

JIMMIE DRURY  
BY BURSTING FLASH BULBS

*by*  
DAVID O'HARA



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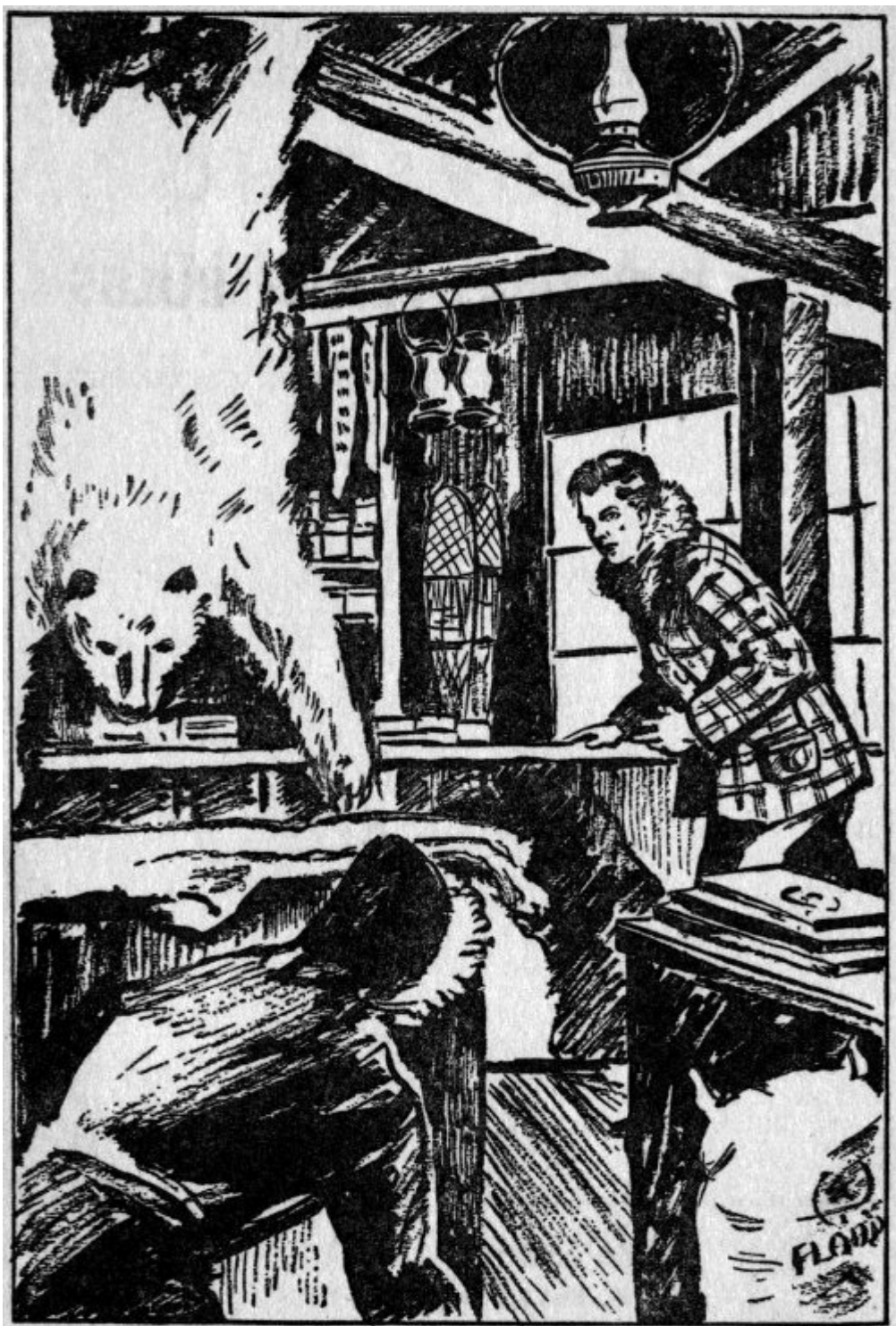


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FROM BEHIND A PILE OF SKINS A PAIR OF DARK EYES  
WERE STARING AT HIM. ([Page 20](#))

*A JIMMIE DRURY MYSTERY*

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# BY BURSTING FLASH BULBS

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# BY BURSTING FLASH BULBS

# **JIMMIE DRURY: BY BURSTING FLASH BULBS**

## **CHAPTER I A FACE IN THE DARK**

Jimmy Drury stirred in his sleep, then lay on his cot half-awake. His surroundings were strange, perhaps the strangest he had ever known. He realized this only as in a dream. Eyes half-open, he saw a beam of light. Crossed by this beam was a face. Jimmy had never before seen that face. The man was an Oriental, no doubt of that, though he wore a blue shirt and a bright red tie.

Jimmy wondered vaguely why the man was there. On his cot, not an arm's length away, slept old Tim MacMurray.

Before they fell asleep Jimmy had said to Tim:

2

“Don't you lock your cabin before you go to bed?”

Tim had laughed as he exclaimed:

“Bless you no, lad! There's nothin' to steal in this cabin. An' besides, up here in the North there's not a soul would steal.”

This memory was enough for Jimmy. “Nothing to steal? No one to steal it,” he thought. He looked at the beam of light. The face was gone. Probably one of Tim’s many friends had looked in to see if he were asleep. In this summer land of short nights, or no nights at all, people did things like that. With a sigh of content Jimmy journeyed back to the land of dreams. But his awakening was to be of quite a different nature—not at all happy and peaceful.

Jimmy was far from home, the farthest he had ever been. He had graduated from high school early in the spring. It was still spring in Alaska, five thousand miles from his home. Such is the magic of travel by air.

Jimmy’s uncle, John Drury—“Captain Jack” every one called him—was captain of a small coast guard cutter serving the coast of Alaska. As a graduation present he had arranged the trip for Jimmy from his home in Illinois to Nome, far north in Alaska. 3

Jimmy was in Nome now, sleeping in Tim’s cabin. Tim spent little time in this cabin. He lived for the most part on a stern-wheel river steamer. The steamer had not traveled a knot in ten years, but that did not matter to Tim. The *Sally Ann* was still his ship and he was proud of her. Jimmy had met Tim, who had come to Nome in ’97, in a small village below Nome, and had liked him. Tim had come to Nome on Jimmy’s boat. Jimmy had begged permission to come ashore and stay with Tim in his cabin. So here he was. And the strange face had disappeared from the beam of light.

The beam of light came, not from a street lamp, but from real

daylight. There was still a short night in Nome, three or four hours long, but that's not enough for a night's sleep. So Tim's windows were darkened, and that beam of light had stolen in from the outside.

Tim's cabin was a half mile from the edge of the little city. There was nothing to disturb Jimmy, nothing but that face, and it hadn't disturbed him much. He and Tim slept on.

On board the coast guard cutter *Seminole* Jimmy's uncle, Captain Jack, was saying to Louis McCarthy, his able first mate, "I hope Jimmy has not forgotten to mail those letters. They're rather important, secret government stuff, you know." 4

And Louis McCarthy, who seldom made a mistake, said, "He can't have mailed them yet, sir. The post office is closed."

"That's a fact," the captain agreed.

Just about that time in the cabin on shore Tim MacMurray began to stir. He sat up and looked around. "Still sleepin'!" he murmured, looking at Jimmy. "It's great to be young. It sure is."

At that Jimmy too stirred a bit in his bed. Then he sat up.

"Tim," he said, "did I see some sort of Oriental chap here while you were asleep, or was I dreaming?"

"Dreamin', you sure was," said Tim. "There's been no one here."

"But you've got a friend, an Oriental, or something, for a friend?" Jimmy insisted.

“Never an Oriental,” Tim insisted. “I don’t exactly like ’em.”

“Tim, when does the post office open?” Jimmy’s mind had taken another turn. He sprang out of bed.

5

“Open right now,” said Tim, reaching for a crock of sourdough batter.

“O.K. I’ll hurry into my clothes and race right down there,” Jimmy said. “Boat sails today. Got some letters to mail for Captain Jack. Should have mailed them last night but the post office—” Jimmy stopped short to dig deep into the pocket of his leather coat.

“Say-ee!” he whispered hoarsely. “Those letters are gone! And they were franked letters, not just stamped. Government messages, that’s what they were. Important. Say, now!” He dropped into a chair. “Now I’m in for it!”

“Look good.” The old man’s brow wrinkled. “Look into all your pockets. You’re foolin’,” said Tim. “Foolin’ yourself, maybe.”

“No.” Jimmy was sure about it. “That man took them. That Oriental.”

“What man? I tell you there wasn’t anybody,” Tim insisted.

“All the same,” said Jimmy after a thorough search, “they’re gone, those letters are gone. And that means no sourdough pancakes for me. I’ve got to get right out to the boat and report.”

“I’ll row you out,” said Tim.

6

“There’re two pairs of oars. We’ll double up,” Jimmy suggested.

Arrived at the sandy beach they found something of a surf rolling in. By the time they had launched the heavy boat they were both soaked to the skin.

“It—it’s them Orientals,” Tim breathed as he pulled at the oars.

Jimmy made no reply. He was thinking hard. Nor were his thoughts happy ones. How he had anticipated this visit to arctic shores! A whole summer on a coast guard cutter! What a grand experience! And now? Right off the bat he had pulled an unforgivable boner. He had forgotten those letters. Tim’s assurance that there was nothing to steal, and no one to steal it, had disarmed him.

“Nothing to steal!” he exclaimed softly. “Only those letters. But then—” He started, and almost lost an oar. He got out of step and hit Tim’s oar a resounding thwack. Then he recovered his thoughts and resumed his steady pull at the oars.

The question that had struck him all of a heap was “Why would anyone steal those letters?” There was no money in them, he was sure of that. He had seen them sealed. It looked like the work of spies. With a sudden turn his thoughts went back to Chicago, to Peter Grim, the camera shop, the big spy, the little spy, and all the rest. But this was Alaska, five thousand miles away. Were there spies everywhere?

7

No more time for thinking. They were nearing the cutter. They

would have to swing about and try to come in without cracking the ribs of Tim's boat.

Fifteen minutes later Jimmy was in his uncle's cabin. The shutters were down, the door fast closed.

"I'm glad you came to me at once, Jimmy." The slim gray-haired, sun-browed captain greeted them with a smile. "Some boys would have put it off, hoping for a run of luck, believing they would come across the Oriental, or that the letters weren't really lost. Letters are sometimes lost in the mail. Who would know that these were not? That's the way they'd reason. And in the end they'd never tell at all. And perhaps no one would be the wiser.

"But, Jimmy"—the captain's eyes shone—"they'd know! And they'd not soon forget. They'd know that they were cowards. It's a terrible thing to live with a coward for a long time, Jimmy." Captain Jack's voice changed. "The letters are not tremendously important. Perhaps," he said thoughtfully, "it may have been fortunate that they were lost. Perhaps Lady Luck took a hand." 8

"I—I don't understand," the boy stammered.

"Of course not." The captain leaned forward. On his strong, thin, sun-tanned face there was a look of utter seriousness now. "Jimmy, this is the fifth time within a year that our mail has been stolen. In all other cases the theft has been from locked pouches on board ships. But this time it is on land, in a small city. Jimmy," his voice rose, "could you tell that man if you saw him?"



“I—I think so—you know it’s strange,” the boy went on eagerly, “up here people’s faces seem so—so sort of calm, like—like a smooth sea at dawn.”

“Yes, I understand. People are like that in quiet places,” was his uncle’s reply. “Perhaps that’s the way God intended us all to be.”

“But this man, this Oriental,” Jimmy exclaimed, “he wasn’t like that at all. His face was all tight and tense like—like \_\_\_\_\_”

9

“Like the men you see in big cities,” his uncle supplemented. “Sort of savage?”

“Yes, like that.”

“Sometimes,” his uncle’s face bore a strange smile, “I think all the real savages live in large cities where people want so many things and have to fight so hard to get them. They fight and fight until their faces grow tense and hard. Up here, well, we’re different, that’s all.

“But this Oriental.” His voice took on a businesslike tone. “I want you to help us get that man. *Get that spy*. Make that your slogan. If you do that it will be a real service.”

“I—I’d like to,” the boy stammered. “But how?”

“First of all”—Captain Jack rose, “go back into the city and comb the place for Orientals. There are not many of them. Ask to see them all. Demand it, if need be. Look them over. See if you recognize one of them as your man. Then report back to

me.”

“Right,” said Jimmy. “I’ll go at once.”

“That’s the stuff. Had your breakfast?” his uncle asked.

“No, but Tim has sourdough pancakes stirred up.”

10

“Good!” Captain Jack laughed. “They’re good enough for anyone. Hot cakes and bacon. They stick to your ribs. See you later. I wish you luck.” His hand was on the boy’s shoulder as he let him out of the cabin.

“One fine man, that uncle of mine,” Jimmy thought with something very like tears in his eyes.

11

## CHAPTER II

### JIMMY ENTERS A NEW WORLD

Ably supported by old Tim who knew “them Orientals, every mother’s son of ’em,” Jimmy went the rounds of the city. From small hand laundries he passed to restaurants where salmon, trout and reindeer steaks were served, and from there to a small curio shop presided over by an ancient Oriental.

Some of these brown men favored Jimmy with a stare, some were completely indifferent to his desire to see all the men in their places of business.

“Well,” Tim sighed at last, “there’s just one more place and it’s run by the boss of the lot, that’s Koto Koto. He’s rich, Koto is, and seems to hold some sort of power over the rest of the blinkin’ lot. We’ll go have a looksee at him.”

“Rich and powerful,” Jimmy thought as a thrill ran up his spine, “that’s my man!”

However, when he entered the gilded palace where the rich one served food to patrons who could afford to pay fancy prices, Jimmy found himself once more facing defeat. The features of Koto were sharp and shrewd enough, but they lacked the tenseness registered in the night intruder’s face.

12

“You’ve got some other fellows workin’ fer you here,” said Tim. “Trot ’em out.”

“Why?” There was a bland look of defiance on the small dark face of Koto.

“Inspection,” said Tim.

“Oh, yeah?” Koto knew American slang—last year’s vintage.

“Yes.” Tim spoke sharply. “This young man is from the *Seminole*, Captain Jack’s boat. He’s lookin’ over the foreigners in this bloomin’ port. See?”

Koto’s dark eyes half closed. “Captain Jack!” came in a hissing whisper from his lips. Pressing three buttons in a row, he caused three small brown men to pop out of three doors, for all the world as if they were on springs.

Jimmy looked them over with one sweeping glance. Then he said, “Is that all?”

“No more,” replied Koto.

“O.K.,” said Jimmy. A moment later they were out on the board walk once more.

“Well,” Jimmy sighed, “that beats us. The man we’re looking for doesn’t seem to be in town. But he sure was last night. And how!”

13

“We’ll go see Bill Bowman,” said Tim. “He’s mighty near boss of this country. Owns a tradin’ store an’ most a million reindeer, I reckon. Knows everybody, he does. Might be some Oriental I’ve missed.”

Ten minutes later they entered a long, low building smelling of smoked fish, raw furs, bacon and kerosene. This was Bill Bowman's store.

A girl with smiling blue eyes greeted them from behind the counter.

"Hello, Tim," she exclaimed. "You back in town? How's the *Sally Ann*?"

"Shipshape an' ready to sail," was Tim's quick retort. "Come on down. We'll fire her up an' go fer a ride.

"Look, Molly," Tim dropped his bantering tone, "this is Jimmy Drury."

"I'm pleased to meet you," said Molly.

"Thanks, I—the pleasure is all mine," Jimmy managed to stammer. Why was he always fussed by strange girls?

"This is Bill Bowman's girl," Tim explained to him. "The finest dog musher in the country, an' mighty near the best sailor. Calls her boat the *Eider*, she does. An' it's the right name. It sure is a graceful bit of craft.

14

"But, Molly," his voice was all business again, "where's your dad?"

"In the loft," said Molly. "Wait. I'll call him." Stepping to the foot of a rough flight of stairs, she shouted:

"Who-hoo! Who-hoo!"

After a brief pause there came a muffled “Who-hoo.”

“He’ll be here in a minute,” said the girl. “Won’t you sit down?” She indicated well-worn chairs beside the huge stove.

Just then a native woman entered, held up five fingers, then muttered “Capseta pee-luk.”

“She wants sugar,” Tim explained to Jimmy, “five pounds.”

A few minutes later Bill Bowman, a big, gruff, red-faced man with a ready smile and a low voice, came in. He greeted Tim as an old friend and gave Jimmy a hearty welcome because he was kin to Captain Jack.

“You’ve seen them all,” he stated emphatically when Tim had called off the Orientals they had inspected. “That is,” Bill added dryly, “all that I know about. We’re only a hundred and fifty miles from Bering Straits, you know. The Straits are the crossroads between two worlds, always were and always will be. This whole continent was populated in the early days by little brown men crossing the Straits. Red men! Thunder! Scientists tell us they’re all yellow men, Orientals.”

15

“All the same,” he added, “I shouldn’t wonder if you’d seen them all this time.”

“All but one,” Jimmy corrected. In a low, quiet voice he told Bill Bowman of his experience in Tim’s cabin and the theft of the letters.

“Whew!” Bill whistled between his teeth. “That’s important. I’m glad you told me. We’ll all have an eye out for some

stranger. You know, Jimmy, we'll do everything we can to help —excuse me," he broke off. "There's Sinrock Mary. She's got a brace of fine white fox skins to trade for eats. I'll be with you again soon.

"And by the way," he flashed a look up the rough wooden stairway, "ever see a trader's storeroom, Jimmy?"

"No, I——"

16

"Go on up," he invited. "You'll be interested. Good as a museum."

"Yes, do," Molly Bowman urged. "I'll come up and show you some of the special things, ivory carvings, native bowls, and the like, soon as I weigh out some flour and sugar for Attatak." She nodded toward a dark-eyed native girl.

"I—I'd like to go up," said Jimmy, little dreaming that in that same breath he was letting himself into a strange new world of mystery and great enchantment.

17

## CHAPTER III

### THOUSAND DOLLAR EGGS

A feeling of mystery swept over Jimmy like a whiff of hot air from a June day sun the moment he had climbed that well-worn stairway and stood in the huge, dim-lit loft. The sense of mystery was connected with a feeling that had come over him in many places, merely a suspicion that in some great, empty space he was not alone.

It was not a feeling that there were spirits about, the spirits of dead men. Jimmy had his own notions about such things, rather vague notions. But for the moment he had a feeling that there was some living, breathing human being in the loft. And this disturbed him. Nothing had been said of anyone being there. Certainly as he allowed his eyes to wander from corner to corner of the vast loft, packed to the rafters with strange northern treasures, he saw no one.

“Oh, well,” he thought, “what if there is someone here?”  
And for the moment he shook himself free from that disturbing sense of mystery.

18

At once a new feeling swept over him, a feeling that this great loft was haunted by spirits of the past. He was looking at great piles of raw furs—fox, mink, seal, deer skins. The walls were lined with native garments, skin boats, parkas, bearskin trousers. In one corner were piles upon piles of boxes from which ivory walrus tusks protruded. The ceiling and walls of the place were dark with age and smoke.



How long had this building stood here? He did not know. Nome had seen a disastrous fire. But this building must have been saved.

Nome's splendor was fading now, but she had seen a glorious past. A city of twenty thousand, she had watched men rush away across the tundra in search of gold. As Jimmy stood there he seemed to hear them tramping up those stairs, scores on scores of them, examining parkas and skin boots, trying them on, selecting the ones they could best use; looking over sleeping bags; tramping about here and there. At last he seemed to hear them tramping back down the stairs, rattling money on the counter, silver and gold; then tramping out into the cold arctic night, perhaps never to return.

“I wish,” he whispered, “I only wish I might have been here in those exciting gold days. I wish——”

19

He stopped suddenly. Had he caught a sound, a stealthy movement? He thought so. And yet . . . From below came the murmur of voices and the merry cackling laughter of some Eskimo woman. This feeling of mystery was nonsense. He'd shake himself free of it. But not for long.

Having been invited to look the place over he proceeded to do so. He marveled at the size and beauty of the white fox pelts, examined with interest the ladies' parkas made with great care and more than a touch of art by native women. He stopped to gaze with real surprise and astonishment at a white bearskin suspended from the rafters. It was, he thought, a full twelve feet long. He measured the distance between the ears.

“Fourteen inches.” He let out a whistle. “I’d hate to meet that old boy on a dark night among the ice floes,” he murmured low. As he closed his eyes he could picture great jagged heaps of ice amid broad stretches of white cakes roofing the ocean, and seemed to see this white monster following in the track of the hunter. He had passed over just such ice floes as this coming up in the mail plane. What a strange, fascinating world this northland was. What——

His thoughts were broken in upon again. Had he caught the sound of a low grunt close at hand?

20

“What if I did?” he asked himself almost angrily.

Here were the boxes of carved ivory. The cribbage boards with carvings of dog teams and men, of walrus and their hunters, and of white fox and ptarmigan, were very attractive and cleverly done, but the carvers had been taught by white men.

In a dust laden box he found something truly rare. A broken bit of ancient ivory dug from the sand, where it had lain buried for hundreds of years, had been carved into the most fantastic and intricate designs. Walrus, polar bears and human beings were all there, woven and interwoven together.

“Ah!” he breathed. “Professor Cole would love this! I must get it for him. I——”

Once again his thoughts were interrupted. Little wonder, for, from behind a pile of skins, a pair of very dark eyes were staring at him from the shadows.

Appearing to realize that he had been seen, the man uttered a low grunt, then stood straight up. He was a native, dressed in skins. To Jimmy he was more than just another native. His was an unusual face. Jimmy had been here long enough to see a hundred Eskimo. None had been like this one. With the slow shuffling gait of a native, the man moved away. At the head of the stairs he paused in a bright spot of sunlight to look down to the room below. It was then that like a flash Jimmy swung his candid camera from beneath his coat and snapped it, not once but twice.

“Dr. Cole asked me to get a number of pictures for him, native types,” he reminded himself. “I’ll begin with this fellow.”

But now someone was coming up the stairs and the native was going down. It was that girl, Molly, coming up. With her bright golden hair, her round cheerful face and sturdy stride, she formed a strange contrast to the shuffling native. As they met the native said: “Hullo!”

“Hello!” the girl replied with a smile. And so they passed on the stairs.

“Who was that man?” Jimmy asked in a tense whisper as the girl reached his side.

“I don’t really know. Some King’s Islander, that’s all,” was her indifferent reply. “Probably wants to buy a wolverine skin for trimming parkas.”

“But he’s different from any native I’ve ever seen,” Jimmy insisted.

“Yes, I suppose so,” said the girl. “The King’s Island crowd are different. They’re stronger, keener, a rather superior lot. Father is using some of them as reindeer herders, just a special tribe of them. It’s astonishing how they catch on. Father thinks they are from quite another race.”

“I shouldn’t wonder,” said Jimmy, and instantly wondered why he had said it. “Look!” he exclaimed. “I found this in that dusty old box. It’s really rare. I want to buy it.”

“Father will sell it to you for a song,” she laughed. “That’s our scrap heap. We trade flour, sugar, sled material and other goods for ivory work, then send them out to dealers. But some things don’t make a hit. Here’s another dead one.” She held up one more piece that was carved with twisting and intricate designs.

“Dragons!” Jimmy exclaimed. “That’s what’s on it, a dozen of them, all set with green eyes. What do Eskimos know about dragons?”

“That’s what everyone wants to know. That’s why they won’t buy it. But the truth is,” the girl’s voice changed, “the very earliest carvings done by Eskimos show dragons. That proves they’re Orientals, doesn’t it?”

23

“Looks that way,” said Jimmy. “I’ll take this dragon one. I like the green eyes.”

“Where did this carving of dragons come from?” Timmy asked Bill Bowman when they were again on the ground floor.

“King’s Island,” said the trader.

“King’s Island?” Jimmy exclaimed. “They must be smart people.”

“Sure are,” said Bill. “They’re close to the Asiatic shores, perhaps that’s why. Another interesting thing.” He took up the piece of ivory. “See those green eyes? That’s jade. And it didn’t come from America, either. That kind is found only in the Orient.”

“That’s queer,” said Jimmy. Once he had made his purchase and thrust the ivory carving in his pocket, he forgot the jade, but not for good and all.

“I’m going to our reindeer herd tomorrow,” said Molly. “Want to go along? Our herd is truly worth looking at.”

“I—I’d like to,” said Jimmy. “That is, if the *Seminole* remains in port. I—I’m sort of attached to her, you know.”

24

“Find out and let me know,” said Molly. “We’ll go by pupmobile.”

“Pupmobile? What’s that?” Jimmy stared.

“Wait and see,” she laughed.

“O.K. I’ll be seeing you if the *Seminole* is still on your sand bar.”

As Jimmy stepped out of the store he all but ran into a tall, slim youth. “A typical college boy of the bookish type,” was his mental comment. The young man wore a belted knicker suit.

“Oh, I say!” he exclaimed. “I’m told you are from the *Seminole*.”

“I’m with my uncle, Captain Jack,” said Jimmy.

“I just arrived by plane,” said the stranger. “Name’s Lancelot Lawson. Don’t let the name bother you. Folks just call me Lance,” he chuckled. “I’ve been told one may travel by coast guard cutter if it is arranged. Do you think it could be arranged? I’m on a hunt for some thousand dollar eggs. You go to the islands, do you not? These eggs might be found there.”

“Let me know when you find them,” Jimmy laughed. “I’d like one for breakfast.”

“No, but I’m serious,” Lance protested. “Never more so. I’ll tell you all about it some time. Do you think it could be arranged?”

25

“The trip on the *Seminole*?” Jimmy thought a moment. There were, he knew, some empty berths in the after cabin. “It might,” he replied slowly. “You’ll have to pay for your eats.”

“Oh, most assuredly!” Lance made a phantom pass at his purse.

“I’ll talk to my uncle about it,” said Jimmy. “I’ll look you up. Staying at the hotel, I suppose.”

“Oh, sure. I’ll be no end grateful. I——”

But Jimmy was gone, and as he went he mumbled “Thousand dollar eggs! This northland is a place of strange dreams. And they say that some of them actually come true!”



## CHAPTER IV

### A FLASH IN THE DARK

After borrowing a pair of rubber boots for launching his boat Jimmy rowed out to the *Seminole* where he made a report to his uncle.

“It’s the strangest thing!” he exclaimed. “They say I’ve seen every one of those little brown men from across the sea and not one of them resembles the man I saw in Tim’s cabin. Except—” he hesitated.

“Except what?” inquired his uncle.

“That fellow I saw in the trading post loft. He wasn’t the man, a long way from it, but there was a sort of resemblance. But then,” he laughed at his own strange notions, “he was a native, not really a foreigner at all.”

“Keep on looking,” advised Captain Jack. “We shall be here two days longer, perhaps three.”

“That’s swell!” Jimmy exclaimed. “Then I can have my pupmobile ride.”

“What’s that?” His uncle stared, just as he had done.

27

“I’ll tell you when I find out,” the boy grinned. “I’m to have that ride with Molly Bowman.”

“Oh! It’s Molly, is it?” His uncle favored him with a wise-as-



an-owl look. “Well, son, Molly’s a fine girl. I never knew anyone who seemed so to belong to this country. Dog teams, reindeer, sailboats—they’re all the same to her. You’ll like her.”

“I already do,” Jimmy admitted frankly. “But, Captain Jack,” he liked that name—“there’s a young college fellow on shore who wants to take a trip with us, says he’s looking for some thousand dollar eggs.”

“Of course,” said his uncle. “So are we all, looking for the goose that lays the golden eggs. There is one too. It’s known as Ross’s snow goose.”

“Oh!” said Timmy in some surprise. “So it’s true?”

“Certainly it is.”

“Then may he come along?” Jimmy’s tone was eager now. “We might find a nestful together. Then, ah! The grand cameras I’ll buy!”

“No harm in bringing him along,” his uncle agreed. “You explained about his paying for his eats?”

28

“Sure did.”

“All right, then, bring him aboard any time.”

“I’m going to Tim’s to sleep tonight,” said Jimmy. “Want to look around a little at night.”

“Short night. You’ll have to hurry,” said Captain Jack.

Ten minutes later, just as the shadows were falling on the dim-lit distant shore line of that strange mysterious little city of the great North, Jimmy found himself rowing over the dark rippling sea.

“The sea,” he thought. “How it sort of seems to haunt you! How the little waves whisper as they pass. They seem to want to tell of the past and of the men who came here to find gold and found instead an unmarked grave somewhere way back there where the North really begins.”

As his boat touched the sandy beach and he waded ashore, the wavelets were whispering still.

Jimmy had his pockets stuffed with flash bulbs. A particular kind of flashlight for shooting them hung at his belt. Dr. Cole, one of the curators of the Field Museum in Chicago, was a college mate and close friend of his father. Before leaving for the North, Jimmy had spent many hours in the museum's display relating to Eskimo life. The doctor had asked him to get many pictures of native life as it is to be seen today. Jimmy was prepared to keep his promise.

29

That night the sandspit along the beach at the edge of Nome seemed to Jimmy to be a chapter taken from another age. Natives from the mainlands of Alaska and Siberia and from half a dozen islands were camped there. With the thirty-five-foot skin boats turned over them for shelter, they sat about cheerful, gleaming fires of driftwood. From one corner came the drone of an ancient victrola, and from another the Ki-yi-yi-um-ah-ah of a native song. Everywhere there was chatter and laughter.

“How happy and free they are,” Jimmy thought. He almost envied them that freedom. As he thought of his father sitting by his lamp on the screened front porch, figuring out bills and accounts, always a little worried about making both ends meet, he was wrapped in silent wonder.

“Picture?” he pointed at his camera as he came to a particularly hilarious group.

“All right,” said a dark-faced man. “You give two bits. Mebby all right.”

“Sure!” Jimmy exclaimed. “Here’s your quarter. Now. Everybody smile.” He stepped back, took a squint, held his flashlight aloft, and flash—bang—the thing was done.

30

“King’s Islanders?” he asked.

“No me,” said an Eskimo woman. “Uba.” She nodded down the beaten path that led past other encampments.

When he had taken one more picture and passed six more upturned boats, Jimmy came to an encampment quite remote from the others. “This,” he thought with a little tremor of mystery and excitement “must be the King’s Islanders camp. But how still and deserted it is! Must all be gone.

“No,” he thought a moment later. “There’s light coming through a crack.” Great stretches of walrus skin had been drawn down before a large skin boat, completely closing it in.

“Hi there!” he called. No answer. “Hey!” Still no answer.

“Confound ’em,” he thought. “They’re in Nome, not in their native village. They don’t need to be so secretive. Or do they? I wonder . . .”

There was very low light inside, only a seal-oil lamp, perhaps. He stepped to a broad crack and tried to peer in. He could see nothing. He fancied he heard low whispers, but could not be sure.

31

“I’ll fix ’em,” he whispered. Without giving the matter a second thought he set his camera, held it before the opening, thrust a flash bulb into the place and touched the button.

The results were instantaneous and terrific. There came the roar of men’s voices and the big skin boat fairly rocked as the boy dashed away. He had not gone a dozen paces in the darkness when he fell over an empty steel barrel. To his consternation, the barrel let out a roar all its own.

Just in time he remembered that these barrels were summer dog kennels. Without attempting to rise, he rolled over and over. When the savage, snapping dog chained to the barrel turned a somersault because he had come to the end of his chain, he kicked Jimmy in the face but did him no real harm.

Ten seconds later the boy was on his feet and away. But where to? He did not know this part of town. Just anywhere then. He sped on.

Was he followed? He paused at last to listen. Fancying he heard soft, padded footsteps, he once more raced away.

32

Coming at last to a broad road he stopped to get his breath.

Bending low, that he might see any form outlined against a stretch of light sky, he looked and listened.

“No one,” he murmured. “Just my imagination.”

He started walking. Then he recognized the road. It led to Tim’s cabin. Great luck!

“Some stunt,” he murmured after a time. “Regular schoolboy trick. Like ringing door-bells and beating it.

“And yet,” he added soberly——

When he told Tim his story, the old man shook his head. “You oughtn’t to antagonize ’em,” he said.

“I guess it was a mistake shooting that picture,” Jimmy admitted. “All the same, I’d like to know what I’ve got on that film.”

Well, he wouldn’t know, not right away. Tomorrow he was to visit a reindeer herd and take a pupmobile ride with Molly. It was a great little world. With these thoughts he went off to the land of dreams. And that night no dark-faced little brown man entered Tim’s cabin.

## CHAPTER V

### MOLLY'S PUPMOBILE

Next morning, after a hearty breakfast of hot cakes, bacon and coffee, Jimmy emerged from Tim's cabin into a changed world, a world of gray fog. The city, the sea, the *Seminole*, all were lost to his view. Only the cabin and the short stretch of road lay before him.

"Well," he sighed, "I'll be going into town." Drawing on his heavy raincoat, he prepared to leave. "Don't look for me until you see me," he warned.

"The latchstring's always on the outside," said Tim. "Come an' go as you bloomin' well please. I'm too old to worry much about a young chap of your build."

Jimmy found Molly at the trading post. A smile of approval overspread his face. Very high boots laced to the knees, a bright plaid skirt, a brighter shirt and still brighter smiling eyes were what he saw.

"Shall we go?" she asked.

"Why not?"

34

"It's likely to rain and blow, perhaps snow—we never can tell. But we won't melt!" she laughed.

"The best way to enjoy a rainy day is to get out in it," said Jimmy.

“That’s right. Let’s go.” And off they went.

Jimmy was still wondering about the pupmobile. He did not wonder long. From some neatly kept kennels at the back of the store Molly led six small black dogs. These were on leashes. Marching on ahead of them, like a king, was the largest gray wolfhound Jimmy had ever seen.

“Jimmy, this is Buck,” said the girl, introducing the big dog as if he were a man. “We named him after Jack London’s dog in the *Call of the Wild*. That’s a wonderful book. And Buck is like the dog in that book. He wanders away sometimes for days at a time. He came to our home and scratched at our door one bitter cold night. No one’s ever claimed him. His past is shrouded in mystery,” she ended with a dramatic flourish. “Perhaps you can solve it.”

The big dog marched up to Jimmy, placed his damp nose against Jimmy’s hand, gave a loud sniff, then lifted his head for a pat, at the same time looking the boy squarely in the eyes.

35

“He likes you,” the girl cried. “He’s adopted you. That’s the way he does it. He’s your dog and mine. He’ll befriend you—fight for you, die for you, if need be. That’s the way he is.”

“Good,” said Jimmy. “I may need a friend sooner than you think. And one who’ll die for me, too.” He did not smile.

He was not long in finding out just what the pupmobile might be. After walking a few blocks they came to a narrow gauge steel track that ran away across the tundra. From a low shed, with Jimmy’s help, Molly pushed a small flat four-wheeled car

onto the rails. After that she hitched the six black pups to the car.

“All aboard,” she shouted gaily. At once Buck climbed onto the car. He was followed by Jimmy and Molly.

“Mush!” shouted Molly. The six pups sprang into the harness, and they were off.

“This road served the mines of the Kongarok district once,” Molly shouted above the noise of the rattling, squealing wheels and the yip-yipping dogs. “Now it serves mostly me. The mines are a dream of the past.”

Jimmy thought the pupmobile a clever invention. He was in for a lark, he could see that, and was glad of it.

36

“This is fine,” he thought. “But the car has no brakes. We’re going up hill. Pretty soon we’ll be going down. And then?”

He decided to wait and see. What he saw when the time came amused him a great deal. When at last they were at the crest of the long, low hill that sloped away for a full half mile, the car came to a standstill. Molly dropped off at the back. Instantly the six pups turned about to climb aboard. There was so little room that Jimmy was all but crowded off. “What now?” he thought.

With mouths wide-open in broad grins, the six pups turned round to stare at Molly as if to say:

“We’re all set. What are we waiting for?”



Molly gave the car a push, then climbed aboard. At once, with its load of dogs and humans, the car began to move, slowly at first, then faster and faster they glided along. And the faster they went the louder was the chorus of howls that came from the delighted pups.

“This is great,” Jimmy shouted. “But suppose we scare up a rabbit?”

“Once we did,” the girl laughed. “One of the pups jumped off and was run over. I think they’ve learned their lesson.”

37

Three more up and three more joyous downward glides and they sighted a small tented city and a great herd of brown and spotted creatures that dotted the hillside.

“That,” said the girl with a touch of pride, “is one of our reindeer herds.”

The tented camp was located some distance above them on a hill. They had a stiff climb of a quarter of a mile to reach it. They were approaching the first tent when Jimmy and Buck both came to a sudden halt. Buck uttered a low growl. Jimmy reached first for his exposure meter then his camera. A look, a shift of the hand, a click, and he had taken a picture.

“Buck!” the girl exclaimed sharply as the dog growled again. “What’s gotten into the dog, barking at one of our men?”

Just then a dark-faced native in parka and skin trousers passed them. He smiled, but somehow Jimmy did not like the smile.

“He’s a King’s Islander, isn’t he?” said Jimmy. “I took his picture.”

“Yes,” said the girl. “He’s a very good man. All the men from King’s Island are. Father is practically turning over three of our herds to their care.”

“I wonder—” Jimmy did not finish.

“What, Jimmy?”

“Just nothing, I guess. It’s a queer world.

“Know anything about cameras?” he asked.

“Yes. Quite a lot. I’m a regular camera bug. Got a darkroom and everything.”

“Good!” said Jimmy. “I took a picture, a rather strange one, last night.” He told her about the flash in the dark.

“You’ll get yourself in trouble,” said Molly.

“I most generally do,” said Jimmy. “And it seems it’s never quite my fault.” He told her of the mysterious face in the dark and the stolen letters.

“That’s important.” Her face was sober. “Father has told me a little about the robbing of the mails. He says there’s sure to be a big war, sooner or later. Do you think there will be a war, Jimmy?”

“I hope not. But if there is to be one we should be prepared.

“But Molly!” he exclaimed. “You were going to show me my first reindeer herd, and here we are talking about war. War is far away! The reindeer are here! Show me, Molly, show me!”

39

“Sure I will,” she exclaimed, “Come on! Let’s go!”

40

## CHAPTER VI

### THE TATTOOED MAN

For three hours after that Jimmy learned about reindeer. He found Molly an able instructor. Sometimes for weeks on end she had remained with the herd. The Eskimo girls were so simple, so kind and jolly that to her life in the camp was all pure fun.

From time to time she paused to ask some herder about the deer, the number they had lost during the winter, the number of strange deer from other herds that had wandered in, and all manner of questions.

At last, leaving a low valley, they climbed back to the camp.

“Look!” Molly exclaimed. “The fog is gone. A storm is coming up. The sea is growing rough. Your boat is running for shelter behind Sledge Island!”

All this Jimmy realized as he studied the scene before him—the city far below, the sea, and the rolling clouds beyond. She was right about the storm.

41

“We’ll stay at the camp for the night,” said the girl. “You can’t get back to the cutter. You’ll find it cozy and jolly here.”

Two hours later as the wind whipped at their tent and rain came pelting down, Molly laid out one sleeping bag for a seat and others for back rests.

“This,” she sighed as they settled down on the seat “is the life.”

As the moments passed Jimmy was ready to agree. Before them a Yukon stove made of heavy sheet iron gave off its cheering warmth. Between them, looking up first at one, then the other, and registering his approval of each with his lolling red tongue, was Buck, the great gray dog.

They talked as young people will of many things. He told of big city life, she of the life they lived in her great white world.

From time to time, as they lapsed into silence, Jimmy found his thoughts drifting back to the stolen letters; the picture he had snapped the night before; the possibilities of a great war; and, last but not least, the terribly efficient and very mysterious King’s Islanders.

“It must be pretty cold up here around Christmas time,” he suggested at last.

42

“Cold? Oh, yes.” The girl’s eyes took on a dreamy look. “Yes, but it’s wonderful—you have no idea how grand it is.

“The moisture is all frozen out of the air. Sawtooth Mountain lies away in the distance—a lot of triangles, half of them pale yellow. That’s the sunny side. The shady sides are deep purple. And sometimes they’re smoking, those mountains, like volcanoes. That’s the snow blowing half a mile high from their peaks. Would you like to be up there then?”

“I’ll say not.” Jimmy shuddered.

“Down here it’s glorious,” the girl went on. “The beach, for as

many miles as you want to go, is covered with ice and hard-packed snow. It glistens—that ocean trail fairly smiles up at you. And the sled runners sing-sing the song of the North. The yip-yip of the dogs, the jingle of sleigh bells, the bite of frost on your cheek—oh, it’s glorious!” She drew a long, full breath.

“Know what I did?” she asked with a broad smile.

“No, what?”

“After I graduated from high school Dad sent me to college down in the States—one of those swell schools for girls. He could do that. Dad’s really got some money. Not much, but enough for that. Made it right here in Alaska, too.” The girl’s voice rose proudly.

43

“Well,” she sighed. “I stood it—the school, I mean—until Christmas. Then Dad sent me a check for Christmas shopping and the like—you know.

“Well,” she sighed, “I sat down and looked at that check. I thought of the girls around me, nice girls, but sort of soft. Then I thought of my pals up here, good, glorious pals. I thought of old Buck here.” She patted his head. “He’d been hunting for me ever since I left. Good old Buck.” The girl’s face lighted.

“Well,” she laughed again, a short, happy laugh. “I’d flown away from all that I really loved, so I took that check and bought myself a ticket. I could fly back to it all again. And that was all of college for me. Cold up here in winter? Yes. But not too cold. Just right, I’d say.”

A little brown man sat in the corner of the tent working on

an ivory walrus tusk with files and sandpaper. A little brown woman worked over the stove heating water for tea and broiling reindeer chops. By and by she dug deep into a box to drag out crackers as large as the top of a hat. Then she said:

“Cup a tea?”

And they had tea, pilot biscuits and delicious chops.

“Umm! Grand!” Jimmy murmured.

“If those chops were half as good when they got outside,” said Molly, “we’d have a fortune.”

“Outside of where?” Jimmy asked.

“Outside of Alaska,” she laughed. “In the States, you know,” she went on. “In the fall the deer are fat. They must be killed then. But they can’t be shipped for nine months. That’s too long. The meat loses its flavor. But then, people in Alaska eat lots of reindeer meat. It’s not so bad, only——”

“Only what?”

“There’s a lot of talk just now about the reindeer belonging to the Eskimos. They did belong to them at first, you know—to the Eskimos and some Laplanders who came here to teach the Eskimos how to herd them. Father bought out the Laplanders, so they’re ours honestly enough. But some people say they should all belong to the Eskimos.”

“Would they buy them?” Jimmy asked.

“How can they?” she exclaimed. “The Eskimos have no money.”

“But the government might buy them,” Jimmy suggested.

“If only they would!” Her brow wrinkled. “You know,” she leaned forward, “we’re not as rich as people think. Our gold is about all mined. We can’t sell the dredges. If they took our reindeer, just took them—well—” she did not finish. There was no need.

“Even the Eskimos collected money and sent a man to Washington to talk for them,” she said after a time.

“Mostly King’s Islanders,” he suggested.

“What? Why do you say that? They are our best men.” She stared at him in surprise.

“Skip it,” was all he said.

By and by the little brown woman said—“Cup a tea?” Once more they had tea and pilot bread. After that Molly and the little brown woman said “good night,” then vanished. The little brown man spread out a sleeping bag for Jimmy and he slept as never before, with the bare tundra for his bed and a swaying tent for his house.

“Windy and rough, with a clear sky!” Molly announced next morning as they sat down to hot cakes and bacon.

“That means at least another day’s blow. We’ll go back by pupmobile and you’ll stay at my house.”



“Oh, that—” Jimmy took a long draw at his coffee, “that’s not necessary. I’ll stay at Tim’s cabin. Tim’s a great old scout. I like to hear him talk.”

“But I want you to see our home,” Molly protested. “We like to have people feel that we are real folks, not savages, and that we have homes just as the people do on the outside.”

There was that word “outside” again. Jimmy found it mildly disturbing. Was he inside? Inside of what?

“I—I’d like nothing better than a visit to a real home,” he said to the girl. “Anyone who knew you for only a short time would know you had a regular home. It—it’s just that I don’t want to be a bother.”

“A bother!” the girl exclaimed. “You haven’t been here long. When you’ve been with us a while you’ll learn that in the smallest cabin at the farthest corner of Alaska, the coffeepot is always on the back of the stove and a kettle of mulligan stew is ready to be warmed up for anyone who may be passing.”

47

“That—that’s grand!” said Jimmy.

“Besides, we’re going to develop that mysterious flash bulb picture of yours,” said the girl.

“That’s right, we are,” Jimmy agreed. “Let’s hurry.”

The Bowman home was, Jimmy found, strangely like his own. It was larger. The living room with its heavy beamed ceiling was immense, he thought. The fireplace was broad and deep.

For all that there was some feeling of homely comfort hovering over all. This, he realized, was not strange, for Mrs. Bowman was very like his mother. Cheerful, kind, and smiling, she welcomed him to her heart and home.

He developed his film in Molly's small darkroom with her peering eagerly over his shoulder. The picture was mildly disappointing at first, then rather exciting. All they saw as the picture began to come out was a group of native men, three of them sitting about a seal-oil lamp. They were stripped to the waist, as natives often are in their homes.

"Just three King's Island natives," was Molly's quiet comment.

48

"Guess that's all," Jimmy agreed. "But wait!" he exclaimed. "There's something interesting. Let me have your reading glass."

For a full moment he studied the film. "That's queer," he sighed at last. "Have a look at that fellow's back. It's tattooed all over."

"That's right," she agreed. "Dragons twined and intertwined. That is queer."

"Of course," she added as she put down the glass, "these natives go in for tattooing. Have for hundreds of years. Some of the older women are tattooed with stripes on their chins. It means something, I don't know what. But the dragons are strange."

"At least," said Jimmy, "I'll know that fellow if I ever get to

see him again. And if I ever want to see him,” he added after a moment’s thought.

“One more thing!” Jimmy exclaimed after studying the picture for some time. “Look at that fellow on the left, the one showing a profile, and tell me whether you have seen him before.”

“Umm,” she held the picture to the light. “Let me see. He does look familiar. I——

“I have it!” she exclaimed. “He’s the fellow I met on the stairs going up to show you our loft!”

49

“Exactly!” said Jimmy. “And he was up there hiding behind a bale of raw furs, spying on me. I wonder why?”

“I do wonder,” she replied softly.

That night as Jimmy sat by the broad fireplace with the Bowman family gathered comfortably about it, the flames from the driftwood logs leaping up the chimney, he thought of many things—the stolen letters and the face in the dark, of the boy who was looking for the goose that lays thousand dollar eggs—and of the tattooed man.

He thought, too, of his own home, of his father and mother seated on the screened porch, of the song of tree toads and the distant roar of a train. He smiled at the contrast. Then, suddenly, one word came to him. “Outside.”

All that—his home, his family, his old-time friends, Jane Hunter, John Nightingale the reporter, Tom Howe the detective, Peter Grim, and all the rest—was “outside.” He was

50

“inside.” Inside of what? A strange terror seized him, a feeling that he was truly inside of something that held him—that he would never get outside of it. In his excitement he half rose from his chair. Then he dropped back again. The spell was broken. But in the days that followed this feeling was to return many times.

He found Molly smiling at him. “You look as if you had wakened from a bad dream,” she laughed.

“I have,” Jimmy replied soberly.

## CHAPTER VII

### GHOST TOWN

That night Jimmy enjoyed a real hot bath in a white tub, and went to bed between real linen sheets. "This, too," he thought, "is Alaska. It's not so different from home, after all."

Next day he wandered back to the sandspit where the Eskimos were encamped. It was a bright warm day, and, like ground squirrels out for a sunning, natives sat about in little groups, talking and laughing.

It was with a rather strange feeling that he approached the camp of the King's Islanders. He wondered whether they would guess that it was he who had touched off that flash bulb a few nights before. As on that other occasion he carried a camera. This time, however, it was an oblong box with a range finder across the entire top. He had it carefully concealed under his coat, and succeeded in taking snaps of several groups without being detected. He wondered whether he had caught the tattooed man again but was unable to tell. They were all fully dressed.

One fact sank deeply into his mind—these King's Islanders were *different*. Just how were they different? He could not quite tell. On their faces at times he caught little flashes of animation never seen on the countenances of the mainland natives.

That they talked the Eskimo language he was certain. The same

clack-clack of Eskimo words was there. He even asked a boy from Nome to interpret a little of it for him. "Suna go puzuk peet" was "What do you want." "Ilacanamuk" was "Thank you," and "Ileet pon a muk" was "Too bad." Their accent, however, was different. "They are the King's Islanders' superior men," he told himself. Was that all the answer? He could not be sure.

Scarcely had he returned to the Bowman trading post than a seaman from the *Seminole* caught up with him. "We're sailing at the earliest possible moment for St. Michael," he explained. "There's a man down there needs to be taken to the hospital. You're to fetch that man Tim what wants to get back to his *Sally Ann*, an' the boy what's to find a million dollar egg."

"Thousand dollar," Jimmy corrected.

53

"It's all the same. He won't find it," the man grumbled.

"I'll go get them," said Jimmy.

Half an hour later as Jimmy drew on high rubber boots preparatory to climbing into the dory something touched his hand. It was Buck's nose.

"Why, Buck, old boy! What are you doing here?" he exclaimed.

For answer the dog put his forepaws on the side of the dory.

"No. No, old fellow. You can't go," Jimmy exclaimed.

The dog seemed to understand, for he dropped back into the shallow water, then went ashore, to hang his head dejectedly.

“Good-bye, old boy!” Jimmy called, as they pulled off. “Good-bye!” he shouted as he caught sight of Molly waving a handkerchief from her doorstep. “Good-bye!” He wondered vaguely when he would see them again, if at all.

“I shall go off with the doctor,” said Captain Jack as next morning they dropped anchor off the mud flats lying before St. Michael. “We may take that sick man aboard and steam right back to Nome.”

Jimmy was a little disappointed. He wanted to look at St. Michael.

54

To Tim the captain said: “We’ll bring off your skiff.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Tim.

“What’s at St. Michael?” asked Jimmy as the captain’s crew pulled off.

“It’s a ghost town, you might say,” was Tim’s slow reply. “Ghosts of men and of ships fairly haunt the place. See that white spot over there on the sand bar?”

“Yes.”

“That’s the *Robert Kerr*. And closer in are the *Susie* and the *Sarah*, all good old stern-wheelers that once steamed up the Yukon. Now they’re just ghosts. They’ll never run again.

“Ah, boy!” Tim’s voice went husky. “Those were the days! Great an’ terrible days they were. Steamers puffin’ up the old Yukon, fifty or a hundred of ’em. Men sweatin’ as they piled

wood into the boilers, men swearin' over the cards in the gamblin' room, men standin' on the dock lookin' ahead, dreamin' of the gold that more than likely they'd never find.

“And now,” his voice dropped, “there they are. All rottin' on the sand flats, the good, brave dream ships of yesterday. They're the ghost ships of today.

55

“All but one.” His voice rose. “All but the *Sally Ann*. See her? The one with the black smokestack and white sides shinin' in the sun.” He pointed away proudly. “That's my *Sally Ann*. She's my ship.

“The captain said, he said to me, ‘Tim,’” he went on, “he said ‘you mind. The *Sally Ann*, Tim, she'll sail again. I feel it in my bones. There'll be another gold rush. Only the surface of Alaska has been scratched. There's more gold in those hills than this world dreams of. When they find it we'll toot the whistle of the old *Sally Ann* and we'll sail away, with music in the main cabin and the decks packed with men who dream of gold.’

“Those were his very words to me, Jimmy.” Tim's eyes were dreamy. “He sent me two hundred dollars every year for lookin' after her. Once he sent me a barrel of paint and wrote me, ‘Paint her up, Tim.’ An' I painted her up. But, Jimmy,”—the old man's voice faltered, “I ain't heard from the captain for goin' on two years now. You don't think he'd be dead, do you?”

“He might be,” said Jimmy. “But then,” he added in a more hopeful tone, “letters get lost, lots of them do,

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coming so far.”

“They do that,” said Tim. “I’ll be hearin’ from the captain yet.”

Tim’s story of those gold days made Jimmy more eager than ever to go ashore. When Captain Jack returned to announce that the sick man could not be moved for two days and that they would lay over here, the boy was fairly ready to dance for joy.

“I’ll take you and Tim ashore,” the captain said. “I want to look over the soldiers’ barracks.”

“Barracks?” Jimmy exclaimed. “Are there soldiers here?”

“That’s the ghost town,” Tim volunteered. “In the days of gold and gamblin’ there were hundreds of soldiers here. Now there’s not a corporal’s guard, not any at all.”

“But tomorrow or next year there may be a whole regiment,” Captain Jack added soberly.

“That there may,” Tim agreed. “The wheel of fate it turns round an’ round.”

Half an hour later Jimmy found himself walking the streets of the strangest little town he had ever seen. Row on row of deserted buildings stood in mute silence. Here were bunkhouses, there the kitchen, and there the mess room. Gymnasium, hospital, library, officers’ quarters—they were alike deserted.

“The men who tramped these streets on cold winter nights when the snow sang beneath their feet are gone.” Captain

Jack's voice had a solemn sound, like a church bell tolled at midnight. "Some of them are dead. The others are scattered to the four corners of the earth. Yet fate may call them back, or others to take their places.

"Jimmy," he turned around, "we are preparing for defense against a great and terrible war. A war we hope will never come. Today along the far-flung shores of Alaska strange things are happening. Men in small motor craft are sounding the waters of all the bays. They are from our navy. They are searching out submarine bases and safe anchorage for great ships of war.

"On shore men are locating spots where just such barracks as these may be erected."

"Preparing." Jimmy's own voice, sounded strange to him.

"Preparing," Captain Jack repeated. "It is a grim necessity. Look at this vast land, nearer to Asia than to our own land. Quite unprotected, yet filled with coal, iron, copper, silver, gold. There are vast herds of reindeer, great stretches of timber, fish to feed a nation. And all of these are vital to a nation that wages a great war. Think what it would mean if an enemy moved quietly over and took possession of Alaska!

"Yes," his voice fell. "We are preparing, doing what we can. And there are spies hiding somewhere who rob us of our secrets even before they have been put on paper. We've got to get those men, Jimmy, and we will!" He struck the wall of the officers' quarters in the deserted barracks where maps still

hung on the walls, and it gave off a hollow sound, like “An echo from a tomb,” Jimmy thought.

“Yes,” he agreed, “We must get those spies!”

## CHAPTER VIII

### SILENT ORDEAL

That night, just at dusk, Jimmy rowed ashore for a lonely visit to the ghost town. The place held a strange fascination for him. It was a cloudy day. The clouds hung low, threatening fog. It was all but dark when he arrived at the street of silent marching ghosts.

Looking in at the library he fancied he saw the soldiers pouring over books and magazines. From the cookhouse seemed to come a ghostly odor of reindeer stew.

One place he had missed before stood open now. Looking in he saw that it was a bowling alley. Someone had set up the pins. There they were, all in place. The balls lay in their rack. Picking one of them up, he swung it back and forth three times. He took a step forward. What a mighty crash there would be! How it would smash the ghostly silence!

There was no crash. Dropping his arm he replaced the ball without a sound.

“Let them sleep,” he chuckled. His own voice sounded hollow in this empty place.

Just as he stepped out into the night, quite dark now, with the fog hanging low, he thought he caught a faint gleam of light ahead.

“The officers’ quarters!” he whispered. “I’ll have a look.”

His rubber soled shoes made no sound as he glided down the deserted street.

“Yes,” he murmured low, “Yes, there is a light. Probably some old prospector camping there for the night. I’ll get his story.”

No prospector was there. Instead, as he peered in at the window, he saw three small men. They were standing with their backs to him, looking at a map. The map had not been there before, he was sure of that. All the other maps left there years before were large. This one was small, with lines running this way and that across it. Who were these men? What were they doing here?

There was something about them that suggested the three men he had photographed under the skin boat at Nome.

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But this, he knew, might be pure fancy. He could not see their faces. They were guiding a mere pencil of light over the map. One made a gesture. Another shrugged his shoulders. He wished they would turn around so he could see their faces.

Should he risk a flash bulb picture? Almost by instinct his hands slid into position, his candid camera in the left, flash bulb shooter in his right. Should he do it? Was it safe? That map might have been stolen from the mails. He recalled the words of Captain Jack. Such a picture might become valuable evidence. Should he risk it?

So he hesitated, and was lost, for suddenly an arm of steel encircled his neck, and he went down in a heap. Not, however, until his nerveless finger had touched off the flash bulb, and his

left hand closed the camera shutter.

Jimmy fought, dizzy, strangling, and without result. The next thing he knew he was blinded by tape over his eyes, gagged with a cloth, and stood on his feet. His hands were tied behind his back.

In all this time there had not been a word spoken. Nothing was said now. Two men held him behind his armpits while a third prodded him from the rear with something sharp. He was to be herded like a balky swine to some other place. What other place? Why? What was to happen there? To these questions he could find no answer. His movements were not to be of his own choosing now. It was strange, and rather terrible.

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His captors marched him a long way. The path they followed was level but appeared to wind this way, then that. Three times he stumbled and all but fell. Each time he was jerked up quickly.

As he walked, his mind was crowded with questions. Where were they taking him? Had he managed to get a picture? Had they found his camera? That was his oldest, most beloved camera. He didn't want to lose it. But then, in the end, one lost all even life itself. How was this to end? He would escape. Yes, he was determined to. But how?

They came at last to a place where he was lifted bodily up a flight of steps. As he was again set on his feet he felt the hard, smooth surface of a floor. The floor slanted. He was led along this floor for a dozen paces or more. A door opened. He walked slowly down a flight of stairs. One of the steps seemed

to crumple beneath his feet. He nearly fell, but was jerked into position.

He came at last to a second door, and to a room where there was a light. He could sense the light through the tape.

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He was lowered onto a seat. Then his shoes were removed. The floor was smooth and cold. A clock near by struck one. Half hour? What half? Ten-thirty, probably. How many times would he hear that clock strike? From somewhere outside came the dismal night howl of a lonely dog. He would know that howl if he ever heard it again. It was a high-pitched howl, high C, he guessed. The thought amused him. He even smiled.

Someone lifted him from his chair. One of his bare feet was slapped sharply, then struck with something that stung. Involuntarily he lifted the foot. When he let it down it was struck again, this time more sharply. He did not put it down again. A minute passed, two, three, four, perhaps ten minutes. No more blows. So that was what they wanted, to have him stand on one foot. It was to be an ordeal.

“Well, I’ll show them a thing or two about that,” he thought savagely.

The clock struck again, this time eleven strokes. What were they thinking about him on the boat now? When would they send out a searching party? Would they find him? Tim had said there were seventy old boats scattered for miles along the flats. There were ancient cabins, too, plenty of them. They had come a long way. His hopes fell.

64

His right leg was beginning to ache. Could he do it? Back in the old Glen High gym they used to practice the lightning change, one foot for the other, with an electric eye to record the time. "The hand is quicker than the eye." So is the foot, if it is trained. He had been the champion change artist. He'd try it now. Now! His left foot went down, his right up. Nothing happened. Stupid fellows, these. He had fooled them. He'd fool them again and again. There was hope in that.

All this time not a word had been spoken. Was he alone? He doubted that. Besides the tick of the clock he seemed to hear a watch.

Silent ordeal. He'd take a lot of it. But in the end they hoped he'd weaken. Then they'd try to make him talk, tell all that his uncle, Captain Jack, had said. Well, he wouldn't. That was all there was to it. Who were these men? How did they dare to do a thing like this? Orientals, he was sure of that. But Tim had said there were none at St. Michael. It was strange. Once again, like a flash, he shifted feet. Still nothing happened.

65

Midnight came and went. One o'clock, then two o'clock. Every half-hour he shifted his feet and those fellows did not know. He could do this for many hours. He'd fool them. Men would come. He would be rescued.

But his captors were growing restless. He could hear them stirring, yawning. He, too, was growing sleepy.

There was a stir. Low whispers came from a corner. A match was scratched. He smelled fire. They were going to make tea,



without a doubt.

Then suddenly his soul was filled with horror. He felt heat approaching his bare uplifted foot. So that was it! Trial by fire! Indian stuff! Well, Indians were Orientals at the start. Could he stand that? Could——

But what was that? A sound from the outside. A strange hush came over the place. A latch was lifted stealthily. Then a wild commotion arose. There were squeals of fear, a dog's low growl, a sound of struggle, short and quick. Then a door slammed. After that came silence.

66

Something touched Jimmy's hands. It was cold and damp, a dog's nose.

“Buck! Buck, old boy!” he whispered hoarsely. The dog whined in answer. Jimmy's soul was flooded with hope.

On his face he felt cool air. It came from in front of him, an open door. He made straight for it, stumbled up a flight of stairs, climbed a slanting surface, tumbled down a low flight of steps, and landed on the ground.

At once he was on his feet and running. Where to? Just anywhere so it was away from that terrible place. With the great dog bumping his legs he ran on and on. Twice the dog swung before him and all but tripped him. The second time his foot splashed in water.

“Good old Buck!” he exclaimed softly. “Saving me from going into the bay!”

Suddenly he became conscious of an important fact, his cheeks were damp. That meant fog. Night and fog. No one could find him. Why run farther? He stopped dead in his tracks. His eyes were taped, his hands tied, but he was alone, free. He dropped to the damp earth.

Buck whined, then nosed him over from head to toe. He licked his bare feet, his hands tied with something, probably rawhide thongs. If only Buck could understand! He began twisting his hands this way, then that. It was no use his trying but the dog might understand. In the north dogs ate rawhide when they were hungry. He had heard of them eating the cover from a large skin boat. That was why the Eskimos kept those boats high on posts. If only—

67

Buck was licking his hands again. He pressed the thongs against the dog's nose. The dog whined and licked the thongs. Then suddenly he appeared to understand. He began to gnaw at the thongs and in no time at all the boy's hands were free.

Wild with joy he tore the gag from his mouth, the tape from his eyes.

"Fog," he whispered. "Fog and night! Glory be!" It was the first time he had been overjoyed at meeting those dark brothers.

"Well, Buck, here we are," he said, patting the dog's head. Buck got up and began going in circles. The circles widened until he was all but lost in the fog. Then he returned to lick the boy's hand and whine. When Jimmy rose, he started off on a slow trot. That trot continued until they came to a long, planked wharf, and after that a well-painted ancient end-

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wheeler. And on her prow in gay letters was the name *Sally Ann*.

“The *Sally Ann*! Thank God!” Jimmy cried. Then he called softly in the night, “Tim! Oh, Tim!”

A frowzy head was thrust from a cabin window. A glorious cracked voice said, “Jimmy! What you doin’ here at this hour of the night?”

# CHAPTER IX

## THE WAY THEY DO IT IN BOOKS

“Tim, I was scared stiff!” Jimmy’s hand trembled as quarter of an hour later he lifted a cup of black coffee to his lips.

“I don’t blame you,” said Tim. “I’d ’a been scared myself, an’ I’m not easy scared. No telling what they would have done if it hadn’t been fer ol’ Buck!”

“Good old Buck.” Jimmy patted the dog’s great shaggy head.

“Two things I don’t understand,” said Jimmy. “How did Buck get down here, and how did he know where your place is?”

“Oh, my place!” said Tim. “That’s not so difficult. There’s a reindeer herd not so far away. Molly comes down now and then. She brings Buck. And she always calls on me. Molly’s a fine girl. There’s none finer.”

“In this case,” Jimmy said after a moment’s thought, “I suppose Buck had one of his ‘Call of the Wild’ spells, and just happened down here.”

“Well, if he did, it’s a grand happenstance,” said Tim as he put a log in his huge barrel stove. “The captain’s got to know about this,” he said after a moment. “I’ll go for him.”

70

“In this fog?” Jimmy asked. “You’ll get lost on the water.”

“Boy,” said Tim, “if you couldn’t find your way in fog up here

you'd not find it at all. This is where all the world's worst fogs are hatched. You go by your compass, or by the moon if it's out above the fog, or by the way the ripples on the water run. It's easy after you once get the hang of it.

"You and Buck just stay right here." Tim took down a ragged canvas coat. "I'll be back with the captain before you can say 'Jack Robinson.'" "

Jimmy took the trouble to drop a heavy bar before the door when Tim was gone. "Just in case," he said to Buck.

"I'll get those fellows now," he thought after a quarter of an hour's sitting before the fire. "It's a personal matter. Patriotism, love of one's country are fine but a little vague. When a fellow's been carried off and tortured, that makes it real.

"But who are they, and where are we to find them?"

71

To the first question he could form no definite answer. His memory of the men was limited to a sense of feeling. He had not seen them. They had not spoken a word. Oh, yes, there was the sense of smell to aid him. About the torture chamber there had been an indescribable odor, as of some drug. He would know that place if they found it. But would they find it?

What time was it? Must be nearly morning, and he had not slept. His head nodded. The stove loomed before him like some black giant. His head dropped forward. He was sound asleep.

He was awakened it seemed at once by a loud banging on the door and a voice saying:

“Jimmy! Open up! It’s me! It’s Tim! An’ I got Captain Jack with me!”

Still half-asleep Jimmy stumbled to the door, lifted the bar and was greeted by Tim, Captain Jack and Louis McCarthy. Lance Lawson, the thousand dollar egg boy, brought up the rear.

“Tell us about it, Jimmy,” said Captain Jack as he dropped into a chair. “Take your time. Don’t hurry. Particulars are important. We want all the facts. After that we’ll go into action.”

Jimmy told his story with all the details that came to his mind.

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“Tim,” said the captain, “you say there are no orientals living in those abandoned boats?”

“Never a mother’s son of ’em,” said Tim. “Nor in cabins hereabouts; that is unless they’ve moved in very recently.”

“But they were here, for all that,” said the captain. “And they’ve shown their hand for the first time. We must find their hide-out. Could you find it, Jimmy?”

“Not if I looked a week,” said Jimmy. “How could I? I was blindfolded going and coming. And there was the fog.”

“The fog is lifting,” said Tim. “That’ll help, but not enough. There’re a hundred places that might be their hide-out, fifty or sixty of them steamboats, some of ’em with a hundred staterooms.”

“I wonder,”—Lance Lawson peered through his thick glasses

—“might I ask a question or two, and er—perhaps make a suggestion?”

“Certainly. Go right ahead,” said Captain Jack.

“I have been reading,” the boy hesitated—“well—er—73 sort of crime books. How they catch criminals and all that. Not that I’d like to be a detective. Oh, no!” He shuddered. “If I should see a criminal, a truly dangerous man, well, I—” he did not finish.

“But this is what they’d do,” he went on, gathering courage, “the detectives, I mean. They’d ask Jimmy questions about the place he was in. What did he smell there? What sounds did he hear that came from outside the place? What did he feel—handrails perhaps, the floor, the walls—all that sort of thing. It might,” he hesitated, “you know these boats, Mr.—a—Tim, is that not true?”

“Most of ’em,” Tim agreed.

“Well, then, if Jimmy tells you all he felt, heard and smelled without seeing a thing, we might arrive at the place by a process of elimination. Don’t you think we might?”

Tim seemed perplexed. It was evident that Lance’s big words had him in deep water. But Captain Jack was smiling. The idea appealed to him.

“Go ahead,” he said simply.

“All right now.” Lance rubbed his hands together. “Was there any motion to this—er—place? Like a boat tied to a 74

dock, or any motors going, or pumps?”

“No,” said Jimmy.

“All right. How many does that eliminate, Tim?”

“Two,” Tim grinned. “The *Sally Ann* and the *Seminole*. All the rest are beached. Besides, it might not have been a ship. Might have been just a log cabin.”

“All right,” said Lance, not in the least disturbed. “Jimmy, you said they carried you up a flight of stairs and you fell down them coming out?”

“That’s right,” said Jimmy. “Second, there was a walk that slants.”

“Sounds like the deck of a beached ship,” suggested Captain Jack.

“After that I went down a stairway,” said Jimmy.

“Going below,” said Captain Jack.

“But the floor of the place I was in was level,” said Jimmy. “It was covered with something cold and hard.”

“And that’s the floor of a land cabin covered with linoleum,” Tim said with an air of conviction. “If any part of a ship slants, all of her slants.”

“We seem,” said Lance, “to be somewhat confused. Did you hear anything from the outside?”



“Yes, a howling dog,” said Jimmy.

“And there are a hundred howling dogs,” said Tim. “You should hear ’em hereabouts on a frosty night. They stick their noses in the air and sing their song as no other creatures ever could.”

“Anything unusual about that dog’s howl?” Lance went on patiently.

“Yes,” Jimmy grinned. “He howled in high C, or something like that.”

“Ah!” said Lance. “We must find that dog. These boats are scattered about for miles. Only one or two are near that dog. Come on, Jimmy. We’ll have a try while Tim’s stirring up sourdough pancakes.”

“Oh! No, you don’t!” exclaimed Tim. “What’s good for one is good for all. We’ll all go. Eh, Captain?”

“We surely shall,” said the captain.

And out into the frosty morning they all went in search of a dog that sang in high C.

The whole affair seemed a trifle strange, if not ridiculous, to Jimmy. He was cold and hungry and wanted to sleep. He would have looked for smoke from abandoned ships and cabins, tried to find footprints, and all that. But no, they must find a dog that howled in high C! This thousand dollar egg boy was a pain in the neck.

He marched along the paths leading over the flats doggedly. Here he saw the rusty smokestacks of the abandoned *Jim Crow*; there the gray hulk of the *Augusta C*; and here a miner's cabin.

“There's smoke comin' out!” he said to Tim.

“That would be Tom Nolan cookin' his breakfast,” said Tim.  
“He lives there.”

They had passed a dozen hulks, barges and cabins. Jimmy was all but walking in his sleep when suddenly his eyes opened wide and he stopped dead in his tracks.

“There,” he exclaimed. “That's it! Listen! That's the very dog!”

They all listened. A minute passed. Two. Three. Four. And then it came again, the mournful, high-pitched wail of a hungry dog.

“That's one of Tootsie Silof's dogs singin' for his breakfast,” said Tim. “And as I live!” he exclaimed excitedly, “Over there's the very place! The *George M. Coates*! She fits the description to a T. Old Sim Barton used to live on her. He couldn't stand the slantin' floor of his cabin, so he floors it all over with planks from the bloomin' hatches, makin' it level. After that he put down canvas an' painted it three coats.”

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“Son”—he put out a hand to Lance Lawson,—“you'll excuse an old man fer bein' a fool. You're a wonder, and no doubtin' it.”

“It's the way they do it in books,” Lance replied modestly.



# CHAPTER X

## THE GREEN JADE KING

The *George M. Coates* had been a colorful boat in its day. One of the first to travel the mighty Yukon, she had carried great hordes of gold-mad men up the broad waters to see them vanish into the wilderness of spruce, fir and aspen, perhaps never to return. As the tide of men came rolling back, gold had poured across her gambling tables as water rippled across her prow. More than one unfortunate loser had plunged from her deck into the rushing water. A crooked gambler had been shot on her deck, then consigned to the deep without benefit of clergy. Yes, the old boat had seen things in her day. But never before in early morn had men armed with rifles and automatics stolen upon her.

To Jimmy this march, short as it was, proved an unforgettable event. Tim carried a heavy walrus rifle. He was to stand guard outside. He would “blast them into eternity, the bloomin’ heathen” if once they showed their heads. Both the captain and his first mate carried automatics. A short, businesslike rifle had been thrust into Jimmy’s hands. Only Lance remained unarmed. He had insisted that he knew nothing of firearms and would no doubt shoot himself if he tried firing one.

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“Just go down the companionway quiet like,” was Tim’s suggestion. “Then rush ’em. The old ship’s a wreck. A push on the door’ll break it in, an’ there you are.”

“Yes,” Jimmy thought as he marched through the dawn with the damp of morning dew on his cheeks. “There we are. But where are we?” He shuddered a little, but managed to keep step with the others.

On tiptoes they climbed the rough stairway leading to the deck. A board creaked under McCarthy’s weight. He cursed silently. They reached the slanting deck to glide down it quietly. They were all on the companionway, prepared for action, when McCarthy gave the door a heavy blow. The door flew open. McCarthy all but fell in, and sure enough, “There they were.” And they were alone.

“Flown the coop,” said Captain Jack. “I thought they might have done just that.

“Whew!” he sniffed. “Opium. This is the place, all right. They smoked a pipe.”

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“But hardly a pipe of peace,” McCarthy chuckled.

“Not if we can help it,” Captain Jack replied grimly. “Boys, we’ve got our job cut out for us for the summer. Of course, the sick will have to be looked after as usual, the starving fed, and the shipwrecked rescued, but we’ll hunt these rats in between times. And we’ll get them!”

“We’ve got it to do,” McCarthy agreed heartily.

“There’s no mistaking the place,” said Jimmy. “Look. Out there is the rotten step that crumbled under my foot. This was the type of floor I stood on. And there in the corner are burnt matches.”

“Straight from across the sea,” said McCarthy, after he had looked at one of the matchsticks. “But then, for that matter, we burn their matches—far too many of them—ourselves.”

“Look!” Jimmy exclaimed softly. “Here’s something they dropped. Green jade.”

Captain Jack took the bit of stone to examine it carefully.

“Jade, all right,” he said. “Know what it is? It’s a king in a set of chessmen. Find the set to which it belongs and you’ll have your man. Here you are, Jimmy. Finders keepers, but guard it well.”

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“With my life,” Jimmy replied solemnly.

A careful search of the boat revealed no further signs of the enemy. “Just a one-night stand,” was the captain’s final pronouncement. “They were here. Now they’re gone.”

“What beats me is,” said Tim, “how did they come? And how’d they go without a sound?”

On their way back Jimmy induced Lance to go with him past the ghost town. “I haven’t much hopes,” he said. “They probably got my camera. Of course, I’ve two others with me. But that one was my special pet. It’s the one I started with when I was copyboy on my father’s paper and when Tom Howe and I went after the Bubble Man. A fellow wrote all that up in a book.”

“*Jimmy Drury, Candid Camera Detective*,” Lance exclaimed. “A corking story. I read it. So you’re that Jimmy Drury. Sayee

—” he breathed heavily. “But tell me,” he said, “was that Bubble Man real?”

“Real!” Jimmy exclaimed. “You’d have thought so if you’d had one of his bubbles thrown at you!”

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They had just reached the barracks.

“Glory be!” Jimmy exclaimed in a hoarse whisper. “It’s still here! My camera! And I’m almost sure I got their picture.”

“They forgot to look or meant to come back for it,” said Lance. “You’re sure lucky.”

“There’s the bowling alley,” said Jimmy a moment later. “Pins up, balls in the rack, everything—regular ghost town fashion. Let’s go in and roll a game, wake the ghosts up.”

“Al—all right,” Lance agreed reluctantly. “You go first. I’ll set ’em up.” He hurried down the runway.

Picking up a heavy ball Jimmy gave it a swing to send it gliding across the smooth surface. It struck the pins squarely with a resounding crash.

“Strike, the first thing!” he exulted.

Lance said nothing. His hands trembled and the pins wobbled as he set them up for the next shot.

The second ball went a little to one side. Jimmy got eight pins, and missed on the second shot.

“Say!” Lance drew in a long breath. “If it’s all right with you we just won’t play the rest of this game. I like contrasts, lights and shadows, sounds and silence—they make life interesting. But when the silence is like nothing you’ve ever known, the silence of a ghost town, and the sound is like thunder, that’s just a little too much.”

“Al—all right.” Jimmy put down his ball.

Lance set the pins just as they had been. Then they tiptoed out of the place of great silence.

“Ghost town today,” Jimmy whispered. “But tomorrow perhaps the roar of airplane motors and the rattle of machine gun fire. Who knows?”



# CHAPTER XI

## MOLLY HOPS THE WAVES

The boy Lancelot Lawson was winning Jimmy's admiration by leaps and bounds. The manner in which he solved the mystery of the Orientals' hide-out surprised him beyond words. As they now made their way back toward the *Sally Ann* and Tim's sourdough flapjacks he thought of the thousand dollar eggs.

"Of course you were just spoofing about those eggs," he suggested.

"Indeed not!" Lance exclaimed. "I've got to find them. My uncle, Dr. Roger Cole——"

"Roger Cole!" Jimmy broke in. "The Dr. Cole of Field Museum?"

"Of course," said Lance.

"Gee!" Jimmy whispered. "That's great! He's my father's friend."

"Yes," Lance smiled queerly. "I met your father at my uncle's house. I like him a lot."

"Well, then," said Jimmy, putting out a hand, "that practically makes us cousins."

"Something like that," Lance laughed.

“But those eggs?” suggested Jimmy.

“Well, you see,” said Lance, “all the really great museums have collections of birds’ eggs. Practically all birds are represented. However, a few birds are so smart and so sly that not one of their eggs has ever been found. You could name your price for a limited number. A thousand dollars apiece would be cheap. So——”

“So you’re going after them,” said Jimmy.

“It’s my big chance.” Lance was in dead earnest. “I want to attend college. You can’t work your way—not altogether—in these days. Uncle is financing me on this trip. So I’ve got to make good.”

“I’ll help you,” Jimmy said impulsively.

“Will you?” Lance demanded eagerly. “You can, you know—you can help a lot.”

“How?” Jimmy asked.

“With your camera. You see——” In his eagerness Lance stopped dead in his tracks. “If I find one of those birds on his nest I’ve got to have a lot of proof. Your camera will help. I have one of a sort, rather old, and I don’t know a great deal about it. We’ve got to get pictures of the birds, on the nest, if possible; pictures of the nesting place and its surroundings; pictures of the taking of the eggs—all sorts of pictures.”

“We’ll get them,” said Jimmy. “Also, if we don’t start walking we’ll have no breakfast. Come on. Let’s go.”

Breakfast over, the two boys and Captain Jack stood on the upper deck of the *Sally Ann*, looking away at the broad Yukon and the sea.

“There’s a native boat just leaving the river,” said Jimmy.

“Yes,” the captain smiled. “They come and go. No one pays any attention to the natives. They’re the least of our troubles up here, except when they run out of food, and that doesn’t happen these days.

“They’re great travelers and traders,” he went on in a rumbling voice. “They had tea and tobacco long before the first American whaler rounded Cape Prince of Wales, traded for it over in Siberia. That,” he added, after a study of the distant skin boat scudding along under full sail, “is a crew of King’s Islanders.”

“King’s Islanders!” Jimmy started, but scarcely knew why. “How can you tell?” he asked.

“By the sail, you see,” said the captain. “Years ago all natives made their sails of narrow strips of dark blue and white canvas. The King’s Islanders still do. That way they can tell one another’s boats a long way off. Three strips of solid blue and four of white is Okbaok’s; two of blue, one of white and four of blue is Puzwuk’s, and so on.”

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“Quite clever,” said Lance.

“They’re not as dumb as they look, especially those King’s Islanders,” the captain said. “Their home is a solid rock rising out of the sea. They live by fighting the sea for the meat that

keeps them alive.”

“Not so dumb,” Jimmy thought to himself. Was he to learn the truth of this by some further strange experience? Something seemed to tell him he might.

“Hello there!” the captain exclaimed. “There’s a sail coming down the wind. I can’t quite make her out, but she’s no native craft—carries too much sail—travels too fast.”

“Let me have a look,” said Jimmy. He took the glass.

“Natives have queer minds,” the captain went on. “Just now they have a regular drive on trying to force all white men to give up their reindeer. You’d think there was some master mind behind them, urging them on, some white man, perhaps, but so far as anyone knows there’s no white man in on it.”

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“They don’t need the reindeer. Don’t take care of the ones they have, herd them, and all that. Just let them run wild and drive them in once or twice a year to cut out a few for food. And yet you’d think it was a great injustice to them for the white men to own the reindeer.

“Owning a million reindeer and managing them is real big business. You must have a refrigeration boat for carrying the meat to the States. But then,” his eyes twinkled, “what’s a million more or less to an Eskimo? Before the white man came they could only count to five hundred. They——”

“Say!” Jimmy exclaimed. “That’s Molly Bowman’s boat. She calls it *Eider*. And that’s Molly hanging to the mast. Look how

that little boat skips over the waves! Boy! Oh, boy! What a sailor Molly is!”

“She’s a daring one,” the captain agreed. “Sometimes she seems to take too many chances. But she always comes back. And that,” he chuckled, “is all that seems to count up here. This is Alaska—not Chicago, or slow old Boston, I can tell you.”

In Tim’s cabin Buck had been napping by the stove. Suddenly, roused by one of those instinctive feelings that only dogs know, he stirred, then sat up on his haunches.

“Something up, old boy?” Tim asked. He knew dogs.

For answer Buck walked to the door and gave a low bark. Tim opened the door and the dog bounded out.

“Somebody’s coming that he knows,” Tim said to Louis McCarthy. “They are always like that, dogs are—that is, dogs with brains—an’ Buck’s got brains. Don’t ever doubt that.”

“How did he know?” asked Louis. “I didn’t hear a thing.”

“Dogs find out things in ways we humans don’t know about,” said Tim.

When Molly, in orange sweater and blue plaid skirt, sailed gaily up to the side of the *Sally Ann*, Buck was there at the rail to greet her.

“You old rascal,” she called to him, “you deserted me!”

“And it’s a good thing he did,” said Jimmy. “He practically saved my life.”

“How thrilling!” the girl exclaimed. “Tell me about it.”

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“Tie up and come in,” the captain invited. “Tim will be glad to see you, and Louis McCarthy, too. Louis has an eye for handsome girls.” He winked at Jimmy.

“Give me your line,” said Jimmy. “Now your hand. Up you come.

“Now!” he exclaimed. “Here we are all prepared for a grand little party.”

“Oh, a party,” Molly laughed happily. “I have a leg of venison, young and tender, in my boat’s cabin. Hop down and get it, and we’ll have a feast as well as a party.

“Folks, meet my crew,” she laughed merrily as a smiling dark-eyed native girl popped her head up from the hatch.

Jimmy took it all in with a look of real appreciation. The sturdy American girl, the little Eskimo, the boat, smooth and shapely as the bird for which she had been named, the single stout mast, abundance of white sail, and back of all that, the rippling blue sea. All this made a picture he would not soon forget.

Tim kindled a roaring fire in the *Sally Ann’s* great range. When the leg of venison had been duly prepared, it was thrust into the yawning oven, there to brown to a turn while Molly, her brown arms bare, concocted two pies from prepared flour and canned blueberries.

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Baked potatoes and rich black coffee topped off the feast which was served at the cook's table in the ancient ship's spacious galley.

It was midafternoon before their visiting over their coffee cups came to an end.

“Stay with us for the night,” Tim urged. “We've staterooms in abundance. I've kept a number of them shipshape for the great day when the *Sally Ann* sails again.”

“Sorry,” said Captain Jack. “I've some papers to get off. I'll have to be going back to the boat. But I don't mind lending you a first mate and a couple of cabin boys.” He looked at his companions and smiled.

“And shall we be glad to be loaned!” Louis McCarthy exclaimed. “We'll have cold venison and blueberry pie for lunch. Who'd want to pass that up?”

“Aye! Aye, sir!” the two boys chorused.

## CHAPTER XII

### A BOX OF GOLD

Jimmy by this time was nodding in his chair. Loss of sleep and the unusual excitement of the night before, together with the grand feed, made him drowsy.

“Did you tell us there were staterooms?” he said to Tim with a yawn.

“To be sure, my boy,” said Tim. “An’ it’s you’ll be needin’ one. Come. I’ll show you.

“An’ here’s the lock,” he said a moment later as he directed Jimmy to his quarters.

“I’ll use it,” said Jimmy, without a smile. “After last night, I’m beginning to think anything may happen.”

“And so it may,” said Tim.

The short arctic night was upon them when Jimmy, his short nap over, again joined the happy party. Buck bounded to his feet as he entered Tim’s spacious cabin. Molly favored him with a smile while Tim drew up a chair for him.

“Some service!” Jimmy grinned.

“An’ the evenin’ repast is about to be served,” said Tim.

The table was already spread there in Tim’s cabin. While the



old man hurried below for a steaming pot of coffee Jimmy had time to glance about him. It was a large snug cabin. In the old days of gold and gambling it had been the captain's quarters. To the right were two spacious berths. Against the forward wall was a broad mantel decorated with a ship's model, a four-rigger under full sail. Beneath this swung a huge compass. On all the walls were charts brown and dusty with age.

"She'll sail again," Jimmy seemed to hear Tim say. And down deep in his heart he hoped this might come true. "For," he thought, "where is there anything finer than an old man's love for an ancient ship?"

As he looked down at the floor, Buck seemed to grin up at him, then to look at Molly, and grin again.

"You ran away from me, you old rascal!" Molly shook a finger at the dog.

"You see," she explained to Jimmy, "I sailed down with some supplies for our reindeer camp at Sitnezomie. I landed in a little cove. We decided to sleep in the cabin of the boat. Buck slipped away after dark."

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"You'll have to forgive him this time for my sake," said Jimmy.

Then he told her of his fantastic and harrowing experience of the night before.

"Jimmy!" she exclaimed when he had finished. "How terrible! They might have killed you! Who could they have been?"

"That," Jimmy replied soberly, "is just what we don't know

and what we're determined to find out. There are bigger things going on right here in Alaska than this world dreams of. A fight for an empire, a frozen, golden empire that the good U.S.A. can't afford to lose. We'll get those rascals! See if we don't!"

"Jimmy, you must!" the girl exclaimed. "And I'll help in every way I can."

"Here you are, folks," Tim sang out as he started to pour the coffee. "Draw up your chairs. Make a long arm and help yourself."

They spent a long time over that meal talking of ships and spies, reindeer and war, dog teams and thousand dollar eggs.

"This old boat could tell some tales if she could talk," Tim said at last in a dreamy voice. "But none of 'em would be stranger than the disappearance of Dave Tower's box of gold nuggets."

95

"How was that?" Louis McCarthy asked.

"Well, now, Dave was a powerful man, he was," said Tim. "The most powerful I most ever saw. He went up the river with us one spring with a load of grub that would have broken the back of a grizzly bear, an' he came out the next spring with a sleepin' bag an' a sheet iron box.

"You see," Tim leaned forward, "Dave he'd worked in a boiler factory once. And you know the sheet iron they make Yukon stoves out of?"

"Yes," someone said.

“Well, Dave had made him a box out of that iron. Neatest job I ever saw—rivets, hinges, lock an’ all. The boys said he’d chawed the hole in it with his teeth an’ bent the corners round with his hands. But of course it wasn’t true. He’d got hold of tools somehow.

“And man! Sure’s I’m tellin’ you, that box was full of gold. Red gold it was. Prettiest sight I ever saw.”

“Red gold?” said Louis.

“Sure! Don’t you know?” Tim stared. “There’s red gold and light yellow gold, an’ dark yellow gold, an’ almost white gold. That’s on account of it bein’ mixed with other minerals—silver, copper, tin an’ the like. That was red gold. An’ in the mornin’ when we reached the landin’ that box of gold was gone!” Tim stopped short to stare at his listeners.

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“Gone?” Jimmy whispered after ten seconds of deep silence.

“Plumb gone!” Tim’s tone was impressive. “You should have seen big Dave Tower! He was ready to kill any man on the boat, any three men. He could do it, too.

“Well, sir, the captain, he was a fair man. He lined up every passenger an’ every member of the crew an’ he had their staterooms searched, their blanket rolls, their grub boxes—everything. But no red gold. No iron box. An’ to this day nobody knows what became of Dave Tower’s box of red gold.”

“Somebody hid it and came back after it,” suggested Louis.

“Might be. I don’t think so.” Tim shook his head. “There were three gamblers, professionals, bad ones, on board. One of ’em tried four times to come back on board but he never made it. We was watchin’ all the time. Two days later Steve Cassady caught that gambler playin’ five aces an’ shot him dead.

“It’s my notion,” Tim’s voice dropped almost to a whisper, “that Dave Tower’s gold is still hid somewhere on the *Sally Ann*. An’ if it is, it’s finders keepers. Dave’s dead. He left a neat bit of property up in Fairbanks an’ nobody came forward to claim it.”

“Have you looked for that box of gold?” Louis asked.

“Many’s the time.”

“Tear the old boat down,” suggested Louis. “That gold is worth more than this boat.”

“Oh, I couldn’t do that!” exclaimed Tim in a shocked voice. “She’s my boat, is the *Sally Ann*! She’ll sail again, go puff, puffing up the river—you mark my word.”

“And you really think her engines and boilers are still in order?” said Louis McCarthy.

“Not a doubt of it,” Tim declared stoutly. “She was the last to leave the run, the *Sally Ann* was, last by two years. The captain wouldn’t give up. Since then she’s been tied up here at the dock—not rottin’ in the sand. I’ve greased her engines regular, an’ sprayed oil into all her flues. She’d pass government inspection, that she would, this very minute.

“Tell you what,” he exclaimed. “Come some slack time when you’re layin’ in the harbor here awaitin’ for some power boat to smash on the rocks, or a native to kill his mate. We’ll take her out, my good old *Sally Ann*, just us folks here. I know a crew of natives who’ll fire her boilers, an’ I’ve got wood a sunnin’ on the bank.

“I’ll be engineer. Louis, you’ll be first mate. Molly’ll be captain, an’ we’ll have two cabin boys to take care of the bloomin’ passengers!” He laughed merrily.

“Passengers mostly ghosts,” said Jimmy.

“This giant, Dave Tower, and all the rest,” Molly chimed in.

“It’s a sporting proposition at that,” said Louis. “What do you say we shake hands on it?”

They shook hands in a strangely solemn manner. Then it was time to hunt out their berths. Tim gave up his cabin to Molly and her “crew.” The men went below to climb into the warm berths left by the cook and helpers so long ago.

That night Jimmy dreamed of little brown spies that turned into totem poles of red, with beady eyes, and after that, of an ancient ship that, like the *Flying Dutchman*, sailed on and on and on into the night, while he, Jimmy, worked incessantly showing ghostly men in heavy boots and canvas coats and carrying sacks of gold to their staterooms.

## CHAPTER XIII

### ONE MORE SNAPSHOT FINDS ITS MARK

Next morning Molly bared her cheeks to the fresh clear air to discover a fair breeze for the sail home.

“Come on, Uncle Tim,” she begged. “Silver sea and a silver sail. Come back to Nome with me!”

“Nay, by—” Tim stopped short. “Well, yes, this one more time I’ll do it, just to save you from drownin’ yourself. But mind me, Molly, you’ll go too far with your sailin’. Then the sea gulls will pick yer bones.”

“Oh, no! Uncle Tim!” Molly laughed. “I’m Irish the same as you, and the Irish have all the luck.”

“I’ll sail you out to the *Seminole*,” she said to the others. So they all piled aboard the narrow deck and the *Eider* skimmed over the little waves with all the grace of a bird.

“Our sick man will be aboard within the hour,” said the captain. “Then we too are off for Nome.”

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“I’ll beat you there!” Molly challenged.

“I’d hate to take a bet with you on that,” the captain smiled. “You’re old Bill Bowman’s daughter, all right. He always loved a race and a fight. Still does. I’ll never forget the day his dog team won the All Alaska Sweepstake and how he licked Sandy McPherson for sayin’ he cheated in that race.”

An hour more and they were on their way. And when they reached Nome, Molly with a dimple in each cheek was there to welcome them.

Jimmy went at once to Molly's darkroom and developed the film he hoped would show a picture of the men in the officers' quarters of the ancient barracks.

He was not disappointed. The picture was there. One of the three men was turned half around. There was no mistaking his race. He was an Oriental. So, too, Jimmy felt certain, was one of the others. The third man was the tallest of the group. His was the dress and appearance of a white man.

“White men mixed up in this,” Jimmy thought. “That may complicate things.”

Most important of all, however, was the map or chart the men were studying. As soon as the film was dry Timmy hurried away to secure an enlargement of the picture. He wanted to study that chart. He decided to have enlargements also made of the picture showing the tattooed man and of two taken in the native village.

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While he was waiting for these prints he wandered down to the sandy beach. No beach in the world has such a colorful history as this. Glittering bits of gold on this beach had started a gold rush that built up a city of thirty thousand people in no time at all. Men had fought for space to shovel this sand into rockers made of rough boards that they might rock out twenty or thirty dollars a day. One man had jumped ashore from a boat, had seized a handful of sand, looked at it for a moment, then

exclaimed: "I told them it wasn't so." And then he blew his brains out.

The beach was quiet enough today. Only one man, a white man, stood looking away at the sea where a dozen ships lay at anchor.

"Beautiful sight," said Jimmy.

"What? Those boats?" The man sneered. "Too many rags flying to the breeze."

"Rags?" said Jimmy.

"Flags. It's all the same," the young man laughed hoarsely.

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Jimmy looked at him. He was well dressed. He had a rather large mouth and peculiar shifty eyes. "They're your flags and mine," Jimmy said quietly. "The Star Spangled Banner belongs to all who live beneath it."

"All right. Have it your own way. I didn't ask you. It was you asked if it wasn't a beautiful sight. My answer is 'No!'" At that he walked away.

"Breathes there a man with soul so dead," flashed through Jimmy's mind—"who never to himself hath said, this is my own, my native land!" What was the rest? He could not remember. What was it? He wanted to know.

Just then he caught sight of Lance Lawson coming down the street. He waited for him. As he waited, the man he had seen



down on the beach passed by. Molly was behind Lance. She caught up with him just as he reached Jimmy.

“Lance,” said Jimmy, “did you learn poetry when you were in school?”

“Loads of it,” Lance grinned broadly. “You’ll think I’m a sissy, but I really went in for it in a big way. It always made me feel like flying.”

“How does this one go?” said Jimmy. ““Breathes there a man with soul so dead,——””

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In a low, melodious voice Lance went on:

“Who never to himself hath said  
This is my own, my native land!  
Whose heart hath ne’er within him burn’d,  
As home his footsteps he hath turned  
From wandering on a foreign strand?  
If such there be, go, mark him well,  
For him no minstrel raptures swell;  
High though his titles, proud his name,  
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim;  
Despite those titles, power, and pelf,  
The wretch, concentred all in self,  
Living, shall forfeit fair renown,  
And, doubly dying, shall go down  
To the vile dust, from whence he sprung,  
Unwept, unhonored, and unsung.”

“What made you think of that?” said Molly.

“That man.” Jimmy nodded at a figure fully a block away. “He made a disparaging remark about our flag. Said it was a rag.”

“Oh, well,” said Molly, “he doesn’t really count. He’s just a beachcomber, though he does seem to have money these days. Something strange about that. They call him the French Kid, and he’s not French, either.”

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“Two years ago,” she went on in muffled tones, “he killed one of our reindeer—didn’t really need the food. He had flour, bacon, and all that, but he wanted fresh meat.”

“People told him father was after him, so he skipped off to King’s Island with a crew of natives. He came back with them this year, and spends a great deal of time with them. Father will never have him arrested. He’s too easy on such people.”

“Some day,” Jimmy said soberly, “he’ll catch up with himself, and that will be just too bad!”

“I’m going for some pictures to show my uncle,” said Jimmy.

“You’d better hurry,” said Molly. “Your boat received a call to Nunivak Island. Some power boat went on the rocks there. The survivors are marooned. You are to sail in just a short time. And I,” she laughed, “am to act as your convoy, as usual. I’m sailing down to look after our reindeer herd on the islands, and pick up a few rare fox pelts.”

“Reindeer herd!” Jimmy exclaimed. “Do you have one at the North Pole also?”

“We are considering the location,” said Molly in a mock

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serious voice. “All depends on whether the natives take over our reindeer. Want to sail down with me?” she invited.

“I’ll take it under consideration. Also consult my secretary,” Jimmy laughed. “In the meantime, so long, everybody.” He was gone.

“Nunivak Island,” Lance said slowly. “That’s one place I wish to visit in my search for eggs.”

“Eggs?” Molly stared.

“Yes, rare birds’ eggs,” Lance explained. “Particularly the eggs of the marbled murrelet and Ross’s snow goose. Shall you be reaching the islands before the *Seminole*?” he asked eagerly.

“Oh! Always!” said Molly. “Besides, the *Seminole* may get a radio message saying the survivors have been rescued and that a native woman has killed her husband with an axe on the Little Diomedes. Then they won’t go to Nunivak at all. You’re perfectly welcome to come with me.

“It will be quite proper,” she hastened to add. “My ‘crew’ will be with me, and I think Tim will go. He’s fond of the natives at Nunivak.”

“I’m frightfully obliged to you,” said Lance. “Of course I’ll go.”

## CHAPTER XIV

### STORM OVER THE SEA

In the meantime, having secured his enlargements, Timmy hurried away to find his uncle who was somewhere in town. He found the captain at the trading post ordering supplies.

“We sail in three hours,” he told Jimmy. “The skiff will be in for you at five o’clock.”

“Good,” said Jimmy. “I’ll be down at the beach, but may not come aboard.”

“Why not?” His uncle’s brow wrinkled.

“I—I might go with Molly,” Jimmy confessed. “I’d like a bit of sailing. It’s rather grand, don’t you think?”

“Molly? Sailing? Oh, yes,” his uncle agreed. To the store clerks he said:

“Make it ten sacks of flour and a dozen hams.”

“Uncle, have you time to look at this?” Jimmy held up a picture.

“Is it important?” said his uncle, frowning.

“It might be,” Jimmy replied with suppressed eagerness.

“Bring it over to the light. I’ll have a look.” Uncle Jack

moved toward the window.

“It was taken the night I was kidnapped,” Jimmy explained as they stood side by side studying the picture. “Those men were in the officers’ quarters of the abandoned barracks. They were looking at a chart. It wasn’t there when we looked in several hours before.”

“You sure of that?” His uncle eyed him shrewdly.

“Certain,” said Jimmy. “Look for yourself.” He held a reading glass before his uncle’s eyes.

The gray-haired man’s eyes widened as he looked. “You’re right, Jimmy. Dead right. It couldn’t have been there before. Know what it is?”

“No. What?”

“It’s a sketch showing the mouth of the Yukon River, a preliminary chart, showing things as they are.” Then he released a thunderbolt as he fairly shouted—“Jimmy, that chart was in one of the long envelopes stolen from your pocket in Tim’s cabin!”

“What?” Jimmy exclaimed. “Then those are the men who stole the letters?”

“It’s more than likely. It is fortunate,” Captain Jack went on, soberly, “that those were not the final drawings outlining our plans for the future. That would have been a major disaster. The mouth of the mighty Yukon River is all important in the event of war. Should this remain unfortified,

small fighting crafts of the enemy could steal up the river and destroy Fairbanks, the golden heart of the North, and every other interior town of any importance.

“To think,” he went on after a moment’s silence, “those men were within reach of us! We could have nabbed them right there. Perhaps we’d have made one of them talk. Who knows? Then we’d have gotten the whole gang of them.

“What’s to be done about all this spying and stealing?” He took a turn around the room. “Only last week in Seward, an airplane messenger of ours, thought to be carrying important messages, was waylaid and robbed. And the culprits were not apprehended. With so large a population of Orientals working in the canneries, fishing from motorboats, running restaurants and the like, it’s hard to get those men.

“Jimmy,” he exclaimed softly, “do you recognize any of those men?”

“I may have seen them. Their figures seem vaguely familiar. I can’t place them. But I—I want to go to one place and snap a picture or two!” Jimmy’s voice rose.

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“What place is that?”

“Koto’s Oriental Restaurant.”

“Oh, yes. Koto’s,” his uncle replied slowly. “That’s all right, only watch your step. It’s a hangout for all kinds of characters.”

“I’ll watch,” said Jimmy as he looked to the priming of his camera.

Koto's place seemed dark and forbidding as Jimmy entered. The little Oriental at the desk appeared to frown at him. When he took his seat in a corner by a small table the waiter glided to his side, placed a menu card before him, then glided back, for all the world like a spider that runs down his web and then retreats.

"Tea, cakes, and ice cream," Jimmy ordered after studying the menu.

"Very sorry. No ice cream," said the waiter.

"All right. Make it peaches," said Jimmy. The waiter glided away again.

As his eyes became accustomed to the dim light he distinguished two figures in the opposite corner. He started as he realized that they were the proprietor, Koto, and the French Kid. Their heads were together. They were talking in low tones. Not a word could he catch.

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It had been a cloudy day, but now the sun, breaking through the clouds, sent a ray of light across the two faces. Jimmy was startled at the fierceness of the Oriental's features, and the repulsive look on the face of the white youth.

"What a chance," he thought. At once his small camera, half-hidden under his coat, was on the table. His fingers trembled as he measured the light with his exposure meter. He set his shutter with great care, clicked it twice and then slid his camera quickly out of sight.

Had the French Kid seen him? And if he had, what then?

Jimmy shrank within himself—his throat went dry as the fellow rose and came shuffling toward him. As he reached Jimmy’s side the fellow’s figure stiffened. “Can it be that you are perhaps following me?” he asked.

“Is there a reason why I should?” Jimmy asked steadily.

“That’s not the question.” An angry flush overspread the fellow’s face. “Are you?” He assumed a threatening attitude.

“I had no reason in the world to believe you were here when I entered,” Jimmy replied truthfully.

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“Oh, well then, that’s all right.” Dropping his threatening manner the French Kid returned to his own corner.

“Well, that’s that!” Jimmy thought as he watched the waiter returning with his order.

The peaches were good, even if they had come out of a can. So too was the tea. He lingered over them as long as he dared, then hurried away to find Molly and Lance. The result of a conference with them was a resolve to travel with them to Nunivak Island—a very weighty decision, and worthy of far more thought than he gave to it.

Nothing in Jimmy’s life had ever been quite so perfect as the beginning of that trip. The *Eider* was not a large boat—thirty-five feet overall and narrow of beam—but she was built along graceful lines and was fitted with a heavy keel. Her single mast was tall and sturdy. She carried an abundance of sail, and her young mistress was not afraid to use it.



The wind was just right. They sat on the slanting deck, bare-headed and bare-armed, basking in the glorious arctic sunshine.

“I have a friend who believes that all the weather in the world is hatched right up here,” Molly said with a happy smile. “We’re sending them a glorious hatful of it today, aren’t we?”

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“You sure are,” Jimmy agreed.

“Sailing,” said Lance, “is more like flying than any form of motion. Airplanes? Bah! They rattle and shudder like an old flivver on a bad road. But a sailboat! Umm! It glides and glides and glides as if it were treading on air.”

“Lance, you’re a poet!” Molly exclaimed.

“I only wish I were,” said Lance. “Way back in the old days you could write romantic tales of King Arthur and get away with it. But now!” He shrugged his shoulders and said no more.

And so they glided dreamily along. A seal bobbed up his manlike head to stare at them. As they skirted a cluster of ice cakes, three dark monsters with gleaming tusks tumbled off and disappeared.

“Walrus,” said Molly, without shifting her position.

Tim stood up unsteadily on the slanting deck. “I’m goin’ below fer three winks,” he announced. “Watch that there cloud.” He jerked a thumb over his shoulder.

“What cloud?” Jimmy asked. Oh, yes, there was a cloud

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—a small one—far away. It appeared to roll along the horizon like a tumble weed on the prairies.

After that in silence they glided on. Birds drifted by—eider ducks of all sorts, white, spotted and speckled. Gray widgeons rose in the air at their approach. A host of screaming sea parrots flew before them.

“Look at him,” Molly whispered to Jimmy, nodding at Lance. “His eyes are on the birds all the time. If he saw a snow goose he’d slide off this deck and go swimming after it.”

“He might at that,” said Jimmy. “He’s a grand little guy. I only hope he finds his thousand dollar eggs.”

“A whole nest of them,” Molly added.

“Look!” Jimmy exclaimed in sudden surprise. “That cloud! It’s ten times the size it was a little while ago!”

“It’s looking for us,” Molly said soberly. “We may have to run for it.”

Just then a whisper, growing louder and louder, moved toward them, and with it a great rolling wave that lifted the tiny craft, then let it down with a faint splash.

# CHAPTER XV

## DRIVEN BEFORE THE WIND AND TOSSED

The cloud continued to look for the white-sailed *Eider*. And as it looked, it grew to monstrous proportions. At last it was like a giant Dutch housewife in billowy skirts of dark purple, bending over to gather them into her arms. And back of the cloud was an ominous blue-gray line.

“Fog,” Tim, who was wide-awake now, groaned. “Wind and fog. How may the heavens preserve us.”

Like a beautiful child dancing over the grass, the little boat spread her sails and leaped away before the storm. But as she leaped, as the clouds grew blacker and the waves higher, the look of deep concern on Tim’s face grew more pronounced.

“Look at him,” Lance whispered. “He’s a regular King Lear. ‘Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks’” he quoted softly,——

“Rage, blow!

You cataracts and hurricanes, spout  
Till you have drench’d our steeples!”

And Tim was a picture. Full white beard and snowy hair flying in the breeze; legs spread wide apart; lips parted; eyes gleaming. He took in every slightest move of the boat and every threat of the increasing storm.

“It’s enough!” he shouted at last. “Down with the sail. Lower

the mast. Make all fast. We'll batten down the hatches and ride her out in the cabin below."

"But Uncle Tim!" Molly did not finish. The wind fairly blew the words down her throat as the grand old man froze her with a look.

Twenty minutes later, their decks all awash, they were snugly stowed away below.

A tiny electric light, run by storage battery, showed Molly and Nowadluk, the Eskimo girl, in the right-hand berths, Tim and Lance on the left-hand ones and Jimmy sprawled out on a pile of canvas on the floor.

"We're a hundred miles from anywhere," said Tim. "She carries too much keel to capsize. If we don't hit a cake of ice—which ain't likely—we'll ride the blow out, even if it keeps on for three days."

It was a strange feeling of intimacy and close kinship that came over them as driven and tossed by wind and wave, they knew not where, they remained snug and safe in that narrow cabin.

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"All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me," Tim quoted softly from a very old book.

"Tim, do you believe in God?" Molly asked, not irreverently.

"Indeed I do!" said Tim. "Strict Presbyterian I was brought up. Not that I say one man's religion is better than another's. It's not what you believe, but how you behave, that counts.

“Me, I’ve roughened up a bit. Alaska does that to a man. But I’m bound to believe there is a God, an’ one that notes the sparrow’s fall, an’ cares what comes of me. I dare hope I’m still His child. But listen to me preach!” He stopped short. “A hardened old sinner like me!”

“Tim, if all the hardened sinners in this world were like you,” said Molly—there was a touch of tenderness in her voice—“it would be one grand place in which to live.”

“Aw, now, Molly!” Tim protested, but said no more.

Jimmy listened to all this and was in deep thought about many things. Then, as one will even in the strangest of circumstances, he turned once again to the problems that were perplexing him before this fresh crisis entered his life.

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Digging his pictures from a corner, he began to study them. Allowing the gleam of his flashlight to play upon them, he examined them one by one; the tattooed man and his companions in the King’s Islanders’ camp; the King’s Islanders themselves, sitting about camp in broad daylight; and the three men in the abandoned barracks. When he had studied them for a long time it seemed to him that there were similarities between certain figures in the different pictures. He was so sure of it that he became greatly excited, forgetting entirely the howl of the wind and the drumming of waves that beat so constantly on the little boat’s deck.

“But what can I do about it?” he asked himself at last with a touch of despair. “It’s only a guess.”

How he wished Tom Howe were here to study the case with

him. He recalled Tom's collection of wax ears, exact reproductions of the ears of public enemies.

“There should be,” he thought, “some way of studying figures so they could be recognized at a distance.” How often in his own home town he had seen a person lean against a post two blocks away and had said—“That’s Fred Fram,” or “Burt Martin,” or “Dave Jones.” And he had been right. But in court he could not say, “I saw him two blocks away. That’s the man, that bank robber,” or “that spy.” He laughed at the very thought. And yet, it was something to work on. He got considerable satisfaction out of that. Perhaps he would get those men, in time! And then! He clenched his fists hard.

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As he sat there thinking of all that had happened and all he had learned, it seemed to him like a jigsaw puzzle. It all fitted together—the stolen letters, the King’s Islanders, old Koto in his restaurant, the French Kid scoffing at the flag, his own kidnapping, the fact that someone was behind the Eskimos, someone with purpose and force, urging them to demand that they get all the reindeer from the white men—all this and much more must fit together to make a picture. But how? HOW!

He gave it up at last and lay there just listening to the thunder of the waves rolling over the deck.

“Jimmy’s quiet,” Molly laughed. “Must be seasick.”

“No. Nothing like that,” Jimmy laughed.

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“The air is bad in here,” Lance complained. “How about lifting the hatch a bit?”

Tim managed that by drawing a canvas over the opening.

Molly threw Jimmy a blanket. He rolled up in it and tried to go to sleep. They might hit a cake of ice. The boat would burst like an eggshell. They'd all be drowned. But what could he do about that? Nothing. He could, and did, resolve never again to trust himself on a clamshell of a boat on the open sea. A small sailboat was well enough along shore, but in the open sea, give him at least a hundred foot deck to tramp upon, and a good marine engine to help fight the waves.

And so, thinking, dreaming, hoping, he at last did fall asleep to dream of rolling drums, marching feet, the drone of motors and the roar of cannon, only to wake with a start and hear again the monotonous crash, crash, crash of the waves as they swept across the deck. Once awake, he asked himself questions. Was it night? Was it day? Was there fog? Or moonlight? Who could answer. Hours passed. They munched at chocolate bars and pilot biscuits and drank cold black coffee.

During all this time there was one expression from some very ancient book that came again and again to Jimmy's mind: "Driven by the wind and tossed." Where had he read that? It brought to mind a very ancient ship, soldiers, sailors and prisoners, one of them a great and wise man. He'd look that up some time. He surely would. "Driven by the wind and tossed."

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At last Tim said, "I think she's lettin' up a bit."

He lifted the hatch for a look and received fully three buckets of salt water right in the face.

“She’s still a blowin’,” he announced as he slammed down the hatch. And they all had their first big laugh.

Two hours later the drumming on the deck had all but ceased. Tim lifted the hatch. Then he crawled halfway out on deck.

“Fog’s gone,” he announced. “No land in sight. We’d better get our bearin’s an’ see if we can manage to hold a course.”

Slowly, one by one, like wild creatures creeping from their dens into the sunshine after a wild storm, they slid out onto the deck.

With great care they set the mast in place, then hoisted the sail.

Like a gull startled by a shot, the small craft swung sharply to one side, all but went over, then leaped up a great sweeping swell.

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After that they climbed one glistening surface, then glided down another to the delightful rhythm of a rolling sea.

As she sat in her place, dreamy-eyed, staring at the sea, Molly seemed shaken and sobered.

Tim moved over to her side. “You see what I mean, Molly?” he said.

“Yes. I see what you mean.” Molly did not smile.

“That’s all I wanted to know,” Tim replied.

Jimmy knew that in those two short sentences the old man had



preached a long sermon. Molly would never take a long chance with the sea again unless some great need forced her to do so.

“Well, there’s your island,” Tim exclaimed half an hour later. “We’re not off our course after all.”

“And there’s a native boat pulling out from shore right now,” said Molly, as a speck of sail showed above the horizon.

“Natives, right enough,” said Tim after a long look through the glass, “but not from those islands. That’s a King’s Island boat, the same one we saw a few days back at the mouth of the Yukon.”

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“It is?” Jimmy started. “What are they doing way down here?”

“Just sailin’ around an’ tradin’ a bit,” said Tim. “They’re great traders, them King’s Islanders.”

“Oh!” Molly swung her boat a little more into the wind. “We’ll have to hurry. They’ll trade for all the fox skins. They catch such wonderful ones down here, blue foxes and real black ones.”

Once while still quite young, Jimmy had been out boating with his uncle and had found a paper dollar floating on the water. With it he had purchased a great treasure, a four-blade knife. He had it still. This experience had made him conscious of all papers floating on the water. As they approached the island’s harbor an hour later, a fragment of paper glided past their prow. Just in time Jimmy reached out with a pike pole and pulled it in. Laughing at his own strange habit, he spread it out on the hatch to dry. Later, during the excitement of landing, he

thought of it again. Without looking at it, he folded it—now quite dry—and thrust it into his pocket. There it was to remain until the proper time.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THRILLS, ADVENTURE, MYSTERY

As they sailed grandly into the little rockbound port, Jimmy thought he had never before felt quite so fine. To drift for hours in fog and storm, expecting at any moment to feel your frail craft crash on rocks or an ice floe, then to be standing in the glorious sunshine watching a score of kayaks darting out to meet you—oh, that was something!

“It’s a great little world,” he said to Molly. “Congratulations on your splendid cruise.” He put out his hand.

Molly took his hand in a solemn shake. “It is a wonderful world,” she agreed. “Too marvelous to lose. But our cruise. Oh, well,—” she shrugged, “well, anyway,”—she squared her shoulders then dropped the sail—“we’re here. And this is one grand little spot. The most natural and primitive natives in Alaska live here.”

Once they were ashore, Lance dashed away up the rocky slope to study the millions of birds nesting there and to continue his search for those thousand dollar eggs.

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Molly walked away with a tall young native to inspect her reindeer herd. This left Jimmy with time on his hands. For a while he sat on a broad rock watching the gulls soar and skim through the air, wondering in a dreamy sort of way when the *Seminole* would come steaming in.

Suddenly he recalled the native boat from King's Island. They had seen it leaving this port. He wondered why they had left and where they were going. More puzzling still was the question, how did they get there? Only a few days before he had seen them in the mouth of the Yukon. Now here they were, two or three hundred miles south. "Some sailors, those King's Islanders," he told himself dreamily.

A handsome Eskimo boy in a bright calico parka came down the path from the village.

"Uba canok?" He showed his gleaming white teeth in a friendly smile. In his hands he held two cribbage boards. The carvings of polar bear, walrus and hunters were exquisite. The boards had been carved from the largest walrus tusks Jimmy had ever seen.

He looked at the boy. Could he understand English?

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"You go after the big ones, don't you?" said Jimmy, admiring the tusks.

"Oh, yes," the boy replied, in Jimmy's own tongue. "Our hunters, they are not afraid. They harpoon walrus, lash to boat, then shoot." He went through the motions of shooting.

"Me," he said, "I am from King's Island. Ilayok, that my name."

"Oh, King's Island!" Jimmy sat up. "You are a fine carver of ivory. Here is a piece from King's Island." He took the trophy bought at the Bowman trading post from his pocket. As he looked at it, the twining dragons with their green eyes seemed more mysterious and fascinating than before.

The native took it from him to study it, while a puzzled look overspread his face. “No,” he said slowly, after a time. “Not from King’s Island. King’s Island man not carve like this.”

“But Molly said it came from King’s Island,” Jimmy insisted.

“It does not matter. What are these?” The boy pointed at the carvings. “Not polar bear, not walrus, not fish these.”

“Dragons,” said Jimmy.

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“What are dragons? We Eskimo people do not carve dragons. We make what we see.” The boy seemed more puzzled than ever.

“Dragons are imaginary creatures,” said Jimmy. “The Japanese and the Chinese believed in them long ago. Perhaps they were only crocodiles. Who knows?”

“But,” said Ilayok, “no Eskimo carve this.”

“How long since you left King’s Island,” Jimmy asked.

“Three years.”

“Well, then perhaps—” Jimmy did not finish, for at that moment the *Seminole* hove into sight from around a rocky point. Driven from his mind for a time, this conversation was to return and haunt him. Why had Molly said this peculiar carving of dragons was done on King’s Island? Because she believed it. “And it was too,” he told himself. “But by whom? That’s the question.”

A half hour later he walked into his uncle’s cabin on the

*Seminole* and, boylike, threw his jacket on a chair. As it flapped down, a paper fluttered to the floor but was not noticed by the boy or his uncle.

Eager to tell of his thrilling experience on the sea, Jimmy launched into the story at once. The gray-haired man listened to the end, in silence.

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“Rather risky, don’t you think?” he said when the boy had finished. “You have a good safe berth on the *Seminole*. You’ll sail with us hereafter. I can’t have that father of yours accusing me of letting you drown.”

“Well, I—” Jimmy scarcely knew what to say. He liked Molly and her boat, but then——

He was not obliged to finish, for at that moment Captain Jack’s keen gray eyes spied the bit of paper that had fallen from Jimmy’s pocket.

“What’s this?” He sprang forward to pick it up. “Where did this come from?” Astonishment was registered on his lean, sunburned face.

“That?” Jimmy stared. “It must have fallen from my pocket. How did it get there? Let me think.”

“Think hard.” The captain’s words came short and crisp.

“Oh, oh yes, now I remember,” the boy exclaimed. “I have a foolish habit of picking drifting bits of paper from the sea. I salvaged that one with a pike pole from the deck of Molly’s boat. I dried it on the deck, then put it in my pocket

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without looking at it. What is it? Is it really important?"

"Important!" the captain exclaimed. "This is half of the chart that was stolen from the letters that were in your pocket that night in Tim's cabin."

"The one those men were looking at in the abandoned officers' quarters at St. Michael?" Jimmy stared, unbelieving.

"The very same," said the captain.

"But Uncle!" Jimmy's eyes widened. "How could it be? I picked that paper from the sea when I was near these islands, more than two hundred miles from St. Michael."

"Then someone brought it here."

"No one on our boat," Jimmy insisted.

"Probably not, but someone. Think hard, Jimmy. Who could it have been?" The captain settled back in his chair.

For a full moment Jimmy sat in deep thought. Then like a jack-in-the-box he sprang from his chair. "I have it! I have it!" he exclaimed. "It must have been that crew of King's Islanders!"

"King's Islanders?" His uncle stared.

"Sure! We saw them at St. Michael leaving the river, and we saw them again leaving this port just as we entered. They always seem to be leaving some place. Tim knew them by the stripes on their sail."

When Jimmy had told all he knew about the whole affair the captain said: “We must catch up with that King’s Island skin boat. There are a few questions I’d like to ask that dark-eyed crew.”

“Count me in on that,” said Jimmy.

“It begins to look as if we were at last hot on the trail,” said the captain. “I only wish we had a small powerboat. They’re best for getting about among these rocks.”

“Molly has a kicker on her boat,” Jimmy suggested with a sly grin. “But then you said I was not to sail with Molly.”

“Circumstances alter cases.” The captain grinned broadly. “Hunt up Louis McCarthy, and tell him he is to go with you on a hunt for that King’s Island boat. Tell him to take three of his men with him.”

“I’ll find him at once,” said Jimmy, springing through the door. He was away, as he whispered to himself, “Thrills, adventure, mystery!”



## CHAPTER XVII

### THE GRAY PHANTOM

Molly did not return from her reindeer herd among the island hills some distance from the village until the next morning. Then, having had a good night's rest and discovered a dozen splendid blue fox skins that might be traded for, she was in high spirits. The thought of using her boat for a spy hunt appealed to her sense of adventure and romance.

“But King's Islanders!” she exclaimed. “Why hunt them? They are Americans, and besides, they're just simple-minded natives.”

“I'm not so sure of that.” A note of mystery crept into Jimmy's voice. “Anyway, it's captain's orders. He wants to talk to them, and so do I.”

“So—o,” said Molly with a sweep of the arm. “Not ours to wonder why. Ours but to do, or die. Climb aboard, all of you, and we'll be off.”

All told there were eight of them—Molly, Jimmy, Lance, old Tim, Louis McCarthy and his three young seamen from the *Seminole*.

“I brought them along just in case those natives get tough,” Louis explained to Molly. “Besides, they like to get away from the *Seminole* for a breathing spell.”

“And how!” exclaimed the leader of the trio.

Hardly had they rounded the point when a thin fog drifted in from the mainland. As they glided forward it was like sailing in a moonless night.

For two hours they sailed slowly onward. Hugging the shore, they kept an eye out for a skin boat turned up on the beach. They saw none.

Then, just as they were beginning to give up hope, through the fog, gliding along like a gray phantom, they sighted a small sail.

“That’s them,” Tim whispered. “Bound to be. Quiet, everybody. Not a word. We’re faster than they are. We’ll sail right up an’ overhaul ’em.”

The moments that followed were thrilling, mysterious, fantastic. It was true that the *Eider* carried more sail than the skin boat, but that gray phantom had an uncanny way of keeping just so far ahead.

“Do you suppose they see us?” Molly asked in a whisper after half an hour of futile sailing.

“What good would that do?” Jimmy asked.

“A whole lot,” replied Molly. “They’re sharp, these natives. They’d paddle and row. Six oars in the middle, as many paddles at each end, gives them a lot of extra speed. They wouldn’t know we’re after them, and yet they might suspect that we are. In that case they’d not let us catch up with

them, but they'd not make us suspicious by really running away, either."

"Keen little brown men!" said Jimmy.

"No end of keen," the girl agreed.

So they sailed on in the wake of the phantom. And little by little the fog thickened.

"We're gaining on them," Louis whispered. "Gained four or five boat lengths in the last ten minutes. We'll get them yet."

Would they? Jimmy's muscles grew tense. And if they did, what then? Would there be a fight? He looked about him for weapons. Two pike poles, four sturdy ash oars, half a dozen belaying pins. With these they'd put up a good scrap.

Closer and closer they came. The mast was clearly outlined. Even the ropes appeared like threads in the fog. Jimmy imagined he heard the low flap of their sail, and caught the smell of native tanned skin garments.

And then, bursting upon the silent air like the rat-tat-tat of a machine gun, came the pop, pop, pop of a powerful outboard motor. Jimmy saw the sail vanish, heard the mast strike the seats of the skin boat, then settled back to listen to the steady pop, pop, pop of that outboard motor carrying the natives away at a rapid rate.

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"Shucks!" said Louis McCarthy.

"I might have known!" said Tim. "They all carry a kicker these

days. We'll just have to surprise 'em when they're campin'."

"Well," Jimmy sighed, "we nearly got them! And the very fact that they beat it shows they've got something to hide."

"If you ask me," said Louis, "I'd say we're hot on the trail of something big.

"But this," he added after a moment, "is about all for today."

Silently Molly dropped her sail. Jimmy started the small motor and they went gliding back to the side of the *Seminole* where a rich feast of reindeer steak awaited them.

After the evening meal Jimmy went to his uncle's cabin for a quiet talk. As they sat in great comfortable leather chairs, the captain began to talk.

"I'm sorry you missed them," he said quietly. "I think you've really got something there. In the end we'll get them. We almost always do.

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"This country"—he took a long draw at his pipe—"is about the worst in the world for hunting men down. You just get nicely started when along comes a fog and hides everything.

"Some of these Orientals," he went on after a brief silence, "give us more trouble than all the rest. Take the fur seal on the Pribilof Islands. By a treaty of long standing, their country gets a fair share of those rich pelts. In spite of that, they're forever slipping in and carrying off seal. If it wasn't for eternal vigilance they'd wipe out the whole seal herd.

“They get what’s coming to them once in a while,” he laughed softly. “One half-breed Indian guard caught four of them stealing seals and shot at them three times, killed two of them and crippled another.”

“What was done to the Indian?” Jimmy asked.

“Why, nothing,” said the captain. “Just nothing at all. We didn’t have so much trouble after that,” he chuckled.

“It’s the same thing with our fisheries,” he went on after a puff or two at his pipe. “Some of them come over in floating canneries to study the salmon in Bristol Bay. In order to study them they found it necessary to can a shipload, and some of our American fishermen went hungry that year. They’ve taken to carrying rifles, those fishermen. Can’t say that I blame them, either.”

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“But spies, Jimmy, they are the most dangerous of all. They steal our secrets, make our defenses worthless in time of war.

“Spies,” he pronounced the word softly as he puffed thoughtfully at his pipe, “like death and taxes, they are always with us and are a constant menace. When you return to your home in the city, the man who sits beside you in the streetcar may be a spy. So too may be your dentist, your barber, or the man who sells you neckties. It is the duty of every loyal American to consider himself an unpaid secret service agent for his country.

“Why, Jimmy!” he exclaimed, knocking the ashes from his pipe, “before one of the terrible European wars, a war that left France a hopeless wreck, there were ten thousand

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German spies in France. They were sent over in droves, men and women alike. The women were efficient secretaries and maids who sold their services very cheaply to the rich and powerful families of France. To their pay they added many a secret that cost France dearly. Thousands of German-born laborers came to France. They too were spies. When German troops were on the march, every home and every farm in the French villages was marked with the number of men or horses they could shelter.

“That’s the way spies work. They’ve done it in other places. They’ll do it in Alaska. You find them smiling and bowing, waiting on you in restaurants, laying your clothes out for you, cooking your meals in your homes, always very humble.”

“But some day, if we don’t watch out,”—the captain leaned forward in his chair—“some day when we are very busy watching other nations with our big guns and battleships, they’ll just move over here and take possession of this rich little corner of our nation.”

“They couldn’t do that!” Jimmy exclaimed.

“They could and will!” Captain Jack declared with emphasis. “If every manjack of us doesn’t stick on the job of watching them, they will.”

“Then we’ll stick,” said Jimmy.

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“That’s the talk!” the captain exclaimed.

“Now I’ve said it,” Jimmy thought to himself, “I’ve got to make good.”

A cold, damp fog was still hanging over the sea. The sky, the deck, even his clothes had been soaked as he went for a promenade. Alaska, as he had seen it, was a lot of low-lying, treeless hills, damp and cold in summer, frozen and white in winter. Why should anyone want to live there? And yet, there was Molly. She loved it. This was her home. It was strange how people loved the place where they had grown up. Alaska was home to thousands. It was theirs. They had a right to it. And if he could help at all, no one should take it from them.

He thought of his own home far away in Illinois, of his father sitting by the light reading; of the black cat curled up asleep in his mother's lap. That was life, wasn't it? Sure it was! And the very best kind.

Then he thought of Molly's home in Alaska, so very like his own. He hoped the *Seminole* would drop anchor off Nome very soon. He wanted to sit by a fireside—Molly's fireside—and dream awhile.

“War, Jimmy,” the captain was speaking again. In his deep, mellow voice was a serious note. “War is something else. War is terrible. I know! I was in the last world war. For a time I was on a destroyer, convoying merchant ships across the perilous Atlantic. That was a life for you! Every morning you got up and went on deck to look about you and find the same twenty ships, one here, one there, one before, one behind, all in the same position as they were the night before. And you had traveled two hundred miles since you last looked at them.”

“It was like guarding a flock of sheep against wolves. For the

most part we did a pretty good job, too. But once—once,” the captain paused to stare away for a moment, “it was my watch. Somehow a sub got around us and torpedoed one of our convoy. They got her squarely amidship. She was an English mail packet from South America, loaded eight feet below normal level with copper nitrate.

“The poor fellows on board didn’t have a chance. She sank like a broken egg. I saw one poor fellow just as she went down, washed up beside the smokestack. The searchlights were playing on his face. I shall never forget that face. He made a try for the top of the smokestack, and missed. Then he vanished. That’s war, Jimmy. Men, real human beings drowning like rats in the sea. 140

“Only a madman could start a war. And yet there are young people who call it romantic. They think they’re just taking a chance. They’re not. Once they are in it they have no chance.

“Look, Jimmy. Later in the war I was on a hospital ship taking the poor fellows home. I wouldn’t want to tell you of the sights I saw on that ship. But, Jimmy, one poor fellow told me his story. There had been six of them, all young and all friends from a little farm community where they have church socials, where the boys stand round and talk to the girls while a glorious moon rises over the rustling cornfields, and all that. The girls thought the boys should go to war, and probably they were right. When your country is at war you must do your duty. But it’s not romantic. It’s terrible.

“One night, back behind the lines, these six pals sat in a wrecked French village and joshed one another about the 141



girls, making the best of a bad business that had lost all of its romance, when whiz—bang! a shell exploded. Three of them were blown to bits, one was blinded for life, one lost a leg, and one escaped injury entirely. People say he was lucky. But was he? How can he ever forget?

“That’s war, Jimmy. It’s terrible. And the only way we can avoid war is by eternal vigilance, keep the spies and disturbers, men who wish to destroy our government, from our shores. And if they do get in, catch up with them quickly, and send them back where they came from. That, Jimmy, is your job and mine!

“And now,” he laughed, stretching his long legs, “the sermon is ended.”

“It’s a fine sermon. I won’t forget it,” said Jimmy.

“Peace, Jimmy!” The captain’s voice rumbled like a cannon. “Peace is the greatest word in the English language. But even that may be bought at too great a price. We must guard against being led into a senseless war, but more than that, we must protect ourselves from being led into slavery.”

As the captain ceased speaking, a strange silence hung over the sea. And then there came a low whisper that grew louder and louder until it became a roar as a small tidal wave sweeping across the black waters lifted the *Seminole* toward the cold, gleaming stars, then allowed it to settle back to rest like a child among its soft blankets.

“Yes,” Jimmy agreed, “we must always be on guard, in peace as well as in war. Tim says that none of these little brown men

are to be trusted. Is that true?" he asked thoughtfully.

"If he is speaking of all those in the world, or even in America, I'd say 'no,'" his uncle answered gravely.

"Jimmy,"—the captain leaned forward in his chair—"listen to this. Write it down in black and white on the walls of your memory." After a long pause, he said—"Take it the world over, regardless of race, color, or creed, ninety-nine out of every hundred persons are to be trusted. The great rank and file, the good common people, are both honest and kind.

"But, Jimmy, when you are speaking of the rulers and those who serve them, then watch out. Greed for wealth and power, the desire for luxuries and leisure at the cost of others, leads them astray. Too often they are dangerous men. And spies, Jimmy, those who come to our land to steal our secrets, they are always dangerous. It is for these that we must always be on the lookout. You and I are in the spy hunting business for the moment. Tomorrow, a week, a month from now, we may be out of it. There are men who devote their lives to this dangerous task. If they perform their work honestly and well, they deserve the highest praise our nation can bestow upon them."

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## CHAPTER XVIII

### PITCHED BATTLE

“Jimmy!” Molly exclaimed the moment her feet hit the deck of the *Seminole* next morning. “Why do you pick on my King’s Island natives? I think they’re wonderful!”

“I’m not picking on them,” Jimmy grinned good-naturedly. “I just want to ask them a question or two. No harm in that, is there?”

“No—o,” she admitted with apparent reluctance. “But, Jimmy, it’s going to make it bad for us if I go hunting them down. What one Eskimo knows, every Eskimo knows. And we have several King’s Islanders working for us. They’re clannish. They may hate us for it. That will make it bad for us.”

“It may make it worse for you if some of us don’t dig deep and uncover a few facts,” Jimmy retorted. “Wait here. I’ll be right back. I want to show you.” He was away.

When he returned he carried a roll under his arm. Lance was with him. “Come into the chartroom,” he invited.

Once inside, he began thumbtacking enlarged pictures to the wall. When they were all up he sighed, and said:

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“Now.”

“Now what?” Molly smiled.

“Look at this picture of three men. This one I took from outside that upturned King’s Island boat. There’s the tattooed man with a fat neck and a broad back. And there is the small slim fellow with a long, skinny neck. This slim one was in your storeroom spying on me. You saw him.”

“Yes,” Molly admitted. “I saw him, but I didn’t see him spying. Why should he spy on you?”

“Because someone stole those letters from me and because I was on their trail.”

“But, Jimmy——”

“Yes, I know,” Jimmy exploded, “King’s Islanders! But look at this next picture. That was taken inside the ancient barracks. Three men. And if two of them are not the same as two of them in this other picture, I’ll eat my hat!”

“But how could you know?” Molly insisted. “They’re wearing parkas. You can’t see their faces.”

“Their necks are the same,” said Jimmy. “Tom Howe told me once there was as much character recorded in your neck as there was in your face, if only one knew how to read it. And, after all,” he chuckled, “you carry your head on your neck, and your head is supposed to be important.”

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“But if you went into court and said ‘I knew him by the back of his neck,’ they’d laugh you out,” said Lance.

“That’s right,” said Jimmy. “But if you wanted to ask a question or two, they’d let you. And that’s all I want to do to those

King's Islanders.

“Besides,” he went on, “we have the picture of three men looking at a stolen chart. There it is, right on the wall. It was taken in St. Michael. That crew of natives was seen leaving the river at St. Michael. They were later seen near this island, more than two hundred miles away. *And I picked up a piece of that very chart* near the spot where they must have sailed. If they didn't throw it away, who did? Now!” he exclaimed. “Do we go on one more hunt for that boat, or don't we?”

“You win,” said Molly. “When do we start?”

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“Puck-mum-ie,” said Jimmy, “which in good Eskimo I'm told, means ‘right away.’”

“Eh-eh,” Molly laughed. “Puck-mum-ie.” And so they were off on one more search of the fog-blanketed sea.

“They told me in the village that no boats from this island are out,” said Molly, as they prepared to start.

“That means if we see a column of smoke rising from the shore we'll know we've found them,” said Jimmy. “I suggest that we use the motor and travel close in shore.”

This plan was agreed upon. Their party was the same as on the previous day. Not expecting any real trouble, they carried no firearms.

It was rather strange, gliding along through the fog. Circling about a point here, cutting into a narrow bay there, watching the bobbing seals and the great flocks of sea parrots, they kept an

eye out for the main sign—a column of smoke rising from the shore, an upturned skin boat.

An hour passed. Two—three hours. Still they sailed on. Then suddenly Lance exclaimed under his breath: “Wait! Slowdown. Come in closer to that shelving beach. I thought I saw——”

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“Yes!” Molly shrieked. “There’s a camp fire. It’s still burning. But the boat. It’s gone!”

Swinging her craft about, she picked up speed. And then the thing happened. They all but rammed the very boat for which they had been searching. By a skillful turn of the wheel, Molly avoided a collision—then slid right along side.

Realizing this was an opportune moment, Jimmy gripped his candid camera, took a quick look for light and distance, then clicked the shutter twice. Just then one of the natives in the boat rose from his seat. Louis McCarthy had secured a firm grip on the side of the skin boat. The native, a powerful fellow, let go a blow at McCarthy’s chin. It fell short.

Losing his grip on the boat, McCarthy caught the man by both shoulders, and would have dragged him aboard the *Eider* had not the fellow’s parka come off in his hands.

As the native, stripped to the waist, stood glaring angrily about him, Jimmy clicked the camera again, and yet again. And then he received a blow on the side of the head that sent him spinning. Falling from his unnerved fingers the camera tumbled into the cabin below. Someone had swat him with an oar.

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He was not long in regaining his poise. Then he plunged into the thick of the fight. It was a glorious battle. Pike poles and oars flashed. Belaying pins came down with dull thuds. Jimmy received one more blow that almost floored him. Molly repaid it with the thrust of a pike pole that sent the native into the sea. The girl might be loyal to the King's Islanders, but her own people came first, every time.

The native crew seemed to be getting the worst of it, when to his surprise, Jimmy found himself facing a white man wearing a parka. Coming to grips, they both tumbled into the sea.

"I'll drown you, you fresh kid!" the man hissed. He punctuated his words by a stinging blow.

But Jimmy was no weakling. He had played two seasons of football. Throwing his full strength into a one-handed swim stroke, he gripped the fellow's thin neck and pushed him down.

"We—we'll see about who drowns!" he panted. Then lifting his voice, he called: "Louis! Louis McCarthy!"

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Instantly the mate was in the water at his side. At the same moment Jimmy caught the pop, pop, pop of a powerful motor.

"Getting away again!" he groaned. "Well, we got one of them," Louis exclaimed as he got a bulldog hold on Jimmy's antagonist.

And so they had. Finding himself overpowered, the fellow gave up the fight, and allowed himself to be dragged on board.

Once the man had been freed of his sodden garments, Jimmy

received a real shock.

“Why!” he exclaimed. “You’re the French Kid, the fellow who calls the Stars and Stripes a rag. Welcome to our ship.”

All he got from the man at the moment was an angry growl, but there was more to come.



## CHAPTER XIX

### JIMMY TELLS THE TRUTH

They returned at once to the *Seminole*. The moment their story was finished the captain ordered steam up and they were off on a cruise about the island. The fog was thick and the shores rocky, so there was little chance of their catching up with the King's Islanders, but the captain never missed a bet.

“Well, Molly,” said Jimmy, as he applied two strips of adhesive tape to a spot back of her left ear where a native paddle had landed, “what do you think of your King's Islanders now?”

“I think they must have completely lost their heads,” was Molly's reply.

“You mean we came near completely losing our heads,” Jimmy replied. He did not smile. “Molly, I'll prove to you that those King's Islanders are traitors if it's the last thing I ever do.”

For hours they cruised about the fog-ridden shores but caught not one glimpse of the native boat.

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In the meantime the French Kid was living well. He had been given a change of clothing and a good meal, and was now asleep.

“He's a weak sister. Give him time, and he'll talk. Then perhaps we'll know what's at the bottom of all this.” Would

they? Jimmy wondered.

The fog lifted. The glorious arctic sun shone again. Once more they circled the island, this time picking up the marooned white men they had come to aid. They caught no glimpse of the skin boat.

“They’re gone,” said the captain. “Can’t be a bit of a doubt about that. Which way did they go? What do you think, Jimmy?”

“Which way does a rabbit go when you frighten him from his hole beneath the grass?” Jimmy asked.

“I’ve forgotten, Jimmy. What way does he go?”

“He goes in a very wide circle that in the end brings him back to the spot from which he started.”

“Meaning what?” asked the captain.

“Meaning that those King’s Islanders would head for home by way of Nome, providing they’ve had enough of hunting and being hunted.”

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“You may be right, son,” said the captain. “At least we’ll put your theory to the test. Go tell Louis McCarthy that we’re heading for Nome.

“And, Jimmy,” he added, “tell Molly we’ll hoist that boat of hers on board and give her a lift home.”

So the *Eider* made an inglorious but safe journey home and

Molly shared the cabin of the ship's nurse. When they were well on their way the captain called their captive, the French Kid, into his cabin and questioned him for an hour. He came out of the cabin at last with a look of deep disgust on his face.

"I don't think the fellow could tell the truth if he wanted to," he exploded. "If he ever told the truth it must have been an accident."

"He didn't tell you anything then?" said Jimmy.

"Oh, yes! Plenty of things. He's a great talker, but he told me nothing of any value. I haven't any more notion why those men put up a fight and then cleared out than I had before."

"Why not try a little scopolamine on him," suggested Dr. Martin, the ship's doctor.

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"What's that?" The captain stared.

"A truth serum, makes 'em tell the truth," replied the doctor.

"That's all bunk," the captain exploded.

"You think so," laughed the doctor. "Want me to try it on you? All your secrets revealed. Only the naked truth. I have some of it in my medicine case. It's a harmless drug. We use it at times in operating. Produces a sort of twilight sleep."

"Try it on Jimmy," said the captain.

"I don't mind," said Jimmy.

So it was arranged. They would try the truth serum in the captain's cabin. Jimmy was to be the victim. Molly and Lance were to serve as witnesses.

“First I shall ask you ten questions,” said the doctor when they were ready. “I shall record the answers. Then I shall give you a mild injection of scopolamine properly combined with morphine, and shall ask the questions once more. As you answer them this second time, I suggest that you make a real effort to tell that which is not true.”

“How odd,” said Molly.

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“All right. Are you ready?” said the doctor.

“Ready,” said Jimmy.

“First question. Do you play golf?”

“A little.”

“What was your lowest score?”

“Seventy-six on a course where seventy-two was par.”

“Did you ever play hooky from school?”

“Several times.” Jimmy blushed.

The questions ran on until the last one—“Were you ever in love?”

Jimmy looked at Lance and Molly, broke into a strange smile,

and said rather loudly: “No! Never!”

“All right,” said the doctor. “Now for the test. Bare your arm to the elbow.” Jimmy obeyed. The shot was given.

“Now,” sighed the doctor a few moments later, as Jimmy seemed to drop off in a semi-trance, “now comes the test.”

One by one the questions were asked. Three times Jimmy hesitated, appeared to go through a struggle, but in the end, each answer was the same as on the first occasion with the exception of the last. The answer to that question, “Were you ever in love?” came promptly and emphatically—“Yes. Once.”

Lance barely suppressed a laugh. Molly seemed disturbed.

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“When was that?” the doctor demanded.

“When I was fourteen,” was Jimmy’s dreamy reply. “She was sixteen. I asked her if she would wait for me. She laughed at me. Then I didn’t love her any more.” At that they enjoyed a good laugh, all but Jimmy.

“Well, Captain,” said the doctor, when a few moments later Jimmy was quite himself again, “are you satisfied?”

“Quite,” said Captain Jack. “We shall try this scopo—whatever it is, on the French Kid tonight, if he is willing, and I am quite sure he’s foolish and bold enough to give it a try.”

“Jimmy,” said Molly, when the three younger members of the party were by themselves, “why didn’t you tell the truth the

first time?”

“I’d forgotten all about my first great love,” Jimmy admitted. “I only hope the next one will be just as painless.”

“But why did you hesitate over three of the answers?” Lance asked.

“I was doing my best to make up a lie,” Jimmy replied quite seriously. “And, believe it or not, the truth was all that would come out.”

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“I hope I get in on the next séance,” said Lance.

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## CHAPTER XX

### SECRETS REVEALED

Lance did not get in on the big showdown nor did Molly. That was reserved for Jimmy alone. After working with him for half an hour on the questions to be asked of the French Kid the captain said: “I am sure you realize, Jimmy, that we are working on a matter of the greatest importance. Should this test prove successful and secrets be revealed, I shall ask you to hold the facts in strictest confidence. Not a word to anyone, not even to your good pals.”

“Not a word,” Jimmy agreed with a little catch of excitement down deep in his throat.

Quarter of an hour later they were together, the captain, the doctor, Jimmy and the French Kid. The doors were closed and locked, though this was not known to the captive, who looked very fresh and lively in a suit of blue.

“A shot!” he exclaimed, when the doctor had suggested one. “Sure, Doc, I’ll take it. In fact,”—he lowered his voice, “taking shots has always been my weakness.”

“I thought perhaps that was so,” the doctor replied dryly as he produced his needle.

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“Not bad, Doc. Not half bad,” the captive said a few moments later as he settled back dreamily in his chair. “Makes me feel fine, like a king, Doc.”

“But I’m not king of the King’s Islanders, Doc,” he hastened to add. “Oh, no! There’s two kings of the King’s Islanders, one in Nome and one on the island, when he ain’t sailin’ about.”

“It’s coming,” the captain whispered as the French Kid lapsed into silence.

And it did come. The story told in that small cabin that night more than once brought exclamations of surprise to Jimmy’s lips. But they were not expressed. Jimmy had been places and seen things. He had helped catch the Bubble Man, and had been in on the Golf Club mystery, and had helped capture the steel mill spies of Chicago. He knew when to talk and when to keep silent.

When at last the French Kid’s strange and fantastic story had all been told and the effect of the drug was wearing off, the doctor led the captive off to his cabin and sent him off to sleep.

“Well, Jimmy, we got it,” the captain sighed as he settled back in his chair. “And now we must get that gang in the skin boat. They must be captured before they make their getaway.”

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“Will they try that?” Jimmy asked.

“Perhaps not,” the captain said after a moment’s thought. “They won’t know we have their story.”

“And they’ll go right ahead with their plans,” Jimmy suggested.

“Yes. And such plans as they are!” his uncle exclaimed. “Such wild dreams! But the scheme might work at that,” he added



thoughtfully. “We’ll get this French Kid off to some spot where he’ll be safe,” he said after a moment’s thought. “Then we’ll go after that gang. We’ll steam up to St. Michael and look about. After that comes Nome, and then King’s Island.”

“King’s Island!” Jimmy thrilled at the thought.

“They’re sure to show up there sooner or later.

“And now,” said Captain Jack, “I want to think things through, and so good night. A grand bit of work, Jimmy, for which you shall receive your share of reward. And don’t forget. Never a word!”

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“I can’t say a word,” Jimmy whispered as a few moments later on the deck Molly shot him a questioning glance. “Only this,” he added. “You were more right than you knew.”

“Jimmy!” she exclaimed. Then, good sport that she was, she put her hands over her own ears.

For some time after that the three pals, Molly, Jimmy and Lance sat on the deck watching the play of the northern lights against the sky.

“Do you know,” Jimmy said after a time, “old Tim is a grand, good sport. Do you suppose his story about Dave Tower’s box of red gold is true?”

“I’ve never doubted it. I’ve heard it told by others,” said Molly.

“It would be keen if we could find that box of gold,” said Lance.

“Just wonderful,” Molly agreed. “You know, Tim has a daughter down in Arkansas. He wants to go there to spend his last days. But they’re not very well off. He won’t go unless he can pay his own way.”

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“Good old sport,” said Lance. “Suppose we have a look for that gold on the *Sally Ann*?”

“We’ll ransack her from hold to hurricane deck,” Molly agreed, “some good old rainy day.”

“Some rainy day!” Jimmy agreed. And as he thought of the task before him he wondered if that rainy day would ever come.

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## CHAPTER XXI

### A SINISTER PLOT

The *Seminole* steamed on to St. Michael. There Tim went back to his berth on his beloved *Sally Ann*, and Molly sailed away on a coastwise journey to her home in Nome.

For five days the *Seminole* haunted the back waters of the mighty Yukon, but without results. No column of smoke rose from the shore to greet them. No native sail appeared on the horizon.

“They’re not here,” said the captain. “We’ll steam on up to Nome.” So Nome it was.

Scarcely had Jimmy gone ashore at Nome when a wild northeaster drove the *Seminole* to shelter behind Sledge Island.

“Well,” he sighed as he settled himself comfortably before the fire in Molly’s large living room, “it seems I must stay here with you a while.”

“Will that be so very terrible?” she asked with a low laugh.

“No,” replied Jimmy with a bashful smile. “It will be rather grand.”

And it was just that. There was a dance at the Lawtons who lived in a large house up the hill. Jimmy and Molly were there. He was sure he had never known a happier or more attractive group of young people. They took him to their hearts

as they might had he been a real sourdough returned from the outside. As he floated across the floor with a smiling face before him, as he listened to voices and laughter, and sensed the wail of violins and the tom-tom of drums, he thought he had never been quite so happy in all his life.

“So this is Alaska,” Jimmy thought as he sat out a dance. “How grand.” And yet, as his spirits cooled, the burden of knowledge that possessed his mind, and the realization of the amount of work there was to do, bore him down like a dark cloud.

When he and Molly returned to the Bowman home, late as it was, he found Bill Bowman, Molly’s father, still up.

“You here?” Jimmy exclaimed.

“Yes.” There was a troubled look on the big man’s face. After Molly had said good night he said to Jimmy, “Sit down. I want to talk.”

“Is it about your reindeer?” Jimmy asked.

“Yes.”

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“Then I think I understand,” said the boy.

“How could you?” The man looked puzzled. Jimmy was not free to tell more, so he kept silent.

“It’s like this,” Bill Bowman said at last. “They’re trying to get our reindeer. There seems to be a sinister force at work trying to practically cheat us out of them.

“You know,” he went on, “in the beginning those in charge of the reindeer thought they should all belong to the Eskimos. They forbade the Eskimos to sell female deer. There was no law for it, but they made it stick and we did not quarrel with them. But when three Laplanders, who had been given deer for training the Eskimos to be herders, wanted to sell their deer and go back to Lapland, we bought them. Bought them, Jimmy. Mind you, we didn’t steal them. We’ve paid honestly for every deer we’ve owned. Of course, we bought them or traded for them from the Eskimos. Why not? There was no law against it. They wanted flour, sugar and bacon. We wanted reindeer. So we traded.

“But now, Jimmy,”—he struck the arm of his chair —“now they are saying that we robbed the natives; that we should give them back for next to nothing, for a price that would bankrupt us, that would leave Molly, her mother, and me without a roof over our heads. 166

“And, Jimmy,”—he rose to pace the floor—“I can’t get at this force that is working against us.”

Jimmy found it difficult to keep silent. He wanted to say, “I can, Mr. Bowman, and I will. Leave it to me and Captain Jack.” But he did not say a word. He dared not.

“Mind you, my boy,” said Bill Bowman, “I’m not saying a word against the party in power in Washington. Another party would be the same. There is the romance, the emotional appeal, giving a primitive people a chance. It sways a man’s judgment. I have no objection to selling the deer for a fair price, or a little under. Let the Eskimos have the deer. But to be

robbed of years of work and our investment—no, that is too much!” He dropped into his chair.

“Mr. Bowman,” said Jimmy, looking his host squarely in the eye, “they say it is always darkest just before dawn.”

Bill Bowman looked at him earnestly for a full moment. “Boy,” he said at last, “you may be right. At any rate, it’s time we turned in.”

Jimmy did not close his eyes until he had sworn to avenge this impending wrong, to defend his hosts and loyal good friends.

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Ten days later Jimmy found himself standing on a narrow, rocky shelf, looking down upon the sea. He stood at last upon King’s Island. He thrilled at the thought. He found it to be but a gigantic rock, rising almost perpendicularly out of the sea. Here, perched upon a ledge, were homes made of rocks and skins. And, in this village, for hundreds of years, had lived daring hunters who scoured the tossing sea for monsters, polar bear, walrus, and whale. As he thought of this he was almost ashamed that he had invaded their territory. And yet had it not been in part for the purpose of defending their good name that he had come?

Once more he looked away at the sea. The *Seminole* lay at anchor before the village. Eskimos in their kayaks darted across the water. Thousands of birds, sea parrots, little auks, and puffins soared aloft. It was a grand sight.

He and Lance had come ashore in a skin boat. The others would come later. Lance had climbed the rocky ridge in

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search of eggs. He, Jimmy, had lingered long enough to become acquainted with old Nepassak the native chief. Then he had climbed this narrow path which appeared to lead to the very top, just to look around.

They were still searching for that big skin boat and its dark-faced, mysterious crew. They had found no trace of them in Nome. So they had come to King's Island. Would they find them there? And if they did? He drew in a sharp breath.

After pausing to still his heart's wild beating, he began to climb again. He had not gone a dozen paces when with a low exclamation he stopped short. The path went straight on and up, but at his right hand was a narrow opening in the wall. It was not a crack, but a grotto, one that was dimly lighted in a mysterious manner. And from the depth to which the rock was worn, he knew that many persons had gone that way.

“How strange,” he whispered.

Stepping back, he aimed his camera and took a shot at the wall and the narrow entrance.

He paused to consider. Should he enter?

“Huh!” He shrugged his shoulders. “Where's the harm? Probably some native hide-out. May be a place where they keep their walrus meat fresh in summer.” He had heard of such places. Then he stepped boldly inside.

## CHAPTER XXII

### TWO BUBBLES

Holding the circle of light from his electric torch on the rocky floor of the winding passage Jimmy glided forward slowly. At every turn he expected to encounter some human being. Was he treading on dangerous ground? He shuddered at the thought. Yet the hope of making some real discovery that would aid him in unraveling the mystery of the stolen papers, the tattooed man, and all the rest, drove him forward. The very rock on which he trod was strange. It was worn smooth as glass by the tramping of many feet. Whose feet? And when?

Suddenly as he turned a corner he came to what appeared to be the end. The passage was closed. “By rock?” he asked himself. He put out a hand. Yes, rock, cold, solid, immovable rocks lay before him. He reached out to right and left. As his hands touched the walls he pushed involuntarily, as one might do in stretching. Then he suddenly started back. Had the wall to his right given a little? To find the answer he threw himself against it. It gave. Slowly, ever so slowly, like the door to a vast bank vault, a section of this wall swung back, and the dumbfounded boy found himself standing at the entrance of a long, narrow compartment that had, beyond doubt, once been a grotto. At the present time it resembled some fantastic eating place he had once visited in the subbasement of a skyscraper. Rich oriental rugs carpeted the floor. Tapestries hung on the walls. There was no furniture save a huge bronze dragon that gave off a faint wisp of smoke. Jimmy stared at the dragon. How long had it been smoking? It



looked a thousand years old. Once in Chicago's Chinatown he had seen one resembling it that had been made more than a thousand years before.

“But incense does not burn a thousand years—nor a thousand minutes,” he told himself, with a shudder. “Someone lit it not long ago.”

His feet wanted to carry him rapidly away, but he himself wished to remain. The place was strange, fascinating, entrancing.

Once when he was a rather small boy he had been taken to a very old house. The house had been partially furnished. The new owner had left the old things there, and had brought in new, modern things. The effect had been fantastic. This grotto was like that. The incense burner sat in a great pile of ashes. It had not been moved for years. In a dark corner he found some ancient native carvings. He had seen some that were more than five hundred years old. These seemed older. They were covered with dust. Perhaps the new owner of this place had not noticed them. Certainly there was a new owner, for the tapestries and rugs were quite new. It was all so strange.

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The light that streamed down into the place was strange too. The top of the grotto had been covered. What with? The oiled duck skin used by the Eskimo? Jimmy thought not. It shone like plate glass.

All at once the boy's figure stiffened. Had he heard a sound? A shuffle? A whisper? A sigh? He could not be sure. He longed

for a grip on the little automatic Peter Grim had once loaned him. But that was in far away Chicago.

Suddenly it occurred to him that he carried a weapon of a sort, in fact four of them. Hanging to his belt was a cylindrical metal box. In the box were four glass bubbles, and in each bubble enough gas to put a man out—not to kill him, but to put him to sleep. One had but to burst one of these bubbles under an adversary's nose, and nature did the rest.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the meantime Lance Lawson had made a great discovery—two of them, in fact. Having climbed the rocky wall that hangs over the roaring waters of Bering Sea, he tramped over the uneven surface of the island's crest where for a thousand years boys had wandered in search of eggs for food. Food did not interest him. He was looking for a bird with peculiar markings. He had seen these birds in a museum, stuffed. He carried a picture of one in his hand, but as a living, flying creature, he could only imagine them. Coming at last to a spot where the rock, broken away by wind, water, and the frost, had formed a shelving bank, he began to climb. Slipping back at every step, he leaned far forward to struggle on when, almost against his face, an ugly beak and a pair of angry eyes came into view. Starting back in surprise, he saw a bird dart from a hole like a rabbit's burrow. Then in his excitement he slipped and fell down flat. He fell on the nesting place of a marbled murrelet—the bird that lays thousand dollar eggs. For a full moment he sat there quite breathless. With the greatest difficulty he repressed his desire to reach into that burrow.

“No!” he fairly shouted. “I must not!”

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Springing to his feet, he studied the ground about him, noting the way he had come. After that he lined up a rocky crag to his right with another at his left. Then at right angles to this line, he drew a second imaginary line from crag to crag. If he could recall those four crags, the crossed lines from one to the other would mark the spot. After drawing a rough sketch of the crags, he set his staff in the soft shale, tied his handkerchief to it, offered a little prayer to the God of All Flying Things, then went sliding down the weather-beaten bank.

“I’ll find Jimmy,” he told himself. “Jimmy and his camera. We’ll come back and take pictures of the bird by the nest, and of the nest itself. Then we’ll take the eggs and photograph them. There may be more nests—many more. Boy! Oh, boy! This is my lucky day!”

But he did not find Jimmy. Jimmy was gone and no one seemed to know where.

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Having imagined that he caught a faint sound in that most silent of all places, the ancient cavern, Jimmy had glanced sharply about him. No one was to be seen. This did not, however, relieve his tense nerves. Six great pieces of tapestry hung from high up on the walls. These walls were uneven. The tapestries reached the floor. A man might be hiding behind any one of these. Then, too, there might be other secret doors behind which men might lurk.

Ever since his adventure with the Bubble Man, Jimmy had kept

the four glass bubbles in the metal case which now hung from his belt. Never until this moment had he dreamed of using them. He had kept them as evidence and proof that this strange story was true. Whenever he cared to tell it, he produced those bubbles.

There was a strap which went from one end to the other of the metal box, holding it shut. When he had finished showing it, Jimmy often hung the box from his belt. He had told the story and shown the trophies to members of the *Seminole's* crew only a few hours before. So it hung from his belt now. And for the first time in his life it occurred to him that these bubbles might be used as weapons by an honest person as well as by a criminal. No sooner thought than done. Opening the box, he removed two glass bubbles and thrust one in each of his side coat pockets.

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“Now,” he breathed, and was once more at ease.

He began studying the tapestries. At once he had the impression that the one before him, a woven picture of many dragons hopelessly entangled, was familiar to him. And yet the picture—had it been a picture he had seen—must have been much smaller. He was pondering this when, with the suddenness of thought, a hand shot under his right arm, then up to his head. It was ju-jitsu. He knew the trick. He would be powerless. His neck might be broken. Instantly his triggerlike mind told him what must be done. It might work. It had worked many times with his schoolmates. Suddenly he went perfectly limp. He had practiced this trick hours on end. He could relax until his eyes rolled when someone tried to pick him up.

Taken by surprise, his attacker lost his grip, stumbled, then crashed to the floor. Jimmy, too, was thrown off his feet. He caught one fleeting glance at his attacker. He wore a mask, was stripped to the waist, and his back was a mass of tattooed dragons.

“The tattooed man,” Jimmy thought.

Then his senses began to reel. Instantly he knew what had happened. He had fallen on one of his glass bubbles. It was giving off its fumes. He would go out. With the energy of despair he snatched at the remaining bubble and flung it full at his antagonist’s head. His aim was true. It burst with a low pop. Then the little world about him blinked out.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE BIRD HAS FLOWN

Lance wanted desperately to find Jimmy. The chance of a lifetime seemed within his grasp. He must not miss it. To gather those priceless eggs without first securing pictures would be a great blunder. Only Jimmy could be depended upon for these pictures. He knew this tricky arctic light. The electric eye in his exposure meter would set him right. Where was Jimmy?

“Where is he?” the boy demanded of the natives. No one knew.

As he turned a corner he all but fell over the most terrible looking native he had ever seen. Bleary-eyed, the man looked up at him, held out a leather pouch, and said:

“Wan na buy?”

Taking a step backward, Lance was about to say “No” and hurry on, when a line from an old poem came to him:

“Who gives himself with his gift feeds three,  
Himself, his hungry neighbor, and me.”

“What you got?” he demanded.

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As the native opened a filthy rawhide sack, Lance stared. The sack was filled with small images done in jade. They were wonderfully carved.

“Two beese—muk,” said the native.

“Two bits!” the boy exclaimed. “Quarter of a dollar! Sure! Four bits. Here it is.” He thrust a half dollar into the astonished native’s hand.

What had he bought? A set of chessmen done in marvelous light and dark green jade. A prize indeed. But that was not all. One piece was missing. That piece, he knew, was in Jimmy’s pocket. They had found it in the officers’ quarters of the ancient barracks at St. Michael. Had he solved a mystery or discovered a fresh one? He was not sure.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jimmy was feeling queer. He could think and hear. What he heard was the ticking of his watch. What he thought was, “Wonder where I am?” Then vaguely he recalled that he was in the ancient grotto. There had been a struggle. A glass bubble had been crushed. Its fumes had gotten him. He had lost consciousness. And now——

With a tremendous mental effort he forced his eyes open, then sat up. One quick look about and he was struggling to his feet. To his vast astonishment he saw no one. The place was empty. He rushed for the entrance, dashed down the passageway, stumbled once or twice, then came out into the clear light of day.

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He was halfway down the slope before he realized that he was running. When he became conscious of it he stopped. No real danger now, he thought. “A village of friendly natives is just below.”

He turned to look back. Then he stared. Had the entrance to the

cave been closed, or had he passed beyond sight of it? He did not know the answer. One thing was certain, the wall of stone he looked at disclosed no entrance.

“Oh, there you are, Jimmy!” came in a joyous exclamation. It was Lance.

“Yes, here I am,” Jimmy thought. “But where am I?”

Lance so took him by surprise with his tale of thousand dollar eggs that he found himself looking to the priming of his camera, then trudging up the path that led to the top.

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Perhaps if he had not just been gassed he might have realized that, for the moment, his own adventure was far more important than Lance's. However, he soon found himself at the island's crest while Lance studied the crags and got his bearings.

“It must be over this way,” said the young naturalist. “Yes,” his voice rose, “right over there. See my flag?”

“Sh,” he warned a moment later. “We'll just slip up on that hole. The bird's almost sure to be on the nest.”

“I'll get within fifteen feet,” said Jimmy. “I'll be ready with my camera. Then you slip up close. When the bird comes out I'll snap a picture of you and the bird. That should be proof enough for anyone.”

To say that Lance was excited as he crept forward would be to put it mildly. This was his big moment. If success crowned his effort, he would take home some very rare eggs. The papers would feature his picture. His story would be published in a



magazine, his uncle would be proud of him. His future would be secure.

But here he was close to the hole. The bird should be coming out. He took another step. No bird. His heart sank. Creeping close to the hole, he listened intently. No sound. In despair he gripped his flashlight, pressed the button, then shot its gleam into the hole. He took one look. Then his nerveless fingers lost their grip. The flashlight dropped to the ground.

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“Nothing!” he groaned. “No bird. No eggs. Nothing.”

“There may be other holes,” Jimmy suggested hopefully.

A careful search revealed no other signs of life on the ledge.

“Too bad,” said Jimmy. After that they trudged back down the hill in silence.

Suddenly Jimmy started. His normal senses were returning to him. “Lance!” he exclaimed, “I’ve had the most mysterious and terrible experience. I’ve got big news. The tattooed man is on the island!” At that he dashed down the trail at a furious rate.

As he reached the home of old Nepassack the chief, he paused. Perhaps the old man could tell him something important.

“Nepassack,” he said, as he came upon the old man seated by his door, “who lives up there?” He nodded toward the hill.

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“How you say?” The old man stared. “How you know anyone

live there?”

“Who is it?” the boy insisted.

“Spirit.” There was a strange wild note in the chief’s voice.

“Spirit of the great white bear. It is best not to know this.”

“That,” said Jimmy, “is nonsense.”

“Some things white man know.” Nepassack’s words sounded like a chant. “Some things Eskimo know. This is Eskimo land. All beasts have spirits, whale, walrus, seal, white bear. If Eskimo kill whale he kill not one more this year. He stay home, make fire with rubbing sticks, burn wild parsnip. This please spirit of dead whale. More whale come to get killed. This Eskimo know.”

Jimmy thrust his hand into his trouser’s pocket, and something hard and cold was there. He pulled it out and found that it was one of the very ancient ivory carvings from the cavern. He had taken it without meaning to.

“See,” he said, “this comes from up there. It must be very old.”

“Yes.” Nepassack turned the piece over in his bony hands. “Yes, it is very old.” He stood up unsteadily. “It is best not to visit the home of spirits.” He put the bit of ivory back into Jimmy’s hand, then turned to walk stiffly into his house.

As Jimmy went on into the village he felt as if he had been at a spiritualist’s séance.

“But all that,” he shook himself, “all that is nonsense.”

Looking up he realized that a change had come over the ocean. Far as he could see it was white with foam. The *Seminole* was moving, running from a sudden storm.

“Lance, old boy,”—his voice sounded hoarse—“we are trapped here by the storm.”

“How—how long?” Lance asked breathlessly.

To this question Jimmy could form no answer. Who could tell when the storm god of northern seas would end his raving? All Jimmy knew was that the true King’s Islanders were friends of white men and that he was safe among them. One thing he was sure he would not do while separated from his comrades on the *Seminole*—he would not again take the path up that steep slope.

Before he fell asleep in a native igloo that night he had time to wonder how the tattooed man had left the ancient grotto. Had he, partially recovering from the effect of the gas from the bubble thrown at him, stumbled out of the place? Or, had some of his party, finding him unconscious, believed him dead, and carried him away? He decided in the end that it did not matter. He was thankful enough to have escaped. That being enough for him, he fell asleep.

184

Next morning as Lance rolled out of his deer-skins something fell from his pocket.

“What’s that?” Jimmy asked.

“That,” Lance stared, “Oh, yes, that’s a set of green chessmen—all but one. You’ve got that. You found it in the old barracks after you’d been kidnapped, you know.”

Sitting on the floor, they compared Jimmy’s single piece with the others.

“You’re right,” said Jimmy. “They are identical. One more link in the chain of evidence.”

“Wonder how that stupid old native got these,” said Lance.

“You’ll probably never know that. Keep them as evidence. We may never need them, but they’ll make a fine trophy from the north. Even if you don’t find your thousand dollar eggs, you’ll have something.”

185

“I’ll find those eggs!” Lance declared stoutly.

He did not. At least, not on King’s Island. A long search for the marbled murrelet yielded them only sore feet.

For three days a storm roared across the sea. The *Seminole* in the lee of the island was safe. Jimmy remained in the native village. Eating doughnuts cooked in seal oil, fried seal liver, and whatever he could find, and sleeping under deer-skins, he fairly turned native. And Lance remained close by his side. Cut off from the protection of their associates, neither of them had any desire to climb that narrow trail to the grotto.

When at last the storm came to an end and they were carried in a big skin boat to the *Seminole*, Jimmy told his story to an all but unbelieving audience.

“If that gang is here, we’ll get them,” the captain declared. But they did not. For three days they circled the island. On the last day Jimmy and Louis McCarthy went ashore to climb the rocky path. Either they followed the wrong path, or the outer entrance to the grotto had been securely sealed, for they found no trace of it.

“You’ve been dreaming,” said Louis.

For answer, Jimmy produced the piece of ancient ivory carving. “I’ll find that place yet, and bring away the ancient dragon.”

When they asked the old chief about the tattooed man, he said:

“Call himself ‘Teragloona,’ this one. Go back to Nome, this one. Mebby one day gone.”

“Doubled back on his tracks,” Louis groaned. “Well, it’s back to Nome for us. Then he’ll not be there.”

Louis was right. A search lasting two days revealed no trace of the vanishing skin boat. So they steamed away to St. Michael, where Jimmy, Lance, Molly, Louis and his three seamen were left to keep a watch while the *Seminole* steamed away on a special mission of mercy.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE LAST CRUISE OF THE *Sally Ann*

For two days they kept a sharp watch on the broad waters of the Yukon but never a sail appeared.

“I wouldn’t doubt they’ve gone up the river,” said Tim. “What do you say we fire up the old *Sally Ann* an’ go after ’em?” There was a bright gleam in the old man’s eye.

“Meaning you want to sail this old barge!” Louis laughed.

“Well, now, perhaps it’s partly that,” Tim agreed.

At first Louis was against it. But Jimmy, Lance and Molly were all for it. So in the end, some Eskimos were called in to fire the boilers—smoke rose from the ancient stacks, steam began to hiss, and they were prepared to be off on a momentous voyage.

The three sailors cast off the lines. There came a hiss from the engine room. Like some sea monster wakened from a long dream, the *Sally Ann* shuddered. The great paddle wheel began moving slowly. The space between the ship’s side and the dock widened. Now a yard, now two, five, ten the space increased. The prow swung half about.

188

Marching proudly back and forth on the bridge, garbed in a spick-and-span uniform once owned by the *Sally Ann*’s last captain, Molly drew down her cap, paused to look up the river, then touched a button. A bell rang. From below came a louder

hiss of steam. The ship shuddered, doors rattled, and there arose a shout of pure joy. It was echoed again and again by those on the deck. And then slowly, majestically, the *Sally Ann* glided away on the course up the river which in days past she had traveled so many times in sun and storm.

The sun was bright. Families of young ducks raced before them. From the shore came the challenge of a bull moose. It was answered at once by the hoarse hoot of the *Sally Ann's* whistle. The moose vanished into willow thicket.

Everyone was happy. Tim, Molly, Jimmy, Lance—all but Louis McCarthy. Louis seemed restless, ill at ease. No longer a boy—he had served on the coast guard for more than ten years—he was accustomed to listen for sounds. Every hiss, bump, rattle and shudder meant something to Louis. He was listening now with all his ears. There was a double line up and down between his eyes.

189

He glanced now and again at his three seamen. They remained at the post he had assigned to them. Sitting nonchalantly in ancient deck chairs, they were nevertheless directly before a stout skiff, hung by new ropes and tackle from the cranes. This skiff, built of stout lumber, was eighteen feet in length by five in width. It would ride a heavy sea.

“I don’t trust those ancient lifeboats of the *Sally Ann*,” Louis had said to Jimmy. “I want something I can depend upon.” That his three seamen and the skiff could be trusted, he knew right well. Once when Tim was absent he had tested them. The boat could be lowered in two minutes by his watch.

Yes, everyone was happy, all but Louis. Jimmy was having the time of his young life. Just to look down upon Tim in his engine room was a sight for sore eyes. The splendid dignity of the old man, the professional touch he gave to each shaft, valve, piston, the way he carried that long-spouted oil can, the very tilt of his head, was a joy to see.

For Jimmy there had always been a strange fascination about the engine room of a great ship. The smooth, gliding motion of great rods, the hiss of steam, the slow, trembling thud of power that was there, thrilled him.

190

“How could Tim help loving it?” he said to Lance.

“He couldn’t,” was Lance’s brief reply.

As for Captain Molly, she too was in her element. She loved all manner of craft. For the day she was in command of a real ship. She had but to touch a button and the *Sally Ann* moved toward the right bank. Another move of her hand and the boat shifted to the left. Here was power, truly marvelous power.

“Of course,” she told herself, “the *Sally Ann* will never cruise again, not on a regular run. River traffic is done for good. But it’s glorious fun to pretend that we’re real people on a real job. And Tim glories in it. What more could be asked?” What indeed!

The equipment of the skiff Louis had hanging over the side was a little strange. Certainly it was well supplied with power. Besides four long ash oars there was a huge outboard motor. “Thirty-four horsepower!” Louis had exclaimed when he found that motor aboard the *Sally Ann*.

191



“Why! Tim, old boy, that thing would drive the *Sally Ann!*”

“That it would,” Tim had agreed.

“Where’d you get it?” Louis had asked.

“Some crazy prospector with more money than sense left it here,” had been Tim’s reply. “Alaska is full of things men have gone off and forgotten.”

Louis had become interested in the motor. He had filled it with gas, had attached it to his skiff, and pulled the string. When at last the thing had begun to thunder, he had barely escaped being thrown backward into the water.

“Grand little plaything,” he had said to Jimmy as he put it back aboard the *Sally Ann*. Now it was in the skiff—just in case. Besides this, there were three powerful rifles lashed to the inside of this skiff. Ever since the real man hunt had begun, Louis and his three companions had gone heavily armed.

“Those devils may be hiding up the river here somewhere,” he said to Jimmy now as he took a seat beside him. “Just as likely to be one place as another. And if they are,”—he made the motion of pulling the rope to his outboard motor, then gripped the handle of his automatic.

192

“Spies!” he hissed. “How I hate them!”

But when Jimmy was gone the worried look on Louis’ face returned. He glanced at his three men basking in the sun. Then he lent an ear to the hiss, shudder and thud of the ancient craft.

“I don’t like it,” he murmured under his breath. “This ancient hulk—it’s a ghost ship.

“Five minutes,” he murmured a little later. “That’s all it would take to get clear of this ghost.”

The *Sally Ann*, all unconscious of these joys and worries, went smoking and hooting on up the river.

As they came to the place where tall spruce trees reared themselves aloft like church spires, Louis kept a sharp lookout for columns of smoke that might mean a party of dark-skinned people hiding along the bank.

Coming at last to a long-deserted woodcutter’s wharf, they pulled alongside. Their native firemen piled the deck high with cordwood. Then again they were away.

“If that man ever shows up demanding his pay for the wood he’ll get it.” Tim’s face broke into a broad smile. “But he won’t. He’s dead.”

193

“One more ghost,” Jimmy thought to himself uneasily.

At the second stop for wood, Jimmy and Lance went ashore. After loading his camera with a color film, Jimmy climbed a steep bank, then looking down on the *Sally Ann* all gay in fresh paint and fluttering flags, exclaimed:

“Lance! That’s a glorious picture.” He snapped his camera twice. “Good old days,” he murmured low. “How I—I’d like to have been there.” The words somehow seemed to stick in his throat.

“Come on up this little stream,” Lance said a few moments later. “It will be an hour before they’re through loading.”

Taking a trail made by moose and bear, they came at last to a narrow sand bar at the edge of the stream.

“Look!” Lance’s eyes were fairly popping from his head. “Ross’s snow goose! And he acts like we were bothering him. He pointed to a great bird swimming restlessly back and forth in the water. “That may mean a nest. And if it does——”

Jimmy had a vision of thousand dollar bills floating through the air as Lance pulled him back into the brush.

194

“Here’s hoping!” he whispered.

“There!” Lance’s keen eyes had been at work. “There she is. It must be a nest. See!” he pointed.

“I see.” Jimmy gripped his camera. “I’ll get her picture in color,” he whispered. “Got it!” he shrieked a moment later.

“Now, let’s slip up. If she’s only resting I—I’ll die.” Lance gripped Jimmy’s arm hard.

Slowly, silently, they moved forward. Now the bird was thirty feet away, now twenty, fifteen——

“Th—there! Get her!” Lance trembled from head to foot. The goose was standing up. Beneath her were eggs, some eight or ten of them, he thought.

Measuring light and distance carefully, Jimmy took four shots

in quick succession. As the bird left the nest he shot again. As she rose and circled back, he took two quick shots on the wing. After that, at his leisure, he took shots of the nest at various angles, and then one of Lance taking one of the eggs.

By that time Lance was beyond the power of speech. His life's ambition had been realized, just like that. Putting out a hand, he gripped Jimmy's until it hurt.

195

Later, with the utmost care, they transferred the eggs from the nest to Lance's hat, then turned reluctantly away.

And the ancient stern-wheel river boat, the *Sally Ann* waited for them at the wood loading dock.

196

## CHAPTER XXV

### CONTACT AT LAST

Dinner that day was served in the ship's ancient dining room. It was an excellent meal, prepared by Aunt Sally Radford, an old, old friend of Tim's, who had been in the north since time began. This meal, however, was not an entirely cheerful affair. The long, slanting shadows of an arctic twilight striking across the decks cast a sense of gloom over the place.

"Ghosts," Jimmy whispered to Lance. Then in a bolder tone — "Please pass the salad."

When the meal was over, Molly sat studying the deepening lines in Louis McCarthy's face. The boat was tied up at a wood dock. As she took her place on the bridge Molly glanced longingly up the river. Then, after making the echoes with three long-drawn blasts of the whistle, she pressed a button, and the old ship began to cut a circle in the dark, rippling water. They were going back.

Eight hours later they were nearing the ancient dock where the *Sally Ann* had so long basked in the sun.

197

"We'll soon be there. Thank God for that," Louis said to Jimmy. "It's been a grand adventure, but you know——"

He stopped short, for at that moment Tim, who had come up for a breath of air, exclaimed:

“Look yonder! That’s them! The bloody, murderin’ spies! We’ll get ’em now! I’ll run ’em down with the *Sally Ann*, if it’s the last thing I ever do.”

Louis sprang to his feet. He took one look at the skin boat with its crew of natives sailing out of the river not a half mile away. “You’re right, Tim,” he replied, soberly. “That’s the boat. We’re in luck for once. But Tim! The *Sally Ann*! No. I couldn’t \_\_\_\_\_”

But Jimmy was gripping Louis’ arm until it hurt. “Louis,” he whispered, “let him try it. It would kill him if he didn’t have the chance to try. Good, brave old Tim! Give him a chance. In the end we’ll get them anyway!”

“Oh, all right,” Louis grumbled. “But if anything happens——”

“Nothing will happen.”

Jimmy hurried to the bridge to tell Captain Molly the grand news. At once Molly signalled for full steam ahead while Tim shouted to his firemen:

198

“Fill ’em up, boys, much as you’re able. Steam and more steam. That’s the ticket.”

“Good old *Sally Ann*,” he muttered to himself. “She’ll pay her way yet.” And he was more right than he knew. The only thing he did not know was how it was to be done.

Scarcely was the great old river boat on the tail of the native boat when the man at the helm, a short, heavy-set man with a swarthy face, called some words to a man in the prow. The

words were spoken not in English nor in Eskimo, but they had their effect. Instantly every face was turned toward the *Sally Ann*.

Grinning, the man at the outboard motor control touched a small lever and the motor redoubled its speed. At once they began to outdistance the *Sally Ann*.

But Tim and his *Sally Ann* had only begun to fight. Jimmy could hear the old man shouting to his stokers demanding more and more steam. And he got it. The hiss of steam, the rattle of doors, the thump and shudder increased with every mile. The motorized skin boat was no longer gaining. It was barely holding its own.

Jimmy and Lance watched with eager interest. Molly nervously paced the bridge. Louis looked more often at his three men and at the swinging skiff.

199

“Five minutes,” he muttered: “That’s all it will take—just five minutes. I wonder——”

From below came the hoarse shout, “Give her the wood! More steam! More steam, drat your hides! More steam!”

Boldly the skin boat headed out for the open sea. The going became choppy. The waves held them back, but the old river boat ploughed straight on.

The *Sally Ann* began to gain, and as they gained Molly pulled a cord. “Who-hooo,” the whistle hooted. “Who-hoo-hoo!” Again and again the old boat roared her challenge to this modern gas-eating demon. And still they gained, a boat length, two, three,

ten, a quarter of a mile, an eighth more. They could fairly look into the startled faces of the little brown men in that swaying, leaping thing of poles and skins.

Molly did not know what it was all about. She did know that somehow those men must be enemies of the land she loved, and that for her was enough.

200

But now, just as the race seemed won, strange and terrible things began to happen. Like frightened rabbits, little brown Eskimo men poured up the gangway to push a skin boat over the gunwale and to tumble into the sea after it. The stokers were deserting the ship. What did it mean?

Tim sprang up after them. His face was as white as his snowy beard. “It—it—it’s the boilers!” he stammered. “Too—too—too much steam! They’ve sprung—sprung a leak! She’s—she’s goin’ to blow up! Blow—blow to high heaven!”

“Quick!” It was Louis McCarthy’s voice that cracked like a gun. “Launch the boat! Over the side, every one of you!”

Somehow—tumbling, sliding, falling upon one another—Molly, Jimmy, Lance, Tim, Louis and his three men found themselves in the skiff. Then they rode away.

Working at top speed, Jimmy changed his film to white and black.

When at last they were well away from the ship, Louis and his men rested on their oars.

201

“There she rides the sea,” Tim said in a quivering voice.



Jimmy aimed his camera for a shot. "There she rides, boys," Tim went on, "the finest river boat that ever sailed the mighty Yukon. I might have been——"

He did not finish, for at that moment a tremendous report filled the air. The captain's cabin of the *Sally Ann*, Molly's bridge, and much else that had been the old ship, rose high above the hull, hung there for a second, then settled back. And all the time Jimmy was clicking his camera.

"What a series of pictures for a magazine," he murmured.

Lance did not appear to hear. He was examining a package he had been holding onto like grim death.

"Thousand dollar eggs!" he murmured. "Not one broken!"

"Well, that's that!" Louis exclaimed. "Now, how about getting those brown demons? You fellows," he looked at his men, "unlash your rifles. Jimmy, give me a hand with this engine. Speaking of motors, we'll show them a thing or two."

The thirty-four horsepower motor in place, Louis pulled the rope. No sound. Again. No result. A third time. There came a roar like a cannon and a machine gun all in one. The boat's prow rose, came down with a swish. Then the skiff began sliding across the crest of small waves like a flat pebble skipped across the sea. It was but a matter of moments when the skin boat was within easy range.

202

"Give them a salute, right over their heads!" Louis shouted. Three heavy rifles roared.

There came a tumult of wild screams. The short stout man at the motor control rose in his place, aimed an automatic and fired point-blank. Crack—crack—crack. Bullets sang about their ears. Next second, the man spun half round, then plunged headforemost into the sea. Louis had gotten his man. As for the rest, they gladly enough thrust their hands high in air.

Jimmy found it hard to sympathize with the one who was thrashing about in the water, for he recognized the victim as the tattooed man, the very man who had ordered his own torture back in the ancient barracks.

“Keep ’em up!” Louis roared. “Keep ’em high and you’ll live long.”

The crew of the skin boat kept their hands up. Ten minutes later Louis’s men were relieving them of knives and automatics, while Jimmy and Lance dragged the wounded man into their boat.

203

“King’s Islanders!” Molly exclaimed in surprise.

“King’s Islanders my eye!” Louis exclaimed. “Orientals, every one of them, right from Asia’s shores! Spies! That’s what they are, spies pretending they are American natives, and plotting to take all your father’s reindeer so that in case they have a war with us and want Alaska they won’t have to go hungry while they are doing it! That right, Jimmy?” he demanded.

“Sure seems to be the case,” Jimmy agreed.

“We’ll tell you a lot more about it later,” said Louis. “In the meantime the ancient lockup at the barracks is in fair shape.

We'll deposit these fellows there until we can find them a better place to live. I think we can provide them a fairly permanent residence, in the end!" He laughed dryly.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### WHEN ESKIMOS ARE NOT ESKIMOS

Taking the skin boat in tow, they headed back toward the mouth of the river. As they came closer in, Tim suddenly exclaimed:

“Look! There’s the old *Sally Ann*! She didn’t sink and she’s not on fire!”

“It’s strange she didn’t catch fire,” said Jimmy.

“She was leakin’ somethin’ awful,” said Tim. “The bilge water in her hold must have been about up to the fires. When she blew up, the explosion sent the fires right into all that water, like as not. Anyway, there she is, there’s no denyin’ that.”

“She’s done for,” said Louis. “Soon as the *Seminole* comes we’ll tow her back to the dock. We can’t let her drift out and turn ghost of the sea.”

At that moment, strangely enough, Jimmy thought again of big Dave Tower’s box of red gold. “Only a legend, I suppose,” he thought to himself. “And yet I wonder——”

205

They were nearing the old dock where they would land and take their captives to their temporary prison, when a cabin amphibian came swooping down from the sky. When it had taxied in close to their skiff a man appeared at the cabin door. It was Molly’s father, Bill Bowman.

“Is Molly there?” he called in an anxious voice.

“Sure! Here I am!” Molly stood up.

“Thank God!” he exclaimed. “Joe Dennis wired in by short wave that the old *Sally Ann* was on the rampage and I thought that meant trouble.”

“Trouble enough,” Louis grumbled. “She blew up!”

“Blew up!” Bill exclaimed.

“Sure, but we’re all safe, and we’ve got the men we’ve been looking for. Come along in with us. Jimmy’s got a thing or two to tell; that is, if his uncle will let him tell it. The *Seminole* should be here any time, and then . . . we’ll just stick around.”

“I wouldn’t miss it,” Bill declared.

In the end it was not the *Seminole* that went out after the shattered hulk that had once been the *Sally Ann*, for when the *Seminole* appeared, she was in the company of a seagoing tug coming to the river for a scow. The captain of this tug agreed to bring the wreck in.

206

Two hours after the *Seminole* arrived, over cups of good black coffee, Jimmy, ably assisted by his uncle, told the story of their spy trapping from the beginning.

“You see,” said Captain Jack, “almost at once Jimmy began saying there was something queer about those King’s Islanders.”

“Yes, and I told him he was crazy,” Molly exclaimed.

“Well, it seems he wasn’t,” the captain went on. “He gathered evidence, bit by bit, mostly pictures taken by his candid camera. These little brown boys were not dumb. They knew Jimmy was on their trail. So they kidnapped him.”

“Yes, and would have killed me if it hadn’t been for good old Buck,” Jimmy broke in. “Molly,” he exclaimed, “I have only one request to make,” he said, turning to the girl.

“What is it, Jimmy?” Molly seemed a bit confused.

“That you let me take Buck back to the States.”

207

“Jimmy!” she exclaimed in surprise. “Our north country is Buck’s home. What kind of a life do you think he’d lead down there? Chasing squirrels, treeing cats and barking at the moon?”

“I guess you’re right,” said Jimmy.

“Sayee! What is this, anyway?” Bill Bowman broke in.

“The big moment came,” said Jimmy, coming back to his story, “when we fought those fellows over by Nunivak Island and carried off the French Kid as a captive.

“Of course,” he added, “I had taken a picture during the fight that pretty well proved that the tattooed man was a spy. When he had been stripped of his parka, I got a picture of both his face and his tattooed back. The minute I saw that picture I knew he was the man who was in Tim’s cabin that first night and who stole those government letters from my pocket.”

“And that,” said the captain, “together with the picture of the chart taken from those letters with three men looking at it, one of whom resembled the tattooed man, made us sure of our grounds.”

“And that torn bit of chart taken from the sea,” Jimmy added.

208

“But what did this French Kid tell you?” Bill Bowman demanded impatiently. “And where do our reindeer come into the picture?”

“They came in right enough!” Captain Jack indulged in a short, happy laugh. “And you would have known it all too late. The story is almost too fantastic for words, but we’ll let Jimmy tell it. He has a boy’s imagination. But let me warn you,” he held up a hand, “don’t imagine for a moment that Jimmy’s telling you a fairy tale. It’s all true, every word of it.”

“It was like this,” Jimmy began. “You know native crews are always being carried away in their big skin boats by sudden storms. More than two years ago one of these boats with a crew of fourteen, ten men and four women, was carried far, far south.

“When they had given up hope, they sighted an island and landed there.

“This island belonged to the emperor of that land of men who do not love us any too much. They took in the King’s Islanders and treated them well.

“There were some spies among the men on the island.

They had meant to visit the mainland for a little spying. But when they found out where the King's Island natives had come from, they thought up a grand scheme. They said: 'We'll keep these people here for a year or two and have them teach us their language. They shall make clothing for us, just like their own. Then we'll go to Alaska as spies and no one will know that we are not King's Islanders.'"

"That," exclaimed Bill Bowman, "would be impossible."

"All right," Captain Jack laughed again. "Then the impossible has been accomplished."

"Truth is," he went on, "nothing could be simpler. The Eskimo language has few words and is not difficult to learn. When it comes to some of these men, clothes *do* make the man. When an Eskimo comes to Seattle dressed in white man's clothes, some oriental will start talking to him in Chinese or Japanese."

"That's a fact," said Louis McCarthy. "I've seen it done more than once."

"Well," said Jimmy, "the plan worked fine. The King's Islanders were sworn to secrecy, under pain of death. These fake King's Islanders have been stealing our secrets right and left ever since."

"Koto and the tattooed man who called himself Teragloona were their leaders," Captain Jack explained. "We've got them locked up, as well as most of their men. All we have to do now, Mr. Bowman, is to make the rounds of your reindeer herds and pick up the rest of their band."



“My herders!” Bill Bowman stared.

“Certainly. You have been using men from King’s Island, haven’t you?” asked Captain Jack.

“Sure we have.” Molly was beginning to smile. “And are they good!”

“Too good,” said Jimmy. “Almost without exception they are oriental spies.

“You see,” he explained, “reindeer furnish all the home-grown meat in Alaska. These Orientals have been stealing fur seals and salmon from our shores for many years. They looked forward to the time when they could move over here in great numbers from their overcrowded country.

“So they hit on the grand scheme of posing as Eskimos working as herders until nearly all the reindeer were under their control. Then they would persuade our government to give all the reindeer to the Eskimos, which would amount to giving the herds to them.”

211

“And they might have succeeded if it hadn’t been for Jimmy and his candid camera,” said Captain Jack.

“And now?” the astonished reindeer owner asked.

“Now these fake Eskimos will be tried as spies, or deported,” said the captain. “If the government wants to purchase the reindeer for our real Eskimos at a fair price, I am sure you will not object.”

“Not in the least,” said Bill Bowman, letting out a heavy sigh. “That sure takes a load off my shoulders. Jimmy, you’re a wonder!” He gripped the boy’s hand hard.

“Just one more camera bug,” Jimmy replied modestly.

“It’s hard to believe,” said Molly as she and Jimmy walked out on the ancient docks.

“Many things done by spies are hard to believe,” said Jimmy. “That’s why we must—all of us—be on our guard all the time.”

“Look!” Molly exclaimed, pointing to the far end of the dock. “They’ve brought in the wreck!”

212

“Sure have,” said Jimmy. “Let’s go have a look.”

It was strange, stepping out on the deck of the old ship once more. Much of the center had been blown away. The passengers’ cabins ranged along the side, most of them with doors gaping wide, had not been greatly harmed. As they walked along the narrow deck, Jimmy found himself looking in at every door. Why? He could not tell. But of a sudden when he paused before one of those more or less secret cubby-holes where linen is stored aboard a ship, he let out a low cry, sprang forward and dragged forth a heavy metal box.

“Dave Tower’s iron box!” Molly cried.

“Of red gold!” Jimmy added.

There could be no mistake. There was the box, with D. T. cut in its top, and its weight told that its contents were still there.

For a full moment they stood there staring while questions flooded their minds. How had it come there? Who had hidden it? Why had it not been found? How did it happen to be in plain sight now? There was little use of asking. It was there. That was enough.

“It’s Tim’s,” Molly whispered as if afraid the ghosts would hear. “He earned it by keeping the old ship afloat.”

“Yes. It’s Tim’s,” Jimmy agreed. “Let’s take it to him.”

Five minutes later, struggling under the weight of their load, they reached Captain Jack’s cabin.

“Now I can go back to Arkansas,” Tim rejoiced. Tears stood in his eyes. “I told you the old *Sally Ann* would pay fer her keep! An’ she has! She has!

“An’ Jimmy,” he added, “you took her picture, didn’t you?”

“In color,” said Jimmy. “All gay with new paint and with flags flying, the old Star Spangled Banner!”

“Jimmy, I want you to have three of those pictures made big.” Tim spread his arms wide. “One for Molly, one for you, and one for me.”

“They’ll cost money,” objected Jimmy.

“Who cares?” Tim stuck out his chest. “I’m rich!”

“O.K.” said Jimmy. “The pictures shall be made.”

A few days later after bidding good-bye to all his Alaskan friends, Jimmy climbed into the mail plane for his trip home. Beside him rode Lance Lawson with his hatful of thousand dollar eggs.

The plane soared high, he saw clouds banked away in the east. In fancy he thought of them as smoke clouds rising from the battlefields of a great war. John Nightingale, his reporter friend, was in Europe covering war news. Would he too be drawn across that broad sea?

“Home,” he whispered low. “That’s where I’m going now. That’s good enough for me. Let the future take care of itself.”



# Transcriber's Notes

- Copyright notice provided as in the original—this e-text is public domain in the country of publication.
- Silently corrected palpable typos; left non-standard spellings and dialect unchanged.
- In the text versions, delimited italics text in underscores (the HTML version reproduces the font form of the printed book.)

[The end of *By Bursting Flash Bulbs: A Jimmy Drury Mystery* by Roy J. Snell (as David O'Hara)]