. There was no doubt about it. Pretty Boy Floyd it was, though if he recognized us he gave no sign.

The ceremony was about to begin. A spirit of reverence filled the church. Even Pretty Boy looked exalted. Under the Cross, tall silver candelabra and a silver crucifix were held high while countless men and women knelt, some of them with candles, some with incense burners. Judases 1 and 2 slowly ascended the Cross by means of ladders and removed the nails and crown of thorns. They untied

Christ's bonds and carefully, reverently, lowered him into the outstretched hands of Judases 3 and 4. With equal care the four Judases placed Christ in a catafalque which was waiting nearby, covering him first with a ceremonial shawl, then with a piece of modern cloth. And the procession was ready to take off.

Now that the tension was over, the bottles reappeared. Pedro, Sam and I pushed our way through the throng of thirsty celebrants and found a place outside the church, past which, said Pedro, the procession would file. "If you wish, we can join it later," he suggested, "but first you will be able to see what goes on."

The procession was headed by two men playing fife and drum. Back of them, at intervals of about five feet, came the silver candelabra and crucifix and a crucifix of wood. Twelve small children, dressed in their Sunday best, followed, crowns of gaily colored paper on their heads. Back and forth they scampered, shrieking with delight. "A costume party?" I queried.

"They represent the Twelve Apostles," Pedro stated in utter seriousness.

"The *what?*"

"Hush," said Sam. "Here comes the catafalque."

The catafalque was a truly impressive sight. Borne on six silver standards beneath a canopy of silk, the sacred bier passed by, surrounded by women bearing candles and incense. So numerous were the women and so thick the incense that the rest of the procession was obscured. "What comes next?" I asked Pedro.

His expression was enough. He didn't have to answer. Thus it was with no surprise that we saw, directly back of the image of Christ, high above the heads of the crowd and wobbling perilously with each unsteady step of his bearers—the Maximon!

Now came the rest of the townspeople, yelling and pushing, almost dancing along. Every few minutes a man would drop out of line, tilt up a bottle and take a drink, then rejoin the procession. "Let's go with them," I cried, and the three of us, holding hands, shoved our way in. "Where are we headed for?" I yelled at Pedro above the noise.

"Through town and to the church again," he yelled back. "The Maximon drops off when we pass Ramirez's house, but the rest of us go on."

By this time the mob was so large and so unruly that it was difficult to stick together. "If we lose each other," shouted Sam, "I'll meet you back at the house as soon as the procession is over."

"Right," I said and let myself be pushed about at will. So that when we approached the spot where the Maximon and about thirty of his attendants dropped out, it was easy to drop out with them. Neither Sam nor Pedro were anywhere to be seen.

Here at last was my chance to see the Maximon without his clothes. The Indians, I decided, were much too drunk to notice anything. Unfortunately I was wrong. As we neared Ramirez's house I found myself close to the royal scarecrow, who was about to be carried into his home. One of the bearers turned to back through the door and looked straight at me. He opened his mouth. I had just time to touch the bosom, the abdomen of the Maximon, to try to feel what was concealed in his wrappings, before the outraged yells began. I don't believe I ever ran so fast in my life.

"*Where have you been?*" asked Sam as I staggered, breathless, into our yard. He looked white.

"The Maximon!" I gasped. "I felt him. Of course I can't be sure, but I've a hunch I know what he's made of. Remember your boot tree that was stolen last month?"

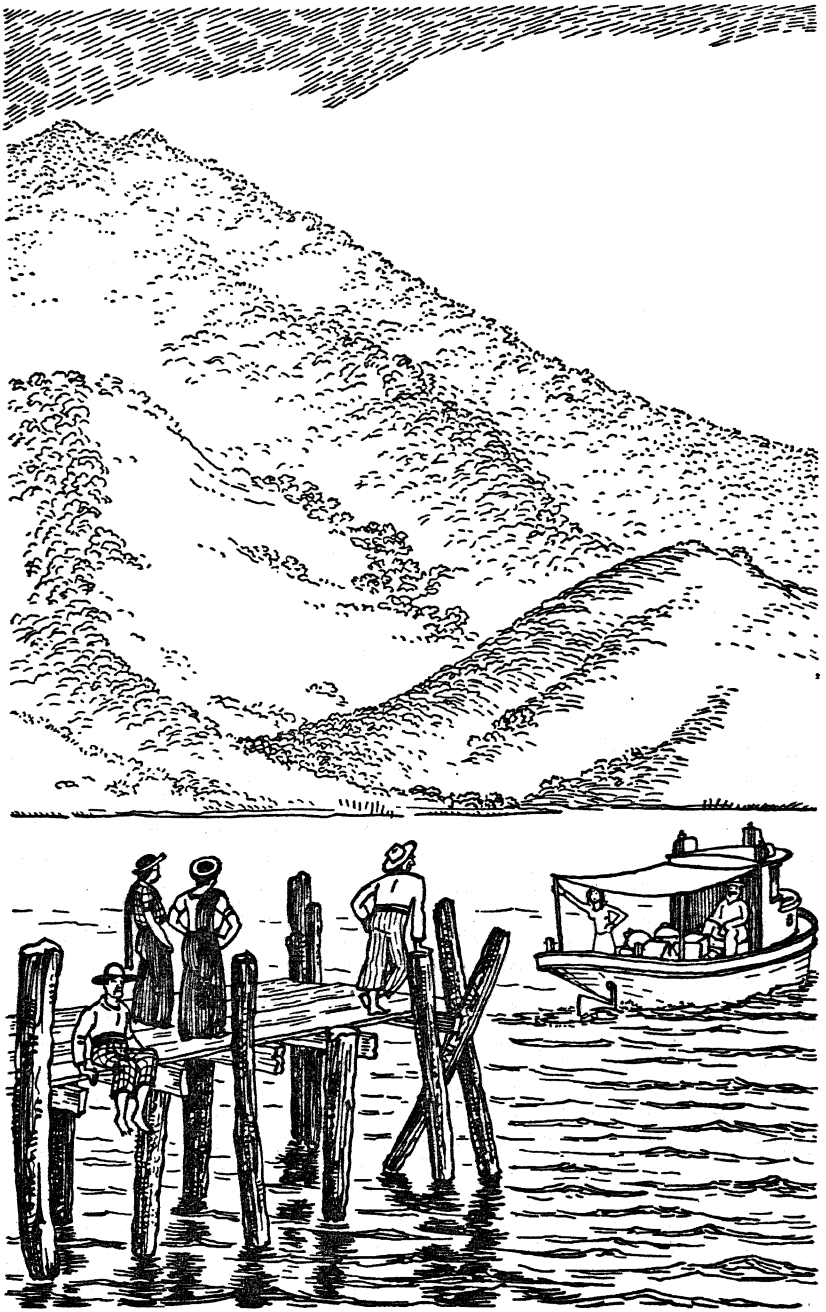
"I think," said Sam, "it's time we left Atitlan!"

Chapter 13

AS SOON AS it was agreed we were to go home, I was all for throwing my two pairs of pants, four blouses and one dress into a bag and taking the next launch. But "not so fast," said Sam. "We still have to pack up some of the material from Chuitinamit. And Pepita has not quite finished the blouse she is weaving for my collection. And Antonio's hand still needs attention." I gave in without a protest, for archaeologists are not inclined to be creatures of impulse. After all, when you take up a profession that depends on a tape measure, abandon is apt to fly out the window.

Through Antonio, Sam had been started on a new career. Antonio was one of the Atitlan constabulary who hung around the town hall. We had seen him frequently on our periodic visits of complaint to the Mayor, but as he, too, had been infected with the anti-Lothrop virus, he had never waxed more cordial than a mild glower. Until one night in Holy Week. During a religious ceremony in the plaza, at which Antonio had been officially delegated to set off some fireworks—in order, we were told, to call God's attention to what was going on down below—a rocket exploded in his hand, taking most of his thumb with it. Sam immediately offered to disinfect the hand and bandage it. "The witch doctor is good enough for me," Antonio had muttered ungraciously, and off he went, a filthy handkerchief wrapped around the wound.

Late that night there was a knock at our door. The handle began



to rattle. "Here it comes again." I began to shake. "And you were sure we'd be left alone during Holy Week."

"Sssh," said Sam, in a conspiratorial whisper. "Maybe if we keep quiet they'll go away."

But though we ignored them, the knocks continued. Finally a small voice quavered, "Señor, *please*. It is I, Antonio."

It seems there were no witch doctors available. They were either out celebrating or taking a vacation or too drunk to minister to the sick. It was clearly the wrong night to have an accident. So Antonio had gone home, his hand wrapped in the same dirty handkerchief, until the pain had become so acute that he had been forced to swallow his dislike for "those foreigners" and come to beg our help. Sam quickly produced his first aid kit, and with me as squeamish assistant, he cleaned and bandaged what was left of Antonio's thumb. "Come back tomorrow and let me look at it again," said Lothrop, M.D.

"Tomorrow *night*?" inquired Antonio hopefully.

"Better let me see it in the morning," said Sam. "It might be infected."

Antonio looked thoroughly unhappy. I thought for a moment he was going to cry. "Señor," he pleaded, "please may I come after dark?"

It was natural, I suppose, for Antonio to want to keep his visits secret. He was a public official and he couldn't afford to be seen trafficking with the enemy. Each night, then, until the hand healed, he slunk furtively in and out of our yard. But somehow the news leaked out. One morning, several days after Antonio's accident, an Indian woman appeared, dragging along a little boy with a stomach so swollen it looked like a blimp. Cristina translated her excited outpourings. "She says you must do something about her little José whose stomach gets bigger every day. She says he must have something bad growing in him. She says she has tried not giving him anything to eat, but it gets bigger anyhow."

"Good heavens!" I was horrified. "What do you suppose is wrong?"

"Worms," said Sam simply. "Lots of the children have them. I'll give him some Eno's Fruit Salts. That can't hurt." So little José got his dose of salts, and Cristina was instructed to tell Mama to feed him or God would come down from above and punish her.

The Enos and the advice were undoubtedly a success, for a few days later three more children with inflated stomachs were brought in for treatment. And then it started. We got up one morning to find a group of would-be patients filling the yard. Sam was asked to minister to stomach-aches, hiccups, morning sickness. His practice was to include a boy with a hare lip, a blind man, a mentally deficient girl and, finally, a husband who found himself impotent.

"Now you're in for it," I declared, laughing at Sam's expression of utter dismay. "If you can cure impotency with salts, you'll make history. What's more, we're almost out of Enos. What are you going to do?"

"Go home," said Sam, with no hesitation at all.

After Cristina had announced that the "doctor" was temporarily out of medicines and could do no curing until further notice, the crowd of patients dispersed, albeit unwillingly. They were obviously displeased. And that night was the worst night of all. We were hardly in bed before the familiar noises, discontinued during Holy Week, started once more. Now, though, there was nothing furtive about our visitors; their footsteps were assured, their behavior unrestrained. Angry mutters could be heard, the doorknob was twisted back and forth until I was sure it would drop off. "Sam, they've never been this bad." My voice was no longer a voice, it was a tremolo.

"It's because of your skirmish with the Maximon."

"It's because you didn't try to stop old Whoosis's hiccups."

"Whatever it is, I'll send a wire for the launch," said Sam, "and we'll leave tomorrow afternoon."

There was a series of violent blows. The door looked as if it were beginning to give. I grabbed Sam. "There must be dozens of them," I wailed. "Oh, *please* don't let them get me."

Sam got up and lit the gasoline lamp. One chair was already wedged under the doorknob, and he carried over the other two

chairs and the table to bolster it. Next his cot, then mine. This disposed of the furniture, but Sam grabbed the camera tripod and, flourishing it like a baseball bat, took up his position as near the door as the barricade allowed. "Let them *try* to get you," he said.

"My hero!" I began to laugh, although the laughter was slightly hysterical. "If only I could take your photograph. In case we ever get home alive to show it."

Outside there was a very loud crash and a sound of things breaking. This was followed by additional noises and a shriek. Then running feet. "That will teach you, you Atitlan scum," shouted Maria.

Sam removed the obstructions and unlocked the door. Carefully we crept into the yard. There stood Maria, candle in hand, surveying the smashed bits of what had once been four large clay water containers. The ground between kitchen and gate was littered with cooking pots, frying pans, a broom. Maria picked up the nearest frying pan and fondled it. "I got one of them," she said. "In the ear, I think."

"We leave tomorrow," Sam repeated. "DEFINITELY!"

It was a lovely sunny day. We finished our packing, paid off Cristina and Jesús and bade a fond farewell to our only friends, the Mendozas. At two o'clock Sam, Maria and I climbed into Francisco's launch. I took one last look at Atitlan. It was as beautiful as ever and I looked at it without regret. A group of Indian men and women stood around the dock and watched us, silently. They appeared sweet and gentle and simple, and I looked at them without regret. As the boat backed into the lake we relaxed comfortably. Sam took my hand. "No more Indians," he exulted. "For a long time, I hope."

"Oh Sam," I shouted, above the noise of the launch, "I wish I knew the Zutugil for 'goody.' "

Part III

Chapter 14

MOST people's ideas of archaeology, if they have any, are romantic and farfetched. Like mine used to be. To the uninitiated, archaeology means digging a hole and pulling out gold and precious stones. This is about as unlikely an event as for a high school girl to visit Hollywood and be invited to dance by Clark Gable. Sam warned me from the start. "You have got to get over the notion," he insisted, "that all an archaeologist has to do is sink a pit into the ground and, presto, out pop gold and emeralds. It just doesn't happen that way." But that was just the way it did happen.

Panama was the kind of experience I've always dreamed about. It was the kind of experience Sam might have dreamed about too. A good archaeologist is chiefly concerned in making a discovery of scientific value, and if at the same time that discovery happens to be something hitherto unknown, he will do handsprings. An amateur like myself, on the other hand, goes for loot. In Panama we found both rolled into one. We didn't even have to hunt for the place; it was sitting there, just waiting to be plucked. And all as a result of pure accident.

In the early part of the 1900's, the Rio Grande de Coclé in Panama changed its course, probably due to log jams during the flood season. The new channel was some distance from the old one, and the

river, in digging it out, chanced to cut through the edge of an ancient Indian graveyard. This act of God went unnoticed until many years later, when a group of natives, poling their way upstream in a canoe, spotted something shiny sticking out of the riverbank. They went right for it, of course, and when they saw several objects that looked like gold, they frenziedly dug them out with their hands, throwing hunks of earth, pottery and bone into the water in their rush. I don't suppose they had the slightest notion of the value of their find or why it was there, but those glittering pieces probably looked good for at least a few drinks at the nearest bar. Actually, the bartender, who must have recognized a good thing when he saw one, was more generous than the men had hoped, and the local firewater which he gave them in exchange kept them unconscious and happy for weeks.

The gold ornaments eventually reached the antique stores in Panama City. Here they were bought for Harvard University, which, after checking on the story back of the treasure, decided to organize an expedition to explore the site. Sam Lothrop was put in charge of the work, and with wife as self-appointed assistant, got ready to set out for Panama.

I had never before taken part in an archaeological expedition where one lives in the wilds and where everything has to be planned ahead. Chile had been full of archaeology, but the work there had been more of a survey, the excavations on a small scale and close to the towns in which we stayed. In Guatemala, too, the excavations had been small ones, and we had been able to live within commuting distance of our dig. Now, though, we were to have technical help and all the workmen we could use, as well as a camp built to order. Gone were the days of inferior hotels, hostile neighbors and general filth. How we made out now was going to be pretty much up to us.

As soon as Sam broke the news of our impending trip, I went to Abercrombie & Fitch to buy the proper outfit. The salesman was both interested and sympathetic, and by the time I was through he had turned me out the perfect Broadway explorer. He sold me two pairs of jodhpurs, three pairs of gabardine shorts—in case the jodhpurs

proved too hot to work in—six polo shirts, one pair of heavy leather shoes (snake-resistant, he told me), a pair of rubber boots plus a mackintosh to keep me dry ("in case of rain, Miss"), and a topee to protect my head from the sun. We agreed I was now prepared for almost anything.

Unfortunately the purchases arrived when I wasn't home, and Sam opened them. "There's some mistake," he said when I came in. He looked genuinely puzzled. "We'll have to call Abercrombie & Fitch and tell them to send for these things."

"It's my camping outfit," I stated bravely, in spite of a sinking feeling. "The man at Abercrombie's picked it out."

"Oh, the man at Abercrombie's. How nice of him to plan our trip for us." Sam dumped the contents of the big box on the floor and examined them carefully. First he picked up the jodhpurs. "You might tell the man at Abercrombie's," said he, "that you're not going on a riding trip. When you do occasionally get on a horse, it won't be necessary to look smart and you can wear the same duck pants you'll use when digging. Any old ones as long as they'll wash." He hurled the jodhpurs back into the box.

Next the shorts. "These," he said, "you can wear if you want to go in for Spectator Sports. But if you expect to help with the digging, you'd better plan on something that will keep your legs from getting covered with dirt." They, too, went back into the box.

The heavy leather shoes brought forth an angry mutter that sounded like "d'ya want to smother in the heat?" Then the rubber boots and mackintosh. "You might tell your friend at Abercrombie's"—Sam was now going strong—"that the rainy season only lasts from May to December and we don't dig then. As for the topee"—he handled it with distaste—"maybe the man at Abercrombie's likes to picture you as a female Dr. Livingstone, but in Panama you don't wear such things."

I began to cry. "How should I know. . . ."

"It's all right, darling," said Sam contritely. "You can keep the polo shirts."

My eventual wardrobe consisted of three pairs of men's duck pants which could be rolled up above the knees when I wasn't working, two pairs of old sneakers, some old tennis socks, an ancient straw hat, a sweater, in case it got cold at night, and the polo shirts.

Our camp equipment was equally prosaic. As Panama is known to have excellent stores, we could count on buying camp beds, cooking utensils, lanterns, and other necessities down there. The only New York touch, therefore, consisted of three canvas water bags, specially made to hang from a tree or pole, which would keep drinking water clean and, when the outside of the bag was soaked, cool.

Of course we had a full set of excavating implements—fine steel knives and small trowels and paintbrushes and whisk brooms. Some of these were new, but most of them had survived previous expeditions. Sam, as every other archaeologist, has his own special taste in what he uses to dig with, and I'm sure he'd be less upset at having to carve a roast beef with a butter knife than to find himself working on ancient remains without his own tried and true paraphernalia. So the few knives and brushes that he now grudgingly bought were set aside for me to break in.

We had just three weeks in which to get ready, and I was in a constant state of excitement. Sam had brought photographs from the Museum of some of the specimens which had been acquired from Coclé—the district in Panama which contained the site where we were to work—and we pored over them nightly. I tasted triumph before we even started. After all, the small digs I'd known had been pretty much of a gamble, but this was almost as good as putting your money down on Number 26, let's say, after the ball had already begun to roll into that groove. We knew more or less where the Museum's collection had been found, so why wouldn't there be more where that came from?

Sam was excited, too, although not exactly for the same reason. It seems that the pieces acquired by the Museum were entirely different from anything seen before. All that was needed to complete the story was to get more of them and to find out how they were

buried and why. "Look," Sam exclaimed, pointing to a little curlicue on one of the photographed objects. "Isn't that interesting? I've never seen anything just like it."

"It is interesting," I answered grudgingly, "but this gold ornament is really wonderful."

"Look at the rim of that bowl," he fairly rhapsodized, handing me a picture of something that looked like an old cooking pot. "What an unusual angle it has."

"Yes, indeed," I said, putting the picture aside. I picked up a photograph of a gold pendant. "Now this . . . ," I began.

"Who cares about the gold?" cried Sam, "when you've got a unique culture here. *Unique!*"

I cared about the gold, but I didn't think he expected an answer to his question.

We sailed from New York just before Christmas, rather unexpectedly accompanied by a friend and volunteer assistant whom, for want of a better name, I shall call Andy. Andy was a playboy. He knew nothing about archaeology and cared less, but he wanted to get away from the pitfalls of New York—which to him meant the Stork Club, El Morocco and a complicated love affair—and he thought that a hunt for Indian treasure was just his dish.

On board we used to congregate in Andy's cabin because there was so much room. Having left in a hurry, he had brought with him nothing but the clothes he wore, six pairs of pyjamas, a shotgun for shooting duck, four bottles of Old Parr whisky, a traveling victrola and a bunch of records, among them three different versions of "Night and Day."

"Night and Day" used to be my favorite song. It isn't any more. The first day at sea, however, I was perfectly willing to sit and listen while Andy played it over and over. It seems that this was *their* song. Andy was feeling virtuous but sorry for himself. I tried to cheer him up by pointing out how wise he had been to come away and how much better off he would be returning to New York with a fresh point of view. It was foolish for him to brood, for, as I re-

minded him, you can't have your cake and eat it too. One more round of "Night and Day" (and Old Parr) and he agreed.

Looking back on our conversation, I think Andy must have been putting on a very good act. He has since protested that this isn't so, but somehow his surprise did not seem very convincing when, later that day, we came upon the "complicated love affair" on the sun deck. It seems she had boarded the boat just before sailing time.

The "complicated love affair" was undeniably effective. She was extremely well built, with perfectly straight blue-black hair, dark-blue eyes, shaded by incredibly long lashes, and a transparently-white skin. Her clothes were spectacular, and she must have changed them at least five times a day. To see that they were taken care of, she had brought along Mattie, a wonderful colored maid, whose only fault was a predilection for straight gin.

Somehow I had never seen anyone less fitted for camp life. It was sacrilege to think of her beautiful body reposing on an army cot. Her soft white hands would obviously be useless in excavating Indian graves, and I was certain that the only skeletons she knew anything about were the kind you keep in a closet. So, at Sam's suggestion, I gave her a serious talk about what the tropical sun would do to her complexion and I described in detail the kind of life one leads in the jungle. As a result, swathed in silver foxes and accompanied by a somewhat unsteady Mattie, she disembarked in Havana. In fact my picture of jungle life was so graphic (though pure invention) that we almost lost Andy too; and I wouldn't have blamed him, for if I'd believed all I was saying, nothing would have kept me from getting off at Cuba myself.

When we reached Panama Sam made plans to leave for our future camp in order to arrange for the cutting down of the tropical growth and the construction of the shacks in which we were to live. And to round up workmen for the dig. "I'll come back for you and Andy in about a week," he told me. "Meanwhile you might order food supplies and engage a cook."

"But I haven't the slightest idea what food to order for an

archaeological camp," I protested. "Or what sort of cook to get. I haven't the slightest idea. . . ."

"You're a woman," stated Sam somewhat obviously.

"And what if I am? I've never had any training in how to be a jungle housewife. Anyhow, I'd much rather go along with you."

"Good-by," said Sam.

"Please," I begged hopefully. "Remember the mistakes I made at Abercrombie's."

But Sam seemed to have supreme confidence in me or maybe he was in a hurry to leave. "Do your best," he said vaguely, patting the Little Woman on the backside. "*Just make sure the cook is good and the food what we need.*" And left it at that.

I wouldn't have had to worry about *which* cook to engage. After four days of intensive search only one turned up who would even consider accompanying us. No servant, I was told, wants to leave the city and work in the wilds unless he has a criminal record or is a little crazy. I finally found a huge Negro, however, with the aristocratic name of Van van Battenberg, who was not only willing but pleased at the idea of cooking for us. He seemed perfectly sane; nor could I find any record of criminal activities. In fact the only thing against him was that he had never cooked before, and he made a point of our not discovering this until he could no longer conceal it—which was the first meal he prepared at camp.

Collecting food supplies was easier than I'd expected. I've always loved groceries and get the same pleasure browsing around among cans and jars as I do among books. So I picked the largest store I could find, and Andy went with me. We spent hours poking into obscure corners and pulling out discoveries to add to The Pile. First, though, I ordered all the tinned soups, vegetables and fruits I could think of. Andy said, "How about some queen olives?"

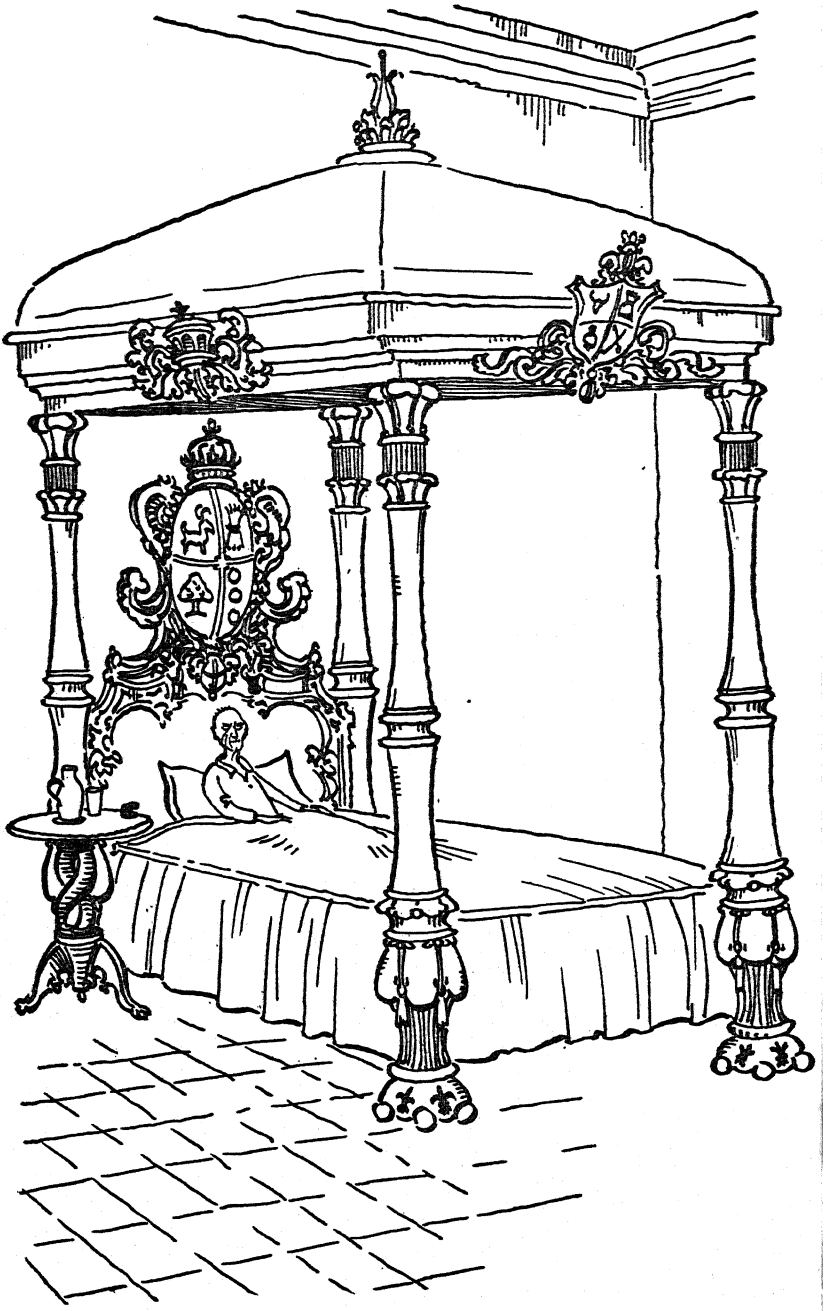
"Of course," I agreed. (After all, wasn't the Museum paying for them?) Then I picked out such condiments as Worcestershire sauce, catsup and Tabasco, so that in case I'd chosen the wrong canned goods we could alter the taste.

Andy cried, "Eleanor, I've found some special cocktail crackers and one little tin of *paté de foie gras*—from *Strasbourg*."

"Wonderful," I said.

Between us we managed to unearth some green turtle soup, one tin of hearts of palm, two tins of jumbo crab meat and, finally, a perfectly beautiful tin of truffles. I had a sneaking suspicion Sam might not entirely approve our choice, but I quickly pushed the thought aside. After all, he might have been more explicit.

As we were leaving, Andy exclaimed, "Good heavens, we've forgotten soda water and pickled onions for the martinis," and he rushed back into the store. I didn't try to stop him. He was getting such pleasure in outfitting a potential barroom that I didn't have the heart to break the news there would be no ice. Or maybe I was afraid he might still back out.



Chapter 15

EVERYTHING is set," announced Sam, when he got back from the country, "except the living quarters. And they'll be finished in another week."

"Are you sure?" I asked. "Because I don't think it would be proper for Andy, you and me to share a grassy couch."

"There's no grass left," said Sam, being literal. "And the houses are bound to be finished. What held us up was the lumber, and it was all there when I left."

So a week later we left for the interior. Camp was some hundred miles from the Canal Zone and took about six hours, nonstop, to reach. It was called "Sitio Conte," after the family who owned the property, but we referred to it (when the Contes weren't around) as "Snakehaven." The first ninety miles could be traveled by car, after which the road went on in the wrong direction and horses were necessary.

Sam, Andy and I started off early one morning in a hired vehicle that had once been a Packard, vintage of 1918. "Gallant Fox," I said, for it had all the instincts of a race horse, if not the performance. Whizzing along at twenty-five miles an hour, cutting corners, we galloped from one side of the road to the other, while Herman, the colored jockey, or driver, crouched forward with his arms around the wheel, frenziedly urging on his steed.

Loving care had evidently been expended on Gallant Fox's insides, but the years had taken their toll of the body which housed them. Springs, sides and top had disappeared, and we bounced up and down and held on desperately so as not to be blown right out onto the road. "Fine for seeing the country," I said with false enthusiasm. But there was nothing to see. Mile after mile of parched brown plains unrolled on either side, dotted with low and flat-topped hills. I felt cheated. "What kind of tropics are these?" I asked bitterly. "Not one palm tree. Not one cactus bush. Not even anything *green!*"

"Cheer up," said Sam. "It gets greener beyond Penonomé, where the road turns toward the Pacific." But after we'd bounced into Penonomé, a town two hours from the Sitio Conte and our last link with civilization, we decided to give our shaken insides a rest. The palm trees could wait.

Penonomé is the capital of Coclé and the largest town in this district, boasting a population of over ten thousand. Because the Pan-American Highway cuts through its center, the main street is paved and wide, in sharp contrast to the dusty and stony side lanes which flank it. But except for its central avenue, Penonomé is just like every other small town in the interior of Panama.

There is the plaza in front of the main church. There are rows upon rows of one-storied wooden houses with tin roofs, backing on straggly and haphazardly planted gardens. There is a wooden amphitheatre, enclosing a ring for the cockfights which take place every Sunday. There are stores—liquor, drug and general—which, between them, minister to every simple need. The drugstores sell nothing but drugs—the sale of Eno's Fruit Salts and aspirin alone would keep them solvent—the liquor stores sport bars where individual drinks are dispensed, and the general stores manage to include almost everything else. Except for fresh food, and the market takes care of that.

In Penonomé, we were informed, the market was a large one and served not only the town but the surrounding countryside. I've always loved Latin American markets (except for the fleas). They are a short cut to knowing a country—what the natives wear, sell, how they act—and I insisted on visiting this one, although Sam and Andy

protested bitterly at being dragged away from their cold beer. I mumbled something about seeing the picturesque and quaint natives and how I hated to go alone because you always get stared at for being so different. So we went.

The market was in a large square and consisted of a series of booths in front of which lines of people were gathered to examine the wares for sale. Sanitary inspectors were posted at intervals to see that the food was kept clean and properly protected by screens. There were no fleas.

The natives, except for their color which ranged from pale yellow to dark brown, looked more or less as we did. The men wore white duck pants, polo shirts and large straw hats. The women wore cotton dresses made of material that had undoubtedly first seen light of day in the States.

Except that the market was out-of-doors, we might have been in Dubuque, Iowa. Or in Peoria, Illinois. Or, on a larger scale, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. "How *picturesque*," said Andy. "How *quaint*," said Sam. "How *different*," they both said. I didn't stoop to an answer, but as we returned to our beers I thought sourly that the U.S. might have stayed on its own home grounds.

Next on the program was a courtesy call on our landlords, the Conte family, who not only lived in Penonomé but were virtual rulers of the town. Their fame had even spread to Panama City, and I'd been regaled with so many strange tales about them that in my mind they had become a kind of case history, and when I finally met them it was just like meeting up with the Kallikaks or the Jukes.

The Conte setup was something you rarely find outside Latin countries. There was Miguel, the oldest. Next in line came brother Hector, then brother Chalado, two maiden sisters, and a son, Miguel, Jr. There was also a son named Jesús who flitted in and out of the picture. Jesús was illegitimate and he was coal black in color, but neither of these facts seemed to embarrass the Contes, and when he was around he was an integral part of the family group that centered on Miguel.

For Miguel was the head, the patriarch—the whole works, in fact—and his relatives only existed to give him service. He had made a fortune in the cattle business and his property comprised thousands of acres, as well as thousands of heads of cattle. In addition, he owned a large general store which supplied Penonomé and where we, for reasons of diplomacy if not necessity, bought most of our groceries.

When we first knew Miguel he was almost eighty and already a legendary character. He had been the last Colombian governor of the province of Coclé before the revolution that separated Panama from Colombia, and when Panama became a republic he had gone right on being governor. He'd been so smart politically that he'd never missed backing a winner in the presidential elections, and his prosperity had increased with each succeeding administration.

According to local gossip, Miguel had been the most virile man in the district and had taken any girl he wished. His children were reputed to number hundreds, although Miguel, Jr., known as "Cholo," was the only legitimate one. No mention was ever made of Cholo's mother, and we took for granted that she had given up the unequal struggle many years before.

Miguel no longer went out. Shortly before we came to Panama he had made up his mind to die, and after making his peace with God and resigning himself to a life of celibacy, he simply retired to bed. Here, waited on by his sisters, who even chewed his food for him when his badly fitting teeth became too uncomfortable, he received occasional visitors. He would announce periodically that he was dying, but that did not prevent him from running his business from his self-styled deathbed. And seven years later, when we returned to Panama, he was slightly more shrunken but still going strong.

Miguel lived in a large old-fashioned house that fronted the main street, distinguished by its size rather than its beauty. Although I later became quite familiar with the layout I never could make out just what the architect had had in mind. Where most people have one drawing room, Miguel had two. He also had two living

rooms, two gardens and, for all I know, two kitchens. The only thing not in duplicate was the bathroom. This was at the extreme end of the house and always seemed a good half-mile walk from the spot you were in when you asked for it. Bathtub and washstand were in one little room, and the toilet, which had REAL PLUMBING that was brought into play by a chain heavy enough to pull up a drawbridge, was contained in a separate cubicle near the kitchen. This functional separation is common to most of Latin America, and you soon learn to avoid the euphemism of "I wonder if I might wash my hands" or you find yourself ushered in to do just that and nothing more.

When we arrived at the house a servant bowed us into Living Room No. 1. The room was dark and musty and so crammed with furniture that I thought for a moment we had gotten into the storeroom by mistake. There were three large tables, each holding a lamp smothered by a long-fringed shade, two couches, three rigidly stiff-backed love seats and a crowd of equally uncomfortable chairs, most of them covered in plush or brocade with rather dirty antimacassars to protect their virgin backs. It was a wonderful setup for musical chairs, but when I suggested a game Sam frowned, so the three of us each picked our own monstrosity and sank down into its iron-ribbed body.

In a few minutes two rabbity and obviously frightened females twittered into the room. These were Miguel's sisters, who lived with him and took care of him. It was pathetically clear they had never done anything else. They looked somewhat like a pair of desiccated string beans and had so submerged their personalities that it was hard to tell them apart. Ike and Mike, as we called them, motioned us back to our seats and they themselves perched gingerly on the edges of two armchairs opposite us. We had come to see Miguel, of course, and they knew it, but the social amenities had to be gone through first.

Mike and Sam simultaneously started the conversational ball rolling with "It's a nice day, isn't it." This was really a statement, not a question, and was followed by silence. I felt the next move was

up to me. "It *is* a nice day," I confirmed brightly. Both Ike and Mike beamed, and Ike daringly added "not too hot."

"What did they say?" whispered Andy, who understood no Spanish whatsoever.

"They remarked on how good looking you are," I answered.

"What nonsense," protested Andy, but he blushed.

Then Ike became positively garrulous. "Have you had dinner?" she inquired. "Can't we offer you something to eat? Or to drink?" Sam looked suddenly hopeful, but as it was two o'clock and we'd just finished a large picnic lunch as well as three beers, I said "Oh, no, thank you very much."

"What did she say this time?" asked Andy.

"Just that the Panamanian girls would probably fight over you."

"I don't believe a word of it," said Andy, but he smoothed back his hair and tried hard not to smirk.

The conversation now apparently exhausted, Ike and Mike diffidently suggested that we might like to see Miguel. "Why yes," Sam allowed, as if the idea had never occurred to him, "we'd be delighted." With that the sisters, barely able to conceal their relief at having concluded the polite preliminaries, arose and offered to escort us to his bedroom.

Miguel's room was fairly small and dominated by an immense four-poster bed, in which his wizened little figure seemed lost. His eyes sparkled, however, and after he had quickly adjusted his teeth, which apparently were only used when absolutely necessary, his voice emerged surprisingly firm, if somewhat staccato. "Bring up chairs for our guests," he yelled at Mike. "Pull up the window shade," he snapped at Ike. "Fix my pillows so that I can sit up," he hurled at both of them.

When everything was arranged to his satisfaction he waved his hand at his sisters to indicate "scram," and the two of them scurried out of the room as if pursued by a banshee. "Bring your chair up close," he cackled at me, cupping his right ear in his hand. "Closer. Closer. You're not afraid of old Miguel, are you?" This was ac-

companied by another cackle as he leaned over and pinched my knee.

"Nice work," commented Andy, and I started to protest, but Miguel had already launched into a series of questions to which he evidently expected no answer: It was a nice day, wasn't it? Did we like Panama? Did Sam expect to find a lot of gold? Wasn't the life going to be too rough for a lovely young girl like me? (This last with a definite leer in my direction.) What was Andy here for? Didn't I think Andy was good looking, ha, ha? The Panamanian girls had better be careful, ha, ha!

I quickly translated the last remarks to Andy, who called me a liar, this time with conviction. At this point Miguel said "damn these teeth" and removed them. Here's where we have our inning, I thought, but I was wrong. "Waaf fo fouf foinf fo Pafamaf?" he went right on. "Wenf fo feepinf finf Faffardf?" Then something that sounded like "fee, fo, fum" but couldn't have been. "Fo damf," said Miguel and put back the teeth.

It wouldn't have mattered anyhow. Miguel's questions were obviously rhetorical and his conversation another of those polite formalities which any relationship in Latin America demands. So it was a relief to all of us when brother Hector appeared.

Hector was about ten years younger than Miguel and less wizened, but he lacked the old man's spark. His manner was as formal as his dress, which consisted of striped pants, a slightly dirty shirt with stiff collar, and a black frock coat—a costume, incidentally, which on the other occasions that we saw him never varied. His brother apparently terrified him, and, except for a polite greeting to us, he contributed nothing but "Yes, Miguel."

I could see the old man was getting tired and his hand kept wandering towards those "damn teeth," so I rose and said we had to leave. Miguel shook hands all round and told Hector to see that the Lothrops (it came out something like Lowtroppes) had everything they needed. Hector said "Yes, Miguel," and as we filed out Miguel settled back comfortably, dental fixtures already in hand.

The moment we left the Presence, Hector became wildly conversational. "It was again a nice day, wasn't it?" I decided the weather had been pushed too far, particularly as every day is a nice day during the dry season, so I got back at him by saying we'd had lunch, before he could produce conversational gambit number two. It didn't seem to bother him, though, for he went right on to: How did we like Panama?, and Would we do him the honor of paying a visit to his house which was only a short distance away?

By this time I'd had enough of the Conte family to last me for a good month and I was sure that Andy and Sam felt the same. So it was with horrified surprise that I heard Sam say, "It would be a pleasure."

"*Pleasure?*" I repeated, my mouth dropping.

"Got to be done," Sam murmured under his breath. "Panamanian custom."

"Who cares?"

"What did you say, Señora?" asked Hector.

"Just that it would be a *pleasure*," I told him.

Hector's house was as ornate and uncomfortable as Miguel's, but there was less of it. His pride of ownership, however, was pathetic. It was as if the minute he entered home grounds he became a personage in his own right and shook off his customary role of handy man to his older brother. Hector acted as if each chair, each table, each picture, was a personal friend; so much so that I would not have been surprised if he'd introduced each one of us to each one of them separately.

I was almost afraid to sit down for fear I'd bruise a pal, but Hector insisted, and he brought us tumblers of sweet but rather pleasant wine. By this time he had visibly swelled two sizes larger, and I waited fascinatedly for him to burst right out of his clothes. Everything held, though, and he settled back and began to talk about archaeology, with a "we fellow scientists must stick together" attitude, which of course left me out. (Andy was already out on two counts, for the conversation was again in Spanish.)

"Ah, science, science," sighed Hector. "It has always been my greatest consolation. I have a diploma, you know."

"A diploma?" I was slightly puzzled.

"Would you like to see it?" he asked eagerly.

"Love to," I lied. So we all got up and trooped into a small library where, hanging in state on the wall facing us, was Hector's most precious possession. I was so impressed with the immense gold frame that I failed to examine what it embraced, but I oh'd and ah'd as if here were the equivalent of a Nobel prize. Hector merely nodded and accepted my admiration as nothing more than his just due.

It was after we had left and were walking back to the car that I asked Sam about the "diploma." "What was it for, Sam? Chemistry or physics or what?"

"Oh, that," said Sam. "That was a certificate of membership in the National Geographic Society. You know—a receipt they send to everyone who has paid for a yearly subscription to the *National Geographic Magazine.*"

"And to think I ever thought the Kallikaks peculiar," I mused out loud.

"Who are the Kallikaks?" asked Andy.

"Oh, just a family I got to know at college," I told him.

Chapter 16

I THOUGHT we were through with the Conte family, at least for the time being, but Sam insisted there were still two more to go. "We must stop a moment," he said, "to see Chalado at the Conte store and make arrangements to have supplies sent in to camp. And then we motor to Palo Verde, Cholo's ranch, where he will have horses to take us the rest of the way."

"Let's compromise and skip Chalado," I suggested, but this was ignored.

The Conte store was spread over one tremendously long and narrow room, layered with dirt and dust, and, like all Panamanian general stores in the country, carried just about everything from tractors to birdseed. There were hammers, screws, hinges, latches, tin buckets, brooms, mops, barbed wire, rope, canvas, hammocks, mosquito netting. There were bolts of calico and other cotton goods—both for dresses and house furnishings—buttons, ribbons, needles, thread. There was a large assortment of canned goods, as well as kitchen necessities. There were special gastronomic delicacies as inducement for the local trade—sweets made out of oranges and other fruits, which sat exposed on the counter and delighted the numerous little children who flocked around and poked at them with dirty fingers fresh out of their dirty mouths. And dried codfish, split flat and hung from wires pushed through the eyes, which gave off a most peculiar odor in the heat of the tropics.

There were even a few rather dull-looking archaeological specimens as a lure for the possible tourist. Conte's store was actually a combination hardware, haberdashery, grocery, notions and gift shop, the contents of which had piled up for years and at times must have surprised the owners themselves.

Chalado Conte ran this emporium and he took us on a personally conducted tour. He was a nondescript little man who had a disconcerting habit of sucking in his upper lip with a kind of osculatory noise. "Look at this complete line of groceries," he said, kiss kiss. "Look at these wonderful archaeological specimens," kiss kiss. And then, leading me to the counter, where he waved his hands wildly to dislodge the flies, "Do have a sweet, Señora," kiss kiss kiss.

We got away after twenty-five minutes and a terrific struggle, Sam and Andy carrying the few token groceries we had bought for goodwill purposes, and I with a butterfly net which Chalado had insisted on presenting me. "We'll be back soon," we shouted mendaciously as the car drove off.

It took us about an hour to reach Palo Verde, which was as close to camp as we could get by car. Here Cholo was waiting for us and, as Contes go, he was a pleasant surprise.

Cholo probably would have been quite a guy if it hadn't been for Papa. Although we had heard that he'd never dared marry, he had inherited a good deal of the old man's lust for life, and his progeny no doubt also dotted the neighborhood. He was a big hearty man in his middle forties, and although pretty much of a glorified errand boy, did the actual running of the cattle business. This enabled him to spend a good deal of time at his ranch house, conveniently away from Miguel's gimlet eye. Here the Conte horses were stabled, and from here, riding like a demon, he would gallop almost daily over the countryside, rounding up cattle and seeing that his cowboys were on the job.

We refused Cholo's hospitable invitation to sit down and have a little wine and prepared to start on our way so as to reach camp before dark. The horses were saddled and waiting, and one of Cholo's men had been delegated to accompany us as guide. Here

Andy caused a mild sensation. Until he tried to mount the wrong end of the horse I hadn't realized he'd never ridden before. After he was hoisted on, however, he looked smugly triumphant, although I wouldn't have given a nickel for his chances of staying put. Fortunately for him, though, Panamanian horses are very small, and his long legs practically reached the ground, so that in spite of looking excruciatingly funny it was impossible for him to fall off and hurt himself.

Tomás, Cholo's man, led the way through a series of open fields which seemed no different from pasture land in the States. After a while the country became less cultivated and we reached a narrow bridgeless river which, because of the recent rainy season, appeared frighteningly high. The technique was to remove your feet from the stirrups, either hold them out at right angles or crisscross them against the horse's neck, and try to balance yourself while he waded through, the water usually just not touching the bottom of your saddle. We crossed several streams in this way and I was consumed with curiosity to see how Andy was making out, but he always slyly kept behind me and I was afraid to turn around for fear my precarious balance would be upset. For, the slightest list to port or starboard and the water lapped your backside.

Meanwhile the country was getting greener, but it still was not my idea of what tropics should be. This, Sam explained, was because the thousands of cattle which had been let loose to graze had pretty well eaten up the scenery. It seems that the cutting down of the jungle for purposes of cultivation went back to before the Conquest. By the end of the sixteenth century the Spaniards had killed off all the natives in the district, and the land, which one of the Conquerors had described as open and suitable for maneuvers of cavalry, had reverted to jungle. But after 1900, with the influx of laborers into Panama to work on the Canal, the demand for beef grew, and the jungle was again cut down to provide pasturage.

Here and there were scattered signs that the country had once been lush. Gigantic trees had been left growing to provide shade for the pampered cattle. Fences had been installed to separate various

properties, and in many cases the fence posts, because of the fertility of the land, had sprouted into bushes. In a few spots, where the cattle had evidently believed the vegetation would disagree with their digestion, thickets had sprung up in tangled masses. On the whole, however, the cows had certainly gotten the better of nature.

By the time we reached our camp site, it was late afternoon. "Here it is," announced Sam.

"Where?"

"Here."

"I don't see it."

"You're on it."

I don't know just what it was I had expected the Sitio Conte to look like. Whatever it was, it didn't. It didn't look like anything. A three-acre field on the river had been cleared of all growth except for a half dozen or so mango trees. Had it not been for these, the site would have made a wonderful bowling alley or baseball field or outdoor parking lot. Not even part of a building reared its head.

"Where . . . ?" I began, but Sam interrupted.

"There," he said, pointing to a large pile of lumber in a remote corner of the field. "I guess something happened."

"I guess it did."

There was nothing to be done, for it was long past the natives' working hour (if they ever worked). Fortunately we had brought cots, bedding, cooking utensils and a little food with us. So we set up the cots in the middle of the field, ate some cheese and crackers, and then, as there was no place to go and no light to see by, we went to bed. The setup gave me the kind of phobia that is the opposite of claustro, but Sam assured me that snakes are not apt to crawl up the legs of a cot, so I drenched my blanket with a layer of Flit to keep off lesser animal life and went to sleep. The last thing I remember was Andy, graduate of New York's better and more crowded night clubs, murmuring how he had always loved the great open spaces.

At dawn, before I was up, the carpenters arrived. The master carpenter, whose name was Manuel, was mildly apologetic. "We didn't put up the houses," he said (in my opinion a rather unneces-

sary statement). "We didn't know just where you wanted them."

"But I told you *exactly* where," protested Sam.

"Did you?" remarked Manuel. "I don't remember. And I thought it better to wait until you came back and have it right." He oozed virtue. "We've been here every day waiting for you." The virtue became reproach.

"All right," said Sam with admirable restraint, directing Manuel's attention to the markers, still in plain view, which he had left in the ground to outline our future residential quarters. "Let's have no more discussion. Hurry and get started."

"But, of course, Señor." Manuel sounded hurt. His tone implied that God must just have dropped the markers from the sky and why then was he, Manuel, to blame? "What would you like us to work on first?"

"The main shack," said Sam, pointing to the largest outline. "I think that's the best idea, don't you?" he asked me. "It's going to be the dining room, and until our own shack is finished you and I can sleep there."

"Oh, Sam," I begged, "please, please let him do an outhouse first."

"You can't sleep in an outhouse."

"I don't care. The other is more important."

"What's wrong with the field?" asked Sam, waving his hand toward the adjacent cow pasture.

"It's full of ticks," I said, scratching. "And bulls."

"Cows," Sam automatically corrected.

"All cows are bulls to me. I don't stop to look at their sex. I run. Oh, please let's have an outhouse quickly."

Sam looked amused and slightly superior, as if the Pioneer Woman he thought he had married had turned out to be nothing more than Weaker Sex, but he said "all right," and directed the men to dig a nice deep hole in an appropriate spot. I stretched out happily on my cot (the only article of furniture as yet available in our outdoor Paradise) and buried myself in a Penguin mystery. My contentment was short-lived. After two hours of steady digging, a yell from Manuel

pierced the air. We rushed over to the pit under construction—to be greeted by an excited group of men proudly pointing to a nasty-looking skull and a piece of a red pot. The projected outhouse had turned into an Indian grave.

Sam's pleasure was considerably greater than mine. An archaeologist viewing a bone is comparable in a way to a hound on the scent of the fox, and each moment I expected to hear a cry of "Yoicks." Sam, however, merely gave me an apologetic and rather pitying look which couldn't possibly conceal his triumph. "I'm sorry," he beamed, and to the men, "Leave everything *exactly* as it is for us to work on later. We'll start another hole over there." Any prospect of a tickless and cowless haven quickly faded.

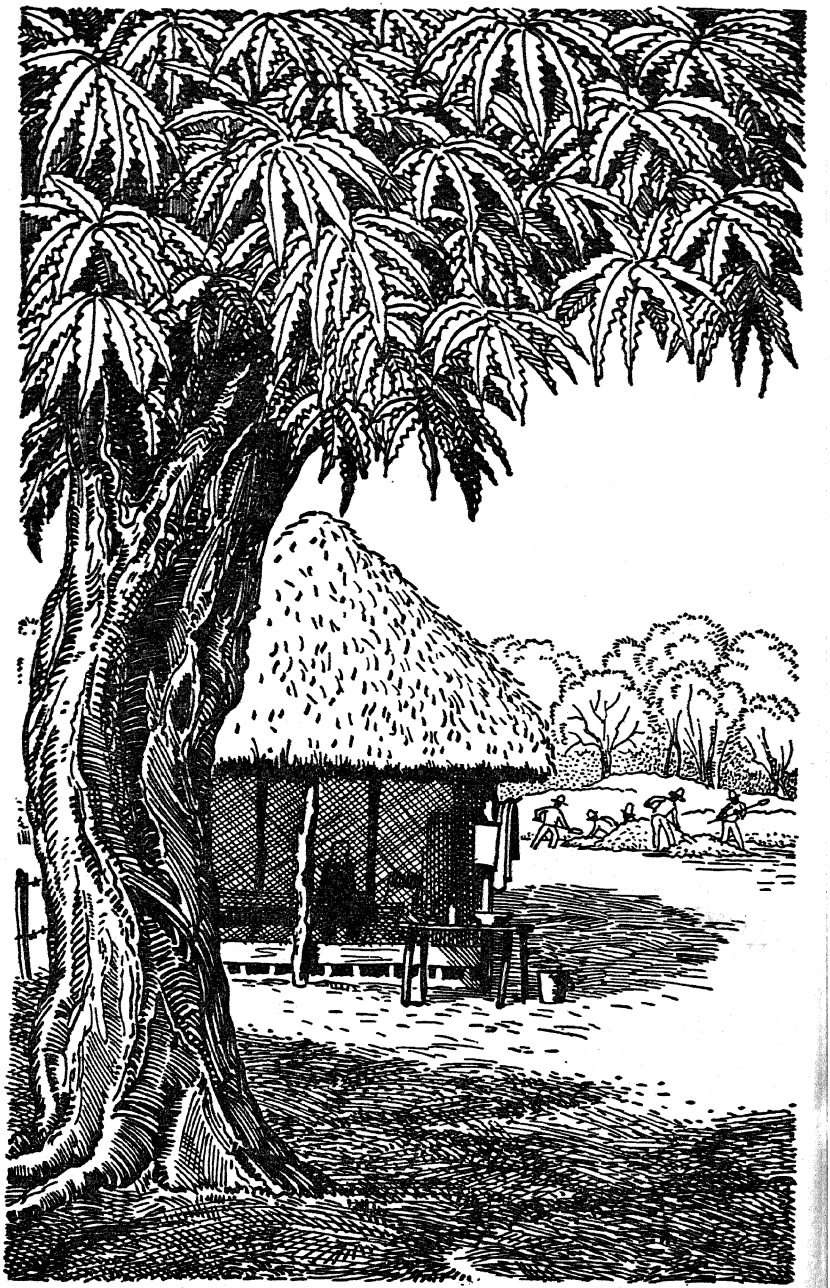
It's bad enough to want something and not get it, but if you want *not* to have something and get it anyhow, it's worse. Many has been the time that I have hung breathlessly over the edge of a trench, straining for the welcome sight of a bone or a hank of ancient hair and unable to see anything but just plain dirt. Here, though, I sat holding my thumbs and praying that the good earth would produce nothing in the way of foreign matter, and just as the pit was almost deep enough for me to relax, some little piece of pottery would turn up. "I'm sorry," Sam kept saying without conviction, and on we'd move. After the third grave had materialized, I stopped looking—I suppose with the idea, in reverse, that a watched pot never boils. At any rate, the idea was a good one. Hole No. 4 was virginal. The days of dodging bulls were over.

Chapter 17

DO TELL how you live when you are on an archaeological expedition?" I am always being asked. The people who pose this question usually fall into one of two categories. There is the it-must-be-wonderful-to-be-close-to-nature group and the how-I-admire-you-for-roughing-it-so-far-from-civilization group. Of the two I prefer the latter. Neither is correct. You are close to nature, all right, but it isn't always wonderful: in fact sometimes you are a little too close. After all, who wants to take a snake or a scorpion to his bosom? And when it comes to roughing it so far from civilization—maybe you have not got all the comforts of home (no Frigidaire, no washing machine), but there are compensations. Who cares, for example, about a washing machine when you can get a laundress for fifteen cents a day?

Having your own camp is the most satisfactory way to live when you are on an archaeological expedition, but an archaeologist avoids building one whenever possible; for it is an expensive proposition and a complicated one. However, if he can find no hotel or house near his work, he is forced to construct his own and it is usually as comfortable as can be made.

Our camp at the Sitio Conte was more or less a typical one for the tropics. It was clean and it was cheerful. There was no resemblance, it is true, to those elaborate affairs one reads about in Egypt or Yucatan, where little black boys are always running around



with iced drinks and palm-leaf fans and where the members of the expedition and their wives dress for dinner each night, but on the whole we lived well.

There were three houses, each about the size of a one-car garage, which dotted the big field at respectable intervals. There were two outhouses, a shanty for the cook, and a kitchen—the latter consisting of an adobe hearth and an empty gasoline tin to serve as an oven, walled in on two sides to keep the wind from blowing out the fire. Andy had his own house and his own outhouse, Sam and I had ours, and between them and slightly larger was the third house—a combination dining room, living room, workroom, as well as bedroom for a technical assistant who was to arrive later.

The houses, so-called (for they were really one-room shacks), consisted of a raised floor of wooden boards, walls—the lower part also of boards and the rest of wire netting to keep out insect and animal life—and a thatched roof. Cheesecloth had been placed under the eaves to catch any scorpions that might otherwise have dropped down on us. There was no need to worry about bad weather as the rainy season was over, but tarpaulins had been attached to the sides as protection from the wind and to provide some measure of privacy. They were so difficult to roll up and down, however, that I usually dressed or undressed lying on the floor beneath my cot.

Under a tree outside each establishment a rough table had been placed to hold a tin basin and a pitcher. A hand mirror hung from a nail driven into the tree and served as a guide for the men to shave by. As the wind rarely permitted the mirrors to remain stationary, the medicine chest boasted an extra supply of court plaster.

Underfoot, the earth was hard-packed mud. To accomplish this, the grass had first been cut down and then burned, and the fiery sun could be counted on to prevent it from bursting forth again until the rains arrived in the spring. With a temperature that at times hit 140 degrees, this smooth hot floor had the advantage of discouraging snakes from slithering across its surface; and occasional sweepings could easily keep it clean so that dead leaves and other debris would not be blown in our faces.

Two rough wooden piers jutted into the river. One was for the laundress to kneel on as she did her weekly wash and was also used as a landing place for occasional canoes. From the other we took our daily baths.

The entire field was fenced in, right down to the water. This was done in the vain hope of keeping out the Conte family's numerous cattle, which, in spite of the lush grass on their own grazing grounds, liked to come in to eat the mangoes which had dropped off in our back yard. As the season wore on they became increasingly bold and the fence, after a continuous onslaught of horns, increasingly weak. As a result, we had a series of nightly visitors peering through the wire netting of our houses and stumbling over water buckets and tin basins. Things finally got so bad that I collected a large pile of stones each afternoon and spent most of each night developing my marksmanship. A cow is the only target I've ever been able to hit.

On the morning after our arrival the workmen appeared. There were six of them, although later, when graves were turning up all over the place, we got extras on a day-to-day basis. The foreman, who had picked out the other men and was responsible for them, had been recommended by Cholo Conte. His name was Eulogio Ramos and he was a rat. Anyone who thinks United States congressmen indulge in nepotism should have met Eulogio. The men he had selected to work for us included brother Teófilo Ramos, brother José Casada Ramos and nephew Victor Ramos. The girl who came each day to make the beds and clean the camp was daughter Concepción Ramos. The laundress was aunt Maria Ramos.

Somehow two outsiders had slipped into this group, probably because the number of available Ramoses had been exhausted. Their names were Bernabel and Justo, and they were expert at their job. As a matter of fact, with the exception of Eulogio, who considered himself above work and sat around all day smoking cigarettes (ours) and casting a very occasional eye on the digging, the men were both hard working and nice.

The Panamanian native is as curious a race mixture as you can

find. Panama is the crossroads of the New World, and since the opening of the Canal there is scarcely a nationality which is not represented there. The French, as everyone knows, copped the contract to build the Canal. For this they imported extra labor—Chinese, East Indians, and any other peoples available. When the Americans took over the Canal they too imported workmen, chiefly Negroes from the various Caribbean islands. These were only admitted on condition that they go home when their work was finished, but many of them seemed to like it better where they were and when the time came to scram, hid in the country. I suppose it was a bit far for the Chinese and East Indians to go all the way back to Asia, so they stayed too. And then they began to mix. They mixed with each other, they mixed with the American Indians who were native to Panama, they mixed with the whites. They got so mixed, in fact, that you can hardly tell who's who—you're apt to see coal-black Chinese or yellow Indians or white men with kinky hair, broad noses and thick lips.

Most of our workmen had black skins but none of them looked like Negroes. Justo, in fact, looked as if he had stepped right out of the Bible. Although he was very dark he had finely chiseled features, and a sad air and expressive hands added to his dignity. He worked quietly and well and rarely spoke.

Bernabel was copper-colored, with big mustachios, and he was so good at his job that Sam at times allowed him to work on the delicate material. His only fault was that he was a continuous spitter. This annoyed me particularly, as I used to run around the excavations poking my face into everything that was going on, and I never dared get too near Bernabel.

Teófilo was the oldest Ramos brother and the father of Victor. How he'd allowed Eulogio to nose him out and run everything I never discovered, but I suspect he was too good-natured to assert himself. Teófilo was ugly as a monkey and had a huge fleshy wart on his left cheek. This made him shy. He would bring me a present, though, two or three times a week—oranges, or a few fresh eggs, or some strange wild flowers. The other men teased him unmercifully,

but although I'm sure he suffered acute embarrassment he kept right on bringing me things.

José Casada Ramos was everyone's favorite. He was young and gay, and although not very bright, had a wonderful sense of humor. He was always called José Casada, as if it were hyphenated, and the Casada part caused great merriment among his friends. *Casada* is Spanish for "married" and they used to tease him about his wives, although as far as I knew he only had one and I don't believe he was technically married to her.

José Casada would have been very good looking except that every time he grinned (which was almost continuously), a large gap showed where five front teeth should have been. He would never tell how he had lost them, but I suspect it was in a fight, as he used to slip away at times on terrific benders and not turn up again for several days. He and Andy became fast friends, in spite of the fact that they could not talk to each other, and after work he would often sit outside Andy's house and listen to the victrola, sometimes accompanying the music on a native drum.

All the men were simple and unspoiled. Few of them had ever been out of the district in which they were born and their education was slight, but they were always laughing and in good humor. With the exception of Justo, they talked constantly while they worked and it was mostly talk about food and getting drunk and having girls, and they teased each other about all these things. Our customs must have seemed very strange, and sometimes they teased us too, but it was all good-natured and because they felt we were friends. Even Andy, who succeeded in not learning a single word of Spanish in the six weeks he spent in Panama and ended up with the same three swear words he had picked up in New York before he came, got along fine with the men.

Except for Sundays, our days were pretty much the same. At 6:30 each morning the cook wakened us by striking a gong. The gong was an old and bent tire frame, probably salvaged from a Model T Ford, which was attached by a rope to a tree near the kitchen and struck

with a tin soup ladle. The gong was sounded again at seven to announce breakfast. The workmen arrived at seven, too, and somebody had always to supervise them, in case they struck something important with their spades or picks without realizing it. It was usually Sam who started them off, and the first one of us who finished breakfast would go relieve him so that he could eat. The digging was within a hundred yards of the dining room, which made things easy.

After breakfast I conferred with the cook, deciding on the day's menus (which varied very little) and going over accounts. I'd then pop a head in on Concepción, wherever she happened to be working. She was a pensive girl and unless she was watched was apt to sit with the broom on her lap, stroking it as if it were too good to be used on the floor. As she was very pregnant I thought this might be one of those obsessions women sometimes get at that time, but when I suggested to her father, Eulogio, that she stop work until she had her baby, he was outraged. I gathered there was no other Ramos who could temporarily replace her.

Sam remained glued to the dig all day, and after I'd finished my housework I usually joined him. This was partly to encourage the workmen (who became as depressed as I when the good earth failed to yield anything ancient) and partly for fear we might miss something.

Actually there were very few barren spells in the digging. This was fortunate, for nothing is so irritating as to sit uncomfortably for hours on the edge of a trench, dust blowing in your face, and look for something that isn't there. What's more, you've got to be careful where you place yourself. I learned that by experience.

I had become automatically conditioned to watching for snakes and scorpions, but anything smaller I failed to take seriously. So that one day, coming upon a lovely log on the riverbank, of nice convenient size, I carried it to where the men were working and sat myself upon it. This was an unhappy idea, for the log turned out to be covered with tiny ticks which transplanted themselves from their home grounds to mine. The next two days were agony.

Ticks are bloodsucking insects which bury their heads in your

anatomy and, if left unmolested, hang on until they are fat and replete and only then drop off. This laissez-faire theory is obviously an unsatisfactory one, and there are two schools of thought on the subject of removing them. Thus you either get a friend to pull them out, tick by tick, with a pair of tweezers—in which case half of the tick is apt to break off and the head remains in status quo—or you have the same friend apply a lighted match to the tick's rear end, which irritates him sufficiently to cause him to withdraw entire from his grazing grounds.

I have had occasion to try both systems and can state in no uncertain terms that the lighted match may hurt the tick but it hurts you more. Therefore, though I dislike halfway measures, I made Sam go to work on me with the tweezers, and with part of each unwelcome guest removed, I spent the next few days either standing up or on my knees. It was some time before I could sit down with any degree of comfort.

Work stopped at noon each day for everybody to lunch. The workmen retired to the end of the field, where their women were waiting for them with containers of hot food. I occasionally peeked to see what they were eating. It was always a stew of some sort, with rice or potatoes and hunks of meat that might have been pig or rabbit.

After lunch we took a short rest until the one o'clock gong recalled us to work. At four we quit for the day. The workmen put away their digging implements and went home, while we, hot and dirty, tramped into the main house, where a pitcher of fresh orange juice was waiting.

Bathing was next on the program. Ladies' hour (that meant me) came first, after which the coast was left clear for the men. I'd hurry into our house, remove my dirty clothes (under the cot), put on a wrapper and slippers, grab a cake of soap and a towel, and wander down to the pier. The river was usually dark brown in color but seemed white compared to the dirt we had picked up working. The current was so swift that only the strongest swimmer could make

headway against it, but fortunately the water was only about three feet deep. As it was, you had to dig your toes into the muddy ooze and hold on to the soap like mad, for if it once slipped out of your grasp it would be floating downstream before you could even try to grab it.

None of us wasted much time in the water as there were hundreds of tiny minnowlike fish which nipped in vulnerable spots unless we kept wiggling about or splashing. There was also a crocodile a bit further down the bank, which watched our ablutions with great interest, but although he scared me to death every time I saw him (and more when I didn't), he did keep to his own side of the fence. You could never be sure, though, that he'd continue being discreet.

We ate supper promptly at six. As it got dark soon after, this just gave the cook time to wash the dishes before he had to light his kerosene lamp. We ourselves boasted gasoline lamps (for each establishment) which gave a fine light when they worked. Unfortunately their innards were very delicate and the gasoline we fed them not always pure, so they were constantly getting indigestion and much of their time was spent being purged. However, what light we had was brought to the main house after supper, where Sam, and later the technician, usually worked on the notes they had taken that day, and where I'd read or write letters. By nine o'clock we were almost always ready for bed.

On Sundays there were no workmen, but if something particularly interesting had turned up in the excavations the day before, we usually worked anyhow. Or the men would catch up on their paper work, while I put on a bathing suit and took a sun bath and a swim. Sunday was also my day to shampoo my hair. This was a cinch, as all you had to do was soap your scalp and dip it into the water and the current rinsed it better than any spray.

On special occasions we sent a message to the nearest village upriver ordering a dozen bottles of cold beer. These would arrive during the afternoon by dugout canoe, the beer nestling in a box filled with ice and sprinkled over with sawdust. We would first drink the beer and later, if any ice remained, use it in highballs. Andy's olives

and soda water would be trotted out, and even if the highballs always tasted of sawdust, we felt gay and almost civilized.

Although life at the Sitio Conte was different from anything I had known before, there were only a few aspects of it which I didn't learn to enjoy. Among these were the snakes.

A solitary snake is bad enough, but we were deluged with them. Word had gone around that we were making a collection, and as a result there was hardly a snake within a radius of five miles that was not captured and carried into camp. We *were* making a collection, in spite of my protests. In Panama City we had met Dr. Herbert Clark, head of the Gorgas Laboratory, who at that time was making a census of snakes throughout the country. "You say you are going to live in the province of *Coclé?*" he asked Sam enthusiastically when he heard about the dig we planned.

"Why, yes," answered Sam. "Are you interested?"

"*Tremendously* interested." I was waiting for him to pull the one about how he had always wanted to be an archaeologist, but he fooled me. "Coclé," he explained, "is the only province from which I lack material for my census. How about collecting snakes for me there?"

"Oh, no," I said shuddering. "We're awfully sorry but. . . ."

"We'll be glad to do it," said Sam at the same time.

"Sam," I cried. "*Snakes!*"

"If they're there," remarked Sam, "we might as well collect them."

I didn't agree with him at all. My idea was to let the snakes go their own sweet way, hoping they would feel we were friends and not get mad at us, but before I could express this sentiment Dr. Clark beamingly presented us with a large tank containing formaldehyde, a first aid packet, antivenin serum and a treatise on venomous snakes.

Our program, as I understood it, was to collect all snakes possible, throw their heads into the tank of formaldehyde, stimulate business by paying out twenty-five cents for each poisonous and ten cents

for each non-poisonous specimen brought in (the money to be refunded us), and pray we would have no use for the first aid packet or the antivenin. The treatise had apparently been thrown in for good measure.

The only advantage attached to this new sport was that snakes became a valuable commodity and few reptiles had a chance to crawl into our homestead unattached. In fact, almost every morning before breakfast a line formed, usually of little boys, each holding a long stick with a sort of vine looped at its farthest end, the effect being that of a fishing rod. Through the loop dangled a snake, wriggling in lively fashion, in spite of the fact that its back had been broken.

Because I was not essential to the general dig, I was put in charge of the snake department. This meant determining whether or not a snake was poisonous, cutting off its head and throwing it into the tank, and paying off the collectors. Naturally they always claimed that their contribution was poisonous as this raised the ante fifteen cents. The only way you could tell was to pry open the mouth of the still squirming snake with a couple of sticks and see if you could spot a poison sac back of its fangs.

This wasn't so easy. The sac is hard to find under the best of conditions, and it takes a strong stomach and a steady hand to fool around with a snake, even if its back is broken. I'm not one of those fortunate but irritating individuals who jump out of bed in the morning bright-eyed and full of health—in fact, it takes a good hour after my coffee is down before I can so much as smile—so I was not a very happy choice for this job. However I did manage to take a quick look and to pay off, even if at times I let myself be persuaded a bit too soon of the poison content of the offerings.

I even read the treatise on venomous snakes, although it merely added to my confusion. According to Dr. Clark, there are eight species of poison snakes in Panama—the bushmaster, the coral snake, the sea snake, the fer-de-lance and four different kinds of vipers; the fer-de-lance and the vipers all belonging to a class called Bothrops. If you happen to be bitten by any of these, the first thing

to do, says Dr. Clark, is to catch the snake and identify it. This, with due apologies to Dr. C., is frankly ridiculous. No one who has just been shot full of poison and scared to death is going to drop everything and go crawling after his assailant, thus laying himself open for another bite. And if he were so foolish as to try to catch him, what makes Dr. Clark believe that anyone without a picture book under his arm could tell which snake was what?

The second step (after being bitten) is to ascertain if the snake has a lump, which Clark calls a "food ball," in its body. If it has, you're in luck, for the snake will have injected most of its venom into whatever that food ball once represented and presumably had little poison left over for you. Here again, you come up against the difficulty of catching the snake in order to look at its stomach. I don't like to keep on disagreeing with Dr. Clark, who must have given a lot of thought to the subject, but it strikes me that this is going to an awful lot of trouble just to get the mental satisfaction that the snake bit something else before he bit you. I should think it would be much more practical to believe the worst and treat the bite accordingly.

As soon, says Clark, as you find out what bit you and if it bit anything else first, you should put on a tourniquet and apply suction to the wound. Then you inject the antivenin. The only catch here is that the antivenin has to be the same brand as the snake that bit you. Even if you were able to catch the snake and recognize it, the brand of antivenin that you happen to have with you may be just the kind that the snake isn't. Very few people except professional snake hunters are apt to carry more than one kind of serum, if that. Fortunately, however, Dr. Clark explains that eighty to eighty-five per cent of snake bites in Panama have been due to one of the species Bothrops and antibothropic serum can be used for any of these. What happens if you use it for a bushmaster or a coral snake, he doesn't mention.

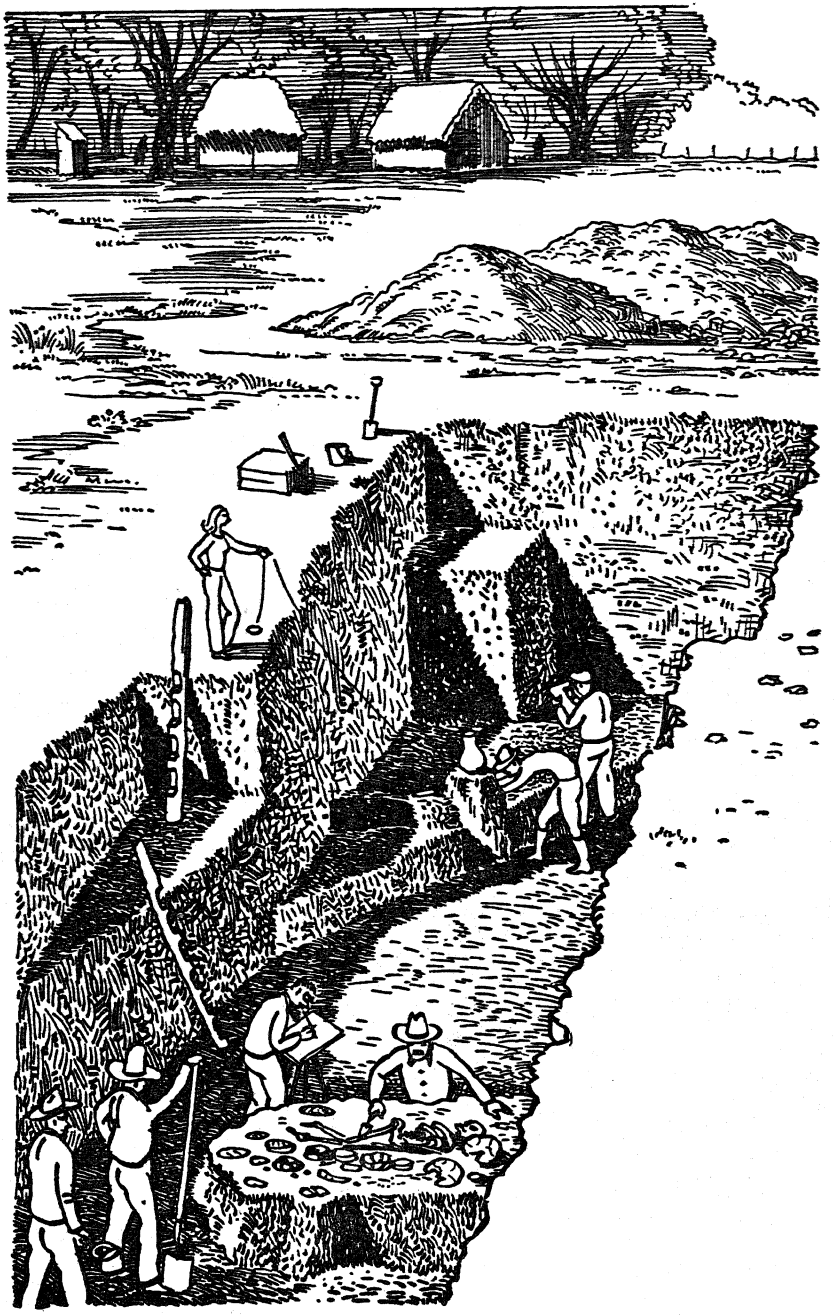
I am sure that fundamentally Dr. Clark is right in all he says, but he makes life unnecessarily complicated. I would suggest that if you are ever bitten by a Panamanian snake you quietly let the snake

go its way, yell for help, apply suction to the bite (unless you can get someone to do it for you), inject your serum (which is apt to be for Bothrops, whatever you might want it to be), and pray. There is nothing else you can do, anyhow, except stay home where there are no snakes.

I didn't stay home, but all my reading made me snake-conscious. I used to dream about the creatures. In order to remember which snakes were poisonous I'd find myself going to sleep murmuring, "If you get bitten by a fer-de-lance, you'll never again be able to dance. If you get bitten by a viper, you'll certainly have to pay the piper. If you get bitten by a bushmaster, you'd better get to a hospital faster. But if you get bitten by a coral snake, you'll probably pass out and never awake."

For obvious reasons I kept these poetic effusions to myself, but when we finally returned Dr. Clark his tank of formaldehyde, containing eighty-four pickled snake heads, I couldn't resist attaching a card with "A tank full of Bothrops, with love from the Lothrops."

We got a pleasant answer, enclosing the results of the analysis of the eighty-four snakes and the money owing us. According to the analysis, our catch included four poisonous snakes—one coral snake and three hog-nosed vipers (Bothrops). The rest were pronounced nonpoisonous and harmless. As I had been treasurer and had paid out quarters for fifty-one poisonous snakes, the bank was out $7.05. There was nothing for me to do but make up the difference out of my own pocket and vow never to fool around with snakes again.



Chapter 18

NOTHING I had ever experienced or read or been told about archaeology prepared me for the dig at the Sitio Conte. It was like a circus. There was almost too much going on. It used to make me miserable not to be able to be in three places at the same time. I'd be flipping earth off a skeleton or getting ready to remove the contents of a grave, when I'd hear an exclamation from Sam or from one of the workmen and I'd know that something exciting had turned up somewhere else. The first few times this happened I dropped what I was doing and rushed over to join the fun. But when it got to the point where I was spending all my time hopping out of one grave and into another, I had to give that up.

Luckily you develop a very special feeling about what you yourself are doing, no matter what it is. "Did you see *my* pot, or *my* plate?" you are apt to ask about something you have merely cleaned or lifted out of the ground. "It's not as good as *mine*," is the answer you'll undoubtedly get. I don't know what makes the amateur digger so proprietary about the pieces he works on. After all, they're not his and he knows he may never see them again, but that doesn't seem to matter. Fortunately.

Excavating started even before our camp was finished. Sam picked out the spot for the men to start a large trench, and they attacked the hard earth with pick and shovel, throwing the dirt to leeward.

When a great mound had accumulated, some of them would climb on top and throw it further off so that the wind, which never let up, would not blow it back into the pit.

The digging was always divided into trenches, and these were large enough for all the men to work in at the same time and usually contained numbers of graves. As soon as there was any evidence of a burial an attempt was made to outline it, and the men removed the top earth down to a little above grave level. Sometimes the outline was easy to find, as the earth in the grave shaft was often softer and of a different color from that around it. Otherwise it was necessary to dig along the outer edge of the exposed objects until the contour showed up clearly. The procedure at all times was to make a sort of ditch in the surrounding earth so that the entire grave would be brought up like a table or platform. That way you didn't have to stand on your head when you worked.

When this point was reached the men were switched to another spot and started all over again with picks and shovels, searching for further remains. They were perfectly amiable about what must have been frustrating work and they were completely without superstition. In fact they joked about the burials, and though their humor was anything but sophisticated and rarely varied, it seemed to amuse them.

"Aha," José Casada would say to Bernabel as a skeleton came to light. "Here is Tio Fernando, that uncle of your father, the one you told us ran off and was never heard from again."

"Nonsense," Bernabel would retort. "This must be one of *your* relatives. He's round-shouldered like all the Ramos family."

Or José Casada, going into rapturous contortions at the sight of a bunch of bones, "Now *that* is a girl I could really go for."

"She looks like an expensive girl, probably a two dollar one." This from Victor.

"I'll bet she wouldn't have anything to do with you, she's too high-class," Teófilo would contribute.

This game went on daily, whenever a pot, a bone, a piece of jewelry turned up. After which the men would cheerfully move

on to attack fresh ground, leaving the trophies for us. Sometimes we had as many as four or five graves going at the same time.

In the meantime, either Sam or Andy or I started on the grave itself. If it happened to be a very large one, two of us worked on it from different sides. The idea was to get the skeleton or skeletons and all the accompanying objects to stand out clearly so that they could be photographed and drawn before they were taken up. A little trowel was used to remove any heavy dirt that might remain, then a knife, to give the objects a sharp outline, and a brush, to clean off any loose earth. When everything was spick and span photographs were taken and a survey was made. Then the specimens were taken out, each one numbered and put in its own paper bag, while notes were taken on their position, condition and anything else you could think up.

I've never seen anything so complicated or elaborate or exciting or confusing as the graves we found. Later on, from historical accounts and from Sam as interpreter of what these meant, I learned a lot about the people whose earthly resting place we'd so rudely disturbed. Only then did pieces of the puzzle fall into place and the picture begin to make sense.

The ancient Panamanians believed that the soul did not die with the body. The dead man was expected to enjoy his women, his ornaments and his utensils in the other world, while his servants were all set to work for him there as formerly. As a result, when he passed away he was decked out in his best clothes and decorations, and his favorite food was deposited in jars or pots beside him. Most of the women with whom he'd ever had any traffic were put in with him, all dressed up in their fanciest costumes and laden with jewels.

Strangely enough, only the chiefs and the nobility rated a burial —with whichever surviving wives and retainers were apt to give them the most fun and service in the hereafter. The bodies of the common people were carried to some deserted spot and left for the beasts and buzzards to enjoy.

The corpses of the chiefs were usually desiccated or dried out so that they'd keep without it being too hard on the olfactory senses of those left behind. This was done by setting them on a stone and lighting a fire around them until all the human juices ran out and they were smoked like a ham. That way they'd be preserved indefinitely and could be put in a niche aboveground for the consolation of their nearest and dearest.

Certain families even maintained special houses or rooms where their ancestors were ranged in order along the walls, with spaces left for those who had been lost in battle. As a rule, though, they were put in the ground, but even so they had to be kept around for a while as the rainy season in Panama goes on for over half the year and it is impossible to dig a grave during that time. Of course if they happened to pop off in the dry season, they could be buried then and there.

There were two different systems for burying the girl friends and the retainers who accompanied the head man. One was to kill them off by giving them poison and then lay them out neatly in the grave. A more intriguing way, though, was to bury the attendants alive. This sounds gruesome but apparently was not painful at all. First the pit was dug and a bench laid down in the center for the chief or nobleman to be placed upon. He was fixed up in his Sunday clothes, and flowers, food and water were put in with him. Then his favorite women climbed down into the grave and sat themselves on the bench surrounding him.

Meanwhile the mourners aboveground made preparations for the funeral feast which lasted for one or two days. They all got very merry and danced around the grave and sang the praises of the deceased and of his girl friends who were about to be. At intervals (and these must have been frequent) *chicha*, the local corn liquor, was consumed—both by those upstairs and those below. After everyone in the grave had passed out, those above who were still on their feet continued to drink and dance until there was no more liquor and then they filled in the pit with earth and called it a day.

The chief's women and servants not only volunteered but fought

for the privilege of accompanying him to his ethereal residence. Sam said this was because they believed that unless you were buried with magical incantations you couldn't get to heaven, and the chiefs were the only ones whose funerals rated such hocus pocus. But I've always had a sneaking feeling that it was because they thought it wasn't such a bad way of being eased out of life.

The Sitio Conte was obviously the burial ground of a very high-class group of people. There must have been a lot of them, too, for it teemed with graves. Not only did you strike one wherever you dug, but there were so many that they were often on top of each other and came out in layers. It took a good deal of digging to get at them, for although the top graves were only three or four feet below the surface, the deepest ones were as far as twelve feet below. How the Indians had managed with primitive tools to push their ancestors down so far is a mystery.

The largest graves were usually the deepest, and they were the richest, too. As they got nearer to the surface they got poorer. Economic times must have changed, and the men in the upper layer, who rarely had even a woman buried with them and very little jewelry, must have gone through something equivalent to the 1930 depression.

Those in the intermediate-sized graves usually did have a woman with them, but only one. This didn't mean that it was all they had had when they were alive, for monogamy in pre-Spanish days was still a thing of the future. However, these men had probably only been sub-chiefs and when buried didn't rate anything more than one bride, about forty pieces of pottery and a mere snitch of jewelry.

We found six really large graves and they were fantastic. Some contained three bodies and some more than twenty, with the chief occupant always placed in the center—usually on a stone slab—and surrounded by his wives and followers. In addition to the skeletons, these graves had an average of two hundred pieces of pottery, as well as a raft of tools, weapons, food, jewelry, fabrics and ornamental objects. Here, obviously, were buried supreme chiefs of their day.

It is fun to try to reconstruct from some old bones and what's buried with them the character and mode of life of people who lived hundreds of years ago. At least it is fun for an amateur—for an archaeologist it is a serious matter and the basic reason for his having taken up this science in the first place.

Like any good archaeologist, Sam is disinclined to commit himself on the significance of any discovery until he has had a chance to study the appropriate historical accounts, comparative work of fellow scientists, chemical analyses of metals or clay, and a lot of other things which to me seem dry as dust. By that time I'd have lost interest. It would happen time and again, two, three years after a dig was completed, that Sam would come home, passion in his eye, and say something like "Remember the skeleton in Grave No. 18 that was lying with his arms crossed under him and a broken tibia —the one who had the incense burners buried with him?" "Of course," I'd answer. "And what did you find out about Him or Her?" Naturally I didn't have the slightest idea what he was referring to, but I was brought up to believe that a wife should encourage her husband.

At the time, though, it is different. At the time you dig him up, you can't help having a proprietary interest in your skeleton. You're inclined to indulge in flights of fancy (in case you're not a scientist), and I find that if you give your ancient remains a name, he assumes a definite personality and you digest your archaeological education more easily.

The skeleton I called Oscar Wilde, for instance, gave me the first inkling that queer things had gone on in prehistoric times, too. Oscar was one of the big chiefs—we found him placed in the center of the grave, laden with gold—and there were three bodies buried with him, all male. Nor could this be explained away by just calling him a misogynist, for, heaped on and around the bodies, were women's ornaments and women's utensils—such as stone metates for grinding corn. And grinding corn is definitely not a man's job.

Then there was the girl I named Pavlova. Pavlova turned up lying on her face with her shins doubled over her thighs so that her feet

rested on top of her buttocks—a position not even a double-jointed ballet dancer could have assumed while alive. Poison had obviously been her lot. As a matter of fact, we'd already found out that the custom at the Sitio Conte had been to kill the chief's retainers and his women before they were buried. Their bodies were always so neatly arranged (except for Pavlova who was probably an afterthought) that they must have been dead before being deposited in the ground. Pavlova only confirmed what we already knew. But she made it easy for me to remember.

Just once did we find evidence of a different system of burial. That was when we dug up Romeo and Juliet—two skeletons lying side by side, one with its arm around the other's neck. There could be no doubt but that they had been buried alive and had shared death throes in the grave itself, clutched in each other's arms. Unfortunately the bones and teeth of the lovers were in such bad condition that no one was able to determine their sex, but they did add a romantic touch to our excavations.

Sam, as might be expected, ignored the names I gave my ancient friends. He always took full descriptive notes on the skeletons and just a glance at these was enough to refresh his memory. I'd look at his little book and find listed: "Skel. No. 10: age adult, sex female, body extended, chest down, face south, arms straight, legs flexed." Or "Skel. No. 24: age adolescent, sex male, body flexed, chest up, face north, arms bent, legs straight."

This might have meant something to Sam, but to me it sounded like nothing more than setting-up exercises on the radio, and no matter how hard I tried I wouldn't be able to conjure up any kind of picture of skeletons 10 or 24. If they'd just had names attached like "Old Mrs. Tuttle" or "Baby Carlos," it would have been a cinch.

Lots of the time, of course, it was impossible to draw any conclusions from what we found. The graves were unbelievably complicated to start with. Then the dampness of the earth had played such havoc with the skeletons that often the bones had completely disintegrated. And many of the funeral objects had been deliberately broken.

This is what in archaeology is termed "killing" an object. The belief was general among prehistoric peoples that the spirits of inanimate things accompanied the spirits of the dead with whom they were buried. Just to be sure there would be no mistake, however, certain skeptics "killed" the objects before they put them in the ground, so that their souls would surely be released. The "killing," as a rule, took the form of making a hole in the bottom or sides of a piece of pottery, but those of the ancient inhabitants of the Sitio Conte who believed in this custom had apparently not been satisfied with such minor destruction. They'd gone ahead and trampled the pottery and sometimes even twisted the metal. It was as if you were to spread out your best dinner set and then jump up and down on it. At least that's what it looked like.

And as if things weren't difficult enough, the people we were dealing with had had a nasty habit of destroying many of the older burials to make room for later ones. They'd often dug into and thrown aside the old bones and grabbed anything worth while that went with them for the more recent corpse.

According to Sam, this disrespect for the dead is most unusual. The filching here, however, had almost invariably been confined to graves either next to or under the new burial and to ones similar in style, so it looked as if the whole thing was a family affair. Those ancient ghouls probably argued that it was perfectly reasonable when burying your father, let's say, with his Lares and Penates, to add some of the things that your grandfather hadn't bothered to take with him or didn't think he'd need where he was headed for. "If Grandpa had wanted them," they no doubt reasoned, "why would they still be in the earth?" Their logic was doubtless good (for them), but it made it very confusing for an archaeologist who was supposed to work out such problems as why, when, where, and which was whose.

Chapter 19

AFTER you've been living in camp for a while, food becomes just about the most important thing in the world. You are working hard and out-of-doors all day long (we, as a matter of fact, were always out-of-doors, for at the Sitio Conte even indoors was outdoors) and you get terribly hungry. Nor, when the day's work is over, have you much else to occupy your mind. There is no question of grabbing a quick bite so that you can get to the movies or the theatre on time, and, good friends as you and your camp mates may be, there are too few of them to contribute much variety. If the Browns or the Smiths could just run over for an occasional drink or game of bridge you might be able to divert into other channels that constant obsession with your stomach. As it is, you spend hours discussing the food at home that you *might* be having and carping about the food you *are* having.

If your food is important, your cook is just as much so, for you don't want to eat all your meals out of a can. Which is why, by unanimous agreement, we fired Van. Van had tried hard, but everything he prepared tasted the same. Or, rather, tasted of nothing at all. We had attempted to help matters by adding every kind of condiment possible to his dishes, but it was no use—indigestion was the only result. So one day, tears streaming down his black face, and carrying two large packages containing his clothes and, as we later discovered, some of ours, Van departed.

Through the Conte family we managed to find another cook. Patricio, or Pat for short, was a West Indian Negro, tall and very thin—unbelievably so, considering the amount of food he managed to put away. We had a slight suspicion he put it away to sell to the natives, but this we were never able to prove. Pat spoke English and Spanish—both in a kind of Calypso singsong—and he always addressed me as "Mistress," which made me feel pleasantly wicked. It was "yes, Mistress" this and "yes, Mistress" that, although the "yes" didn't mean a thing, for, except when I lost my temper and made a scene, he said "yes" and went right ahead doing the equivalent of "no."

Pat owned a flourishing junk shop in Panama City, which he had left in charge of his wife when he came to camp, bringing his small son to run errands for him. It was hard to understand why he'd been willing to leave the city unless it was because the wife nagged him and he wanted to get away from her. This seemed more than likely, for the third day after his arrival he suddenly yelled "Mistress" as I was in the trench carefully brushing up a couple of old tibias, and I rushed out thinking the kitchen wall must have fallen in.

Pat said, "Mistress, that Conception she don't work good. I just happen to know a better one who it just happens might come live here."

I said, "No, Pat."

He said, "Yes, Mistress."

"And don't call me Mistress."

"Yes, Mistress," said Pat.

A week later he tried again. "That Conception . . . ," he began.

"It's no use, Pat," I declared firmly. "Concepción is here to stay. And don't call me Mistress."

"Yes, Mistress," said Pat.

This "Mistress-that-Conception-she-don't-work-good-I-know-a-better-one" was offered me regularly every week and just as regularly I turned it down, in spite of the fit of sulks which followed. It wasn't that Concepción was even slightly efficient, but I was taking no chance on antagonizing the Ramos family and, besides, I

was afraid that love might interfere with Pat's cooking. For, in spite of a bad disposition and a somewhat elastic idea of honesty, he was a really good cook. And that isn't easy in the kind of camp we ran.

Three times a week one of the younger Ramoses rode to Rio Grande to get us fresh meat. Rio Grande was a village on the main highway, about an hour's ride from camp, and consisted of a bar and general store (the same) and about twenty thatched-roof houses scattered over an area of perhaps half a mile. Trucks made daily deliveries to this store, and as the cattle were slaughtered each day at sunrise and by Panamanian law had to be sold by 9 A.M. or thrown away, the meat was horribly fresh. *Fresh!* It was so fresh that I always expected it to get up from the plate and moo at me, and if you were ever foolish enough to dream about sinking a tooth into what looked like a juicy tidbit, you were apt to have a quick awakening in order to save that tooth from the destructive inroads of what turned out to have the consistency of salt water taffy.

Young Ramos always bought enough beef for two days and Pat did his best with it. The first day he would either cook steaks, pounded thin to make them a little less tough, or grind the beef into hamburgers. The second day's menus were less tasty, for as we had no ice the meat could only be kept by stewing it or by soaking it overnight in a bucket of salt water. In the latter case, the outside part would turn white and had to be cut off before the rest of it was cooked. Either way you lost. If the meat was chewable it had no taste, and if you could detect a slight flavor it meant such hard work ahead that your jaw and stomach were hardly on speaking terms.

Chicken was an occasional welcome change. The chickens we bought from the workmen, but they were so scrawny that they had to be fattened up for several weeks before they were fit to eat. We kept them tied by a string to a treetop, so that wild animals or snakes could not get at them and so that they couldn't escape. Here they stayed, making singularly unpleasant noises and dropping messes on anyone so forgetful as to look for shade under their particular nesting ground.

Every so often we had exotic and unusual dishes. The best of these

was *tepiscuintli*, the Indian name for wild guinea pig. These were about the size of an ordinary baby pig and when made into stew tasted like a slightly gamey but very superior chicken. They only came out at night, and the workmen would hunt them with a flashlight and then shoot them. They were hard to get and we paid five dollars apiece for them, but in spite of this big bonus only three were brought in the entire season. Iguana, or lizard, was more common, but Pat had some superstitious reason for not wanting to cook these and nothing could make him give in. I tried my hand one day at iguana stew, but after one taste we unanimously agreed to do without this delicacy.

Pat had no prejudice, however, about armadillos. An armadillo is a small creature with its body and head protected by an armor of bony plates, and it curls up into a ball when afraid. One specimen wandered into camp after we had been there some months and we adopted it as a pet. We called it Andy after our star boarder, although no one was able to determine the animal's sex. I tied a string around his neck and took him for daily walks, and little Andy became quite friendly and easy to manage. You might think it hard to get attached to an animal that rolls up into a ball every time you look at him, but little Andy got so he accepted me and stayed out when I was around. It was only with the others that he retired into himself and wouldn't play.

We kept little Andy in an empty trench to prevent him from escaping, but in spite of these precautions he disappeared and I was heartbroken. The day after the tragedy, as I was eating an unusually good stew for lunch, a sudden suspicion struck me. I called Pat over. "What's this stew made of, Pat?" I asked.

"Ain't it good, Mistress?" he countered, looking about as innocent as a man who's just murdered his mother.

"Pat, is this armadillo stew?"

"Mistress!" exclaimed Pat in a shocked voice.

"Is this armadillo stew?" I repeated.

"Armadillo," he said. "Well it might just so happen that it might be, and then again it might happen that it ain't."

"Pat," I asked firmly, "have we been eating little Andy?"

"Yes, Mistress," he answered reluctantly.

There was nothing I could do. I left the rest of little Andy on the plate, and Pat and I didn't resume friendly relations for a week.

Staples such as rice, potatoes, lard, butter (bought in cans) were ordered from Conte's general store in Penonomé and delivered to Cholo's ranch at Palo Verde, whence they were brought to camp with the mail two or three times a week. Eggs, oranges and bananas were obtained locally from the workmen and were both cheap and good. The rest of our meals were made up of canned soups, canned vegetables and canned fruit.

The water we drank came from the river and it naturally had to be boiled. Pat thought this was absolutely absurd (as has every native cook I've ever had), and I had to sneak up on him daily to make sure he didn't cheat. Boiling the water eliminated any danger of disease, but it still tasted and looked awful. The color varied from pale to deep brown, depending on the mountain rains that flowed down and muddied the river, but if you let it sit overnight in a covered pail the sediment would sink to the bottom. Then if you closed your eyes and were thirsty enough, it didn't seem quite so bad.

The trick was to try to make everything you ate or drank taste like something it wasn't. Except in the case of our two big gastronomic events—the wild duck dinner which didn't come off and the caviar dinner which did.

The idea of a succulent dish of roast wild duck had been in our minds ever since our arrival, but in spite of the beautiful shotgun which Andy had carried with him for nearly two thousand miles, he lazily refused to move from camp. After a great deal of nagging and prodding, however, he reluctantly consented to take José Casada as guide and spend a day trying to bag us a really good meal.

The two-man expedition set out at dawn. José Casada on one horse, carrying a package of food and the gun, led the way, and we had a hard time not to laugh at Andy, who brought up the rear hold-

ing on to his steed with everything he had. As he told me later, he was none too happy. The horse bothered him, he had no idea where he was going, and, in spite of his close friendship with José Casada, there existed the slight handicap that neither could understand a word of what the other said.

After an hour's ride José Casada dismounted and tethered his horse, making signs to Andy to do the same. Waist-high grass was all that he could see, but there was nothing for him to do but follow his guide. As a matter of fact, Andy had had a lot of experience in duck-shooting and was an extremely good shot.

It was the first time, though, that he had gone on an expedition without fancy duck blinds, decoys, retrievers and, doubtless, various bottles of brandy in case he got cold or damp. Here, in order to reach the water and spot any possible duck, he had to crawl through high grass and rushes, expecting each moment to look a snake in the eye. His slithering progress was uneventful, though, and in spite of being thoroughly scared he managed to knock down five duck.

José Casada, it seems, was all for continuing indefinitely, but Andy, emotionally shattered by his tour de force, made the well-known sign of thumb toward mouth which is the same in any language, and as a result the ducks were attached to the saddles and the two sportsmen rode off in search of the nearest bar.

They reached the general store at Rio Grande some time in the early afternoon, where they downed various whiskys in rapid succession. Andy was right in his element, but José Casada, who was unused to anything stronger than the local *chicha* or cider and who had never tasted whisky, succumbed after his fifth and was carried into the back room and neatly laid out on the dirt floor.

There was nothing for Andy to do until his companion recovered except keep on drinking, with the result that after an indefinite additional number of whiskys he too had to be carried out and laid down next to his unconscious pal. When José Casada came to, he saw Andy passed out and he therefore repaired to the bar to pull himself together. When Andy came to, José Casada was back in

his former comatose state and the procedure took place in reverse. It was unfortunate that at no point did the two show signs of life at the same time.

During one of his waking spells Andy noted that it had grown dark, and vaguely realizing that we might be worried about him, left the recumbent José Casada and stumbled out and onto his horse. Just how he got home he is not clear about, but Dobbin must have known the way. We greeted him sleepily and after one look refrained from asking questions. His shooting prowess was evident to all of us the next morning, however, for when we arose, the smell of putrefying birds was wafted on the breeze from the spot where Andy's horse, still saddled and duck-encumbered, had spent the night.

Andy refused for some time to give us details of his trip. José Casada was equally reticent when he turned up three days later, merely stating that he had been delayed at the hospital in Penonomé, where he had been treated for what he told us was a kidney condition. We spent the rest of the season without eating duck.

The caviar dinner was more successful. This came about as a result of my going to Panama City to meet my mother and father who were coming through on a cruise and were to have about twenty-four hours in port. They arrived in style, bearing as gifts most of the gastronomic delicacies of the United States. In a moment of depression I must have written home about the monotony and inferior quality of camp food and I had obviously given the impression that we were living in darkest Africa. At any rate, my graphic literary style had brought forth the kind of picnic hamper you might picture Doris Duke taking on a week's camping trip and, topping it off, a pound of fresh caviar.

Now the caviar posed a really serious problem. It had been nicely preserved in the ship's icebox whence it had been rushed to the refrigerators of the Hotel Tivoli, where I was staying, but I was afraid that a six-hour trip through tropical heat would turn it into a soggy mess, its long journey all for naught. Of course I could have sat in the Tivoli and ordered toast, lemon and hardboiled egg and eaten it by myself, but somehow I thought it would taste better away

from civilization—to say nothing of Sam's liking caviar, too. I finally worked out a solution.

Among the people we had met in Panama City was a young secretary attached to the American Embassy whose name was Johnny. Johnny had expressed a deep interest in archaeology and had hinted that he would look kindly upon an invitation to visit us and see the work at first hand. Johnny had a car. So I called him up and suggested that he drive me out to camp. Johnny accepted with pleasure.

We set forth the next day. On the ninety-odd mile drive to Penonomé you pass through six small villages and one vacation resort. The caviar, fresh from the Tivoli icebox and wrapped in newspaper, was rushed to the car. When we reached the first village on our route we stopped at the nearest bar and ordered two beers, at the same time requesting the bartender to put our package on the ice. After staying long enough to give the caviar a chill we went on to the next village, where the procedure was repeated. And the next and the next. The vacation resort was a cinch, for we took two hours off for lunch and a swim and got the caviar thoroughly iced. The last part of the trip was made on horseback, and we urged on our steeds at top speed. It was rather like carrying the good news from Ghent to Aix.

Our supper that night was wonderful. We ate caviar. We ate goose liver. We ate galantine of chicken. It was our first and only excursion into higher gastronomic fields and we had indigestion all night. It was worth it.

There seems to be a general impression that menus in an archaeological camp must be queer ones. The supposed range is wide; you may be pictured smacking your lips over such delicacies as roast peacock and hummingbirds' tongues or even warding off starvation with a desperate diet of cactus soup and stewed rats. The minute you leave civilization, it is argued, your meals are bound to be *different*, and the fact that Mr. Campbell's cans are as well-known in tiny South American or African villages as in his home country is overlooked.

Our food was neither better nor worse than that of the average archaeological camp; on the whole it was both adequate and healthful. The only disadvantage was its monotony. "God, not again!" Sam and Andy would chorus at mealtimes until I got really mad. (After all, you can't make scalopini of veal out of an old and tired Panamanian cow.) So they changed their tune. "What's this wonderful new dish called?" Sam would ask, holding up a limp piece of beef while he reached for the Tabasco. "Ah, *crème de la crème!*" Andy would exclaim enthusiastically as he poured half a bottle of Worcestershire into his canned vegetable soup.

We used to sprinkle curry powder over the canned corn, ladle Chile sauce on the meat and drown everything else in Worcestershire, until we got as tired of the condiments as of the food they disguised. When Sam's mother wrote that she was coming through Panama and asked what she could bring us—drugs, clothes, books?—a cable was despatched posthaste reading: "Bernaise Sauce Bernaise Sauce Sauce Escoffier Sauce Escoffier Any Sauce." She undoubtedly thought the tropics had affected our sanity, but she arrived with eight welcome bottles, and while they lasted, the cuisine of the Sitio Conte seemed as good to us as Voisin or "21."

Chapter 20

TOWARD the middle of February, with half the field season over, Sam decided to take two weeks off to visit the adjoining province of Veraguas. Andy, having had enough of the simple life, had departed for home and the "complicated love affair." Our technician, whom I shall call Teck, had been with us for about a month and could be left in charge of the work at the Sitio Conte. It was a good time for us to go.

Teck had arrived from the States equipped to do about everything which could be done on a dig. He had a large and complicated series of instruments with which to survey the site. He had a camera and a special drawing board on which to make pictures. He had plaster to construct molds of anything that could not be removed from the ground and gum arabic and synthetic resin to help him take out the very delicate material. With his magnifying glass, his instruments and his little pots of paste, he looked like nothing so much as a Sherlock Holmes hot on the trail of prehistoric murder.

Teck was terrifically efficient but, unfortunately, had the irritating characteristics which usually accompany this quality. He was slow and careful and deliberate, and nothing could hurry him. He was thorough. He was so thorough that he was exasperating. So much so that we would all wait hopefully for him to make a mistake, and on the day when lunch was held up some twenty minutes while he

removed an elaborate piece of carved bone from one of the graves, and the bone was subsequently blown off the table (where he'd put it too near the edge) and smashed to powder, there was general elation. Secret, of course.

Teck loved to talk and, once started, he just could not be stopped. He had been married for some years and "the wife" was at last about to make him a father. Although "the wife" and I still remain strangers, I have never known anyone so intimately. Her appearance, her cute sayings, what she ate, what she wore, what she liked, were thrust at me until I got a mental stomach-ache. She wrote him almost every day and each symptom of her approaching motherhood was mine not for the asking. It got so I spent my time avoiding Teck.

So when Sam suggested a side trip to Veraguas I was delighted. Veraguas, though close to Coclé, has its own particular culture. For some years the Museum at Harvard had been buying archaeological specimens from this district, but as no data had accompanied the material, they were anxious for Sam to authenticate their collection by enlarging it and by putting in a few days' dig to get the information straight from the horse's (or Indian's) mouth.

Our first step was to get in touch with a Spaniard named Don Juan, through whom the Museum had obtained most of its specimens. Don Juan was as unlike his namesake as could possibly be imagined. About five feet tall, he was thin and mangy, with a straggling mustache that hung down unevenly on one side. His suit was a faded blue, stained and spotted, and although the spots increased daily I never saw him wear anything else. No one knew how he had happened to come to Panama, but in the '30's, when the Pan-American Highway was cut through Veraguas, he chanced to be on the spot, and as the road diggers hit upon ancient remains Don Juan was right there to pay out good money for objects hot out of the ground, which he in turn disposed of at an immense profit. After a while he had virtually cornered the archaeological market, and the natives throughout the province brought him all their finds. He was obviously delighted at taking us, a couple of

gringo prospects, in tow. "Easy pickings," he probably said to himself.

The first week the three of us spent touring the countryside in a hired car, searching for already opened ancient graves—in order to note the types of burial—and looking at private collections of pottery in the hope of doing some buying for the Museum. Although Don Juan had originally claimed to know the site of several cemeteries, when the time came he suddenly developed amnesia. This no doubt was because there was no profit in showing moldy bones, whereas, in leading us to collections, he could enjoy his accustomed role of middleman.

Thus we visited house after house and Don Juan's system rarely varied. We would enter and look at the pottery. Don Juan would look at our host. "Oh, Don Carlos," or "Don José," or "Don Alfonso," he would say, as the case might be, "would you mind showing me where I can wash my hands." (A painfully obvious subterfuge as soap and water were completely alien to his anatomy!) When the two returned, Don Juan, his hands as dirty as before, would ask Sam if there was anything he was interested in buying. "This," Sam might say, indicating a piece of pottery, and Don Carlos or Don José or Don Alfonso would then bemoan the fact that Sam had selected his best piece (whatever it happened to be) and either ask an outrageous price for it or flatly refuse to sell at all.

In the first case, Don Juan would use his persuasive powers to reduce the tariff, barely bothering to conceal a conspiratorial wink at his buddy, or, in case of a downright refusal, he would shake his head sadly and escort us to the car. "I'll have one more try," he'd suddenly announce, rushing back to the house. "Maybe I can make the owner see reason." Needless to say he always returned with the desired article or articles, and either way his own pockets bulged more each day.

As Sam's great interest on the trip was to put in a few days of actual digging, Don Juan made arrangements for us to stay with a native Panamanian family on whose property were known to be countless untapped graves. The head of the family was named

Jesús, and his homestead was situated on a hill in the interior, miles from any automobile road. Horses were therefore procured and Don Juan started us on our way, having arranged to follow a little later with an extra man who would transport our folding cots and other luggage.

I was grateful that no one but Sam was around to see my horsemanship. The trail was nothing more than a narrow gash through tropical jungle growth and traversed a series of perpendicular Pikes Peaks that would have put a roller coaster to shame. Bushes crowded in on each side, slapping our faces, but as the path was muddy and slippery with roots cropping up at unpredictable intervals, both hands were needed just to hang on, making it impossible to remain unscratched and still keep your seat. I alternately slid (going downhill) onto the horse's neck, where I locked my arms around his head and hooked my legs back of the saddle, or sat (going uphill) on his tail and tried to grab his mane and ears with my hands. This last technique didn't appeal to him and he gently but firmly deposited me in a bush, out of which I climbed with only minor wounds and walked the rest of the way. Sam, who was apparently having no trouble, finally looked around and saw me painfully limping along. "Why be so considerate of your horse?" he asked. "He's used to this sort of going." "You, you—*equestrian,*" I retorted bitterly.

We arrived at our destination around six, just as the sun was setting. Jesús greeted us with enthusiasm and proudly ushered us into his mansion—a small hut, constructed of thatch and adobe, which consisted of living room, bedroom and kitchen, and a narrow, roofless porch in front. As the bedroom was already occupied by Jesús's wife, who had given birth to a baby the night before, his mother, who had functioned as midwife, and five or six additional children, it was indicated that our cots should be installed in the living room.

This was a dark and windowless chamber, containing exactly two articles of furniture—a log bed in one corner and a hammock in the center, strung from one end of the room to the other. The floor was

of earth and convenient for the family, who used it for spitting purposes. Jesús spat constantly, either out of nervousness or just for pleasure, his various children considered it smart to follow his example and Mama, who continuously chewed at a large, dead cigar, apparently found it necessary to keep on expectorating stray pieces of tobacco.

From under the eaves came a steady cooing which proved to be pigeons. I have always loathed pigeons and see no use for them (except roasted on toast, or possibly carriers in an emergency). And these, which apparently never slept but cooed right through the night, certainly didn't make me change my mind.

The entire family were obviously animal lovers for, in addition to the collection of pigeons, they owned two horses, a cow, a pig, three turkeys, four hens and a rooster, six ducks, three parrots, and four dogs of questionable origin. Any or all of these (except the horses and the cow) were inclined to wander in and out of the house at will, affectionately encouraged by the children.

It did not take a detailed examination of our prospective bedchamber to make us announce that we were fresh-air fiends and loved nothing so much as sleeping out-of-doors. Jesús was shocked and disappointed, but he finally agreed to install our cots under a nearby tree. By this time Don Juan and the equipment had arrived, and Jesús wandered off, machete in hand, to cut some poles so that a tarpaulin could be set up over our beds in case it rained.

He had hardly gone before I heard a yell of pain and, rushing to the top of a hill from where the sound had come, I found Jesús stretched on the ground holding on to his ankle, his face contorted with fear. "Snake bit," he gasped.

I first screamed the news to Sam and then, remembering rules A and B of Dr. Clark's manual, looked for the snake. I looked and looked but it was nowhere to be found, and I finally elicited from a hysterical Jesús that he had killed it with his machete and thrown the carcass down a nearby ravine. This was discouraging, but from the description I gathered it to have been a fer-de-lance

(Bothrops) and I decided we might as well go on that assumption as antibothropic serum was the only kind we had with us. Whether or not the snake had had a food ball in its stomach was another matter. Obviously the only way to determine that was to climb down the ravine after it, and somehow the idea didn't appeal to me.

In exactly two minutes Sam appeared with Dr. Clark's snake kit. This was a small tin box and contained a tourniquet, a knife, a small bottle of iodine, a narrow glass pump and two different-sized rubber nozzles, or suction cups, to be attached to the pump. According to Burroughs Wellcome, who fathered the kit, which nozzle you use depends on what part of the anatomy the patient has been bitten. If there is a large area around the bite, like what happens when you sit on a snake, you can use the big nozzle. This is a cinch, as on a flat surface the suction causes the rubber to stay put and you can apply all your energies to pumping out the venom. Jesús, unfortunately, had not sat on his snake. His wound was on the inside of his left heel, against the ankle bone, so that it was necessary to use the small nozzle, and one person had to hold it down while the other pumped. First, however, we applied a tourniquet, and the men carried poor Jesús to the house and deposited him in the living-room hammock.

By this time all the neighbors had collected, as well as the children and some of the animals. Jesús's mother had been in the kitchen preparing our supper, but when the excitement started she gave that up and got some candles, which various spectators held high so that we could see what we were doing. We wouldn't have had much time for food in any case as Sam and I worked continuously, one of us holding down the nozzle and the other pumping out the venom. Occasionally we allowed Don Juan to participate but we didn't really trust anyone but ourselves. I was Florence Nightingale and Sam took on some of the better qualities of Dr. Pasteur. He had suggested that I keep a detailed record of our treatment for the benefit of posterity and the scientific world. This I did—on the margins of a Penguin detective story, as no other paper could be

found. However, I managed to write everything down clearly and succinctly, as I had visions of our record landing in some famous medical library.

We kept up the treatment for about six hours. This consisted of applying a tourniquet and loosening it at regular intervals, taking Jesús's pulse and pumping like mad. We didn't use the serum, as Sam decided it wasn't necessary. This was lucky, for we had brought only one dose, and I was sure that if a snake had got Jesús that quickly one would be sure to get Sam or me before we left.

Although it seemed fairly certain that Jesús would survive, he was in a good deal of pain as well as horribly frightened. In a fit of generosity and pity, therefore, I opened our suitcase and unpacked our only bottle of whisky, which I thought might improve his state of mind.

"What are you *doing*?" asked Sam as I was about to put the bottle into Jesús's eagerly outstretched hand.

"Giving him a drink, of course," I answered. "He needs it."

"STOP!" yelled Dr. Pasteur Lothrop, withering me with a glance. "Don't you know that spirits increase the circulation and thus spread the poison more quickly?"

"No, I didn't," I said meekly. So I took a swallow of it instead. In fact, each time Jesús groaned we both felt so sorry for him that we had to take a drink to keep from getting discouraged. By midnight I'd lost interest in playing Florence Nightingale, but Sam stuck to his post for several hours more, until he was sure he had pulled his patient through.

There was no longer any question of our sleeping in the great snaky outdoors, but as Jesús and his entourage occupied the living room, we put up our cots along the narrow porch, the jutting eaves giving at least a slight protection. There wasn't much time to sleep, anyhow. At dawn, as I was dreaming happily that I was being decorated for outstanding services as a nurse, an agonized grunt woke me. I thought, of course, it was Jesús in his death throes and I quickly sat up—to find the pig nuzzling my blanket and making unintelligible and horrid noises. Chasing him off did no good as

he affectionately kept coming back, so I got up to see how our patient was doing. Outside of a badly swollen foot, Jesús seemed to be in pretty good condition and obviously feeling a great deal better than I did.

I was cheerful, though, for I was already looking forward to the distinctly inferior but snakeless hotel in which we would sleep that night. It never occurred to me that Sam would go on with the expedition after the harrowing experience of the night before. I was wrong. "Why, of course we're staying," said he. "After all, Jesús is alive and doing well. (Doctor and nurse beamed smugly at each other.) All arrangements have been made. Don't you *want* to see the dig?"

"Naturally," I answered. "I'm just scared to death, that's all."

"Nothing will happen," declared Sam with false heartiness. And added rather unnecessarily, "Just be careful not to step on a snake and don't go wandering about after dusk."

Don Juan had hired five men to do the digging but by 10:30 not one had appeared. It turned out later that three of them had been beaten up with sticks at a dance the previous night, one had been bitten by a snake (sic!) and the fifth had decided he didn't feel like working. None of this worried Don Juan, as he was being paid by the day, but after Sam threatened to go home and turn off the meal ticket a new quintet miraculously showed up.

The graves were some two hundred yards from the house and entirely different in type from those at the Sitio Conte. These were small and deep (about twelve feet down) and shaped something like a bottle, becoming slightly more rounded as they grew deeper. No more than one man could possibly fit into any one grave at a time, and after he had reached the bottom he filled the hole so completely that an onlooker could see nothing more than his rear end as he bent over to do his work.

We had arranged to pay the workmen's wages and a lump sum to Jesús for the privilege of using his property, in exchange for which any articles dug up were to be ours. Nothing emerged, however, except a lot of perfectly plain pottery. Of course, for all we were able

to see, the earth might have been teeming with gold and other metals, and the diggers, who were expert at obstructing the view, could easily have lined their pockets with loot. In which case we probably bought it back from Don Juan, among other specimens he sold us later on.

I didn't hang around the dig for long as there was nothing to look at but the backside of a workman. There wasn't much else to do, so I got a book and sat on a convenient rock to read it (first making sure that there was no snake between the rock and me). This wasn't exactly a comfortable seat but it wouldn't have been bad except for the children, who evidently looked upon me as a strange combination of comic artist and lunatic and fascinatedly tagged along wherever I went in order to see what peculiar thing I'd do next. They never said a word, although they occasionally let out funny little giggles, and when I spoke to them they looked scared and retreated a few steps, creeping back, however, as soon as I was silent. This was so disconcerting that I never got beyond page two of my book. Anyone who has ever tried to read in a perfectly quiet atmosphere with six pairs of eyes steadily trained his way will know what I mean.

For the four days of our stay the small fry never let me out of their sight. At first I tried to charm them. "What's your name, little girl?" I started with. "Tee hee," giggled Little Girl and retreated. "Would you like to see my book?" I continued idiotically, in a feeble attempt to break down the conversational deadlock. "TEE HEE," came back in unison from the group. "What's wrong with me?" I asked desperately. This elicited an absolute barrage of giggles, as well as nudges and fingers pointing my way. "Why don't you go home and leave me alone," I finally begged. "Go. GO." But they hung on even more closely. It got so that if I wanted to wash or perform other private functions I had to wait until they were stuffing down their food (thereby missing most of mine) or until it was dark and the Snake Problem reared its ugly head.

The nights were no less nerve wracking than the days. I've always been under the impression that animals slept when it was dark.

This rule evidently did not apply to Jesús' brood. Or maybe it was the climate. At any rate, the cow, the goat, the three parrots and two of the dogs were on the night shift and wandered restlessly about, making horrid noises peculiar to their kind. At dawn they subsided and the day shift took over. The ringleaders here were the pig, the ducks, hens and turkeys, and the remaining two dogs; and each morning they did some sort of native song and dance around our beds. The pigeons were on twenty-four hour duty.

I must admit the horses behaved normally. I've always loved horses. *They* know, all right, that I feel about as secure on their backs as if I were trying to walk a tightrope, and that unless I hold on to the pummel of the saddle we are apt to part company, but they're usually patient and try hard not to give me an inferiority complex. In this case, though, it wouldn't have mattered, as I was too numb and miserable to care about the figure I would undoubtedly cut on the way out. By the time we were set to leave I was suffering from indigestion, a bad headache, violent insomnia (enforced) and was close to being a mental case.

Our hosts seemed oblivious of my condition, and the old lady and Jesús (hobbling around with a cane) and the children all saw us off, grinning genially. I gave them a hollow smile and fell semi-conscious on to my steed's stalwart back. When I came to, we were back in what I had once foolishly and ungratefully considered a third-rate hotel.

It was some time before we were in Panama City again and able to see Dr. Clark. I could hardly wait to tell him of our heroic role in saving a man's life and to give him the information we had so painstakingly culled in the process. Although Dr. Clark had spent the better part of his life studying snakes, I knew he had never happened to be on the spot at the very moment that a fer-de-lance had done its deadly work, and our firsthand report was bound to interest him.

I had carried my Penguin book with its precious notations wherever I went, not trusting it for a moment to alien hands. I carried it to Dr. Clark's laboratory, too, and thrust it at him without a word,

while Sam and I sat back and watched his face as he examined it. I was reminded of the time I had given the manuscript of a supposedly humorous article I'd written to a friend to read, while I'd settled in a comfortable chair and pretended to be engrossed in a book. Naturally I hadn't read a line but had slyly watched my friend's face while I occasionally turned the pages I wasn't looking at. Each time he chuckled or even smiled I'd glowed inside with secret pleasure.

Dr. Clark's face, however, was expressionless until he had slowly and carefully finished and laid down our contribution to science. He then looked up and, genuine astonishment in his voice, said, "And you mean to tell me this poor man survived after the treatment you gave him?"

What we had done for Jesús, it seems, had been more or less correct. The trouble was that we had done it much too hard and much too long. Using a tourniquet over such a lengthy period, Clark explained, might have given him gangrene by interfering with his circulation, and our six-hour pumping job was five hours more than necessary and could have crippled him for life.

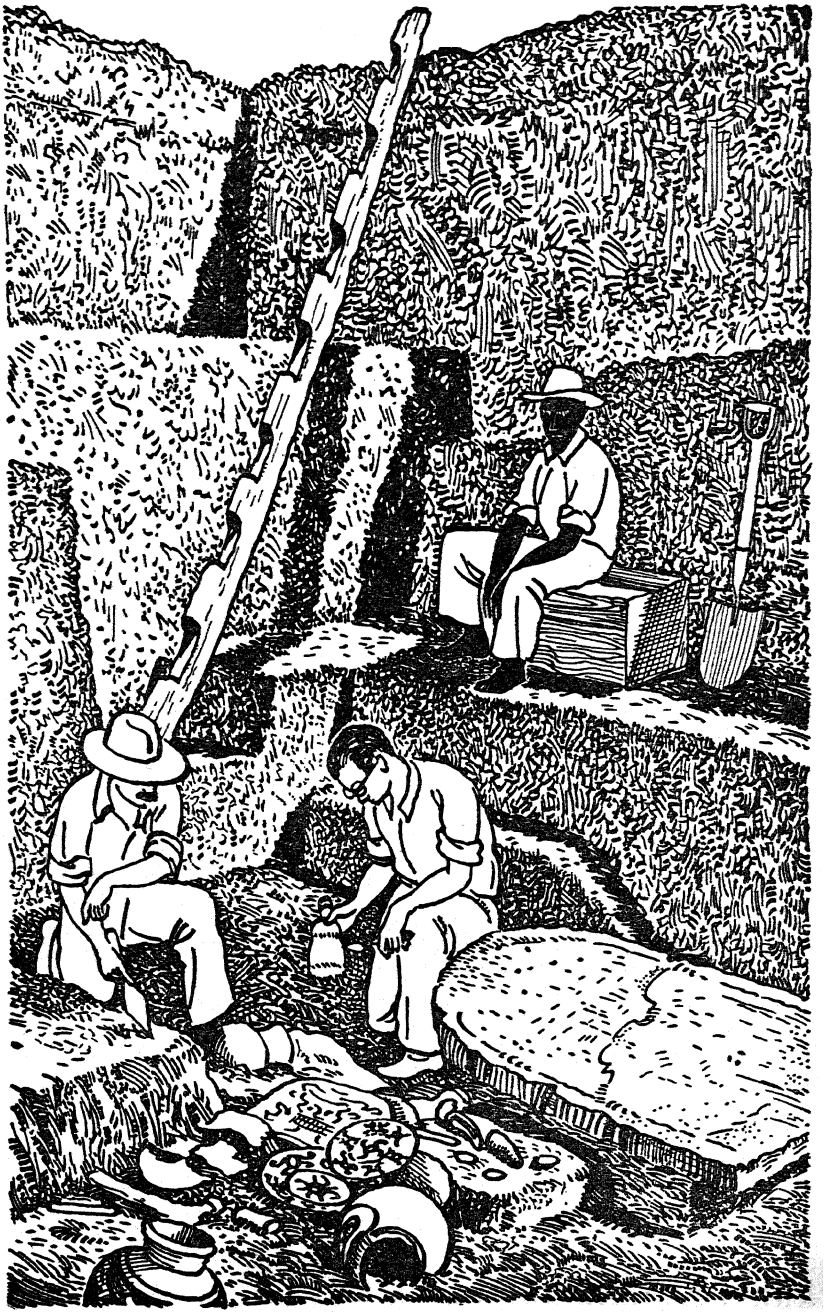
Sam and I slunk back to our hotel without speaking a word and I took the Penguin book and quietly deposited it in the wastepaper basket. It was weeks before I recovered from this blow and I only consoled myself by deciding that it was Dr. Clark's fault for putting out a snake manual telling you what to do but not when to stop doing it.

Chapter 21

"THIS," said Sam, "will be known as Grave Number 26!" I was shocked. It was as if you tried to give a true picture of the Colossus of Rhodes by describing it as a statue 105 feet high. Or the Pyramids of Egypt as a group of geometrical buildings. All correct as far as it went. Grave No. 26 had followed the discovery of Grave No. 25 and would precede that of Grave No. 27. But it might better have been called "The Grave of Graves" or "Locus Lothrop" or "Harvard's Happy Hunting Ground."

Grave No. 26 was the first grave to come to light after our return to camp from Veraguas. One grave! One grave measuring twelve feet by ten. And what came out of that one grave could have stocked a good-sized store. It took more than two weeks, all of us working like mad, before Grave No. 26 was fully excavated and its contents removed. After which Sam, Teck and I collapsed in a weary heap with just enough energy left to count up the score.

There were mirror backs of stone, stone axes and arrow points, metal, agate and bone pendants, agate and bone beads, quartz crystals, pierced sharks' teeth and dog teeth for necklaces, a carved whale's tooth, the carved rib of a sea cow, incense burners and sting ray spines, these last for use as spear points. There were nearly two hundred and fifty pieces of pottery—some painted in lovely colors and in perfect condition, some badly broken and incomplete.



Almost all, however, had been brand new when buried, showing that they had been specially made for use in the next world.

The gold alone included three necklaces of large beads, twenty-nine disks or plaques, quantities of ear rods, round cuffs for arms and legs, finger rings, boar tusks set in gold, jaguar teeth, carved whale's teeth encrusted with gold, chisels, pendants—one in the shape of twin crocodiles, another a doubleheaded bat—and, finally, two large emeralds in gold settings.

The excitement around camp was terrific. We hardly slept nights, waiting to see what the next day would bring forth. Breakfast and lunch were necessary evils which took us away from the other world in which we were living. We each had our own section to work in, and we each kept crying "*look*" as more things came to light, and nobody paid any attention as they were much too busy with their own discoveries. Except the workmen, who left what they were doing (they'd been banished to another trench) and ran over every few minutes to see what was new.

Sam kept murmuring "but this is *different*. I've never seen anything like this before." Teck indulged in a running conversation with himself about the pieces of carved bone, each of which put him in a state of rapture. As for me, for once I couldn't talk. I just gaped with delight.

Almost right from the beginning it looked as if we were in for a big haul. Although the grave itself was comparatively small, we found, surrounded by their treasures, what had once been twenty-two bodies, crammed so close together that it was often impossible to tell whose bones belonged to whom. There was no question, though, as to which skeleton represented the head man. What was left of him—for convenience I'll call him Caesar—reposed on a large stone slab set in the center of the grave. His body had been placed sitting up, whereas his cohorts had been laid out in rows about him. His belongings were not only the cream of this grave but were much more elaborate than anything found in any other grave.

Some of the riches had probably been looted from other burials,

for there was evidence that in originally digging the shaft of Grave No. 26 an earlier burial had been cut through and almost entirely destroyed, while, underneath, another one had been mangled and robbed of some of its spoils. Even so, Grave No. 26 must have been extraordinarily rich to start with and Caesar an extremely important man.

On the earth which covered his body were strange little cabalistic signs which looked just as if some rodent had been buried by mistake and had scrabbled around trying to get out for a breath of fresh air. When I said this, Sam and Teck looked at me in such a way that I wished I'd kept quiet, and after bringing out a magnifying glass and other technical instruments, they pronounced the imprints to be designs of what had once been a textile which had disintegrated due to dampness. And heaped on top of what I'm still not sure weren't mouse tracks but which I suppose I'll have to accept as what-had-once-been-a-textile, were Caesar's treasures.

Here we found all twenty-nine plaques, the three gold-bead necklaces, the gold leg and arm cuffs, six pairs of ear rods, four gold finger rings and the larger of the two emeralds. And, interspersed with them, smaller gold ornaments, ornaments of stone and bone, and a great pile of weapons and pots and pans. Caesar had obviously been equipped to face almost anything anywhere.

As I've noted before, one of the first rules of archaeology is that, in excavating, the entire grave is neatened up and everything in it exposed before so much as a splinter is taken out of the ground. However when we struck Caesar's gold all rules were off. The ornaments were so obviously valuable that it seemed like tempting fate (and the Panamanians) to leave them exposed, and Sam, Teck and I worked by lamplight until late hours, taking notes, drawing pictures and, finally, pulling out our treasure.

And what treasure it was! The large plaques were slightly bigger than the ordinary dessert plate and were of beaten gold with designs in relief, always portraying a crocodile in some form or other. They were so handsome that any self-respecting crocodile should have been flattered at the way he'd been glorified.

The twenty-five smaller gold disks were of a variety of shapes and, although undecorated, were extremely effective. Like the big plaques, they had tiny holes along their edges, through which, Sam deduced, they had been sewn to their owner's shirt or shirts. Of the shirts themselves, of course, there was no longer any trace.

The ear rods, which were made to be inserted through holes in the ears, were of different types and varied in length from two to seven inches. Some were of hollow gold and had been filled with gum to strengthen them. Others were of stone tipped with gold, and one pair had evidently been made of wood which had rotted away, leaving nothing but the gold ends.

"What could old Caesar have wanted with five sets of ear rods?" I asked Sam. "Don't tell me he wore them all at once." I had a picture of him trying in vain to hold his head erect. The gold-tipped stone pair alone, which was a good six inches long and seemed to weigh a ton when I picked it up, must have stretched the lobes of his ears right down to his heels.

"He may have liked to change them off," said Sam. "And then there was always the chance he might mislay some of them up there," he went on, pointing vaguely toward the sky. He wasn't trying to be funny, either. It just goes to show what archaeology sometimes does to people.

The gold ornaments, as well as the stone and bone and pottery, had been spread over and around Caesar without any attempt at order. And scattered all through the earth as if they'd been carelessly spilled out of a hat, were hundreds of immense gold beads which, when matched, made up three necklaces. The most spectacular one consisted of a hundred and twenty hollow ping-pong balls—this was literally the size—and when strung was so long that it could be looped double to the waist.

When Eulogio saw these he said, rather sourly, "When I was a child we used to play marbles with those."

"You *what?*" asked Sam.

"We used to play marbles," he repeated. "You know, marbles. The other boys and I would fill them with clay to make them heavy

and then we'd roll them. This way." He threw back his arm as if he were in a bowling alley and demonstrated.

"But where did you find them?" asked Sam.

"There were hundreds and hundreds of them," Eulogio said. "When I was about eight, the river changed its course and cut new banks, and these things turned up all around. We thought they were some form of tin."

"Whatever happened to them?" I asked, always the practical one.

"Oh, eventually we lost them all." He sighed reminiscently. "It was a good game, though."

In my mind's eye I could see the gold beads rolling over the ground, sliding down the bank into the river, burying themselves in the muddy bottom. In fact I was so fascinated by the picture of a group of little black boys shooting marbles with prehistoric ping-pong balls that I paid but little attention to the work I was doing. AND THAT WAS WHEN I FOUND CAESAR'S EMERALD!

I must admit I didn't have the slightest idea what it was; all I saw was a dull and dirty green hunk. "What's this funny stone?" I asked Sam. He took a look and said, "Probably a piece of jade," which seemed pretty thrilling at the time, and he picked it up and dipped it into a bucket of water which was conveniently sitting nearby. Just then the midday sun happened to hit it full force and green lights shot out and nearly blinded us.

I yelled like any amateur, while Sam, giving me a warning look, quickly slipped the stone out of sight and smiled vaguely at the workmen who had rushed over to see what the excitement was about. They may have thought I'd seen a snake. They may even have suspected the truth. At any rate, no explanations were ever given.

That afternoon, after everyone had gone home, we took out our prize and just looked at it. It was decided to dirty it up again, as we were afraid what might happen if word got around that we had found an emerald. With a little plastic, earth and water, Sam performed such a workmanlike job that our jewel looked like nothing so much as a piece of rubble, and then he began to worry that

someone might find it and throw it away as a useless hunk of rock. In fact it was obvious that whatever we did the stone was going to be a headache until we got it out of the country. I was sorry I hadn't just grabbed it in the first place and kept quiet.

My reasons for this were not entirely unselfish. The emerald was truly spectacular. It not only looked gigantic to us, it was gigantic —actually weighing 189 carats and measuring an inch by an inch and a half. It was something you might conceivably imagine in Tiffany's window but certainly not in the wilds of Panama.

The stone was magnificent in spite of being in anything but perfect condition. Interior light, which nowadays you get by cutting facets on the outside surface, had been produced by drilling eight small holes into it. Someone had tried, too, to cut a hole right through the center, probably to enable it to be worn on a chain, but this had apparently proved too difficult and the idea had been abandoned halfway through. As a result, the stone was chipped and slightly cracked, but it was still green and sparkling and beautiful.

The emerald must have had quite a history, too. According to Sam, Panama produces no emeralds and this one was therefore a trade piece. "From Ecuador," he finally pronounced, after squinting at it carefully. "This is the type drilling they used down there. Yes, it all fits in," he went on, as if he were Hercule Poirot or some other famous detective. "The ancient Panamanians used to send ships as far south as the coast of the Inca Empire. They probably made the trade down there."

I decided to give his little gray cells a bit more exercise. "What did they trade it for, Hercule—I mean Sam?"

"God knows," he disappointed me by saying. "Of course a lot of sea shells native to Panama and Central America have been found both in Ecuador and in Peru. . . ."

"A fine detective you are," I broke in. "You're not trying to tell me the Ecuadoreans would let the Panamanians palm off some old shells for a magnificent emerald?"

"You've got a false sense of values," said Sam witheringly. "There are other things in the world as important as emeralds." But I knew

he didn't mean it. He was just as excited about our mammoth jewel as I was.

Near the emerald was buried its setting. Or, rather, a rough casting for the setting. This was a massive hunk of gold weighing the equivalent of five old-time twenty dollar gold pieces and designed to portray a mythological monster. Although it hadn't been finished and the socket was not worked smooth, it had obviously been created for the emerald to fit into it and, together, to make a pendant. Though the emerald had come from far away the setting, because of its similarity in style to the rest of the gold in Grave No. 26, must have been the result of home talent.

Sam refused to make any definite statement as to why the pendant had been deposited in the earth unfinished. "However," said he, "it looks—and don't quote me please—as if the pendant had been specially made for this burial and the work took so long that the burial couldn't wait. So they put it in as was."

This didn't satisfy me. "I should think it would have been an insult to Caesar to bury something with him that wasn't even finished."

"Not at all," said Sam. "The Indians, naturally, would expect it to be finished in the other world. They may even have buried the artisan who did the preliminary work along with it so that he could complete the job later on. An important leader, naturally, would rate that kind of service."

I saw nothing natural in any of this, but people who work like mad to create beautiful things and then put them in the ground and jump on them are apt to do almost anything. Fortunately the emerald was one trophy they hadn't been able to hurt.

The dig at the Sitio Conte turned out to be one of the most spectacular digs ever undertaken in the New World. From the point of view of what might be described either as loot or as archaeological artifacts, depending on who was doing the describing, it was enough to make the most blasé individual's eyes pop. But what was even more important was that, in Coclé, an unknown civilization had

come to life. It wasn't Aztec or Maya or Inca, as people invariably assume—those being the only Latin American civilizations to get any publicity—it was absolutely *new*.

Sam was as surprised at this discovery as Sir Isaac Newton must have been when the apple hit him. "But what is so strange about that?" I asked him. "It's exciting, yes, but exciting things do sometimes happen."

"I didn't expect anything like this in Panama," said Sam. "Panama is the gateway to South America and, as such, should show evidences of the great migrations to that continent which must have taken place thousands of years ago."

"And doesn't it?"

"Not a sign," mourned Sam. "Archaeologists have been unable to discover any remains or temporary camp sites dating back to those days. Instead we find a settled and complex community showing permanent occupation for some centuries before the Conquest."

"But aren't you pleased to have found something new and wonderful? Columbus didn't discover what he expected to, either, but nobody complained."

Sam acknowledged my comparison with a deep bow. "Of course I'm pleased," he admitted. "It's just that this upsets all previous theories. Panama is a place you would expect people to have passed through, not settled in."

"Why?" I asked, probably for the hundred thousandth time since I married an archaeologist.

"The culture of South America is as highly developed as any known in the New World," Sam explained patiently, "and the people must have arrived there from somewhere. And how else except through Panama?"

"Why not by boat?" I cried triumphantly.

But Sam demolished that theory in no time at all. "And how did the prehistoric horses and animals of the camel family, such as llamas and alpacas, get south? Do you by any chance think the Indians could have squeezed a horse into one of their tiny boats?"

"You win," I admitted. "But where does that leave us?"

"With a permanent population that shouldn't have existed and no sign of the transitory one that did exist."

"What a science!" I said admiringly. "You find some ancient pots and pans and make a liar out of history."

Chapter 22

THERE comes a time toward the end of every field season, no matter how interesting it has been or how much you've enjoyed it, when, more than anything in the world, you want to go home. You become stale, your co-workers seem deliberately to be trying to annoy you and the dusty flavor of ancient remains sticks in your throat. You have looked upon artistic antiques and scientific discoveries until your eye is jaundiced and you would be more than willing to trade in any pre-Columbian jug, no matter how beautiful, for a twentieth-century aluminum frying pan. And throw in a few bones for good measure.

My low point came after we had finished with Grave No. 26. We had reached the peak of our work—anything else would be an anti-climax—and my relations with Teck had gone downhill until I felt the two of us could not be contained much longer in the same area.

In all fairness I must state that to my knowledge there has never been an archaeological expedition which did not end up with the participants wishing to slit each other's throats. Two friends of ours, well-known archaeologists, headed a dig some years ago in the wilds of Central America, at which time one of them wrote a letter to Sam, announcing in all seriousness that his companion was trying to murder him. If the attempt proved successful, he

stated, he wished the letter to be on record so that the culprit would not escape punishment. Our friend emerged from the jungle unscathed, but to this day he insists his fears were justified and he sees nothing humorous in the situation.

Now that an interval of some years has elapsed I look on Teck more kindly and even appreciate his many good qualities. Now I realize that I was obviously a victim of "expedition nerves"—a disease which anyone who has been cooped up in a small camp for more than a month inevitably acquires. The disease breaks out for any reason, big or small; or for no reason at all. If your campmate is disagreeable, naturally you dislike him. If he is agreeable, you dislike him even more. If he is inefficient in his work, you resent it. If he is efficient, you resent it twice as much. The way he eats his food, blows his nose, the things he says, the things he doesn't say—all, all combine to foment undying hatred (which fortunately is not apt to last after you once get home).

As a seasoned trooper Sam recognized these symptoms and applied the only possible remedy. He kept both Teck and me so busy and consequently so weary that we had no energy left to scrap.

"I'd like a detailed survey of that grave," he'd say to Teck. 'And after you're finished, do check the measurements of that last trench. I want to be sure we have them right."

And to me: "Please clear that smashed skeleton in Grave 27." (A fiendish job!) "And I'd appreciate your bringing all the bags with pottery in them" (there were hundreds!) "over to the main house so I can sort them for packing. And when you're finished with that . . ."

There was no doubt that Sam knew what he was doing. By the time he was through with Teck and me we had barely enough strength left to speak. Any attempted slap, if either of us had been so inclined, would have turned out to be more of a love pat.

Sam kept our minds occupied, too. We would give a party for our workmen, he decided, before we left. It was to be a dance, and as the Museum was footing the expenses we called it the Harvard University Ball. The workmen were to supply (for proper compen-

sation) both the orchestra and the liquor—the former to consist of Panamanian drums, which certain of the natives knew how to play, and the latter of *chicha*, or homemade beer, with which they were *all* familiar.

Panamanians love parties, and the natives frequently give dances at which they sell food and drink and to which people come from near and far. News of these is generally passed about by word of mouth some days ahead so that those living in distant places can make their preparations. The formal announcement is marked by the rolling of the drums as festivities begin and gives any nearby friends who might have missed the glad tidings a chance to join in. There is no question of arriving too late, for a party is apt to go on all night, and when the liquor holds out, continues for days.

Because we wished to restrict our ball pretty much to the workmen and their families and friends, and to avoid having the roughnecks who often came on from distant towns, we announced the party for a certain date but actually planned to give it two days before that time. At noon of the day itself the workmen were informed of the change, and they were allowed to go home early to wash up and put on their best clothes. Some days before, we had ordered eighty gallons of *chicha* to be made by various members of the Ramos family, and as Eulogio had been let in on the secret of the changed date, we could count on its being ready.

Chicha is the local maize beer. It is made by grinding corn and then boiling it, after which the mixture is set aside to ferment. On the second day it is fit to drink and on the fifth it reaches full maturity. The women of the family do the actual work, but the young girls help by chewing extra kernels of corn and spitting them into the brew. This far from sanitary process hastens fermentation, but it seems to be done even when there's no particular hurry, so the natives must think it adds a special fillip to the taste.

Actually, *chicha* has a refreshing and pungent flavor and a not inconsiderable effect. The workmen occasionally brought us a jar as a present and would stay for a short time after work to drink it with us. The liquid was milky white in color and was scooped out

with a gourd that had been brought along for the occasion, from which each drank in turn. We were considerately allowed to drink out of our own glasses, and if you could only forget how the *chicha* had been made, it tasted pretty good. It was impossible to refuse to join in, and after I repeated to myself often enough that alcohol kills all germs I got so I could gag it down without being conspicuous.

The night of the ball we ate early, for activities had been called for seven. Long before that, however, the *chicha* had been carried in in big clay jars and deposited in a cool spot. Before seven, too, the drummers arrived—six of them—and began to tune up.

The Panamanian drum is a cylinder of hard wood about two feet high, the head of which has been covered by deerskin pulled tight and held down by rawhide cords. Through these, wooden wedges are jammed to tighten it even more. The instrument is placed on the ground and held between the knees and the feet, and the actual drumming is done with the fingers. The result is a strange and somewhat monotonous rhythm, the note of which can be altered by lifting the base of the drum off the ground with the toes. If you wear shoes, you might as well give up before you start.

Earlier in the winter José Casada had tried to give me a lesson. He'd brought his drum over one night after supper, and he and I sat in front of the main house and practiced while Andy, Sam and Teck stayed inside and groaned. I took the drum and clutched it between my knees and hit the top of it with my fingers as I'd been told to do. The noise that emerged was a cross between a honk and a caw.

José Casada took it back and touched it carelessly with the flat of his hands, producing a rhythm which would have made a jitterbug weep with envy. "Maybe you'd better take off your shoes," he suggested.

I had visions of chiggers (a cute little insect which burrows under your toenails and lays eggs there), athlete's foot and various other diseases, but I had to show José Casada I was a good sport so I

removed my sneakers, took over the drum and touched the top exactly the way I'd seen him do it. What came out was a cross between a honk and a caw.

"Maybe I'd better get my shotgun," yelled Andy, "and have a try at that bird."

"All right," I said. "I give up." This was greeted by sighs of relief from within and we all sat around and celebrated my failure. I tried again on several other occasions, but as I never seemed to graduate beyond animal noises I finally had to admit defeat. What was so maddening was that it looked so easy.

I thought of this as I listened to the drummers we'd engaged getting ready. Even their tuning up sounded like Beethoven's Fifth compared to what I'd been able to achieve, and by the time they really got going, they were wonderful. By 7:30 the party was in full swing. The Conte family and our white neighbors from across the river had not yet arrived, but most of the other guests, who varied in color from yellow to dark brown, were there in force. One old crone named Doña Ines rode in on horseback wearing nothing but an old-fashioned corset laced up the back, and carrying her dress over her arm. I thought surely she'd been the victim of an attack but it seemed she just wanted to keep her best costume clean. She tethered her horse, slipped on the dress and joined in the fun.

Our gasoline lamps had been suspended from the trees and lit up a fairly level square of ground on which the dancers disported themselves, the drummers lining one side and the spectators the other three. The women who weren't dancing formed a chorus and chanted to the accompaniment of the drums. When they once got on to a tune they hung on to it for an hour or more, and the spectators sat around and clapped their hands in rhythm. Whenever any of them got dry, which was not infrequently, they dropped out and repaired to the *chicha* jars.

The dancing itself was amusing to watch. Only one kind of dance is performed. The man selects his partner and the two dance opposite and then around each other, the girl with a handkerchief which she flips gaily in rhythm with the music. The two never touch.

When a couple is outstandingly good, they are given the floor, so to speak, and the rest stand aside and clap their hands and yell. After a man gets tired of his partner, he leaves her, dancing off by himself, and picks another. Someone else usually comes in and takes his place.

We had rum and a little whisky for our special guests, and the drummers, who really worked hard, were given some rum, too, with which to lace their *chicha*. As the evening wore on the music became somewhat frenzied and the dancing freer. José Casada—the first apparently with sufficient courage—asked me to dance and I grabbed Sam's handkerchief and performed various pseudo-polka steps around him while the audience cheered. After that, others of the Ramos family stepped in, and though I didn't have the slightest idea what I was doing, I went right ahead and did it anyhow.

We had carefully ordered what we thought would be the right amount of *chicha* to last more or less until midnight, and in order not to be thought stingy, had arranged for an extra supply to be taken to a house about a mile away. Our calculations had been fairly accurate, for by 12:30 the eighty gallons had been consumed, and by one o'clock the party was being continued elsewhere and we were able to fall wearily into bed.

Unfortunately we'd failed to reckon on the affection in which our friends held us, for at sunrise back they came, staggering under the weight of a fresh supply of *chicha*. Where they had obtained it was a mystery. By that time the alcohol had taken pretty general effect and there was no way of heading off the unwelcome guests. We huddled in bed, therefore, I with a pillow over my head to drown out the sounds which, as time wore on, became more and more bloodcurdling. Actually no one tried to break in. I discovered later that our workmen had formed a special guard to see that we were treated with respect and even in their cups had seen to it that no rash person approached too close to the houses. I only wish I'd known about this at the time.

The party was still going on when we got up that morning, but at eleven o'clock the last feeble guy fell to the ground. Our camp

looked like a battlefield. Bodies were stretched out all over the site. Some had been lucky enough to collapse under the trees, but others were exposed to the full rays of the sun. From time to time one of the women would wander in and try to stir up some life in her man, but in general the casualties were dead to the world and were left alone.

Needless to say there was no work done that day. We stayed in our houses, only emerging to take a photographic record of the results of the Harvard University Ball. If after-effects mean anything, it had definitely been a successful party.

The time was drawing near for us to leave, as the rainy season in Panama begins in April and once it takes hold, it is impossible to work. The men, therefore, were told to fill in empty trenches with the piled-up earth that had accumulated, and Sam, Teck and I spent our days packing up archaeological specimens. To me the packing was painful work. Not for a moment were delicate and valuable articles such as gold or bone put in my inexperienced hands. Nor was I allowed much truck with the unbroken or more important pottery.

My job was almost entirely concerned with the thousands of fragments or, in archaeological parlance, sherds, which made up the collection. The pieces of each broken pot, as well as could be determined, had been kept together and put in a paper bag at the time of removal from the ground, with a catalogue number scrawled across the bag to identify it. It was up to me, then, to take, bag by bag, these smashed and uninteresting-looking bits of clay and wrap them in newspaper in such a way that they would take up as little room as possible and would not break further.

To do this you nest the pieces one inside the other, always remembering to stuff them with plenty of paper and starting with the small ones and working up to the large. Of course what happens is that after what was once a pot is neatly wrapped and carefully deposited in the bottom of a packing case, you find one small piece which has dropped out and you are in endless trouble. Or, when

everything seems to be going well, one of the sharp edges of a sherd tears the newspaper and you have to start all over again. After about an hour you're sure your back is broken. And that your eyes will never again focus properly. My heart wasn't in the work anyway, and I was constantly fighting the temptation to throw away that extra little piece or break off that protruding edge.

The monotony of this was somewhat relieved by Cholo Conte, who rode over almost every day; for when he arrived I was let off work to take on hostess duties. Cholo's ostensible purpose in coming was to see if he could be of any assistance, but we all knew (and he knew we knew) that his father had sent him to make sure we were not making off with something to which we weren't entitled.

According to the contract between Harvard University and the Conte family, the latter were paid outright for the use of their property and were promised duplicates of everything found—whether metal, bone, stone or pottery. Any piece that was unique was to go to Harvard. In addition, the Conte family were to receive the bullion value of all the gold objects that were being sent to the States, and these were set aside to be weighed in Panama City.

The division of the spoils had taken place on one momentous day before the packing started. Everything (except the broken pottery) had been spread out on benches or set on the ground. The pottery fragments, it was unanimously agreed, were to be repaired in the States and duplicates later returned to Panama. The Contes *had* to trust us here, for many of the pots were so badly broken that it was impossible to tell what was what.

As a matter of fact, Cholo Conte was a thoroughly nice person and inclined to be easygoing. It was old man Miguel who was the sharp one, and as he was unable to travel, he had sent over brother Hector on "Division Day" to make sure that Cholo wasn't getting cheated. Hector ran around from bench to bench sniffing like a bird dog, and I even caught him peering under our beds to see if we might have tried to hold out anything. The conversation went something like this:

HECTOR: "What a perfectly beautiful *pair* of gold plaques!"

SAM (politely): "They are beautiful, Don Hector, but I am sure if you will examine them carefully you will see that they are not a pair. The design on each is entirely different."

HECTOR: "Ah, yes, you are right, Don Samuel. But I am sure I have seen the replica of this one. It must be on one of the other benches."

ELEANOR (to herself): "Try and find it, Hector. Just try and find it."

Hector, obviously having been primed by his brother, disputed everything. It was all done politely, but his minute examination and discussion of each piece dragged on so long that the two Contes not only stayed for lunch but for a time I thought we would have to give them supper. Cholo was clearly embarrassed by Uncle Hector and made up for it by presenting me with three pots that were duplicates and therefore belonged to his side. This made me unpopular all around, for Hector glared in annoyance and Sam later tried to persuade me that the Museum was entitled to my booty. I've still got it, however.

We were about ready to go home. The Conte family had removed their share of the spoils and the packing of the Museum's lot was to be finished up by Teck, who was staying an extra two weeks for that purpose. With the exception of Sam's digging implements and a few personal possessions, we had disposed of everything else.

"The custom at the end of a dig," Sam had explained, "is to give each workman his pick and shovel, and I think Pat should be allowed to choose his favorite pot and pan. The rest of the camp equipment we can auction off."

"Why auction?" I'd asked.

"There isn't any point in taking all these things back with us," Sam had said, "and although I would like to give them away, I feel the Museum should get back something on their investment."

The auction at first was a complete failure. All the workmen, as well as their families, attended it with interest, but they merely

stood and gaped. "Won't anyone give me a bid?" asked auctioneer Sam, pointing to the dining-room table.

"Nineteen cents," Eulogio finally ventured, nor did anyone compete with him. Teófilo went as high as seven cents each for the mirrors, and the remaining pots and pans brought in spirited bids ranging from three cents to a dime.

"What about the cots and mattresses?" Sam fairly pleaded, skipping in desperation to the prize articles. "Practically new and in wonderful condition."

There was no response. Eulogio finally slipped over and whispered in his ear: "We wouldn't know what to do with them. We sleep in hammocks."

"Oh, Lord," exclaimed Sam. "I'd forgotten. I suppose we might as well give everything away. At this rate the most we can possibly make for the Museum is a couple of dollars."

The moment it was announced that the auction was free it became madly popular. Every bucket, every broom, every fork was bid for, and now the cots and mattresses went like hot cakes, although just what they were to be used for was not explained. Our guests were orderly and polite, discussing among themselves who was to get what, but they looked determined, and it was obvious that when they came to claim their bids after our departure there would be no mistakes. The auction was the strangest I've ever attended.

It was while Eulogio and Teófilo were in our house deciding who was entitled to the water pitcher that Teófilo noticed a pink slip hanging over a chair. "I think my wife would love to have that," he said shyly.

"All right." I couldn't help but laugh. "Take it for her."

With that there was a scramble. "*Please,*" begged Concepción, "may I have this?" as she picked up my tooth powder. "I'd like to have these pants," said Victor. "I could use this belt," said José Casada. "How about this, how about that," came from the others.

Sam and I quickly put aside what we absolutely needed and distributed the rest. All was well until Sam held up a new shirt

which he had bought in New York and which had turned out to be two sizes too small for him. This caused a near riot. It seemed that every man at the Sitio Conte insisted on being dressed by Brooks Brothers.

"We'll have a raffle," suggested Sam. And breaking off all but one of a number of matches, he gave them to me to hold out. José Casada looked so stricken at the prospect of losing the prize that I steered the unbroken match his way, and his ecstatic toothless grin at the result was worth any possible pangs of conscience.

When everyone had gone I took inventory and found I was left with the blouse, duck pants, socks and sneakers which I planned to wear on the trip out, one extra set of underwear, a brush and comb, a toothbrush, a bottle of Alka Seltzer, a little face powder and one lipstick. Fortunately Sam and I had a few clothes stored in Panama City, for we were both cleaned out.

The actual day of departure finally arrived. And curiously enough, although I had been thinking of nothing else for weeks, suddenly I was terribly loath to leave. Our one-room shack looked cosy and comfortable, and I was sure I'd never again have such good friends as José Casada, Teófilo and Bernabel. I even felt slightly sad at saying good-by to Teck.

We were seen off in style. Concepción was dressed up in my sweater (although it was a sizzling day), her nose covered with tooth powder and her lips smeared scarlet with my lipstick. José Casada was bursting out of his Brooks Brothers shirt, which barely reached his middle. Teófilo sported a pair of Sam's pants, and his wife, not to be outdone, was wearing my slip over her dress.

Our bags had left at dawn by oxcart and we were to pick them up at Palo Verde. Cholo had ridden into camp to escort us out and he had brought his best (and gentlest) horse for me. I climbed on while our friends stood sadly around. The men took off their hats and yelled "Good-by" and "Good morning" and "O.K." and "Bastard" (Andy's contribution), which was all the English they knew; and I cried. I didn't want to go back to civilization at all.

Conclusion

A GREAT deal is expected of an archaeologist's wife. The moment a woman gets involved with an archaeologist legally, she is supposed to take on the wisdom of the ages, a terrific interest in humanity past and present and an omniscience that must frighten the ordinary citizen. Just why this is so I have never understood. If you marry a man it is presumably because you like the man and not, necessarily, his profession. Marrying a mortician or a dentist, for instance, does not presuppose a passionate interest in and a knowledge of embalming or filling teeth. Yet an archaeologist's bride is expected to emerge from the marriage ceremony with a fullblown understanding of history, sociology, linguistics and philosophy, to say nothing of the less frivolous aspects of anatomy.

Occasionally an archaeological wife responds to this pressure and becomes so serious and so erudite that by contrast her scientific husband seems a master of frivolity. She bones up on bones, she grows a mental gray beard, her interests comprise nothing that is less than eight hundred years old. She develops an intellectual arrogance which makes her scorn to straighten the hem of her skirt, powder her nose, curl her hair, or in any way interfere with what God has seen fit to give her. With such a female, vanity flies out the window the moment archaeology flies in.

Every so often you will find the other extreme—the archaeological wife who perversely encases herself in a shell of flightiness that is

proof against any form of education. She flutters through archaeological life. She approaches a dig as if it were a reception, wearing a costume which should make even a skeleton sit up and take notice. "What's this, honey?" she gurgles, breaking off a vertebra or pushing a painted jar out of place with her toe. At this point, Honey, if he is wise, will send Mrs. Honey home, for it is obvious she has made up her mind to learn nothing. To her, B.C. is something to be avoided as assiduously as B.O.

These, though, are the exceptions, for as a rule an archaeologist's wife is a pleasant person and a better mate than most. She is a good sport and apt to have a sense of humor. Those qualities are essential; without them she won't survive long in her chosen role. For if she cannot learn to laugh about the difficulties she encounters and stand them without too many complaints, she had better go home and marry a banker or a baker or a bond salesman and live in the style to which archaeology has not accustomed her.

Some wives take to archaeological life naturally. Some have to learn. I was in the latter class and it took me longer than most. Considering that I was brought up in an atmosphere of Dutch Cleanser and taught that a bedbug was Public Enemy No. 1 and soap more important than diamonds, I suppose this was to be expected. And if my batting average is still far from perfect at least I have learned, if not to lap up discomforts, to make them as painless as possible.

Necessity is a good teacher. Take the question of food, for instance. I was weaned on a theory that if you ate something that had been exposed to dirt or touched by hands less sterile than those of a surgeon about to undertake an operation, it would make you sick. And though I soon realized the absurdity of this principle I still preferred to close my eyes to anything I suspected to be hygienically impure. No peering into kitchens for me. Let the cook keep tasting the broth with the same dirty spoon, let the chop fall on the floor—as long as I wasn't there to see it. But in many places to which archaeology leads you, neither your fastidiousness nor your digestion is spared. You see what you eat and you eat what you see—or you starve.

At one of my first meals in the backwoods of Chile I found a dead fly in my stew. "Hey," I said to the waiter in my best Spanish. "Look! Fly." The waiter, who must have been myopic, raised the plate until it was almost in contact with his nose and clucked sympathetically, whether at the fly or at me I never knew. Then he dipped in thumb and forefinger and removed the hapless intruder, returning me the purged stew. I ate nothing that meal. But the next time I found foreign matter in my food (and there was a next time and a next) I didn't call the waiter. I removed my own fly. And ate my lunch. If I'd been hungry enough I would have eaten the fly. Or the waiter's finger.

It is more difficult to get used to the insects which are a part of archaeological life, although if you follow certain rules you may be able to reduce the number and species that are out to get you. Lice, I've found, can usually be avoided if you don't get in close contact with the native population and learn to curb your enthusiasm about hugging some cute little Indian tot. Chiggers, which like to make their home underneath your toenails, can rarely fulfill this ambition if you don't amble about in bare feet, though on occasion they have been known to burrow miraculously right through your shoes. If your work takes you into the wilder parts of the country, you will run into ticks; if you live in small and primitive towns, you will almost surely encounter bedbugs. Tick bites can be kept to a minimum if you are careful about sitting down on strange logs and don't walk or ride through long grass. The only way I know to avoid bedbugs is not to go to bed.

But even if by some lucky fluke you manage to duck the assaults of these various pests, *there are always fleas!* You have about as much chance of going through an archaeological season without acquiring fleas as a man in a Turkish bath has of not perspiring. But you soon learn there is no use in letting any particular species of bug worry you, for something is going to get you no matter what you do, and once an insect has bitten, the itch is the same. Fortunately you can always scratch.

The bathroom problem is one that even philosophy cannot

simplify. When you are on a dig you usually have your own camp with adequate sanitation, but when you travel in obscure regions, sniffing for archaeological ground and hobnobbing with Indians, you live in any hotel or boardinghouse which will give you a so-called bed. And here you are apt to find life at its most miserable. "Oh, United States," you mourn, "land of running water and enamel fixtures, where there are more bathrooms per square person than anywhere in the world, why did I ever leave you?" You develop the same obsession for hygiene that a fat woman on a calory diet does for chocolate creams. And no amount of training or experience can improve the situation or make you mind it less. All you can do is take typhoid shots, put a clothespin on your nose and pray you'll soon be able to move on to more sanitary fields.

Most people go all starry-eyed as soon as they hear you are married to an archaeologist and murmur envious phrases about the wonderful and romantic life you must lead and how, secretly, archaeology is the one thing in the world they would most like to have gone in for. "Why didn't you, then?" is a question I always feel like asking. And "What's wonderful about snakes and lice? Have you ever gone three weeks without a bath? How do you go about pursuing romance?" are others.

In Panama, if Sam so much as kissed me, a technician, six workmen and a couple of cows were apt to be watching. In Guatemala, unless we kept our door open all day, we got neither light nor air, while at night the Indians frightened any romantic thoughts out of our heads. In Chile, the bathing facilities where our work took us were often so sketchy that after a few days we stayed as far away from each other as possible.

But it is only because the individuals who make glib assumptions about the glories of archaeology are themselves usually wedded to a life of comfort and ease—dreamers who yearn for adventure from the depths of an armchair—that I long to shock them. For fundamentally they are right. Archaeology *is* wonderful.

Anyone who has the time and the money can travel. The average tourist, however, flits comfortably from the Café de la Paix in Paris

to a gondola in Venice or, if he is more serious about his education, depends on Mr. Cook to organize matters and sees life with his nose in a Baedeker. I used to do a little better than that. Before I was married I spent hours and hours imbibing foreign atmosphere—visiting Soho, motoring along the Mediterranean, bicycling in Brittany, drinking beer in Munich, squirming at bull fights in Spain, ogling Norway's fiords, dislocating my neck to see Michelangelo's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel. I have gaped at the Mona Lisa, at the spires of Oxford, at the Elgin Marbles, at the Tower of Pisa, at Napoleon's tomb, at sixteen Venuses, and at ninety-five Madonnas with children. I loved every minute of it (or at least every other minute), and my trips were a good deal more comfortable than any since, but I've gotten more satisfaction and a better understanding of the people of the country (both dead and alive) out of one archaeological trip than out of all the rest of my travels put together.

On a dig you get to know everyone from the wealthiest country squire to the poorest workman swinging a pick; as well as government officials with whom you draw up a contract, bankers to whom you go for credit, storekeepers who equip you, bakers, butchers, mailmen, individuals who arrange your transportation—ranging from aeroplanes and steamships to oxcarts and mules. There is no aspect of life not yours for the seeing.

What's more, archaeology has the appeal of an Easter egg hunt or a paper chase, and it is a thousand times more exciting. For even if there are no painted hard-boiled eggs concealed behind cushions nor rhymed jingles to interpret, the suspense is greater. In archaeology neither you nor anyone else knows what you are going to find; the prize has been hidden for centuries.

No hunt has ever thrilled me as much as the first grave in Chile I was given to work on by myself. Sam was busy in a nearby trench, and when our workman's pick struck evidence of ancient remains, he told me to explore them. The tiniest pottery edge was sticking out above the surface of the ground. "Go at it slowly," said Sam. "Remove all the surrounding earth and then work in toward the object

itself, for there is no way of telling how big it may be." So I took my little trowel and my knife and carefully flicked away at the earth until I reached something solid. Bit by bit the pottery came to life; first the delicately curved rim, next the sides covered with intricate designs, then the base. And there, discovered by me (or so I felt at the time), was a magnificent painted bowl, as beautiful as any art object in a museum. What's more, it was *mine*—for the time being, anyway.

Archaeology also has the appeal of a crossword puzzle or a word game, and it is a thousand times more exciting. When you work on a game or puzzle, either you know the correct answer or you can look it up in the back of the book. In archaeology you create your own answers and conclusions.

I remember a grave in Panama which when uncovered and cleared was an apparently senseless mess. There were nine or ten skeletons laid out in parallel rows, some on top of others. There were layers upon layers of pottery, most of it smashed to bits. There were metal tools, bent and worn. There was jewelry scattered haphazardly about. And underneath everything else there were four large turtle shells.

It would be nice, if inaccurate, to be able to say that Sam took one quick glance and announced: "This is the grave of a chieftain, his two wives, his three girl friends, his three children and his favorite slave. The chief died of smallpox, one wife also contracted the disease, and the other wife as well as the rest of his entourage were given arsenic and thrown in with him. The chief had a nasty disposition and was disgustingly greedy about food. He was mean to his wives and beat up his girl friends. The only kindness he showed was to his pets, the turtles. He died in 1399 and good riddance too."

What Sam actually *did* say was: "The people who dug this grave must have had a hell of a 'killing' complex to have deliberately smashed up so many things. What a mess!" In spite of the mess, though, he was able to deduce the sex and approximate age of each skeleton, some of their religious beliefs (they were all buried with their heads facing east), the food they liked best (turtle meat, beans,

and corn), and many of their interests (the chief skeleton was buried with all the trappings of a warrior; one female had weaving instruments and another the tools for making pottery).

It is this detective work which gives archaeology its significance and its greatest fascination—to find clues and use those clues to enlarge your knowledge, to dig up a few bits of bone, of stone, of clay, and put them together to reconstruct a lost world.

That world, unfortunately, does not come to life very quickly. I have found myself dying of curiosity while on a dig, but the satisfaction I got was zero. "What does this mean?" I'd ask Sam. "How old is this grave? Why does this skeleton seem to be chewing his toe? Why did this woman own four necklaces and two bracelets and her girl friend none? Why did this man have ten females buried with him?"

And Sam would shake his head and say, "I don't know." Or, "I'd rather not commit myself until I have further information." Or, "I'm not quite sure yet." And always, "Wait until we get home." Not that the answers are sitting waiting for you at home. You've got to work to get them. The specimens that you have dug up must first be delivered to the museum, to be reassembled, cleaned, mended, drawn and photographed. Then follows a period of historical research and a study of comparative material. Months and months usually go by before you learn the inside story of Skeleton XYZ or the saga of Trench 6, Grave 14.

Toward the end of a field season, though, you forget all that looms ahead before your curiosity can be satisfied, and you feel like a mystery fan who reads a detective story in serial form and who lacks the last installment. You want to get home and find out the solution. What you want too, of course, is just to get home, for any reason at all.

Each time we wind up an archaeological trip I look forward to the same things. No scratching. Lying in bed late, soaking in a hot bath. Plumbing. Ice water and fresh milk. Raw celery and lettuce. Plumbing. Movies and theatres. Plumbing!

And what happens? About a month of these delights and I get

restless. It never fails. Sam comes home from work, sinks into a comfortable chair in his comfortable bugless apartment and tries to appear ecstatically happy. So do I. We look at each other. I usually say it first. "This is the life! It's wonderful; no doubt about it. But *when* oh *when* are we going *where*?"