

A background illustration of autumn foliage, including various types of leaves and tall, thin stalks of grain or reeds, rendered in shades of orange, yellow, and brown. The foliage is arranged in a dense, overlapping cluster.

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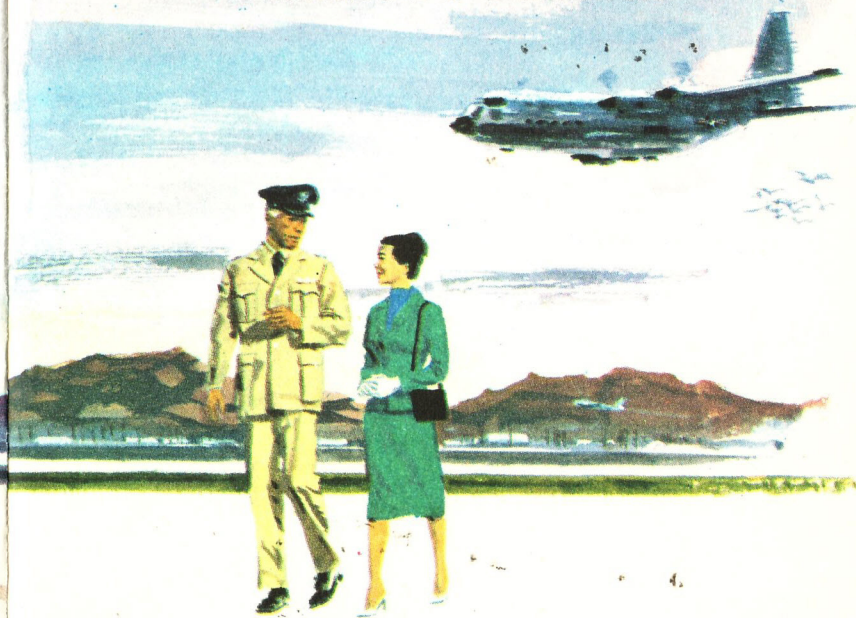


Illustrations by Dick Stone

FLIGHT FROM ASHIYA

A condensation of the book by

ELLIOTT ARNOLD



"Flight from Ashiya," © copyright 1959 by Elliott Arnold, is published at \$3.95 by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 501 Madison Ave., New York 22, N. Y.

FROM an American air base in Japan two planes fly out over the China Sea to rescue survivors of a shipwreck. One of the planes goes down, with all its crew. And back at the base a single question haunts every mind:

Which plane is lost?

As the wall clock in the Operations Room ticks off the agonizing minutes, the women who wait and the men in the surviving but still endangered plane relive their bittersweet loves, their secret triumphs and defeats. By the time the mission of mercy reaches its climax, the lives of all concerned have been subtly reshaped.

Through this novel of heroic action threads the moving story of delicately beautiful Tomiko, the Japanese girl in whom new Western freedoms war with the traditions of an ancient land, and Colonel Glenn Stevenson of the U.S. Air Force's Air Rescue Service, whose men court death fulfilling their gallant motto: *That Others May Live*.

Flight Operations, that afternoon . . .

2 p.m.

TOMIKO TAKAMORI was in the Officers Club on the Air Base at Ashiya trying to sell an automobile to a second lieutenant when a captain joined some people at the next table and said he had just heard at Operations that a plane had gone down.

Tomiko was explaining the automatic transmission in her precise English with professional assurance, and she had the feeling she was close to the moment when she could take out an order blank. It was then that she heard the captain talking over her own voice and over the questions of the second lieutenant and then one of the captain's words jumped out and she could hear nothing else, as though the lieutenant were talking to her through glass.

"One of the two Rescue planes that went out after some survivors from a Jap ship that went down in the typhoon," the captain was saying. "Lost the whole crew. Colonel Stevenson was flying one of the planes."

And all she heard was the name Stevenson.

She went on answering the lieutenant's questions automatically, but she was no longer there. Finally she understood he was saying he would bring his wife down to the showroom to pick out the color, and she smiled and nodded and got up and walked away from the table. She knew she had to get outside, alone, fast.

On the terrace she felt the chill September rain fall upon her, the rain from the edge of the typhoon that had torn apart the Japanese vessel. She looked neat and businesslike and un-Japanese in her English tweed suit and her flat-heeled walking shoes.

Presently she walked to the parking area and got into her car. She told herself it might not be his airplane, that the captain had said two planes had gone out. And all the while she knew it was his plane, that it had to be. She knew it because it made a pattern

and she understood it was proper that all things be formed into orderly patterns: flowers, food on a plate, life and death.

She lit a cigarette, an American cigarette from the last pack he had brought to the house, the house which was so filled with him and to which he had only lent himself, and for the first time since the day before, since that moment in his office when he looked up from his desk and spoke to her, she knew a relief. Now it was ended and she knew it was ended and it was right.

She knew what she would do. The moves were ordered, as in the old Japanese plays. She would wait at the Operations Building and verify that it was his airplane, the SA-16 commanded by Colonel Glenn Stevenson, and then she would go to the house and she would think back on all the things they had had, all the places, all the times, all the words, and she would think of all the things they had not had, and never could have, and then she would kill herself.

2:15 p.m.

"I REALLY don't know what Colonel Thorburn became so exercised about," Judy Moore said. "After all Fred *is* a major and rank has some privileges."

Ann Sumter, curled up in a deep chair, the telephone cradled comfortably on her shoulder, giggled into the mouthpiece. "What did the Old Man say?"

"Oh, he was very polite; just the icebox treatment, something about the Air Force not paying its Air Police to look for stray dogs."

"But they did find the dog."

"Yes, but don't think *they* were very pleasant about it either. They said: 'Mrs. Moore, this is the fourth time this month that your dog has turned up missing. Might we suggest that you keep him tied up?' Can you imagine? Honestly, I don't know what the service is coming to these days. Why, my father would have eaten those A.P.s out until they wouldn't have known which side was up! Well, he always said there *was* a difference between the Army and the Air Force." Judy was silent for a moment. "Well, Ann, I better get to work. I have to locate those coffee urns before the PTA meeting. Gene's out today, isn't he?"

"Yes, Colonel Stevenson asked him to fly navigator."

"Colonel Stevenson," Judy said. "He could ask me to fly navigator in his plane any time."

"Better not let Fred hear you talk that way," Ann said.

"Well, I'll speak to you later, Ann. Bridge tonight?"

"Uh, uh. Gene's got to do some studying. He has some tests coming up tomorrow."

Ann had just hung up when the phone rang again. This time it was Wally Mound, Gene's best friend, commander of the stand-by Rescue crew, who was serving as Duty Control Officer. Ann listened to him and then she said: "But you don't know for sure it was the plane Gene was in."

"All we know is that it's one of the SA-16's," Wally said. "There was a British flying boat, a Sunderland, out of Kai Tak at Hong Kong, at the scene. They saw one of our planes go down and they radioed Kai Tak and Kai Tak notified us."

"But they didn't say which one."

"No."

"Can't you contact the other one?"

"We're trying, Ann. We can't get through. There's weather and he may be having radio trouble."

"Thanks for calling, Wally."

"I knew you'd hear about it anyway and I wanted to remind you that Colonel Stevenson was not out to make the pickup, just to fly cover, so the chances are it wasn't his plane."

"Who's flying the mission?"

"Jerry Cooper."

"My God, poor Jo! Have you called her yet?"

"Can't reach her. Got to hang up now. Just stand by, Ann. I'll keep you clued in. Do you want me to get Mildred over there?"

Ann stiffened. "No." Mildred's coming over would make it more certain, as if she were a brand-new widow. Then she said, "Thanks, Wally, thanks for calling." She hung up and looked across the room. It was a small room in one of the small houses the Air Force had put up on the base. She could see through to the kitchen. She could see the rain outside. The cold, gray Japanese rain. The breakfast dishes were still in the sink with the yellow from the eggs dried on them and the fat he had cut from his ham.

Wally was right, she thought. Chances were it wasn't Gene's plane. It was awful that it had to be Jerry Cooper's airplane,

poor Jo. But not Gene. It couldn't be. They had just had an argument that morning, something about the kids picking up all kinds of Jap words and Gene saying fine, the more they learned the better, that's the way the world was getting to be, and she saying she wanted them to grow up like normal American children, back in a little town somewhere and not talking a foreign language even their own parents couldn't understand. That's why she wanted Gene to go to night school because then he would be better equipped when he got out and started living a normal life back home.

And Gene said okay, but that was for later; meanwhile the children of a major in the Air Force had to grow up wherever their old man happened to be stationed and they were lucky it wasn't a hardship station like Iceland or Dhahran.

"I understand that," she said. It was very early and she was still half asleep. "And don't think I'm not grateful to God. It's just that almost everybody we used to know in the war is out of the service by now and they belong to one place someplace. It's as though everybody graduated but you."

He finished his coffee before he answered. "I promised you that when this tour was up I'd resign my commission. I'm going to night school so I can get a decent job when I get out. What more do you want?"

"Nothing."

"Then stop going on about it."

It was then that Operations had called and said there was a mission and that Colonel Stevenson was going to fly cover and he wanted the Squadron Navigator, Major Sumter, to fly with him. Gene said: "Well, I'll get a little peace in the airplane anyway, it'll certainly be quieter than here," and he grabbed his cap and left.

After that she sat over another cup of coffee and began to feel rotten, knowing she should not have started all that again, she had already got her way. He had raised the roof when she first suggested that he go to night school, yelling he was no damned schoolboy and what would the other guys say, but in the end she had convinced him she was right. He had a fine mind, and it just had to be directed properly. That was what a good wife was for, knowing what was best for her husband, being able to see what he couldn't see. He still wasn't happy about getting out of the

service, but once out he would see she was right. She loved him very much and she wanted him to be the man she knew he could be.

AFTER WALLY called with the news, she telephoned Mildred Mound. "Gene took the car this morning," she said. "Will you drive me down to Operations?"

"That won't do any good, Ann," Mildred said. "You can't just sit there and wait."

"Will you please drive me down, Millie?"

"Of course," Mildred said, and Ann could tell from the way Mildred said those two small words that she too believed Gene was dead.

On the way to Operations both women were silent and Ann knew it was because they were both thinking of the same thing and talking about anything else would only be avoiding it. As they rode through the rain Ann remembered something Mildred had once said. Mildred had two children and both deliveries were difficult and right after Ann's youngest was born Mildred had said, holding the new baby in her arms: "I think I could just about manage one more of these."

"Why don't you, Millie?" Ann had asked. "Wally would love it."

"We both would. Only if anything happens to Wally and if I were to remarry I would want to give my next husband a child."

Ann was aghast. "How can you say that? The way you and Wally are?"

"The way Wally and I are has nothing to do with it," Mildred had said quietly. "In this business it's always happening and it can always happen to you."

Now Mildred pulled up in front of the long, dark Operations Building, darker in the rain. "Don't worry about anything at home," she said. "I'll stay with the children until you get back."

Ann entered the building. The big room was filled with wives and friends of the men on the two airplanes. Ann went to the counter behind which Wally was seated at a desk. He rose swiftly. "There was no need to come here, Ann. I told you I'd let you know."

"Did you hear anything?"

He shook his head. "It's kicking up a hell of a storm between

here and where they are." He fiddled with a pencil. "Okay, grab a seat somewhere. We got to get through before too long."

She sat down on a bench and looked around. She saw the Japanese girl, Tomiko, the one who sold automobiles, and wondered what she was doing there. Then she remembered the girl was working for Colonel Stevenson. She nodded and Tomiko inclined her head. She had a beautiful face, Ann thought, like so many Japanese girls, but it seemed hard as porcelain. She supposed they must have feelings, like everybody else, but they never showed.

She looked up. A WAF captain was standing before her holding out a paper cup of coffee. "It's chilly here, Mrs. Sumter," the WAF said. "This will warm you up."

Ann said thanks and took the cup. She was suddenly aware the room was cold and smelled of the rain. She looked up at the big loud-speaker on the wall behind the counter. Whatever it was going to be was going to come out of that.

2:50 p.m.

CAPTAIN LUCILLE CARROLL left Ann Sumter, walked down a short corridor and turned into a room marked WEATHER. She looked at the map thumbtacked to a draftsman's table.

Major Ralph Heath, the Base Weather Officer, glanced up from his desk. "No change, Lu, except maybe it's a little worse." He nodded toward the waiting room. "Getting sticky out there?"

"Like a wake," she said. "Some of the wives of Major Cooper's crew are out there, but it's like they're cushioning a bet. They all really believe it's Colonel Stevenson's airplane. Why, Ralph?"

"Beats me. I don't have a crystal ball." He looked at her keenly. "Why are *you* all shook up? Anybody special on one of those crates? You wouldn't hide anything from a pal, would you?"

She laughed nervously and lit a cigarette. "Who could hide anything in *this* place? It's just the way they are out there in that room. Creepy. Some of those women are widows. And none of them knows which, for sure." She tugged down on her short Eisenhower jacket. "Well, I'd better get out there again."

She went out and stood behind the counter, thinking maybe she had slipped a little. She was a big, cheerful woman and everybody was used to her that way. She wondered if she had covered



up all right. She was tired of pretending, covering up. The services were so strict about officers and enlisted men, especially when the officers were women and the enlisted people were men. Even when Mike was in civvies and she was out of uniform, they both felt everybody must know she was an officer and he was a sergeant.

And where was Sergeant Michael Warren, paramedic, at this moment? He went out in an airplane in which he was just a passenger until his own moment arrived, hunched up and waiting until the time came to open the door and go. The others all had something to do with the airplane, but he went along for the ride until he went on his own ride. It was a pretty lousy way for a jumper to get it, trapped in the metal belly of an airplane. If he had to die it should have been his own way, alone, after dangling on nylon cords through a lot of empty air.

She had once asked him: "Mike, why do you jump?"

He took a long time to answer. They were having beer and sandwiches and he finished his beer before he said: "It makes me feel good. You're in this airplane, and it's noisy, metal all around you and people all around you, and then you go out and there is the little pop, like, and the big jerk and then you're alone. You're a little deaf from the noise of the plane, so it's real quiet around you and by then the plane has disappeared, it's crazy how fast that plane gets away, and you're all by yourself and if it's night you can't even see the ground. Like you're all alone in the world." He stared at the mouth of the beer bottle. "Then it ends and you get back."

Back, she remembered thinking, not down but back. Back from his own world, the universe he possessed unto himself. Where he floated down and nothing else lived.

"What can I give you after that?" she had asked. "What could any woman give you?"

He seemed very young and thin, but it was amazing the punishment his body could take, landing on the ground with the speed of jumping from an express train and then tumbling like a circus acrobat. She wanted to take him in her arms and hold him tight. Give her time, she thought, give her time and she'd lick the competition.

Now she was looking at the men lounging in the room. "Straightlegs," Mike called them. That's what the jumpers, who

wore their trousers tucked into their high paratroop boots, called all the others.

As she filled more coffee cups she wondered about the coffee in Sugar Apple One Three Two One, taken out that morning by Colonel Glenn Stevenson and five other men. It must be damned diluted by now.

And she had never licked the competition. The other thing had won out, after all.

2:55 p.m. SERGEANT MEL GRIFFITH broke open his cigarette butt, scattered the tobacco, rolled the paper into a ball and flipped it out of the open hangar door. "It ain't that he's maybe dead," he said. "He did his dying more than a year ago, in Germany. All he'd be doing now was getting himself buried and having it put down on the records, official. It ain't that." He wiped his wet palm slowly on the seat of his coveralls. "It's the damned coffin he picked out for himself. A chopper pilot getting himself buried in a stiff-wing!"

Griffith, his peaked fatigue cap pushed back on his crew cut, his square face leathery and dark, was squatting on his heels staring out on the empty strip. Because of the weather warning, all the planes were parked in the great hollow building, like dead creatures from a prehistoric world, huge, ungainly and still.

"And in a pickup crew," Griffith said. "They put all these jokers together and they don't fit, so something goes wrong. Even a paddlefoot like you knows that a crew has got to fit."

Airman Third Class Alvin Hurley shifted his skinny rump on the cold cement floor and blinked his eyes, big behind thick glasses. "You knew Lieutenant Gregg a long time, didn't you, Sarge?" he asked. "He was a funny guy. Seems like I never seen him crack a smile."

"You don't know a thing," Griffith said. "I remember when the lieutenant showed up at Fursty in Germany fresh out of chopper school. His family had a lot of scratch and he showed it. His uniform fit better than anybody else's and he could speak Kraut real good. The Krauts used to invite him out to their places, not the crummy clip joints where the rest of us used to go.

"I remember one time they wanted him at the base, the C.O.

wanted him to give some brass a ride in a chopper, and I found him in some beer cellar and he was standing in the middle of the floor with some Kraut doing that crazy dance where they slap their legs and then slap each other. Everybody was singing and shouting and stamping their feet and when they found out I was there to take the lieutenant away they almost mobbed me."

"Jeez," Hurley said. "Lieutenant Gregg. *Dancing.*"

"I had a tough time getting him away, but he took the general up and gave him a ride like nobody ever got before. Lieutenant Gregg could make a chopper do tricks, like a circus horse. When he landed and the general climbed out Lieutenant Gregg lifted the chopper about ten feet and *bowed* it to the general. When Lieutenant Gregg came down and climbed out the general put his arm around him and said: 'Lieutenant, the helicopter has capabilities I never imagined.'"

Griffith gave a short laugh. "Nobody wised the brass up. Nobody told him it didn't have no capabilities like that, only for Lieutenant Gregg. But a couple of months later the whole Group got more choppers. With the compliments of the general."

Griffith stuck a cigarette in his mouth and Hurley whipped out a lighter instantly. "The time they had the floods in Holland," Griffith said. "People and animals drowning and he went out seven, eight times a day, picking up people, and then after dark working out plans for the next day with the C.O. and getting no sleep hardly. Lieutenant Gregg was one of them jerks, he worried about people he heard got drowned, like it was his fault he wasn't there to save them."

"Once the rotor shaft of his chopper fouled up and he sat on the shoulder of the sergeant in charge of repairs until the shaft was changed and he kept looking at his watch like there were people waiting for him somewhere. That day he picked up a baby that was floating down a canal in a basket. When he landed he yelled to the sergeant who fixed up his shaft and made him come over and see the baby. 'This is what I got with that new shaft you fixed up for me,' the lieutenant says to him." Griffith blew out a mouthful of smoke. "It made the sergeant feel real good. It wasn't often he could see exactly what his sweat was doing, like a baby in a basket."

"Why didn't he fly a chopper over here?" Hurley asked. "I never seen him even go near no chopper."

Griffith dragged on his cigarette. "That was his story," he said. "I never talked about it when he was alive and I ain't going to talk about it now that he's maybe dead." He stood up.

"You sure know a lot about him," Hurley said.

"Why shouldn't I?" Griffith said harshly. "I flew with him all the time. He was the pilot and I was the engineer. Lieutenant Gregg and me made a team."

He strode out of the hangar into the rain.

The airplanes, that morning . . .

6:10 a.m. THAT MORNING, just after first light, the two SA-16's had taken off from the base at Ashiya.

They had wheels up about sixty seconds apart, and forty minutes later they crossed over the city of Nagasaki and left the island of Kyushu behind them. They were headed southwest for the point in the East China Sea where the Japanese cargo vessel *Tanda Maru* had broken her back in Typhoon Kathy, exploded and then sunk with all hands except for four women and two children, who had been launched in a small lifeboat.

Before the vessel had gone down, the radio operator had got out a last signal establishing its position. The signal had been intercepted by a Japanese freighter and passed on to the Japanese Coast Guard station at Moji, where it was relayed to the 39th Air Rescue Squadron at Ashiya.

The message reached Rescue Control thirteen hours and forty minutes after the *Tanda Maru* went down, and the two airplanes departed fifty minutes later with Major Jerry Cooper, the Squadron Commander, flying as Mission Commander on aircraft No. 1326, and Colonel Glenn Stevenson flying aircraft No. 1321 to serve as cover if the survivors were located and a water landing attempted. By the time the airplanes arrived over the area where the *Tanda Maru* sank, the lifeboat would have been afloat, if it were still afloat, on an open sea in the wake of a typhoon for more than nineteen hours and would have drifted an unknown distance in an unknown direction. The point of sinking was the sole clue and the search would begin there.

Now, a little more than an hour after take-off, the two aircraft were flying five hundred yards apart, at an altitude of ten thousand

feet, on a parallel course of 218 degrees. Lateral visibility was fair; visibility below was nil.

Colonel Stevenson glanced out his window and saw the boat-like hull of Cooper's aircraft, the high wing, the torpedo-shaped disposable gasoline tank and the orange-colored starboard float. He pulled down the microphone bracket on his headset and called out on Echo Channel, the private Rescue frequency on the ultra-high-frequency radio: "One Three Two Six, this is One Three Two One. Do you read me on Echo?"

Major Cooper came in instantly: "Receive you five square, sir."

"How's your airplane, Cooper?"

"No sweat, Colonel."

After a brief instrument check, Stevenson signed off, made a slight aileron trim for balance and then touched the arm of his copilot, Lieutenant John Gregg, nodding to him to take over the controls. "You got it," he said.

He removed his headset with its foam-rubber cushions. The noise of the airplane hit him, and it was as though he was now alone in a world of noise. He unsnapped his safety harness, lit a cigarette and inhaled deeply. Then he lifted the seat arm and stood up.

He was a tall man, just past forty. His hair was cut short and was gray at the temples. His eyes were a clear blue and there were lines on both sides of his mouth that were older than his years.

He started toward the middle of the airplane. His eyes met those of Master Sergeant Homer Garrison, the engineer, and Garrison, a huge man, held up his hand with the thumb and forefinger making a circle. The radio operator, Staff Sergeant Tracy Dennis, pushed an earphone off one ear. "Just called in a position report, sir," he said.

Major Gene Sumter, the navigator, was seated at his desk, his eyes glued to the radarscope. Stevenson got himself a cup of coffee and looked back toward the rear of the plane.

Seated on the edge of a chair, the paramedic, Technical Sergeant Mike Warren, was wrapping an uninflated Mae West around his medical kit. Sipping the coffee, Stevenson watched him. Warren's fingers moved with precision, and he worked with concentration. He arranged the straps so they would not interfere with the inflation of the vest, tucked them in, tightened them. Then he held up the kit and inspected it from all sides. He made

another small adjustment, and then, satisfied, he picked up a piece of rope about ten feet long and tied one end of it to the kit. He looked over his work once more and then laid down the kit gently.

There was, in the manner in which he worked, such a sense of application, such a quality of privacy, that Stevenson felt suddenly he had almost been spying on him and he turned away his head quickly before the paramedic could look up and see he had been watching him.

SERGEANT GARRISON ushered his bulky two hundred and thirty pounds slowly and comfortably toward the rear of the airplane and flopped heavily into a seat across the aisle from Mike Warren. The paramedic did not turn his head. His face was small, tightly made and as contained as his body. His hair was light and his eyes were a pale amber.

Garrison leaned over and looked at the medical kit. "Pretty smart, fixing that up so it'll float by itself," he said.

"Don't touch it," Warren said.

Garrison sat back in his seat. "Don't worry, pal. I ain't going to touch nothing that belongs to you. Only tell me one thing, how the hell did you get a Mae West issued to a medical kit?" He laughed loudly.

Warren leaned his head back and closed his eyes. Maybe if he looked like he was going to sleep, he thought, Garrison would shut up.

"Grab some sack time, pal," Garrison said. "You ain't got nothing else to do."

If he only could sleep, Mike thought, instead of running away inside his head, back to Algiers and the palm trees and the beach and the narrow street leading up to the Kasbah, wanting to reach out and touch her, and knowing that he could not. He was on the outside. People pushing at him from all sides and it was like he was not there.

But he wasn't going to think about that now. It would come, all right. He could hide for a while but it always found him out.

CAPTAIN HARRY VICTOR, the navigator on Cooper's plane, got Gene Sumter on the radio. "Keep us in sight, Gene," Victor said. "We don't want you to get lost today."

"I'll try," Sumter said. "I'll try real hard."

"Need a heading? Or a loran fix? Or any other little old thing?"

"Nope, I'm a happy man," Sumter said.

"Good. You just keep following us and stay happy. Don't you bother your little old head with any of those nasty maps. I'll give you all the poop you need. Want you to keep that head clear. Can't have my boss flunking out tomorrow, you know. The whole squadron's betting on you."

"Go to hell," Sumter said.

"You just sit back there and *think*. Want to know anything, just give me a yell."

"Roger," Sumter said.

"Got to go to work now," Victor said. "You just relax."

LIEUTENANT JOHN GREGG felt his hands break out with sweat as he took over the controls. "You got it," the colonel had said, officially transferring to him the airplane and the men in it. He wanted to rub his hands together, to get rid of some of the sweat, but he didn't want the colonel to see him. *No sweat*, the expression was, no problem, no trouble, and he felt the wheel wet under his hands.

He looked straight ahead, thinking how even the clouds looked like snow, like big bellies of snow, packed and piled and waiting, feather-light and yet as heavy as the world. How long would it seem that snow falling in New York or Maine or Omaha was falling on a valley in the German Alps? Even now the snow on Fuji-san was, for him, still German snow. Maybe if the clouds were not so solid below, and he could see water. . . . Only there was a big sea today with whitecaps, and it would be the same thing, flying over mountains with white peaks and dark, dead sides.

He wanted to put the airplane on automatic pilot, to know it was not flying under his hands. Any other pilot would do it and sit back and the sweating would go away. Only *he* couldn't do it. It would be another defeat. Even if the thing had to win out in the end he still had to try to fight it.

Only not this time. Not this one single time. It was what anybody might do at this time. Maybe it wouldn't be a defeat.

He leaned forward and started to put the aircraft into electronic control and then in the earphones he heard the voice of Major Cooper asking for Colonel Stevenson.

He turned and looked back. "He's just coming back to his seat, Major," he said. He looked up at Stevenson and touched his earphones.

Stevenson sat down and put on his headset. "Colonel Stevenson."

"Major Cooper, Colonel," Cooper said. "Our navigator picked up some thunder bampus ahead. Your boy pick up the same?"

"Affirmative," Stevenson said. "I just saw it on the radar screen. About eight miles dead ahead. It'll give us a little excitement."

"How's old Gene doing, Colonel?"

"Old Gene is doing fine."

"You got to watch that boy and make sure he stays awake."

"You know what you can do," Sumter cut in from his station.

"Gene likes to sleep in an airplane, Colonel. Stays up studying all night and sleeps all day," Cooper said.

"I'll keep my eye on him," Stevenson said.

"Roger, over and out."

Stevenson said to Gregg: "I've got it."

Gregg sat back in his seat. He turned his face, young, thin and cut fine, to the window. He had lost again. The colonel had come back before he could do it but he had been going to do it and he had lost again.

The docs knew a lot, he thought, when they ordered him out of choppers, but they didn't know everything. Because if they did they wouldn't let him inside an airplane. Not even to ride in.

Flight Operations, that afternoon . . .

3:05 p.m. KNOWING THAT within a few hours she might take her life, Tomiko sat quietly in the big room, hoping only that she would remain unnoticed.

Grief was a private thing, not to be displayed before strangers. Love was meant to be shared; sorrow to be endured in solitude.

Amid the hum of voices she thought of a small Buddhist temple she visited from time to time when she was troubled. There, in the ancient serenities, she had tried to understand the transience of material things; the concept of *satori*, the freedom from passion. Now, as she awaited the word for which everybody in the room

was waiting, she thought that death itself must be the ultimate *satori*. Death was not the end of something, but the beginning of nothing.

IT HAD started with Glenn Stevenson the day after he had arrived in Ashiya from Rescue Group Headquarters in Nagoya. Major Jerry Cooper had phoned her. "Tommy, Colonel Stevenson, the new Inspector General from Rescue Headquarters, is here for a few weeks, and he says he has a message for you from Ed Carlson. We're giving him a cocktail party tomorrow and we'd like you to come."

"I would like to come."

When Tomiko arrived at the club she saw an officer who was considering buying a car from her, and she was talking to him when Cooper and Stevenson came over.

"Interrupting anything?" Cooper said.

The officer to whom Tomiko was talking said: "You're just in the proverbial nick. She had me hooked and was reeling me in." He raised his hands defensively and backed away.

Cooper laughed. "Sorry, Tommy." He introduced her to Stevenson. "I'll leave you two alone," he said.

Stevenson's eyes laughed. "Think I'm safe? What would I do with a car in Japan?"

"You got the whole Rescue squadron here, Colonel," Cooper said. "You get in trouble, you yell for help."

Cooper walked away and Stevenson cocked his head and looked at her. "Well," he said. "Tomiko. At last."

"Why 'at last,' Colonel?"

"When Ed Carlson found I was coming out here he didn't stop talking about you until I took off. You're an old friend."

He smiled. It was a warm smile and Tomiko knew she was going to be comfortable with him. She knew many Americans in Ashiya and most of them were amused by her, by the idea of a Japanese girl selling automobiles. They thought of her as a kind of local character. This attitude was a valuable business asset, but a character must always stay in character and she had to work at it. It was nice to meet a man with whom she could relax.

"Specifically, Carlson asked me to tell you he's doing everything he can to get papers for you to go to Florida and marry him," Stevenson said. "He has it bad, Tomiko. And I can see

why." He looked at her quizzically. "The message doesn't exactly seem to fill you with joy."

"It does not fill me with joy, Colonel. But it was good of you to remember."

At this point Cooper reappeared. "Excuse me, Colonel, but some of the boys and their wives over there would like to meet you."

"Thank you again, Colonel," Tomiko said immediately.

He slipped his hand under her arm. "No," he said. "You come along too. Wives scare me."

Cooper introduced Stevenson to the Sumters, to the Mounds and to his wife, Jo. "You all know Tomiko," he said.

Stevenson held a chair for her and she sat down. She felt suddenly uneasy and she wanted to whisper to Stevenson: "The wives frighten me too." She looked up and saw that he was holding out a lighted cigarette and something on his face made her believe he understood what was passing in her mind.

Major Sumter said: "Maybe we'll have a mission turn up for you while you're here. Want you to see the best squadron in Rescue in action?"

"Maybe I'll get lucky," Stevenson said.

Cooper ordered drinks. "Colonel, I understand you want to look into our liaison with the Japanese Coast Guard. I took the liberty of inviting Captain Koda, commanding officer of the station at Moji, to come tonight. We do a lot of business with him."

"Fine," Stevenson said.

"How many squadrons have you visited so far, Colonel?" Mound asked.

"Hawaii and the others here in Japan."

"How are they doing?"

"First rate."

"Second rate, Colonel," Sumter said. "There's only one first rate."

Stevenson laughed. "Keep talking, Major. You're selling me."

"Where do you go next, sir?" Mound asked.

"Okinawa. Then Taipeh, the Philippines and on to Dhahran."

"Dhahran." Mound shuddered. "I put in a year there."

At that moment the public-address system summoned Cooper to Rescue Operations. He kissed his wife on the cheek and stood up. "You may flirt a little," he said. "But not too much."

Jo Cooper crinkled her nose. "Not too much," she agreed. Her eyes stayed on Cooper until he left the room.

"Kind of like that boy, don't you?" Stevenson said.

Jo turned to him. She was slim and cool-looking. "Yes, Colonel, I kind of like that boy."

"Where do you come from?"

"We're both from Ohio. Jerry and I have known each other since we were children."

"You're both a long way from home."

She smiled, a smile that illuminated her face. "No, Colonel, wherever Jerry and the children and I are is home." She sipped from her glass. "You know, all my life I've wanted to settle down in a house with my own things, but Jerry can't stand a desk." She was silent for a moment. "Jerry knows what I would like but I don't think I'd like it really. You can never be happy at somebody else's expense."

Tomiko saw Gene Sumter staring at his wife and she saw Ann turn her head and look away.

Cooper returned to the table. He said: "False alarm at Rescue Operations. But Captain Koda just came through the gate."

Stevenson stood up immediately. "We'll go out to the terrace to greet him."

Cooper turned to Tomiko. "Tommy, Captain Koda doesn't speak much English. Could you come along with us?"

"Of course," she said. As they walked toward the door she said quietly to Stevenson: "You are a courteous man, Colonel."

"It's just as easy that way."

"You are also a charming man."

"Thank you."

"Americans have many fine qualities, but many of them, please forgive me, are thoughtless about little things that are important to Japanese. And few of them have charm."

He took her arm. "I like you too," he said.

As they went out onto the terrace a car pulled up and a Japanese naval officer, carrying an attaché case, stepped out. He bowed low to Stevenson and then saluted. Stevenson returned the salute, and Cooper introduced them. Koda, a slender man with clean, crisp features, said, in English: "It is a great honor, Colonel Stevenson."

"The honor is mine, Captain," Stevenson said, and held out

his hand. Koda shook it and then Stevenson gestured for him to precede him into the club. At the table Cooper introduced Koda to the wives and ordered drinks. When they arrived Koda raised his glass and spoke. Tomiko translated: "Captain Koda wishes to make a toast to the Air Rescue Service which has done so much for the people of Japan."

Stevenson said: "Please tell him that without the coöperation of the splendid Japanese Coast Guard we would be useless here."

Through Tomiko, Koda replied: "I speak for all my officers and men when I say we are proud to be considered worthy of serving with you. I hope you will honor my command at Moji by paying a visit there if your schedule permits."

"Tell him I would like nothing more," Stevenson replied. "One of the chief reasons I have come to Ashiya is to pay my respects to his command."

Koda nodded slowly as Tomiko translated the words and then spoke again to her. "Captain Koda has brought a small present he would like to give to you to commemorate this occasion, Colonel," she said.

Koda opened the attaché case and took out a heavy silk scroll, which he presented to Stevenson. Stevenson looked at the Japanese characters and said: "Will you do the honors, Tomiko, please?"

She took the scroll. "It reads as follows: *We are sincerely grateful for the brave deeds of the Air Rescue Service in saving Japanese vessels and people. We present this Certificate of Appreciation to commemorate these brave deeds forever, firmly believing that they will greatly promote friendship between Japanese and Americans. It is signed Japanese Coast Guard, Moji Station, Captain Yukio Koda, Commandant.*"

Stevenson said: "Please express my thanks to Captain Koda and his brave men and tell him that I shall treasure this scroll forever."

Koda rose. Tomiko said: "Captain Koda says he will leave now and that he will await the colonel's visit with the greatest pleasure."

The men stood up and Stevenson shook Koda's hand warmly. Koda left the club, escorted by Cooper, and Tomiko turned to Stevenson. Her face froze.

He was still smiling affably, but his left arm was as rigid as a steel bar. The silk scroll was crushed into a tight ball in his fist.

He saw her expression and frowned slightly, puzzled, and then



he looked down. He stared at his clenched hand as though it did not belong to him and then his fingers opened slowly and he brought his two hands together and tried to smooth out the crumpled piece of silk.

She looked around swiftly. No one else had seen it. She took the scroll from him and folded it. "I will press this out for you, Colonel," she said.

Cooper returned to the table. "That's a fine officer," he said.

"Yes, he is," Stevenson said.

Her hands felt like ice as she held the wrinkled silk in her lap and she thought how he had not even been aware of his hatred.

NEXT MORNING she bought a *samurai* doll and sent it to him by messenger with a card: *With gratitude to Colonel Stevenson from Tomiko Takamori.* He called her at the showroom and thanked her.

"It is for good luck, Colonel," she said. "You did me a favor,

remembering to tell me the words of Major Carlson. I am still in your debt and I would like to do something for you."

"You've done more than enough, Tomiko. The doll is handsome."

"I would like to take you to dinner, for you have brought me good fortune."

"I? How?"

She laughed softly. "I have been trying to sell Captain MacGregor a car for more than three weeks. Last night at the party he agreed at last to buy one. I wish to share my good fortune with you. Are you free today?"

"I guess I could make it."

"I want to take you to Fukuoka. It takes almost three hours to get there and there is a place on the way I want to visit for a little while, so I will call for you at the club at noon."

She was waiting at the club when he got there. "I will drive," she said. "I want you to be free to look around and see everything."

She backed out the car expertly. He lit a cigarette for her and one for himself. "How did you get around to selling cars?" he asked.

"My father and mother died in Java, where my father had a business before the war. I returned to Japan to live with my uncle. He had many children, too many girls. I had to help. I worked in a store in Ashiya, and I met Major Carlson. He introduced me to friends at the Air Base. All the time they are talking about automobiles." She laughed. "It seemed to me that American men thought more about automobiles even than about women. I took a position at an automobile agency and I began to sell cars to Major Carlson's friends. Now almost everybody on the base buys cars from me."

Presently she turned the car off the highway onto a small dirt road. They came to a small village and she pulled up and stopped.

"Do you mind to stop here for a little while? There is a Shinto shrine."

They got out of the car and she led him briskly to a huge gateway, opening on a series of broad, worn steps. On both sides of the steps were sheets of boarding on which were attached little pieces of paper.

"Those are prayers from women for children," she said. "Men

children." She smiled. "Japanese girls are not popular in Japan. Except with American soldiers."

At the top of the stairs they reached a broad terrace, intricately landscaped. She led him across the terrace toward the deserted shrine. When they reached it she clapped her hands and bowed in obeisance. She remained there for several minutes, her head inclined, her hands pressed together, and then she rose, took some paper money from her purse and put it into a slotted box. A large cymbal swung from a hook nearby. She picked up a drumstick and struck the cymbal. The sound reverberated loudly in the silence.

"Now we will go to Fukuoka," she said.

They crossed the terrace and started down the stairs. "Among the Shinto gods, there are seven Gods of Fortune," she said. "This is a shrine to Daikoku, the God of Wealth. My name, Tomiko, means richness. I come here many times. I want to be rich."

FUKUOKA was large and clean and crowded. Tomiko parked the car and they began to stroll. "We will eat in places where Americans do not visit," she said. "That is what I can do for you in Fukuoka. Is there anything you want to do first?"

"I could use a drink," he said.

"Americans can always use a drink. No matter what else they cannot use they can always use a drink."

She took him to a small, Western-style bar. When the waiter appeared, she said, in English: "A Gibson. Very dry and very cold."

"Make it two," Stevenson said.

The drinks were very good. He said, "Whoever taught them how to make a Gibson knew his business. I'll bet it was Ed Carlson."

"No, Colonel. Major Carlson was as surprised as you are."

"You?" he asked.

"A Japanese girl must learn many things before she is considered fit for the company of men, Colonel."

He shook his head. "Tomiko, you are a lady of many parts. You'll probably end up owning General Motors in Japan."

She laughed, feeling wholly relaxed, and thought again how pleasant it was to be with him; and then she saw him pick up a paper napkin and wipe his lips and crush the napkin in his fist.

She set down her glass. "Let us go and eat something," she said.

"You haven't finished your drink." He gestured to the waiter.

"I have had enough. There is no check, Colonel. You are my guest."

"Now wait a minute, Tomiko."

She was already halfway out of the bar. She felt a deep, remote fear and she would have liked to keep going, alone. But he caught up with her and took her by the arm. She leaned against him for a moment, feeling his strength, and she knew what was happening to her and she knew it was going to be bad. She wanted to run but he was holding her. Presently they started to walk down the crowded street.

They ate *tempura* and drank beer at a small restaurant counter, and then she took him to another place where they removed their shoes and went to a private room. There they ate *sukiyaki* and drank hot rice wine. When they finished, a girl appeared carrying a *samisen*. She sat down in a corner and plucked the strings of the long-necked instrument and began to sing softly.

Tomiko said in a low voice: "The meaning of the song is this: *Pine trees and a crane, plum blossoms and a nightingale, and a bamboo grove and the moon.* The pine and the plum and the bamboo are three strong trees which cannot be destroyed even by the severest winter. That is why this music is played on especially happy occasions."

He contemplated her across the low table. "Is this an especially happy occasion, Tomiko?"

"Yes," she said, and she could not have said whether she was lying or telling the truth.

Afterward they walked onto a terrace and watched the river, filled with small boats with sails that hung limp in the still night air. "Has this day interested you, Colonel?" she asked.

"Yes." He looked at her and smiled. "Have *you* enjoyed it?"

"Ah, yes, yes." Then she said: "Do you mind to stay at my uncle's hotel tonight? I live with him still. He owns a little hotel in a town between here and Ashiya. If you do not mind I will telephone him to prepare a room for you."

"Isn't it a little late to call him?"

"It is not often that an American colonel honors his poor hotel. He will not mind being awakened."

When they arrived at the hotel her uncle and a young Japanese

girl were waiting in the street. The uncle, a tiny old man with skin like parchment, bowed three times to Stevenson.

"My uncle says please to tell you he is very happy that the best room in his poor hotel is vacant and he thus is able to give it to you tonight," Tomiko said.

"Thank him for me, please, and tell him I am honored."

"The maid will show you to your room. Do you mind to have some beer before you go to sleep?"

"I'd like that, Tomiko."

The maid giggled and beckoned for him to follow her.

TOMIKO got down on her knees outside his door and set down the tray, with the bottle of beer, one glass and a plateful of salted nuts, dyed in many colors. She rapped gently on the door.

"Come in," he said.

She slid open the door. He was standing at the far side of the room, wearing a Japanese kimono. "Look how the maid rigged me up," he said. Then, "Excuse me, I thought you were Tomiko." He looked at her again. "My God."

Tomiko slid into the room on her knees, and touched her head to the floor three times. She turned, picked up the tray, slid the door shut, then rose to her feet. She set down the tray and knelt before him, touching her head to the *tatami* matting again, and then she looked up at him. She was in Japanese dress with Japanese-style make-up, so that her face was without expression. She had arranged her hair high on her head and put on a pale-lavender kimono with a turquoise *obi* held together with a red-and-silver cord.

"You look exquisite," he said gently.

She nodded, formally, distantly. She handed him the glass and then filled it with beer.

"I don't see another glass," he said.

"In my uncle's house it is my duty to serve you," she said.

Her voice was low and restrained, as though with each word she apologized for speaking. "Are you comfortable in my uncle's poor hotel?" she asked, in the same voice.

"Yes." He looked at himself and grinned. "I guess so. Is it usual for the maid to undress a man?"

"The maid would be impolite if she did not undress you, Colonel."

"Why two robes?"

"The inside robe is called *yukata*. You must wear it all night as though it were pajamas. There is no heat here and it gets cold. The outside robe is called *tanzen*. It is to keep you warm until you go to bed. Are you warm enough, Colonel?"

"Yes, Tomiko. Would you like a cigarette?"

"Do you mind to see me smoking in your room?"

"I mind to see you not smoking."

She took the cigarette from his hand and lit it herself.

"My uncle would be embarrassed if he knew I was smoking in your presence in his house," she said. "He would scold me and tell me that my parents had not taught me properly." She took short puffs on the cigarette, holding it delicately between her thumb and her forefinger.

"This is quite a switch," he said. "The tweed suit, the car salesman, the Gibsons—and then this."

"You are wondering which is the true Tomiko." He nodded. "I am not acting to entertain you, Colonel. I move as I do now because this clothing is designed to make one move that way. And it is my birthright."

"Do you dress this way often?"

"Always, when I come to the house of my uncle."

He sipped his beer. "How is it to live in two such different worlds at the same time?"

She looked down. "There is conflict," she said. "But it is not my conflict, Colonel. It is the conflict of Japan today." She raised her eyes again. "Do you mind to see me dressed in this fashion?"

"No, Tomiko."

"I put on this Japanese dress because you may not wish to see me again and I wanted to wear it for you at least once."

"Why do you say that?"

"You are going to be very busy, Colonel. You have no need of me."

He was silent.

"And I know that you do not like the Japanese," she said. Fear crossed her face. She had not wanted to say that.

He finished his beer and set the glass on the table. "I've outgrown my dislikes," he said.

After a moment she said, "Do you mind to go to sleep?"

"It is getting late."

She rose to her feet. "Please to let me remove your *tanzen*."

He stood up. She untied the outer kimono and removed it. He lay down on the bedding, his head on the bean-filled *makura*. She knelt at his side and drew the blanket up to his chin.

"Thank you for the hours you gave to me today, Colonel."

He raised himself and smiled at her. "Thank you, Tomiko. It was a good day."

She touched her head to the *tatami*, and started to rise. Then she paused and lowered herself again to her knees.

"There is something I almost forgot," she said. She reached into the sleeve of her kimono and brought out the silk scroll. "I have pressed it out," she said. "It is as it was before."

The smile remained on his lips. His eyes became remote. "Thank you very much, Tomiko," he said. "Just put it down." His voice was suddenly excessively courteous, as though he were talking to a servant. She clasped the scroll and looked at the face of a stranger. She knew she could not ask why the scroll did to him what it did, but she wanted to tell him that, whatever it was, if he would permit it, she would try to understand.

"Why don't you just put it down, Tomiko," he said.

He lay back on the pillow and turned his head away from her.

Dismissed, she put the scroll on the *tatami* next to him, stood up, switched off the light and left the room.

HE CALLED her two days later. "Tomiko, could you do me a favor? This little town near here, Ueki, where they had the floods recently. The mayor is having some kind of ceremony for me tomorrow—I wonder if you could come along and interpret for me."

She wanted to say no, quickly, casually. She could explain she was going to be busy, and he would just say, in his polite way: "I'm sorry." She wanted very much to say no.

"I will be glad to help you," she said.

"Good. There are official funds for this sort of thing so I'll be able to pay you. I'll pick you up about one o'clock."

She lay awake half that night and when he came around the next day she was nervous and tired. He drove out on the road bordering the Onwaga River.

"It was nice of you to take time off and come with me today, Tomiko. I'd like to be able to call on you from time to time, if I

may. For instance, I have to go to Moji to see Captain Koda one of these days. I'll need an interpreter for that too."

"If I am free I will be happy to go with you, Colonel."

The ceremony at Ueki, attended by many who had been rescued from the floods, was filled with long speeches. She worked almost automatically, words entering her in one language and emerging in another. She found herself watching Stevenson closely, with an intentness she would not have dared under other circumstances. He was patient with the almost illiterate peasants, listening with what appeared to be genuine interest and in reply using words that were exactly right.

It was early evening when they started back. She leaned back in the car and closed her eyes.

"You look bushed, Tomiko," he said, "and I'm not surprised. You worked hard, and you did wonderfully well. I don't know what I would have done without you."

She opened her eyes and looked at him. His face was warm and sympathetic. She thought she had placed too much importance on that moment with the silk scroll.

"How about dinner this evening, Tomiko?" he asked.

She felt suddenly warm and close to him and she wanted to reach out and touch his hand. She moved as far away from him as she could.

AS THEY walked along the streets in Ashiya, the warm feeling was still with her. When they passed a small shop she said, "You keep walking, Colonel. I will join you in a moment."

She went inside the shop and came out with a small package. "This is a surprise," she said. "For you."

He grinned and took her arm. At the restaurant she put the package on the table.

"When can I see what's inside?" he asked.

She thought, at that moment, that he was like a small boy. She opened the package. It was a wood carving. He picked it up and then put it on the table. "That's the happy god," he said.

"Yes, that is Hotei."

"Well, welcome to the party," he said. "Make with the happiness." He smiled at her. "I always wanted one of those."

"I am happy it was I who could give him to you," she said.

The waitress brought bottles of *sake*. He raised the tiny cup.

"Cheers, Tomiko, and thanks again for all your help today."

"Yes. Cheers." She was filled with warmth and content.

He leaned back, relaxed. "Have you heard from Carlson?"

She hesitated. "I received a letter from him yesterday." She looked down at the carving. "He says he is very lonely for me," she said quietly, and went on in the same voice: "I wrote him it was ended between us and not to write to me again."

He lit a cigarette. "Do you want to tell me why?"

"I do not love Major Carlson. I believe I knew it even when he was here. It was good when we were together, but when we were not together I did not miss him. I thought this must be the way such things are and I did not think anything was wrong about it." She felt her fingernails against her palms. "Are you not going to ask me when I decided there *was* something wrong about it?"

"It's none of my business, Tomiko," he said.

"It is very much your business, Colonel," she said. "The time I realized I did not love Major Carlson was when I asked you to spend the night at my uncle's hotel."

She refilled his *sake* cup, holding the slender winebottle as though it were a chalice. "I felt it all during that day," she said in a low voice. "But I was not certain of it until that moment. That is why I put on Japanese dress and came to your room." She set down the bottle carefully as though it might shatter.

"Listen, Tomiko," he said. His eyes were gentle. "I came to you with a message from Carlson. You don't feel anything about me. You're just feeling him through me. Those places you took me to, the shrine, the restaurants, the night club, they were all places you used to go to with him, weren't they?"

"Yes."

"There's your answer." He patted her hand. He looked around. "How about getting that waitress? I'm as hungry as a bear."

They ate and drank and he told her amusing stories about experiences in different parts of the world. By the time they were finished she had begun to feel good again. "This has been a very happy evening, Colonel," she said.

He smiled warmly. "I've enjoyed every minute of it, Tomiko."

She looked at the carving. "It is because of Hotei."

He nodded. "He was really on the job."

She rose to her knees and picked up a pair of chopsticks and bowed before the carving and then she rapped the sticks sharply

against each other. She looked up at him. "This is to call all the other gods here to bring you richness and a full life," she said.

Suddenly his eyes became remote again. After a moment, he said: "You don't have to work this hard to hold your job with me, Tomiko. And I think you might also stop buying me presents."

She sat back slowly. She placed the chopsticks gently on the table.

"Are you ready to go?" he asked.

"Yes, Colonel."

He helped her to her feet. They left the room and she did not turn back to look at Hotei, grinning on the table.

They walked to the staff car and got in. "Perhaps it would be better if you did get someone else to interpret for you," she said.

"If that's the way you want it."

They drove to the agency. He held open the door of her car as she got in. "Thanks for everything, Tomiko."

"You are quite welcome, Colonel."

"Sorry it worked out this way. We might have had fun."

She drove off. She thought how Americans made it all come out in one word, fun, how they pinpointed the largest and smallest things with it. It was a word she had never really understood, and she understood it least of all now. Whatever it might have been with Glenn Stevenson, it would not have been fun.

3:15 p.m. ANN SUMTER got a coke from the machine, not wanting one but wanting to do something. She could not make herself swallow, and finally she put down the bottle and turned around and she saw Jo Cooper enter the room. She wanted to avoid Jo, but Jo had seen her. The two women sat down and were silent for several minutes. Finally Jo reached out and touched Ann's hand. Ann looked at her wearily. "What did you do when you found out about this?"

"I prayed," Jo said.

"Did it help? Did it help you, Jo?"

"I didn't pray to help *me*."

Ann nodded. "Maybe I could try that. Only it wouldn't work for both of us." She looked up, terrified. "Jo, I didn't mean that."

Jo stood up. "I have to telephone the house and see if Larry got back from school all right." She started to walk away.

"Jo!"

Jo came back to her. She wanted to tell Jo she was sorry but she remembered the word had been used quite a bit lately and what would it mean anyway, who was kidding who, one of them had had it, and there was going to be a moment soon when one or the other of them was going to use that word and have it mean something. She shook her head. "I guess I'm getting too old for this sort of thing, Jo," she said. She said it almost inaudibly, almost to herself.

3:25 p.m. THERE IS a special moment, Captain Lucille Carroll thought, when you get to know a man.

You go with him for a long time, and maybe you think you know him, but there comes that certain time when you get to *know* him. And you never forget that time.

With Mike Warren that moment came on a summer afternoon on the Ginza in Tokyo, about a month after they had met at a jumping exhibition. They were on leave together and they were standing on a corner looking through the twilight at the people and the signs.

Jumpers were all a little strange, Lucille had found out, men who kept apart from nonjumpers, men who belonged to each other all over the world, a kind of fraternity; but Mike Warren seemed different even among his own kind. Now, as he stared down the street, his face was strange to her and open in a way she had never seen before. He watched the Japanese people pass.

"These Nips must feel real good inside," he said. "All of them."

"Why?"

"They know who they are."

She looked at him, puzzled. "What do you mean?"

"They know they're Japanese," he said.

She frowned. "You know you're American. So what?"

"I know I'm a jumper." He watched the crowd. "I dig these people. Crazy little people. How did they figure they were going to knock us over and boss the world?"

"They did think so. And they tried and they almost did."

He shook his head. "Naah. Not most of them. Some of them, sure, the suicide jokers, like. The ones in the airplanes. The ones who bought the one-way tickets."

"The *kamikazes*?"

"Yeah, them. They knew something, those cats," he said. "They were cutting the big pad for real." Mike still talked the language he had picked up when he worked the drums in a night club in the little town in Pennsylvania where he was born. It was a shorthand in sound that let him convey meaning and yet remain somehow hidden.

He stepped back and let a Japanese gentleman pass. The man bowed and he returned the courtesy. "You know something," he said. "They all belong to each other, these people. Seems like everywhere I ever been out of the States the people all belong to each other."

"But we belong, Americans belong," she said.

He shook his head. "No, we don't. Back in the States it's like we're too big, or something, and nobody gives a damn. We only belong to parts of it, like saying you're a Southerner or a Westerner." He was silent for a moment. "All we can belong to is pieces."

She looked closely at his face. It was half obscured in the shadows. He looked very young and very small and alone.

"And it ain't only that," he said. "They live pretty, like, these people. They don't have to figure out things. It's all figured out for them and it's pretty. All they got to do is follow the rules. We ain't got rules. We got to play it by ear."

"Isn't that better, Mike? Not to be bound by the past?"

He did not answer her. Then he said: "It's like they got only one way to do things, these Nips. Everything they do fits."

She reached out and took his hand. "Mike, you have a way of doing things now. Us. Our way."

He looked at her slantingly: the face of a stranger and yet a face she knew for the first time. He started to walk down the Ginza. She caught up with him. "Did you hear what I said, Mike?"

"Yeah, I heard."

She felt cold. "Mike, why can't we ever talk? Why do you always go away?"

"Don't bug me."

"I'm not trying to bug you. It's as though there are two of you. It's as though we're as close as two people can be, and then when I have to talk a little it's as though I'm talking to somebody I never met before. You put me down, Mike."

"Everybody puts everybody down," he said. "Haven't you found that out yet?"

She thought of that time now in the crowded Operations Room and she thought he was in his own way no different from the other *kamikaze* men, with a parachute for an airplane, with one way to go and no way to come back. Only he did it more than once. He did it every time.

3:40 p.m. WHEN Sergeant Mel Griffith returned to the hangar it appeared empty except for the parked airplanes. He stepped in out of the rain, took a bottle of whiskey from the back pocket of his coveralls and took a deep slug.

"They'll bust you, Sergeant, boozing here." Griffith whirled. Airman Hurley was standing there, looking worried.

"Where the hell did you come from!" Griffith roared. "Out of the ground?" He cocked a fist. "Don't never creep up on me like that. You got nothing better to do today than hang around here?"

He sat down on the floor and Hurley dropped down next to him. Hurley said: "I figured I'd hang around until we heard for sure about the lieutenant."

"Yeah," Griffith said. "The lieutenant." He glared at Hurley. "What's it to you what happens to the lieutenant?"

"I know him too," Hurley said.

"You don't know him. And that's the whole damn thing. If you don't know the lieutenant what's happened to him don't mean nothing. What makes it real bad is that it happened to Johnny Gregg." He took another drink. "Saving people has got to be good," he said. "But it went deeper than that with the lieutenant. It was like what he was born for, to go out in choppers and save people." He stopped short. "What the hell am I telling *you* all this for?"

"I'd sure like to hear about it, Sergeant," Hurley said.

Griffith was silent for a while. Then he said: "We were stationed in Germany. The lieutenant and me was sent to England to ferry back a new-model chopper. On the way back to Fursty we ran into a bad storm. It was snowing hard and the wind almost tore the chopper apart. We felt pretty good when we finally set down in Fursty."

Griffith stuck a cigarette in his mouth. "The whole base was closed because of the blizzard," he said. "But next morning we got word that an avalanche had come down in some Kraut valley in the Alps and they needed help there fast. The lieutenant and me took off with some Kraut docs and we finally got into the valley and saw the first village up ahead." Griffith stopped and looked away. "You never saw nothing like that place," he said at last. "The hills were broke away, like in canyons. People digging everywhere. Just parts of houses showing above the snow.

"I said to the lieutenant: 'There's no place you can land.'

"He says: 'Maybe over there where there used to be a building. Part of the floor is still there.'

"I said: 'You can't put down there, Lieutenant. The hill goes up too steep in back of it and the rotors will hit.'

"Well, he set his two front wheels down on the edge of that floor with the two rear wheels *off* the ground and held the chopper in a hover with the rotors just missing the hill in front and the wind trying to rip us to pieces, and behind us the valley dropped down like the side of the Empire State Building only twice as far. The Kraut docs jumped out and started loading survivors aboard. When we couldn't get no more people in he took off. He made it by sliding off the side of the hill and *backing* away.

"That first afternoon he made three round trips, the last one in the darkness on the way back. We finally crawled into the sack and the lieutenant woke me up before it was light the next morning and we went back to work. That day a couple more choppers came in and we went further up the valley to where there were other villages. And that's when it began to get hairy."

Griffith rested his head on the wall and closed his eyes. "That valley," he said, his eyes still closed. "That stinkin' valley. The first time we drove through, it was snowing again and there was no visibility and we were kind of feeling our way slowly and all of a sudden I saw something and I said: 'Lieutenant, what the hell is that?'

"'A cable,' he says. He threw the chopper ~~into~~ a quick stop. We were about a thousand feet up and we started falling straight down on autorotation. He figured to go under it but there was another cable about thirty, forty feet under the first one and a third and a fourth under that one. The lieutenant got to the bottom one and he still had to go down.



"Finally we was no more than about thirty feet off the ground. They had these cables strung everywhere so that the Krauts who grew hay on the sides of the valley could slide it across. The lieutenant kept going straight up and down trying to find a space to get through. Finally, he says: 'Looks like we got the biggest opening right here, Mel. Are you ready?'"

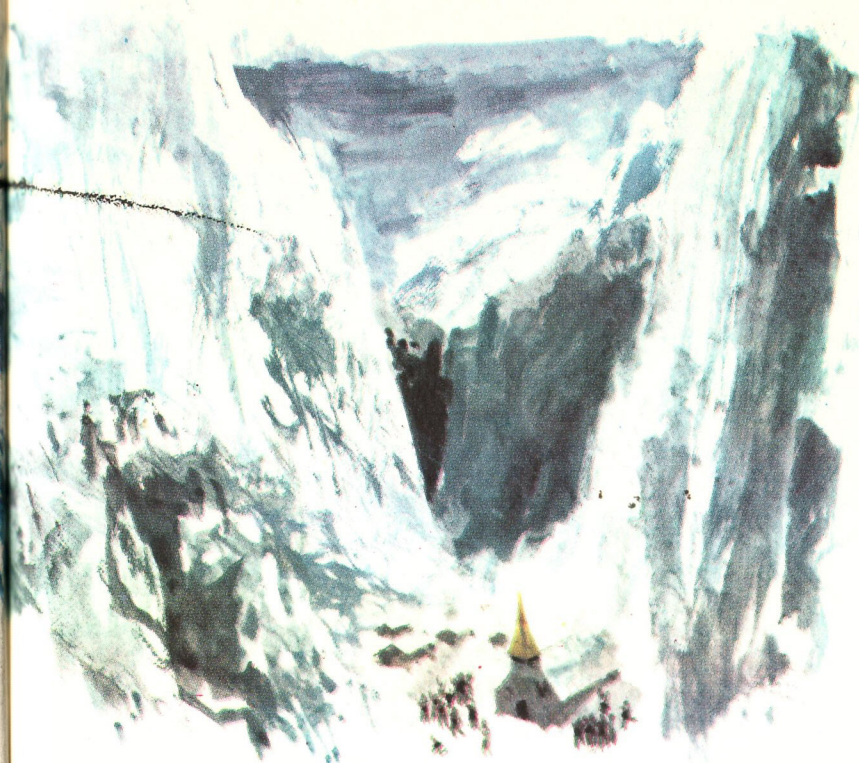
"I said: 'What if I ain't ready, Lieutenant?'"

"He says: 'I could go down and let you off.'"

"I said: 'Don't bother, Lieutenant, we'll probably end up down there anyway.'"

"So he went through with a few feet above us and below us. And when he got through I wished he hadn't. I don't never want to see nothing like that again."

Griffith sat forward. He rubbed the side of his face slowly. He stared past Hurley, past the hangar, past the rain. "If hell ever gets snowed under it'll look like that place looked. There was a stream in the valley and it was choked up with the bodies of



people and animals. There was little dark figures burrowing in the snow like moles trying to find people who were buried. And when we passed they all stopped and raised up their hands begging for help. And then the rush when we put down."

He lifted the bottle and drank deeply, the knuckles of his hand white. "They fought like crazy people to get on. The lieutenant got back through the cables and we off-loaded and went back up the valley. For three days we flew forty, fifty round trips."

"We got out at a place one day and walked into the church and they had all the dead people laid out there, thirty, forty of them and half of them kids. It was terrible. And the way the lieutenant looked at them was even worse. 'If we had only got here earlier,' he says. 'Maybe some of them could have been saved.'"

"‘You can’t be eight places at once, Lieutenant,’ I said.

"‘But he kept looking at them dead kids. ‘We should have come here earlier,’ he says.”

Griffith got to his feet and began to walk back and forth, pounding his fist into the palm of his hand, slowly, mechanically, without emotion. "One afternoon the weather turned real bad, and the squadron C.O. grounded all the choppers. I wasn’t sorry. We were all pretty well beat, and the lieutenant was damned near a hospital case himself. But he heard a Kraut rescue man say there was a little village way up the valley that was in a real bad way. He says to the Kraut: ‘Could you guide me up there?’

"‘The Kraut says: ‘Yes, I think so.’

"‘I said: ‘Look, Lieutenant, orders are for us to stand down.’

"‘He says: ‘Mel, I’m going out. You can stay or go.’

"‘So that’s how it happened. The three of us, this Kraut, the lieutenant and me, took off about three o’clock in the afternoon. The wind slowed us up to almost nothing and it was getting dark. The cables were weighted down with ice and they were at different altitudes than before. He had to feel his way past them, one by one. Finally the Kraut yelled that we had reached the place. We could see a church and a couple of buildings still standing and we could see people waving to us and some of them got down on their knees like they were praying and women held up little kids like they thought we could reach down and take them. Then it happened.

"‘It happened while we was watching, while the lieutenant was looking for someplace he could land, while the people were waving and praying and holding out their kids. The first thing we knew was there seemed to be powder in the air, a snow smaller than the snow that was falling, and then the Kraut with us screamed.

"‘‘Back away!’ he yelled. ‘Back *away!* The noise from the helicopter is starting a *new* avalanche!’

"‘The lieutenant threw the chopper into reverse but it was too late because we could see the mountain of snow fall on the people. The snow covered everything, all of the people, covered them like they never were there, and finally the only thing we could see was the steeple of the church sticking up out of the snow like a toothpick. It was the only thing that showed there had been a village there.

"‘I looked at the lieutenant and I thought he was dead. I thought maybe he had had a heart attack. I reached over and shook him and his arm was like a steel band and I shook him again but he didn’t know it. I could have stuck knives in him and he wouldn’t have known it.

"‘I pushed up his earphones and I put my mouth against his ear. ‘You’re still flying a chopper!’ I yelled. It was like he was stone deaf. His hands were gripped on the controls like they were glued there. I had to pull them off, it was like pulling off the hands of a dead man, and I had to fly the chopper. I backed it away and then the lieutenant reached out and took the controls again. He didn’t say nothing. He just took over the controls.

"‘So I figured he was okay. I said: ‘It’s just one of them damn things.’

"‘He says: ‘Yes.’

"‘I said: ‘It’s terrible, but it wasn’t your fault.’

"‘He says: ‘No.’

"‘I said, ‘For pete’s sake, Lieutenant, how could you know?’

"‘He didn’t say anything and by then I knew he wasn’t okay, that inside he wasn’t okay at all. He was flying like he was asleep, his eyes half closed. He went through the cables like they weren’t there, no sweat at all, and I began to ask God to give him something to sweat for. When we got back to the strip he set the chopper down like it was a toy and then he closed his eyes.

"‘The docs said he passed out cold after he landed. I knew better. He passed out cold when that snow came falling down and he saw those people smothered to death. He was able to fly back because he’s the best damn chopper pilot alive and somehow he knew he had a couple of other lives in his hands. If he had been alone he would have just let go where it happened. I know he would.”

After a while Griffith said quietly: "‘It was ten days before they could get to that village and start digging the people out. Eighteen of them. They told me some of the people were still kneeling, their hands together like they were praying, and that the women still were holding their babies, all of them under the snow.

"‘The lieutenant was back at base hospital by then. When I got there he wanted to know and I had to tell him. They ordered me, not to, but I knew him better than the docs did and I knew he had to know. And I told him he had saved more than two hundred

people before that, personally, and no matter how he added it up he was still way ahead in any damn book in the world.

"I guess maybe after a while it sank in because he came out of it, except he never would get in a chopper again."

Griffith raised the bottle to his lips and held it there until it was empty. Then he hurled the bottle against the wall.

"Now you know why you never seen Lieutenant Gregg go near no chopper here. Now you know why I said he died long ago and if he cracked up today it don't matter," he said. He wiped his mouth. "You ever tell anybody what I told you I'll bust open your head."

He lurched out of the hangar. Hurley watched him until he disappeared and then he got up and went for a broom to sweep up the pieces of broken glass.

3:50 p.m. "WILL YOU please give me your attention," Captain Mound said over the public-address system. The room silenced immediately. "We are in very close quarters here. Will all persons not directly connected with the personnel on the two SA-16's out on today's mission please depart."

There was a long sigh in the room, and then the hum of voices rose again. Tomiko looked around. Nobody was leaving. Then she asked herself the question: Was she directly connected with any of the personnel on the SA-16's? Had she ever had any true connection with Glenn Stevenson?

She nodded slowly to herself. There had been moments. If Captain Mound had put the question to her, she could, with honesty, say yes.

AFTER THE DAY with Stevenson in Ueki she had stayed away from the base. She knew she was deluding herself. She knew it had not ended with him, but she tried to tell herself that if she avoided him she might hear one day that he had gone and it would be over.

About a week later an officer who was buying a car phoned and invited her to dinner at the club. She asked if he could meet her in town, but he said he was on duty and could not leave the base.

She started to tremble as she parked her car outside the club, and when she met the officer at the bar she asked for a drink. He

nodded approvingly. "Get loaded," he said. "Maybe I'll get a better deal out of you."

"You would not take advantage of a poor, simple Japanese girl," she said. "You know I lose money on every car I sell. I am in business only to help good relations between the Americans and the Japanese."

"Hah! Listen to her," he snorted. "You got a head like a steel trap. I put a padlock on my wallet before I came here."

They started talking business, and presently, instead of fearing that Stevenson might come into the club, she began to wish he would come so she could show him it did not matter. She closed the deal with the major while they were eating steaks. When they finished they went back to the bar for a nightcap and, looking into the mirror, Tomiko saw him.

He was seated farther down the bar with Cooper. She felt herself knot up inside. He saw her in the glass and waved. She bowed slightly.

She left right after that without looking his way, and the next morning she drove back onto the base and went to his office. He was working on some papers when she entered the room. He glanced at her and then picked up his phone. "Get me Operations," he said. Then: "Colonel Stevenson. You can set up that trip to Moji immediately." He hung up. "Ever fly a chopper?" he asked. "A helicopter?"

"No, Colonel."

He picked up a brief case and stood up. "Let's get down to the flight line."

The helicopter was waiting on the strip inside a painted circle. He helped her into the cabin and climbed in after her, behind the pilot. The engine started with a cough and then a roar and the rotors began to turn slowly and then faster and the dust churned up on the cement strip from the furious downdraft.

The helicopter rose and, leaning forward against her safety belt, she looked down through the open cabin door at the buildings and the airfield and then the town itself laid out below her, and she had the feeling she was rising in a kind of miraculous elevator. Presently they were over water and then over land again, and the helicopter began to descend. They had been aloft for less than an hour and yet she felt as though they were coming down from another world.

AT THE BASE, Stevenson greeted Captain Koda with courtesy and presented him with a cigarette lighter bearing the Rescue insignia and the motto: THAT OTHERS MAY LIVE. Tomiko translated the words.

Stevenson then inspected all the Coast Guard vessels which were in port. After that there was lunch with Koda and some of his officers, and then an informal technical meeting. Again Tomiko marveled at Stevenson's patience, his good manners, good even by the high Japanese standards, and his effortless charm as he answered questions. It was midafternoon when they were finished. Stevenson thanked Koda and his staff for giving him their time. Then he telephoned Ashiya for the helicopter.

"Your throat must be like sandpaper after all that translating," he said to Tomiko. "How about a beer while we're waiting?"

"I would like a beer, Colonel."

They found a small bar and sat down at a table looking on the street. "You did fine today, Tomiko," he said. "They were quite a bunch. Especially that fellow who lost two brothers in our air attacks. He looked tough and hard as nails."

"He also was embarrassed."

"I can see why. He's hated our guts all his life and now he has to feel grateful because we help save the lives of his people."

She nodded. "That poor man has lost face to himself."

"He'll manage to survive," Stevenson said.

"You were not in the least surprised to see me this morning. You had not got anyone else to interpret for you?"

"No."

"Why not, Colonel? What made you so certain I would return?"

"I just kept thinking maybe you'd change your mind."

"But you would not have called me again."

He finished his beer. "You're a big girl, Tomiko," he said. "You're old enough to decide things all by yourself."

BACK AT ASHIYA they had dinner at the club, and afterward he said, "I'd like to get away from here. Any place we can go?"

She drove him to a small Japanese night club. There was a four-piece orchestra and the room was thick with smoke. They ordered drinks, and when they appeared Tomiko picked up her glass. "*Kampai*. Bottoms up."

"*Kampai*." Stevenson had been looking around. "There seem to be more women than men here," he said.

"It is true. Most are working girls. Since the beginning of the war many more girls work, so they have money to spend on a good time. But it is a strange thing, Colonel; the ones who benefit most from this are the Communists."

"That's a switch."

"The greatest obstacle to Communism in this country is the traditional family life, but this new way of life is breaking up the family. It began when the GIs came, and they dated Japanese girls just as they would date girls back in their own country, and soon the girls became used to being treated this way and refused to go back to the old ways. They would no longer accept husbands they had never seen, and when more factories were built the girls flocked to them because they offered even greater freedom. And so the old traditions are vanishing and the Communists are working very hard to supply new ones." She smiled. "It is strange, is it not, that Communism, which is supposed to feed on poverty and hunger, should be nurtured in Japan by prosperity and money?"

"It's even funnier when you realize that a lot of these factories were set up to make stuff for the American troops here," he said.

She nodded. "In the end, perhaps, it will be good, but now it is painful. I feel sorry for Japanese men who are bewildered by all this and if I were a Japanese man I think I would not like Americans."

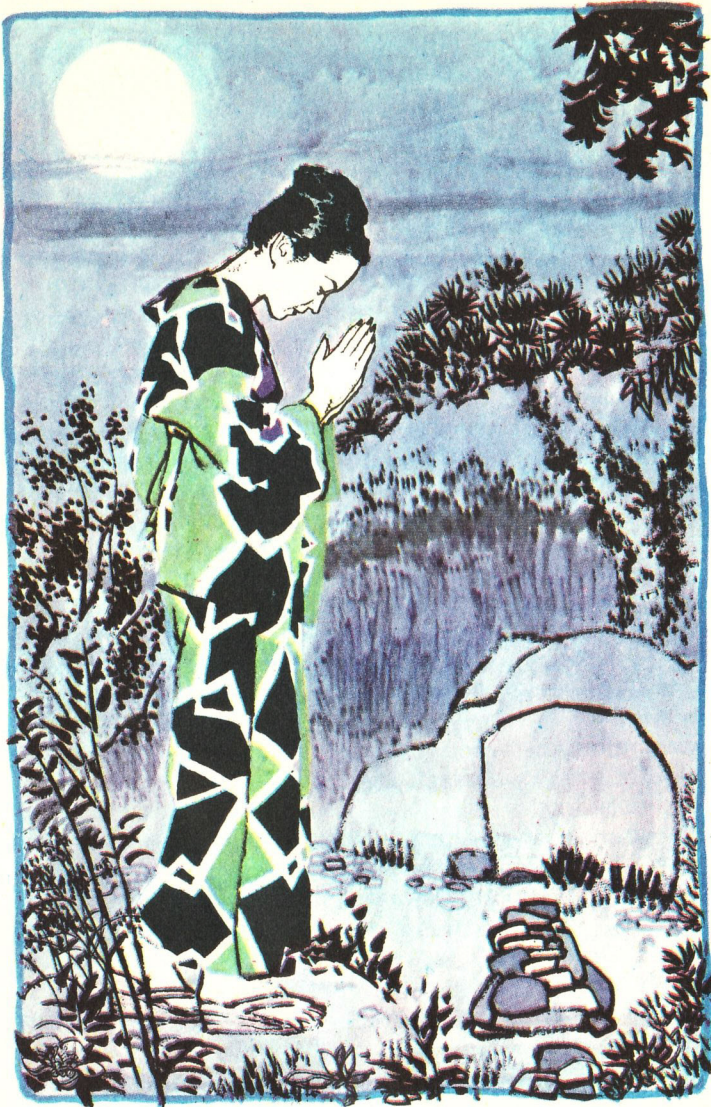
It was midnight when they left the smoky, hot room and walked out into the street. Ashiya was dark and quiet. He breathed deeply.

"Somewhere they must manufacture air for night clubs all over the world," he said. "Must be a big business." They walked to her car. He said, "I apologize for making you drive home alone."

"I have no drive-home," she said quietly. "I have rented a small house here in Ashiya."

They did not speak as she drove through the town and stopped in front of a small, Japanese-style house. She made no move to get out.

"Please to give me a cigarette, Colonel," she said. She smoked it slowly until it was half consumed. "Do you mind to stay with me?" she asked quietly.



"Tomiko, you know I'm not going to be around here very long. What's in this for you?"

"I have not asked that question," she said.

She stepped out of the car and went into the house ahead of him, touching a light switch. Not looking at him, she said: "I chose a Japanese house. It will be unfamiliar and strange to you but afterwards perhaps you will remember because of that."

He put his arms around her from behind. "I will remember for many reasons."

"Do not say pleasant, meaningless things to me. Sweet words are like too much dessert. I have been brought up on a Japanese diet, plain and simple. It is better that way. Just do not lie to me."

"I will not lie to you, Tomiko."

She turned quickly in his arms and looked up at him. "That is the only security I need."

LATER THAT NIGHT, while he slept, she went into the garden. In one corner stones had been arranged to make a shrine, and now in the soft summer night she bowed before it.

"It was a strange time," she whispered. She gazed at the shrine and she thought that in his love-making it had been as though he had striven against secret fetters in a solitary combat in which she had no part. She felt trampled and taken, serving only as the earth serves the feet of soldiers who battle on it.

"If that is his way," she said now before the stones, "then it must be my way. I ask only that I be given to understand it."

She went back to the bedroom. In sleep his hands were still clenched. She knew she could not touch him. She looked at the clenched hands and she thought of the silk scroll and she knew that on this night she was the scroll.

When she woke next morning he was gone. She went to his office, as they had arranged, to work on the Moji report.

As she entered he looked up and smiled. "Ready to go to work?"

She sought in the smile something that would indicate their new intimacy, but there was nothing there. It was agreeable and friendly and impersonal. "Yes," she said.

"Good. Let's get at it."

They set to work. He said nothing of the night before. It was as though it had never happened.

DURING THE next few weeks she worked for him when he required her services and he stayed with her often in the little house. Each time he asked if he might stay with her the day became different, the air clearer and the sun brighter, and her blood felt suddenly changed to champagne. And each time he came it was to grapple alone with his fetters, until at last she reached a state where she did not know which she dreaded more, the days when he did not ask to stay with her or the days when he did and the music inside her began to build and then in the night he was there and not there at all.

"I dare not ask that it be changed," she said, night after night, to the shrine of stones. "I ask only that I may be allowed to understand."

ONE AFTERNOON he surprised her by dropping in at the agency. He looked around the showroom. "I didn't believe it," he said. "I've been telling myself this car racket is just a little fairy tale you dreamed up." He sat down on her desk and leaned close. "Come clean, Tomiko," he said out of the side of his mouth. "What you're really peddling around here is dope, isn't it?"

"Now you know, Colonel," she said. "What kind would you like, plain or filters?"

"Plain. I'm tough. I want that opium tar right in my lungs where it'll do the most good. Can you take time out for a libation?"

"It is the hour."

They strolled down the street.

"Do you suppose in all Japan there is a Buick super hardtop with a turquoise body and a beige top?" she asked. "Mrs. Moore insists that only a beige top will go well with her dog."

"You have a problem."

"American women have too much to say in these matters," she said. "And I do not think it is good for them. No Japanese man would consult his wife about a matter like this."

"No," he said. "I guess not. *Good God!*"

A taxicab came swinging around the corner, heedless of people crossing the street; it knocked down an old man and continued on.

Stevenson's fingers tightened like talons on her arm. "Did you see that? He never stopped!" He looked around. It was as though nothing had happened. The people continued to walk, uncon-

cerned, cars and cabs went by without stopping, taking care only to move around the old man lying in the street.

"Isn't anybody going to do anything?" Stevenson demanded. He ran out to where the man was lying, knelt and examined him and then straightened. "He's still alive." Again he looked around. No one was paying any attention. His face was transfixed with fury. "What's the matter with everybody!" he shouted. "This man will die. Call a doctor!"

Tomiko rushed over to him. "Glenn, please," she said.

His eyes were blazing. He took her by the shoulders. "This man is dying! Call a doctor!" He turned and shouted at the crowd that now was gathering. "This man needs help!"

No one moved.

Tomiko took him by the arm. She said, "Here are two policemen. They will take care of everything. Please come away."

He flung off her hand and turned to the policemen. They glanced indifferently at the injured man and one of them took out a small black book and began to write. "Never mind that," Stevenson said. "Call an ambulance."

The policeman looked at Stevenson and then turned his back and continued to write.

Stevenson grabbed the officer and whirled him around. "I said call a doctor. This man is going to die."

The policeman's eyes flared with hatred and he pushed Stevenson away. Stevenson hit him on the jaw. The policeman staggered back and Stevenson turned to the second policeman. "Call an ambulance," he said.

The policeman stood there.

"I said call an ambulance." Stevenson moved toward him.

The policeman held his ground for a moment and then turned and disappeared into the crowd.

The first officer said to Tomiko, "If you know this insane American, please remove him from here."

Tomiko took Stevenson's hand. "Please, Glenn, come away. He's calling for an ambulance. Please, please, Glenn. I promise you there will be a doctor here soon."

She led him away. The crowd parted slowly. Stevenson looked at the men as he passed them, waiting for someone to say something, to do something, and she knew it was what he wanted then more than anything else in the world. She held his arm

tightly and she felt closer to him than she had ever felt before. An ambulance came down the street and she felt the tension slip away from him.

"Not one person," he said. "Not one person gave a damn."

"It was enough," she said, "that you gave a damn."

They walked in silence until they came to a bar, went inside and sat down. "I'm sorry, Tomiko," he said.

She looked at him swiftly and she saw that it was gone. And she wondered whether she had only imagined it because in her heart she had always prayed that it might be there. She felt suddenly very tired. "Do not apologize. It must have seemed heartless to you."

He waved his hand indifferently. "It was none of my business in the first place," he said. He smiled pleasantly.

"Let me explain something," Tomiko said. "We Japanese believe that when a person saves the life of another person he brings upon himself gratitude, to which he will have to respond. The two are bound together forever. Most Japanese are born with more burden than they can bear. They want to assume no more."

"That's a very convenient philosophy."

"It is not a philosophy, it is only a belief. How would you feel, Colonel," she added evenly, "if your life was saved by a Japanese?"

She saw the muscles tighten in his face. "Why, I'd slap him on the back and say thanks," he said easily. "And then I'd buy him a drink." He leaned across the table and smiled. "Know what I'd like? A Chinese meal. Do you suppose there are any good chop-suey joints in this particular part of Japan?"

4:05 p.m. THE BIG CLOCK on the wall glared down balefully on everybody. Ann Sumter had to fight to keep from looking at it, and each time her eyes strayed it looked back and told her it wouldn't be long now, soon she would know for sure.

She turned her head away from the clock and saw Judy Moore come in with her big dog. "I've been trying to find you, Annie," Judy said in her loud brassy voice. "Have you heard anything yet?"

"No," Ann said. She felt something wet on her hand and saw

the dog was licking her and she thought how good it would be to scream, just to open her mouth and scream.

"Duke, stop that!" Judy said.

"He's all right," Ann said. She kept her eyes on Judy, tall, thin, blond, her arms covered with jangling bracelets, so she wouldn't look at the clock.

Judy sat down. "Sit, Duke," she commanded. "You know, Fred got back from Tokyo yesterday. They notified me he was coming in yesterday afternoon and I got rid of the kids and got all fixed up and then they called and told me his plane was held up, so I went to the beauty parlor and I'm sitting there with my head under the dryer when they call and say he just landed. Honestly, the way they run things around here!" And Judy held out a cigarette to Ann, her bracelets clattering. Ann took it, her eyes betraying her. The clock said 4:20, the long, red second hand sweeping around like a crazy dancer. "Oh," Judy said. "There's Jo. Good."

Ann looked intently at Jo, still asking silently to be forgiven, and Jo reached over and touched her on the shoulder.

"What I came here about was those damned coffee urns," Judy said. "If they're not here by the PTA meeting . . ."

Ann stood up. "Excuse me, will you? I'll be right back."

"Don't be long," Judy said. "I have to get back and fix dinner for Fred and the kids. Sit down, Duke!"

As Ann started toward the Operations counter she heard Judy say: "I'm just talking anything that comes to mind. I'm just trying to help."

It seemed to Ann that she had to cover a great distance, like one of those journeys in a dream, where the place you want to get to stays the same distance away no matter how much you walk toward it. When she reached the counter she grabbed it and held it hard. Wally Mound looked up and hunched his shoulders. "Still sweating it out," he said. "I just spoke to Mildred. Everything is okay over at your place."

"Why didn't you tell me?" Her voice was suddenly loud.

"I was just going to come over."

"I'm sorry, Wally. You haven't heard anything, have you?"

"Not a thing, yet. Annie, why don't you go home?"

"Wally, what's it like when a plane crashes into the water?"

"Please, Annie."

"I wonder what it's like." She bit her lip. "I wonder what a person thinks about, in the time the plane is going down."

"I have to get back to work, Ann."

"Gene and I had a quarrel this morning before he left. What if all he could think of was how we were this morning, how *I* was?"

"We don't know that it's Gene. And even if it is Gene they may still be okay. Those planes were made to float, you know."

"But the British plane said one of the Rescue planes went down."

"The message wasn't very clear. The Sunderland was getting low on fuel and maybe he didn't have time to hang around and see whether the SA-16 actually went under or not."

Her eyes were wide. "I didn't even think of that," she said. "Maybe it's not Gene and even if it is maybe he's still okay. Thanks, Wally. Oh, thanks, Wally." She took his hand and pressed it to her cheek. "Thanks, Wally, oh, thank you so much."

She rushed back to Judy and Jo Cooper. She wanted to throw her arms around Jo. It didn't have to be either of them after all. "Jo," she said, "*listen* to what Wally just told me."

4:20 p.m. YES, WE HAD a strange time together, Glenn, Tomiko said to him silently over the sounds in the big room. A woman remembers stray moments in her time with a man, Glenn, moments which belong to her as jewels—secret moments when she sees him and he does not see himself. With me it was that time of anger, when you saw the old man struck by a taxicab. For a little while you were a violent man. Not the way you were that time with the scroll, but open, unashamed anger. After that I could think that deep within you was that man and that one day he could free himself and come forth. I knew that only then was there any small chance for me. But more than anything else I wanted him for you.

I never saw that man again, but, when I almost ceased to hope, you gave me a second moment, utterly different, a moment of which you never knew, and then, a third moment. And that in the end was what you left me with, and that, in the end, was what destroyed us.

Was it only last week that you told me you had to go to Nagoya for a meeting and asked me to accompany you? We flew there

and after the meeting you said you thought you could steal a few days for a holiday. It was the first time we went away, together. You borrowed an automobile and we drove out of the city and I remember thinking that no human being should feel as happy as I felt.

We reached Gifu late in the afternoon and after dinner we went down to the river to see the cormorants catch trout. It was a moonless night, which is necessary, and the cormorant boats were lined up with bonfires blazing on their prows.

"What are the fires for?" you asked. "To keep the birds warm?"

"The fire attracts the fish," I explained. "Each boat has five men. The master fisherman wears a medieval costume—the short skirt of straw. Two of the others are his assistants and two are boatmen. The master fisherman handles twelve birds on twelve lines, the assistants four each. And each bird is tied around the neck so he can catch the fish but not swallow it."

We watched as the birds took off and dived and came up with fish and no matter how they swooped and flew the master fisherman always kept the lines untangled. "Look at that fellow over there," you said suddenly. "He's got at least five fish in his mouth."

"They will not return to the boat with less than four or five."

"What a life," you said mournfully. "Five meals in your mouth and unable to swallow even one of them."

"Later the fishermen will feed them scraps."

"Decent. Damned decent, kind and most generous."

We watched for more than an hour and then we went back to the hotel. I remember how you looked at me. "You're fun to be with, Tomiko," you said.

It was not often you came to me that way, even in such small degree. I wanted to say something warm but I knew that would make you go away. "It is the way a woman should be with a man," I said. "Japanese women are taught from childhood that their only pleasure is giving a man pleasure. When I know I am giving you pleasure, that is my greatest pleasure."

You looked at me for a long time. Then you said, in a very gentle voice: "You look tired, Tomiko. Why don't you go to bed?"

"If it would not displease you, Glenn-san. This holiday was so unexpected. I think I am tired from my happiness."

"I'll have a nightcap and join you."

I fell asleep immediately and in two hours I was awake again and I knew you were not there. The thought came to me that perhaps something had happened to you.

I dressed quickly and went back to the bar, but you were not there. The bartender said you had had more drinks and then gone back to the river. I hurried out and looked for you everywhere and I could not find you. I began to feel panic, and then by the light of the bonfire on one of the boats I saw you. You were sitting on the deck of the boat talking to a cormorant.

You turned your head to the master fisherman and I heard you say: "Give my friend another one of the same." The fisherman's teeth gleamed in the firelight as he laughed, and he picked up a fish and tossed it to the bird. I, too, started to laugh and I rushed toward you and then I saw you put your arm around the bird. You said: "Don't say no right away, Joe. Think about it. If you come to work for me I guarantee you better pay, better working conditions and a five-day week."

I came no farther, because I suddenly knew that even if you would be glad to see me, it would no longer be the same, and I would spoil it. I could enjoy it, but I knew I must not intrude. I watched you talking to the bird until after a while you called to the fisherman: "What do I owe you?" and I saw you hand him some money.

I ran back toward the hotel. Glancing back, I saw you holding the cormorant close to you. I started to laugh again and then suddenly I thought that I could not remember when you ever had touched me or held me, just in affection, even the kind of affection you now were feeling for the cormorant. I kept running and the laughter no longer was inside me nor even on my lips. I thought only how much I loved you and how hard it was to love you as I did.

WHILE WE were having breakfast next morning I told you of an old man, a painter, a friend of my father who lived in a little village in the mountains. I asked if you would be interested to visit him. "If you like," you said.

"I would like it very much, if you would not mind. And he has few visitors. I think he would enjoy it."

I telephoned and my father's friend, Komatsu, said he would

be pleased to have us visit him. We left the hotel and drove toward the mountains, aloof and remote in the gray sky, many of the peaks lost in the clouds. The road became increasingly narrow and you had to drive onto the shoulder to allow a bus or truck to pass you. You smiled at how the Japanese drivers bowed to you from behind their wheels and after the third or fourth time you began to bow back.

We entered the village late in the afternoon. It was located on two sides of a deep gorge, with many little bridges connecting the halves. Small hotels on each side were lighting their lanterns in the twilight. We drew up at a small house and there, through the open wooden gates, we saw a man in a black kimono standing in the yard.

"That is my friend Komatsu," I said.

"How did he know we were coming at just this time?"

"He did not know. He has probably been standing there waiting for a long time."

As we alighted Komatsu bowed slightly and then turned and disappeared into the house. Just inside the open front door were four persons on their knees. They bowed so their foreheads touched the *tatami*. "These persons are the wife of Komatsu, his two daughters and his son," I said.

We removed our shoes and entered the house. I remember how you got down on your knees and bowed to the family of Komatsu. It made me happy to see you return their courtesy. Then we went on into the main room of the house. Komatsu was awaiting us there. He placed his hands on his knees and bowed from his waist and then gestured toward an oblong table, around which cushions had been arranged on the matting. He indicated your place in front of a small alcove in which was a floral arrangement and, behind the flowers, one of Komatsu's paintings.

"That is the *tokonoma*," I told you. "The guest of honor is always placed in front of it."

I gave Komatsu and his wife some little presents we had brought, making the proper depreciating remark: "These are small and amount to nothing." They took the gifts without opening them and thanked you gravely. Komatsu was a man of about sixty. His hair was black, his face gentle and tired and serene. Mrs. Komatsu was a tiny creature, with a quick birdlike smile.

The two daughters appeared with tightly twisted hot towels for

us to wipe away the dust of the road. Then they brought sweets, kneeling before they entered the room. The delicacy was chocolate fudge, each piece the size of a golf ball, covered with a thin, translucent gelatin. Each girl brought a single plate and set it before us and then they brought in plates for their parents. The girls then brought tea, again carrying only one cup each time.

When we finished, the women left and Komatsu asked you if you cared to see his collection. He had gathered together priceless things of ancient Japan: replicas of gods, in metal and wood; old chinaware, *sake* bottles, weapons, shields, lamps—some things as much as one thousand years old.

When we had finished examining them, Komatsu led us through a back door to a small garden. Here in a small space he had raised no less than thirty dwarf trees, plum, cherry, pine, oak and others. Among the little trees he had placed old metal lamps.

We went up a steep flight of stairs to a room in which Komatsu did his own work. He picked up a distorted carving of a god and held it toward you. "Picasso," he said, and you chuckled.

At his work desk, he held up one of his pictures, a water color of a fish, caught in a leap, sparkling in the sun.

"It is an *ayu*," I said, "a kind of trout."

"It's quite beautiful," you said.

I translated and Komatsu bowed. He showed you another picture. It too was of an *ayu*. You looked at eight or ten pictures, all of *ayu*, all of surpassing delicacy with the subtlest coloration.

"They are lovely," you said after you had seen the last one. "How long has he been painting fish?"

"For almost fifty years," I said.

You looked at me and then at Komatsu and then back at me. "Nothing but fish?"

"Just this one kind of fish," I said. "Just *ayu*."

The expression on your face was delightful to see and I saw a small smile come to Komatsu's lips. "You are wondering why I have spent my entire lifetime painting one subject, an insignificant fish," he said. "My reason is quite simple. A human being has a choice to make in life: whether to learn a small amount about many things or as much as he can about a single thing. I chose the latter, realizing that if I painted *ayu* all my life I would still not capture all of the beauty this small creature has to offer to someone who looks for it."



He looked at one of the water colors for a moment. "You see, Colonel Stevenson, for one who seeks it, each thing on this earth is a microcosm, containing the essence of all living. I have found music, poetry, the dance, the beginning and the end of beauty, in this simple fish." He set down the painting and an impish expression appeared on his face. "Besides, they are very good to eat."

RETURNING to the room downstairs, we found that the table had been removed and three smaller tables brought in. Two were set on one side of the room, the third on the other. You were again given the place of honor in front of the *tokonoma* and I was seated beside you.

Mrs. Komatsu and the girls brought fresh towels and then bottles of *sake*. Komatsu seated himself in front of you and Mrs. Komatsu knelt in front of me. They filled *sake* cups for us and as we emptied the cups they refilled them. You remembered what I had told you earlier in the day, and after the third drink you rinsed your cup in a bowl of hot water and presented it to Komatsu. You bowed, and filled the cup. Komatsu drained it in a

swallow, rinsed it out, returned it to you and refilled it. He lowered his head as you drank.

We moved to one of the other tables and sat down. The daughters began to bring food. The first course was two boiled fish, each a little larger than a sardine, served whole and arranged on the plate as though Komatsu planned to paint them. Komatsu spread one of his paintings before you and then went to his own table. He waited until you had begun to eat before he brought the food to his own mouth.

After this we were served the same fish, broiled, and then a cup of raw squid with yellow sauce. After that, *sashimi*, slices of raw fish, and then broiled sea bream, called *tai*. As guest of honor you were served the head and I could see the sudden look in your eyes and I was proud of you when you said nothing and ate it.

I could see you were uncomfortable, sitting cross-legged. You said: "Please tell Mr. Komatsu I would like to see some of his paintings again." Komatsu nodded politely and you both got up and walked to a table where he had some of his paintings.

After the *tai* the girls brought eel, boiled in sweet-and-sour sauce, and then *soba*, buckwheat noodles, sprinkled with a seaweed we call *nori*. The final hot dish was a cup of *misoshiru*, a soup made of soybean paste, in which floated slices of bamboo.

You stood up again to stretch your legs and again made the excuse of wanting to look at Komatsu's pictures. When you returned to your table Komatsu was standing there with two additional cushions. He made a higher place for you, and said to me: "Please tell Colonel Stevenson it no longer will be necessary for him to keep looking at my poor paintings."

You both laughed when I translated and then he said his daughters would entertain us. The older daughter uncovered a *koto*, a long instrument with thirteen strings, and the younger daughter brought in a *samisen*. As the girls played and sang Komatsu and his wife sat in gentle repose in separate parts of the room and the son, whom we had not seen after our arrival, sat outside the door in the next room.

LATER THAT night we stood at a hotel window and looked at the rain and at the lights in the river. I did not speak because I wanted nothing to conflict with the sound of the rain and the sound of the water.

"You are a strange people, Tomiko," you said at last. "He waited on me all evening as though he were a servant."

"When you are a guest in his house, he is as a servant to you."

"Setting his painting in front of me before he went to his own table for dinner."

"Do you know why he did that? It was to leave something of himself with you while he was eating."

You looked for a long time at the rain, and then you took my hand and said my name in a voice I had never heard from you before. And that night, when you made love to me, you did not turn away to go wherever it was you went the times before.

Next morning I found you at an open window, looking again at the rain slanting across the river. I went to your side. You put your arm around me. I followed your gaze and saw on the other side of the river a woman walking carefully down a steep, narrow path, holding a straw umbrella over her head. She knelt at the edge of the river and washed her face and hands, holding the umbrella over her all the time in the crook of her arm, and then she climbed back slowly up the gorge in the rain.

You were silent as we drove back to Nagoya and then flew back to Ashiya and that night you did not stay with me and the next morning, when I went to your office, you said: "I won't need you any more, Tomiko. See Major Cooper about whatever money is coming to you."

I did not have to question you. I knew the meaning of the words you did not speak.

THAT WAS just yesterday, she thought, and this afternoon, not knowing whether he lived now or was dead, she had walked slowly through her own brief life with Glenn Stevenson. And now that the final door was shut behind her, she realized that she knew nothing about him. They had done things together and they had had, as he had promised, fun; but when he had rejected her for the last time she still knew almost nothing about the man she loved, nor had the smallest clue to why he was as he was.

Waiting now for the speaker on the wall to deliver its message, she moved yet another step forward on her way. Until now she knew she could not live with him dead. Now she knew that neither could she live with him dead to her. She would wait to find out, and then, either way, she would do what she had to do.

The airplanes, that morning . . .

7:55 a.m. SERGEANT MIKE WARREN opened his eyes and he was instantly awake. Sergeant Homer Garrison leaned toward him. "Did you have a nice sleep, Sergeant?" he asked.

"Get lost."

"Nothing to do but ride like a passenger." Garrison shook his head. "Why didn't I pick me a nice, easy job in the service?"

"They couldn't've built a chute big enough to hold you."

Mike got up and went to the latrine in the tail of the plane. Garrison bugged him. It made him sick when people let their bodies go. They became slobs, like the way his sisters had let go. They'd worked hard and respected themselves and then they got tired and let go and they were slobs, and it didn't matter because nothing mattered. His whole family, the way everybody lived in it, the neighborhood. Nothing mattered and nobody gave a damn for themselves or anybody else.

He came out of the latrine and saw that Garrison had gone up front. He sat down again. He looked at the ring on his finger. The stone in the silver mounting was green in the daylight, like when he first saw the one like it, on *her* finger, on the beach near Algiers. It was her ring because it was part of that time.

So now it had found him out again and he had to go the route like he always did and it would only make the ankle hurt again, like the ankle was remembering too.

ALGIERS was where there was the funny smell of French cigarettes everywhere and the girls with the veils rode in trolley cars, usually standing up, because the Moslems thought girls were too private or something to show their faces but not too private to stand holding onto the straps. That was where he first saw her.

He had broken his ankle more than a month before on a jump in the Atlas Mountains, trying to patch up some stranded natives before the helicopters arrived to take them off. That had meant several weeks in the hospital, and then a taped ankle and a ten-day furlough. Walking around on his first day in Algiers his ankle began to bother him and he took a trolley. It was half empty, but

presently it began to fill up and he saw the Arab girl standing there with the veil covering the bottom half of her face, and he got up and gave her his seat just because it was too much to see a woman with a veil holding onto a strap in a trolley. And that was how it started with Leila.

He stood there leaning on his cane and he didn't know she was watching him until she touched him and he looked down and saw a couple of big, dark eyes, and she pointed to the cane and then to his leg and started to get up. He shook his head. "It don't bother me. The medic says I ought to work it out as much as I can anyway."

He saw her forehead crinkle and the eyes look puzzled.

"I guess you don't dig English," he said. He touched his ankle with the cane. "Okay."

She nodded. "Okay," she said.

"I guess everybody digs okay." He grinned.

It would have ended at that except when he got off the trolley he slipped on the step and would have fallen into the street if somebody hadn't grabbed him, and it was the same Arab girl.

"Thanks," he said, and then he added: "*Merci.*" He touched his cap and went on, or tried to go on, but he had hurt the bum ankle more than he realized, and he had to stand in the street with cars blowing horns at him and then he felt her take his arm again.

When they reached the sidewalk he leaned against a street lamp and rested his leg on his cane. "*Merci beaucoup,*" he said.

"*De rien, monsieur,*" she said. "*Vous parlez français?*"

He shook his head. "All I can say is *merci beaucoup* and I wonder what kind of face you got under that doily. I'll bet it's a gasser." He grinned. "I got another French word. *Au revoir.*"

"*Au revoir, monsieur.*"

He started for a café down the street and then stopped. The sun was very hot. He felt the sweat starting down his neck.

"*Vous êtes souffrant, monsieur?*" She took his arm.

"It's you again," he said. "The living doll in the bed sheet."

Resting on her arm, he limped to the café. A few Arab men were sipping coffee or sweet nonalcoholic drinks. Mike saw an empty table and fell into a chair. "How about joining me in a drink?" He made a gesture of lifting a glass to his lips and pointed to the chair next to him.

She shook her head. "*Non, monsieur. Ce n'est pas permis.*"

"I can figure out what that means," he said. He shrugged. "Well, it wasn't like I didn't try." He smiled. "You're probably hiding a mustache under that veil anyway."

He heard something said in Arabic behind him and from the tone it was not friendly. He twisted his head and saw a tall, angry-looking Arab seated at a table. The Arab said something again to the girl.

Mike looked at her. She was shaking. He stood up and faced the Arab, gripping his cane. The Arab got up and stalked away, his long robe swirling. Mike turned back to the girl. She was still shaking. "What was all that jazz?" he asked.

She shook her head and tears filled her eyes. She started to walk away. He caught her by the arm. "Please," he said. "You can't go like that. You got to calm down. How about a cup of coffee? *Café.*"

Before she could refuse again, he took her canvas bag and helped her into a chair. He could feel her trembling. He sat down and waved to a waiter. "A cup of coffee and a beer." He turned back to the girl and started to say something and then he didn't say it. After a while he said: "So that's what you been keeping under wraps."

She had removed her veil and her face was streaked with tears but that didn't spoil anything. He heard a sharp clicking and he looked down and saw she was tapping her shoe on the pavement and that it was a European shoe, a very small shoe with a very high heel.

"I'm hep," he said. "Around here they don't dig Arab girls sitting around like this in public, especially with GIs."

The waiter brought the coffee and beer. Mike raised his glass. "I'm with you, doll," he said. "All the way."

He must have got something through because she looked at him directly for the first time and smiled. "*Soldat,*" she said. "*Américain.*"

He touched the jumper badge on his blouse. "Airplane," he said. He pressed his hands together and made a motion of diving.

"*Ah, oui!*" She pointed to the parachute on the insignie and spread her hands wide. "*Pouf.*"

"Yeah. *Pouf.* You're a doll. I'd like to kiss you right now, this minute."

She drank her coffee and stood up. "*Merci, monsieur,*" she said. "We just met, doll," he said. "You can't cut now."

She covered her face with the veil and picked up the canvas bag and started to walk down the street, her spiked French heels showing at the bottom of her robe.

He knew he had to do something fast because in a few seconds she was going to be one cloaked and veiled woman among hundreds and he didn't know her name and there wasn't a prayer in the world of ever finding her again. He let out a large groan, bent over and grabbed his ankle and cried out again, a cry of infinite pain. He didn't have to look up. He knew he had a sure thing.

He heard her say something in a voice filled with compassion and he saw the canvas bag set down on the ground and got his first look inside it and that gave him a brand-new plan of battle. He looked up, twisting his face in agony. "Oh, I'd love to kiss you," he said in a voice of terrible suffering.

Her eyes were wide with sympathy and she said something rapidly and he caught a word that sounded like "doctor."

"You're the living end," he said, grimacing in his pain. He straightened in the chair and smiled bravely. He stood up and allowed himself another quick wince and then he gave out with the smile of courage again. Walking his fingers across the table, he pointed to himself. "Just help me walk a little."

He left some money on the table and she took his hand and they started down the street. He leaned against her, a little heavily, and then apologized and she said something quickly which would have meant, in any language, that it was all right, she understood and wanted to help.

They passed a men's furnishing shop and he led her inside. A clerk, a tall man with a carved mustache, sprang to attention and said, in excellent English: "Can I be of service to you, sir?"

"You sure can, pal," Mike said. "I want to buy a pair of swimming trunks. But first, would you translate something to this young lady?"

"I am happy to be of assistance, sir."

"Tell her I'd like to know her name. Mine is Mike Warren."

The salesman spoke to the girl. "She says her name is Leila. She says also she likes the name Michel."

"Michel," Mike said. "Well." Then he said: "Please tell her that I am here on convalescent leave after getting myself banged

up saving the lives of three Moroccans. Ask her if there is a beach near here where I could lie in the sun and get my strength back."

The clerk translated. Mike saw Leila listen intently and then look at him sharply. He lowered his eyes modestly. Leila spoke to the clerk, who said: "The young lady says that it happens she is on her way to the beach. She will be happy to take you there."

"What do you know," Mike said.

Leila held up her bag and showed him a bathing suit inside it. "Now isn't that a coincidence," Mike said.

THAT WAS how it started. They spent a lazy afternoon on the beach, and when she began to gather her things together he said: "How about dinner tonight?" He went through the motions of eating.

She shook her head rapidly. "*Non, Michel. Comme je vous ai dit, ce n'est pas permis.*"

"There's that dirty word again." He had another thought. "You're not married, are you?" He picked up her hand. She wore no ring other than one with a green stone in a silver mounting. "Marriage. Husband."

"Oh," she said. "*Mariage.*" She shook her head. "*Non, Michel.*"

"I like that '*Non, Michel*' better than any of the others." He nodded. "Okay, I can play it cool too. How about tomorrow? We meet here again." He made elaborate motions, indicating the beach and her and himself and making a wide sweep with his arm to show he meant the next day. He remembered a word from flying. "*Rendezvous,*" he said. He jabbed his finger at the beach.

"*Ah, oui,*" she said happily. "*Demain, je reviendrai à la plage, ici.*" She wrote the number 11 in the sand.

"Eleven o'clock," he said. "Leila, you got yourself a date."

They rode back to the city on the bus and when she got off and he started to follow her she held up her hand. He watched her disappear in the crowd.

Next morning he went down to the beach. She probably wouldn't show but he had to play out his hand. The sun beat on his head and the water looked good but he was afraid he might miss her if he went in. He sat there, feeling low, and then he saw her coming toward him.

He limped over to her. "I didn't think you'd show," he said.

"*Bonjour, Michel,*" she said.

He took her beach bag. "You look good enough to eat," he said. He took her by the hand. "Let's go in the water right now."

The water was clean and not too warm and he felt great. It was the most beautiful day since the beginning of time and she was the most beautiful girl who ever lived. After a while he saw that they had been carried a little distance down the beach to where some rocks went out into the water. He made for them and saw a sheltered place and sat down there against a flat rock. She sat down next to him.

From where they were they could not see the rest of the beach nor the other people. The sun warmed him and he smelled the clean air and looked at some birds wheeling in the sky and a peace came over him. It was like nothing that had ever happened before. They all belonged together there, Leila, himself, the birds, the rocks, the sun and the water, and for the first time in his life it was like everything was working for him and not against him.

"I'd like to stay here with you forever," he said, "and never leave here and never have to see nobody but you." He sat up. "Let's build a house here. Let's never go away from here!"

He gathered some sand and began to block out the outline of a house. Suddenly she laughed delightedly and got on her knees to help him.

"This is the living room," he said, "where we sit in the evenings after the kids go to bed, and look at each other and tell each other how nuts we are about each other."

He blocked out another square. "That's for the kids," he said. He looked at her. Her eyes were dancing. "You know, kids." He held up his hand, palm down, and made a series of steps.

She threw back her head and laughed. "*Ah, les enfants!*" She folded her arms and rocked them back and forth gently.

"You're hep," he said. "*Enfants. Lots of enfants.*"

She looked at him quietly for a moment and then she went through the motions of stirring a pot and eating. She pointed at him and held out her hands to show he was getting a fat belly.

"The kitchen," he said. "Now how could I forget that."

He outlined another room. "That's our bedroom, where I'm going to wake up to you every morning and look at you while you're sleeping." He looked at her and then he couldn't look at her any more and he lay back against the rock and closed his eyes and then he felt her take his hand.

Suddenly he wanted to tell her everything, although he knew she wouldn't understand his words. "Where I come from there never was room anywhere," he said. "The only place you could get away from the family was the bathroom. And then you had to stand in line. And when you finally got into the place it was always filled with stockings drying. My sisters had only one pair at a time and they had to wash them every night."

He put his arm around her and held her head against his chest. "You never saw such a house. It was like it was a rooming house, or something. We were all living in the same house and we were a family and nobody even wanted to talk to anybody else. It was that way when I cut and it's probably worse now. After I left that dirty town I never went back, and I never wrote and they never wrote me. I might be dead and they wouldn't know." He paused. "No, I guess that's not right. The Air Force would notify them. They'd think my family was the same as any other family and would want to know."

They sat there through the afternoon watching the blue water and he spoke to her from time to time about things he had never talked about before and he thought how unimportant they all were, all the memories, the things he had tried long ago to stop thinking about. "It's you, Leila," he said. "When I tell you about it, it hasn't got any size at all any more."

Late in the afternoon she had to go but she agreed to meet him there, at the rocks, the next day. She collected her things; then she leaned down and kissed his cheek lightly and hurried off.

Long afterward, in the twilight, he started to leave and then stopped and looked back at the house in the sand. It looked empty now and there was no laughter in it.

He picked up a piece of flat driftwood and wedged it down in the sand between the house and the sea. She was coming back tomorrow to give it life again, and he had to keep the sea from taking it away.

NEXT MORNING he bought sandwiches and fruit. He started to buy a bottle of wine but he remembered Moslems never touched alcohol and he bought soft drinks instead. On the way to the bus he saw a ring like hers in a store window. He went in and bought it.

When he got to the rocks she was not there yet. The driftwood

was lying on its side and the sand where the house had been was flat and wet. He put the food in an opening between the rocks and buried the bottles in the sand under water. Then he stood up and she was coming toward him, waving her hand. She came to him and stopped short. They remained there, silent, facing each other, her eyes going all over his face, and then she looked down at the sand.

"Oh, Michel," she said, "*la petite maison a disparu.*"

He touched her cheek with his finger tips and took her beach bag and set it on the rocks. He heard her say something delightfully and he saw she was pointing to the ring on his finger.

He held his hand next to hers. "Same as yours, baby," he said. "Very popular in the service—the double-ring routine. Like it makes it twice as strong that way."

She put her arm around him and hugged him and then she reached into the beach bag and came up with sandwiches and a long, slender bottle of wine. She held them up, her face filled with happiness.

He looked at the bottle, puzzled, and gestured at her. She shook her head. "*Ce n'est pas pour moi,*" she said. She pointed to him. "*C'est pour vous.*" She went into the bag again and took out a bottle of orange drink. "*Ceci, c'est à moi.*"

He put down the winebottle and dug up the bottles of soft drink he had brought. They looked at each other and burst into laughter.

Then he shook his head, wonderingly. "We were thinking about each other," he said. "You were thinking about me."

They ate their lunch and then they went out on the rocks and sat down and watched the sea. There was no one in the world but Leila and himself.

He stayed on again after she left that day. He looked at the sea and this time it did not seem so empty without her, more of her was staying with him, and he was beginning to believe it.

HE RETURNED the next day and after a while he realized he had been waiting a long time. The fear built in him and late in the afternoon he rode back to the city, scared. He tried to tell himself something had happened, she didn't know where to reach him, she'd be there tomorrow. The rocks were the only place where they knew to find each other, and she had to be there.

The next morning he went to the rocks and waited and she did not come that day either and that night he limped through the dark streets of the city. He walked until his foot hurt him too much and he called a cab and told the driver to take him down to the beach. It was after three o'clock in the morning when he dragged himself up on the rocks and then he fell back exhausted and looked up at the sky.

"Leila," he said to the bright, shining stars. "Leila."

WHEN HE opened his eyes it was daylight. His back ached and his ankle was raw and swollen against his boot.

Then he saw her.

"Leila," he said hoarsely. He started for her. His foot collapsed under him and he fell. She rushed to him and he got up on his knees and put his arms around her waist.

"Leila," he said. "Leila." He pulled himself up and held her face between his hands and kissed her lips and her neck and her cheeks. He said, "Leila, I love you so much. Leila, *je vous aime*."

"Oui, Michel," she said. "*Je vous aime aussi*."

"I know," he said. "I know you do. I want to marry you, Leila. Oh, God, please make her understand me. Leila, I want to marry you." He smoothed the hair away from her face. "Marry," he said.

"Mariage," she said. "*Oui, je comprends*." Her face was grave and her eyes were tragic. "*Mais, c'est impossible*."

"Why is it impossible?" he said. "Nothing's impossible. We could make it work. I'll do anything, Leila."

She shook her head. "*Michel*," she said. She touched his lips with her finger tips. "*Cher Michel. C'est impossible*."

He gripped her hard. "No," he said. "No. No." He kissed her and she tore away from him and ran toward the pavilion where the women changed their clothes.

"Leila!" He ran after her. He fell and felt the sand in his mouth. He found his cane and pushed himself up and lurched after her, the cane sinking with each step. When he reached the pavilion she was gone. He leaned against a wall, gasping.

Suddenly he felt someone grab his arm. He looked around and saw he was being held by a swarthy Algerian man. Another Algerian stood next to him.

"American soldiers," the man said. "You are all the same."

"You don't understand," Mike said. "Please don't try to stop me. I got to find Leila." He jerked free and started for a veiled woman coming out of the door. The man stuck out his foot and Mike sprawled on the ground. The man laughed.

"You don't understand," Mike said wearily, trying to get up.

The man shoved him down again. Mike swung his cane and caught the man across the shins. The Algerian screamed and Mike got up on his feet. He raised the cane. "Don't try to stop me," he whispered. "I'll kill you."

He felt a blow on the back of his head and he went down again and both men closed in on him. They kicked him again and again and then he heard her voice and the two men backed away and he saw her kneel down next to him.

"You sure turn up when I need you," he said. "But what am I going to do when I run out of busted ankles and guys to clobber me?"

She helped him to his feet and called a cab and they rode back to the city. He lay back against the seat and let the pain trickle out of him. They got off at the square and he took her to the store where he had bought his swimming trunks. The clerk with the carved mustache gave him a big, business smile. "Can I serve you today, monsieur?"

"Yeah," Mike said. "I want you to tell her something for me."

The smile disappeared and the clerk looked pained. He fingered his mustache. "What is it this time, monsieur?"

"Tell her I'll do anything she wants if she'll marry me," Mike said eagerly. "Tell her I'll quit the Air Force. Tell her we can live here, in Algiers."

The clerk spoke to her.

"Oh, lord," Mike said. "Don't say it that way. Put something into it. Say it so it sounds like something."

Leila spoke rapidly. The clerk turned to Mike. "The young lady says you must understand it is utterly impossible."

"Why?" Mike hit his fist on the counter. "Why is it impossible?"

"She says she is a student—a follower of the Princess Aisha of Morocco. She is studying to be of service to her people."

"Tell her I'll help her," Mike said.

Leila spoke again. "She says that she was called away to a little village the day before yesterday in an emergency," the clerk said



in a monotone. "That is why she could not meet you. But it gave her time to think and she realized she must not see you again. That is why she came to the beach today, to see you for the last time."

"Look," Mike said. "Tell her that in the Air Force I work as a medic. It's almost like being a doctor. Tell her I can help in what she's doing. Tell her we'd make a team."

The clerk spoke to her again and Leila answered. The clerk said to Mike: "The young lady says she is Arab and you are American and your people would not accept her and her people would not accept you."

"The hell with people," Mike said loudly. "We're not marrying people. We're marrying each other. Tell her that."

"I'm sorry," the clerk said. "This is a business establishment. I must wait on my customers." He walked away. The people in the store were looking at Mike and Leila curiously.

"Michel," she said. "Venez."

The clerk looked up. "She is saying to follow her," he said, the sincere smile on his face again.

"Thanks, pal," Mike said. "Thanks a lot."

He followed Leila out of the store and she led him through a series of streets, each less European than the other, and then they were in a street that was wholly native. Every few steps she glanced at him. Her eyes were big and deep and he could see the sorrow in them. Presently the street began to rise. She pointed upward. "*La Casba*," she said.

They climbed up the street, through a small bazaar crowded with haggling men and women. The street grew so narrow that sometimes he had to walk behind her, the houses so close together with their tops leaning so far they blotted out the bright African afternoon in darkness and shadows.

They reached a small square. The sudden sun was blinding and Mike filled his lungs with air as though he had come out of deep water. The square was full and noisy. Donkeys clattered past on the cobblestones. A barber, his shop in the open, shaved the head of a Moslem. A date seller dozed by his fruit, while an Arab youth strolled by holding a sprig of jasmine under his nose.

Over the sounds in the little square Mike heard the shrill voices of children. Leila led him toward a small, open room. Inside, a group of children, none over eight, sat facing an older boy who

was striking a blackboard with a ruler. On the blackboard Arabic letters were written. As the boy touched each letter the children cried it out.

The boy saw Leila and his face lit up and he said something and the children twisted around and saw her and then they scrambled up from their stools and rushed out, laughing and fighting like a litter of puppies to get near her.

She looked closely at one child with a sore eye. Mike knelt and examined it. "If I had my kit, I could fix this kid up," he said. He stood up and put his arm around her. "It's what I'm trying to get over to you. I know how to handle medicine. It's my trade." He shook his head slowly. "I know why you brought me here, Leila. You're trying to show me where you belong and to tell me I don't belong here. But you're wrong. I'll belong too. I'll be good for your people."

She moved closer to him and her eyes were full of love. He held her tightly. "You'll see, Leila," he said. "I'll learn the language. You'll see how great it'll be."

He looked up and saw an old man coming out of the school-room. He looked like something out of the Bible. He was bearded and he looked kind and he walked with a tall staff. Mike smiled to him and the old man said something sharp and violent. He rapped on the cobblestones and spoke to the children and they backed away. Leila held out her hand to them and they looked at her and at the old man, their small faces confused and scared, and the old man waved his staff and they ran back into the building.

The old man said something harsh to Leila and she cringed in Mike's arm. Then he looked at Mike as though he were a dog at his feet, spat on the ground and walked back into the classroom. Mike looked at Leila. She was slumped against him and her eyes were wet with tears. He let go of her. His arm fell like lead.

She took his hand and led him into a courtyard on the far side of which was a small mosque. She pointed to the mosque and he limped slowly toward it. He saw she was not following him and looked back. She shook her head.

He walked to the entrance of the mosque and removed his shoes. He looked back again. She was still standing there, and he looked at her for a long time and then he entered the mosque.

Inside it was cool, lit only by guttering oil lamps. He sank

slowly to his knees. In his ears he could still hear the children piping Arabic words in voices like birds, and he knew that the children meant something to her that nobody where he came from meant to him, not his mother nor his father nor his sisters nor anybody else.

And he remembered the man in the café the day he met her and the men who had jumped him on the beach and the old man who came out of the classroom and he knew it would be that way everywhere, worse in the villages, and what it was she had he would take away.

He got up and went outside and put on his shoes. He didn't look for her. He knew she was gone.

He walked back down the steps of the Kasbah alone.

8:05 a.m. MAJOR GENE SUMTER studied the cloud formation on his radar screen. He called Stevenson on the intercom. "Cumulus dead ahead with heavy precipitation, sir," he said. "Shall I alter course?"

"Okay, Sumter," Stevenson said. "You take over."

The navigator peered into the scope. "Colonel, forty-five degrees right."

Sumter felt the aircraft bank. He strained his eyes at the screen. He watched the cloud formation grow.

Eight minutes later he said: "Fifteen degrees left, sir." Then: "There's an opening, sir. Eight degrees left." The airplane, guided by Sumter's eyes on the screen, nosed its way between the cumulus build-ups. "We're through it now, sir," Sumter said. "I'll give you a new heading."

"Roger."

Sumter turned to his loran screen and began to count its two sets of short vertical parallel lines, like two picket fences one on top of the other, one picking up the signal from the loran master station, the other from the slave station. He had to work rapidly now, for the count would give him his position at the exact moment he made it, but the airplane was traveling almost a mile every twenty seconds. He plotted the count on his loran chart and the point where the lines crossed gave him the position of the plane at 0831 hours 33 seconds. He set up a track from that point to the destination. Compensating for magnetic variation

and drift, he worked out a new true heading on his computer. "Navigator to pilot," he said.

"Roger, Sumter," Stevenson said.

"New heading is two one three degrees, sir."

"Roger, two one three degrees."

Sumter sat back in his seat and rubbed his eyes. He did his work accurately and well and enjoyed doing it. Normally, at this time, he would have relaxed with a cup of coffee for a few moments, pleasantly aware that the plane was moving in the direction he said it should move.

Instead his mind snapped back to what had been worrying him constantly for days: his examinations, coming up tomorrow night. He had planned some last-minute studying, but with this long haul and the weather what it was, he wondered whether he was going to get back early enough to spend sufficient time with his schoolbooks. Maybe he had bit off more than he could chew. He had been afraid of that before he started night school. He had tried to tell Ann so, but she had brushed it aside.

"You can do anything you set your mind to, Gene. You have a fine mind." She smiled tenderly. "Oh, Gene, the kids and I are going to be so proud of you. You're going to be such a success."

Now he shook his head and groaned silently at the thought of the books on his bedroom desk. The whole thing was going to end up with his having to quit something he liked and did well and trying to do something altogether different. What on earth was he going to do as a civilian, college credits or no college credits?

Captain Victor, Cooper's navigator, called him on the radio. "How you doing, Pappy? Get through that thunder stuff okay?"

"We're still flying."

"That's the old SA-16 for you. Something's been worrying me. What if you flunk tomorrow night? They wouldn't do anything mean, like bust you to captain, would they?"

"You got nothing to do on that airplane but beat your gums?"

"You still got your old captain's bars, haven't you?" Victor said. "Because if you haven't I'll lend you a pair."

"Keep them. You're going to need them for a long time."

College credits. And what made it worse was that the class had enlisted men in it, most of them fresh out of school and still in the habit of absorbing things from books, and it would be just great if they passed and he, a major, flunked out.

10:17 a.m.

COLONEL STEVENSON made a slight aileron trim and then ran his eyes in a routine check over the instrument panel. There was a time, he thought, when there were more things to do on an airplane even though there were fewer things to do them with. Now you looked at the dials and they looked back at you, like a hundred eyes, and the minutes ticked along and the airplane ran itself. How was it that one of the rescue pilots described these missions: "Ninety-nine percent boredom and one percent sheer terror."

You sat with boredom as a companion and tried not to think back. . . .

"DON'T KISS ME that way," Caroline had said. "Not in public, Steve."

"This isn't public," he'd said, smelling the perfume on her neck. "This is a private room in a Japanese restaurant."

"Those two girls are watching us." She indicated the Japanese entertainers.

"Doesn't matter. They don't understand English."

Her eyes crinkled. "What you're doing they'd understand in Tibet. Besides, we're married now. Husbands don't kiss their wives that way."

"I haven't got used to being a husband yet. I'm still a healthy red-blooded American boy."

"Steve, let's go home. . . ."

For a little while still he heard her voice clearly, above the noise of the engines, and knew the feeling of going back with her to their home on Manila Bay.

"RESCUE One Three Two One, One Three Two One. This is Rescue One Three Two Six. Do you read me on Echo?"

It was Cooper's voice. Stevenson came back with a jolt. "One Three Two Six, I read you five-by-five."

"We're approaching the target area, Colonel. I'm going to descend to five hundred feet and start a creeping line search. Haven't had you in sight for some time."

"We're about fifteen minutes behind you," Stevenson said. We had to scoot around that cumulus."

"Roger. Over and out."

Stevenson looked over the instrument panel again. He had to bring himself all the way back to now, where he was, in an SA-16, flying two miles above the East China Sea, on a mission to locate some Japanese survivors in a lifeboat.

Japanese survivors. Things have changed a little, haven't they, Caroline?

He looked out the windshield. It was still packed pretty solid below, but the sky now was clear and blue. He looked at the blue sky and wondered whether she was watching. If that was the way it was. In an airplane it was never too hard to believe that was the way it might be. Not on the ground, not even in a church, but when you were up close and there was nothing in between.

And if that was the way it was, then it was that way not only for the Japanese survivors but for the Japanese girl, Tomiko. There had been other girls after Caroline, a lot of casual ones, and it had never bothered him that she might be watching him with them. But a Japanese girl. Or was it because this time it hadn't been just a casual thing? If she had been watching then she knew Tomiko was not like any of the other girls.

After all the years, to have feeling again, like a human being, and to have it with a girl who was a Jap. It probably was very funny. He looked at the sky and he wondered if Caroline was laughing. She had been able to laugh at almost everything. Was she able to laugh at that?

But it's over with, he told her and himself. Forgive me, Caroline; God help me, it was rough, but I managed to close the book.

Sitting one day on the patio of their house, he remembered, looking at the water of Manila Bay, she had said: "I get so darned smug it frightens me, Steve. We have too much. And when you have too much, you have to pay."

"We can afford it. We're rich."

"Do you believe that, Steve?"

"Yes."

"Then you must make me believe it. You see, Steve, I don't believe anybody is that rich."

THE PICTURE never faded. It remained clear and sharp and never mingled with the other things of his life. The time with Caroline, each little part of it, still lived with him.

He remembered the first day he saw her.

It was the spring of 1941. He was running a local civilian air line out of Manila, serving the islands. An earthquake struck the country near Lake Lanao in Mindanao, the big island to the south of Luzon; then a tidal wave tore across the lake and flooded twenty or thirty small villages, leaving hundreds dead and thousands injured and homeless. Stevenson was asked to fly down medical supplies. For three days he shuttled back and forth between Manila and Maria Christina Airport near Dansasalan City, carrying medicines, food and clothing. He was in Flight Operations at Manila, filing his form, getting ready to start in on the fourth day, when she came up to him.

"Are you Mr. Glenn Stevenson?" she asked.

He looked up. He saw a tall, slender girl in a sweater and skirt, a leather bag slung over her shoulder. "I'm Stevenson."

"They tell me you're flying down to Lake Lanao. Will you take me down?"

He looked her over carefully. "I don't think they are in the mood for sight-seers at the moment." He turned back to the form.

"I'm not a tourist," she said. "I'm a reporter. And I don't mean take me down for free."

He finished the form and handed it to the clerk. "Get into a pair of slacks," he said. "That's jungle country down there." He looked at his watch. "We take off in fifteen minutes."

He was at the controls, running up the engines, when she came up on the flight deck. He said: "I told you to put on slacks."

"Where did you think I was going to pick up a pair of lady's pants in fifteen minutes, Mr. Stevenson?"

"Get back in the plane and fasten your safety belt. I'll find something for you on the way down."

After they were up he gave the plane over to the copilot and rummaged around until he found an old pair of coveralls. He went back into the plane. "Put these on," he said.

She stood up, unbuttoned her skirt and stepped out of it and pulled the sweater over her head. She put on the coveralls. The pants and sleeves were too long. She rolled them up.

"Will I do now, Mr. Stevenson?"

He surveyed her. "You looked better before. But you'll do better this way."

"You might as well know my name," she said, holding out her hand. "I'm Caroline Gordon."

He took the hand. Her grasp was firm and warm. "I didn't know reporters came looking like you. In the movies they always wear beat-up hats and need a shave."

"That was last year's style. And I also take pictures."

"I haven't seen you around Manila."

"I haven't been around Manila. I was on my way to Hong Kong when the magazine cabled me to try to get down to Lake Lanao."

"Hong Kong." He smiled. "You'll look great in a slit skirt."

"You peeked, Mr. Stevenson." She grinned. The skin crinkled around her eyes. It was her trademark, to him, the built-in laughter, and what went with it. "Speaking of needing a shave," she said, "it would be nice to know what kind of a face you have."

He rubbed his chin; he hadn't shaved since he had started the runs to Mindanao. "I'll save it for a surprise," he said.

When they landed he arranged for her to ride on a truck bringing supplies into Dansalan City. She climbed aboard. "Thanks for the ride," she said, and, as the truck pulled away: "Hey, I forgot to pay you."

He waved to her. "There's a lot of unfinished business."

That afternoon he flew back to Manila. Her skirt and sweater were still in the plane. He folded them carefully and stored them away.

When he returned to Mindanao the next day she was waiting at the airport. She looked tired and the make-up was gone from her face. She held up a paper bag. "Film," she said. "Stuff I shot yesterday. Could you send it off to New York from Manila? Herald Publications."

"Sure." He took the film. "You look bushed."

"I am, a little." She shook her head. "These poor people."

"Let's get a cup of coffee."

"Love to, but I can't. Thanks again, Mr. Stewenson. When are you going to have a shave?"

The next morning before he took off from Manila he shaved and put on clean coveralls. He looked for her as he taxied up the strip at Maria Christina. She wasn't there. He made several more flights back and forth and looked for her each time but she was never there.



When he got back to Maria Christina again the next day and she still was not there he got a car from the Red Cross and started to look for her. He thought of all the things that might have happened to her, the people half crazy from the flood and hunger, the climate for somebody not used to it.

He went from village to village, asking for her, picking his way through the streams of homeless Filipinos, their possessions loaded on their backs, in little carts, on oxen. He was approaching one of the settlements where the tidal wave had done its heaviest damage when he heard his name called and jammed on the brakes.

She was in the middle of a mass of people, carrying a Filipino baby in her arms.

He jumped out of the car. "You crazy fool," he said.

"Hello to you too." Her face was streaked with dirt and sweat and she looked as though she were ready to fall over.

"I've been looking everywhere for you."

"I've been right here, on lovely Lake Lanao." Her eyes closed with exhaustion and he took the baby from her. She started to sag and he caught her with his free arm. He helped her into the car,

put the baby in her lap and got behind the wheel. "You don't know this country. You don't know what could have happened to you here," he said.

She looked at him. "It's a good face. When did you know?"

"I don't know what I know. I know it's been hell looking for you."

She shook her head and the crinkles appeared around her eyes. "You're a slow take." She touched her coveralls. "I think I knew when I got into these. I think that's why I did it in front of you. Cheap woman's trick. Wanted to leave an impression."

"Well, for now," he said, "let's say it worked."

"Why were you so worried about me, Mr. Stevenson?"

He honked the horn and started to move the car slowly. "Don't you remember?" he said. "You still owe me for the trip down."

"So I do." Her voice trailed off and he saw she was asleep.

He drove until he came to a Red Cross first-aid station where he gave the baby to a nurse. Then he drove to Dansalan City and pulled up in front of a bar. She was still asleep. He looked at her dirty face and the tired set of her mouth, and then he awakened her. She opened her eyes, puzzled, and sat up.

"The baby," she said.

"I gave it to the Red Cross. It's going to be all right." He got out and opened her door. "I thought you could use a drink."

"You're a thoughtful man, Mr. Stevenson."

They sat down at a small table and he ordered rum drinks. "How did you do down there?"

"It was pretty bad."

"That means good pictures."

"Oh, they're good, all right." It was hot but she suddenly shivered. "There were times when I was very happy I had met you, Mr. Stevenson." She looked away. "The people. The children . . ." The drinks came and she picked up her glass but she did not drink from it. "I'll never forget those children. The drowned ones." She shivered again. "It was nice to turn them off and turn you on when I tried to get some sleep. Did you think of me, Mr. Stevenson?"

"Yes."

"Where do you live?"

"In Manila."

"Are you married?"

"No. Are you?"

"No." She looked up. "I'm glad neither of us is married. Where is your house?"

"Overlooking the bay."

"Do you have bougainvillaea?"

"All over the place."

"When I finish here will you take me to your house in Manila?"

"You're finished here now."

She shook her head. "I still have work to do here."

"You're finished now."

"My boss won't like you, Mr. Stevenson. Can I have a bath in your house? With something that feels nice and smells nice? Like bubbles?"

She slept in the plane all the way back to Manila. When they got to the house she said: "Show me where the bathroom is."

"You have a choice. I have two."

"Just show me 'hers,' and hang one of your shirts on the door for me to wear," she said. She paused at the bathroom door. "You know something, Mr. Stevenson? You're a nice man."

"You keep thinking that," he said.

He shaved, showered, got a shirt and hung it outside her bathroom door, listened to her splashing, and then he went downstairs and out to the patio and looked at the bay. He felt clean and refreshed and a little excited.

"Really, Mr. Stevenson," he heard her say. "I asked for a shirt. I've worn peekaboo nighties in my time but compared to this they were all made of twelve-gauge steel."

"That's a *barong Tagalog* shirt. It's made out of banana fiber."

"Weak, anemic bananas."

He started to laugh. He could not help himself. He went over and kissed her. "I didn't do it on purpose," he said. "It was the first shirt I grabbed."

She stretched out on a rattan chaise longue. "This is a lovely place," she said. "The water saying hello to you all the time. The stars full of good humor."

He mixed her a drink and handed it to her. "The *barong Tagalog* has a history," he said. He had to talk. "It goes back to the Spanish days." He was talking very fast. "They passed a law that

only Spaniards could wear their shirts inside their pants. The natives had to leave their shirts hanging out."

"Whatever for?"

"It was the sign, the difference between the conquerors and the conquered. But the Filipinos made it a badge of honor. They made the shirts as beautiful as they could, covered them with embroidery. Then when the Spanish got out, the Filipinos kept the shirt. It's a kind of national dress."

She sighed contentedly. "Do you have any more nuggets of information, Mr. Stevenson?"

"I'm full of them. What would you like to know?"

"Something important. Like who you are and what you're doing here running an air line at your age."

"I started young. I ran away from home to fly airplanes when I was fifteen. There was a garage mechanic who lived near us in Tucson, Les Carter. He had picked up the wreck of an old Jenny as junk and was spending his spare time fixing it up. I got a look at the wreck and from that day on he had an assistant. Six months later he quit his job to start barnstorming. I bundled up some clothes and next morning I started off as though I was going to school. Half an hour later Les and I were in the air and away. We barnstormed all over the country."

"Weren't you a little young for that?"

"I was too young then to get a pilot's license. But when I was seventeen I enlisted in the Air Corps. When I finished my three-year hitch I was a sergeant and they offered me a direct commission as a first lieutenant if I stayed in. I took it and they shipped me here to Nichols Field. I served another three years, made captain, and then resigned and took a commission as a major in the Reserves. I started to fly with this local outfit, invested some of my Army pay, and took it over. And that's about it. Now what about you? Aren't you a little young to be knocking around this way?"

"Very short," she said. "I started as a reporter for a paper in New York. Society. I got bored writing about all the fascinating things the debutantes were doing and I got bored with staying in one place. I moved over to the magazine and I haven't been much in one place since. I hate monotony worse than death."

"Hey," he said. "That's my pitch." He went over to her. "We're the same kind of people, Caroline."

"I told you that at Lake Lanao."

"You got to hang around. I mean you can't come here like this and then take off again. I could get around to falling in love with a girl like you."

"You are already, a little. And so am I, with you." The eyes crinkled. "It's ourselves we see in each other."

"Whatever it is I never had it before." He took her hand and she stood up. "You can't go," he said. "I'm going to make you stay."

"I'll stay," she said. "I'll stay with you forever."

SHE WAS still sleeping when he woke in the morning and called his office. He was told the relief people wanted him to make another trip down to Mindanao.

He showered and dressed, and she was still asleep. He wrote her a note promising to return by evening, and drove out to the airport. Forty minutes out of Maria Christina the number-one engine started overheating, and after they landed he traced the trouble to a faulty oil pump. They started to work on it immediately but he knew he was not going to get off the ground again that day. He finally telegraphed her he was delayed overnight.

That evening he began to wonder what he was getting into. He thought about all the things he had said to her and he thought, Lord, you live in a place like Manila and you don't see many American girls and when one comes along, especially a looker like Caroline, you promise her the world and you promise her forever. And they all believe it. They talk about being independent and wanting to live their own lives but all they really want is to get the hook in and settle down.

Settle down. Marriage. He ran his fingers through his hair. How do you get out? How do you get out of something like this?

When they landed back at Manila the next morning he drove out to the house, wondering how he was going to say it. He saw a folded piece of paper on the desk in the living room.

Steve darling:

Thanks for everything.

It all was wonderful and we both said all the lovely things and we both knew we meant them only for that night. My love,

Caroline

He stared at the letter and he knew she had the hook in him. He called her hotel in Manila. They told him she had checked out the day before.

He called the airport. "I'd like some information," he said. "Look at your manifest for yesterday's Clipper. Will you please tell me if a Miss Caroline Gordon was on the passenger list."

He heard a rustle of papers. Then the clerk's voice: "Yes, a Miss Gordon was on board for the flight to Hong Kong."

"I want to get out this afternoon."

"I'm sorry, sir," the clerk said. "We're booked up for a week at least."

"Let me speak to the manager." He lit a cigarette. He looked at his watch. Then he said: "Señor Aguilar, this is Glenn Stevenson."

"Ah, Mr. Stevenson, it is an honor to speak to you. I know of the assistance you gave to the people at Lake Lanao."

"I need a favor. I have to get off to Hong Kong. Today. I was told all the seats on the Clipper are taken." He gripped the telephone. "I don't ask favors often. This is important."

"I will see what I can do, Mr. Stevenson."

He threw some clothing into a bag and waited. He paced back and forth in the room. He reread the letter half a dozen times and he knew the hook was in deep.

The telephone rang. He grabbed it. "Stevenson."

"Come over immediately, Mr. Stevenson," Aguilar said. "There is a seat for you on today's Clipper."

THE CLIPPER made the long tricky approach to Kai Tak Airport in Hong Kong and landed. Stevenson cleared customs and began to telephone hotels. He found her at the Peninsula.

"Where are you?" she asked.

"At Kai Tak."

There was a long silence. Then she said in a very small voice: "What took you so long?"

They were married the next morning by a Buddhist priest in a small temple in the New Territories. On the way back in the cab she gripped his hand tightly. "It was so lovely, Steve," she said. "It was so very lovely. Did you understand it? Why was he hitting those wooden sticks together?"

"He was summoning the gods."



"Chinese gods? Just for us? I'm so glad they came to our wedding. And the fruit on the altar. What was that for?"

"A rich life."

"A Buddhist priest in a gold robe and Chinese gods and a rich life. Oh, Steve, we're going to have a very rich life." She looked at him fearfully. "We don't have to have it done again, do we?"

"No," he said.

"I feel married now, Steve. I feel very married. And I think the Chinese gods would be offended if we did it again. They would think that somehow we didn't trust them."

He told the cab driver to stop and he pointed out a rock formation on top of a hill. "That's *Wan Fu Shan*—Yearning for Husband Hill. The Chinese say that the rocks look like a woman carrying a baby on her back and that she is looking off into the distance for her husband."

"Where did he go?"

"To search for a fortune."

The taxi driver turned his head. He said sadly: "Never come back. Woman look but man never come back."

"It was because they didn't trust the gods," she said.

THEY STAYED in Hong Kong for two weeks while she took pictures, and when they could they stole time and swam and sunned at Repulse Bay. On the last morning they rode up to Victoria Peak and looked across at the Kowloon peninsula. "The hills over there are supposed to look like dragons," he said. "Kowloon, *Kau Lung*, means the land of the nine dragons."

"The land of the nine dragons and Yearning for Husband Hill. Do you suppose she's going to wait for him forever, Steve?"

"She's been waiting a long time."

"I hope she waits and I hope he comes back. Do you know something, Steve? I don't think it will matter at all to her whether he has a fortune or not."

Her head was turned away a little from him and he felt suddenly frightened. "You've had a couple of weeks now, Lynn," he said. "How do you feel?"

"The way I felt when the man in the gold robe finished talking to his gods. Married."

They returned to Manila and she cabled her editor, telling him she was quitting. They settled down in the house on the bay.

It was hot even for Manila that summer, and they cooled off at Baclaran Beach and shot the rapids in a *banca* at Pagsanjan Falls. She went with Stevenson often when he flew to the islands and there were many evenings on the patio looking out on the water and then in August she told him she was pregnant.

"And about time," he said. He looked at her closely. "Hey, what's the matter?"

She hesitated. "I didn't exactly know how you'd take it. You know. Roots. The old thing."

"Our roots are in each other. Wherever we are, together."

"And a baby won't make it any different? For you?"

"He won't be roots. He'll be people. And people are portable. I'll have him checked out as a pilot before he can walk."

"Oh, Steve."

He took her in his arms. "Lynn, you're happy."

"I'm very happy, Steve."

He took a month off and brought her up to Baguio, in the mountains, where it was cool. They returned to Manila late in September and several weeks later Stevenson received orders recalling him to active duty in the Army Air Corps with the rank of lieutenant colonel. He was given sixty days to wind up his business affairs. He did not have quite enough time. The Japanese occupied Manila in January.

STEVENSON WAS taken, with other military prisoners, to Old Bilibid Prison. Caroline was interned in Santo Tomás University, which the Japanese converted into a civilian prison camp.

Stevenson was given a prolonged working over by his captors before the Japanese officer in charge resigned himself to the fact that Stevenson possessed no military secrets. Then the officer informed him that technically he was a civilian, since he had not actually been restored to active duty, and that an advocate in the right place could have him transferred to Santo Tomás to be with his wife. Stevenson took the hint, gave the officer all the money he had, and a few days later was brought over to the civilian internment camp.

By then there were more than three thousand men, women and children herded within the walls of the university campus. Stevenson began a search for his wife. He questioned Japanese guards. They turned their backs without replying. He had no money left, but he wrote Caroline's name on a piece of paper and gave it, with his wrist watch, to a Japanese sergeant.

Two days passed. He roamed the campus looking for her. He tried to eat the rice that was given out but he could not get it down. On the third afternoon, weak from hunger and the two weeks of interrogation, he was resting against a tree when he heard her call his name and he whirled and saw her, held up by the Japanese sergeant.

"Caroline." He staggered over to her.

"You need a shave, Steve. Just like the first day I met you."

He clasped her in his arms. "Caroline, Caroline." Then he pulled back and looked at her.

She nodded weakly. "We'll just have to make another one, Steve. It was a boy, Steve. We made a son."

"We'll make a dozen sons."

"Will we, Steve?"

"Yes, darling, yes."

He felt her grow limp in his arms and he looked at her, and her face was tight and burning. He laid her gently on the ground.

"I feel so tired, Steve," she whispered.

"Caroline!" He looked around wildly.

An elderly man, a retired American doctor he had known in Manila, came and knelt down and examined her. "She has a high fever," he said.

"She just lost a child," Stevenson said.

"She has some kind of infection. Probably puerperal."

"Do something for her. Please, do something for her."

The doctor looked at him sadly. "I am a doctor without medicines, Mr. Stevenson. Your wife needs hospitalization."

Stevenson got to his feet and rushed to the Japanese sergeant. "My wife," he said. "She's just lost a baby and is very sick. How do I get a doctor to look at her?"

The sergeant looked at him without expression. "For Americans, no doctor." He started to walk away. Stevenson grabbed him by the arm.

"Don't you understand? She'll die!" He shook the sergeant. "She needs a doctor or she'll die!"

The sergeant gave an order in Japanese. A soldier pulled Stevenson away and when Stevenson tried to free himself the soldier threw him down. "Please," Stevenson said from his knees. "She needs help. She needs a doctor or she'll die."

He felt himself being helped to his feet. "Save your strength," said the man who was holding him. "They don't have the slightest interest in whether any of us lives or dies. They're Orientals. And we're the enemy." The man helped him back to where Caroline was lying on the ground.

"We'll figure out something, Lynn," he said. "Don't worry. You're going to be all right, Lynn."

The American doctor said, "There is a couple here who want you to use their hut, Mr. Stevenson. Come, let us take your wife out of the sun." They carried her into the hut.

"I've got to get to somebody," Stevenson said. "They're not animals. They're human beings." He rushed out to prison headquarters. "Please," he said to the sentry. "Let me speak to an officer. My wife is dying."

The soldier went into the building and a few minutes later returned with a major. "Thank God," Stevenson said. "Please, can you get me a doctor? My wife is dying."

"No doctor."

"Please, please, she's dying."

"There is no doctor." The major went back into the building. Stevenson returned to the hut. Caroline's eyes were closed. He looked at the doctor.

"She's sleeping, Mr. Stevenson. I'd give anything in the world to be able to help her."

Stevenson sat at her side and early next morning she opened her eyes and asked for some water. Her glazed eyes cleared as she

sipped the fetid liquid and the lines of laughter appeared faintly around them. "That's a pretty lousy drink you're making for me these days, Mr. Stevenson," she said.

He lifted her and held her head against his breast. "If you only had never met me," he said.

"That's the first unkind thing you've ever said to me. Our friends knew their business. It was very rich."

He stared at her numbly.

"I wonder if she's still waiting, the woman on the hill." She was silent for a moment. "I'll bet she is," she said. She smiled; then she raised her eyes and the smile went away. "Steve, the hate on your face."

"Oh, Caroline. Caroline, my darling."

"You mustn't hate, Steve. Not because of them. Because of what it will do to you."

His tears fell on her. She shivered suddenly. "Steve!" Her voice broke. "*I'm scared.*"

He looked down at her. Her eyes were wide with terror.

"*Caroline.*"

He gripped her and he knew he could do nothing for her and she closed her eyes and died.

He held his dead wife against him and then he saw a Japanese officer and three soldiers enter the hut. The officer carried a small black bag. The soldiers tried to take Caroline out of Stevenson's arms.

"No," he said. He bent over her and sheltered her.

"No dead bodies in camp," the medical officer said. "Not sanitary."

The soldiers forced them apart and the officer felt her pulse and then gave an order and the soldiers carried her out of the hut.

Stevenson dragged himself to his feet. He ran after the Japanese officer, and pulled the black bag out of his hand. He threw the bag at the Japanese doctor's face and went for him. One of the soldiers raised his rifle and struck him on the head.

STEVENSON WAS released from Santo Tomás, with the others who were still alive, when the Americans reoccupied Manila early in 1945. Bearded, his cheeks sunken, he walked out of the place where Caroline had died and returned to the city in which she had lived. Three months later, he left the Army Hospital and

rode out to his house on the bay. The house had been destroyed by the fighting in the harbor.

It was, he thought, the way it should be. He had never been able to find out what happened to the body of his wife and, since there was no grave he would ever know of, their ruined house, covered with bougainvillea, would do.

10:47 a.m. A THRUST of wind made the airplane shudder. Stevenson touched Gregg. "You got it," he said. He made his way back and drank some coffee, still remembering. He finished the cup and on the way back to his seat Dennis touched his earphone.

"I've got some RAF aircraft, sir," the radioman said.

Back in his seat Stevenson put on his headset. "Colonel Stevenson."

"Flight Lieutenant Digby here." The RAF pilot gave him his position, approximately one hundred miles south by east.

"See anything in the water, Lieutenant?"

"A bit of debris here and there, Colonel, nothing else."

"How is the sea?"

"Choppy. Very choppy. As a matter of fact a bit too choppy for us. We're flying a Sunderland."

"May I ask what your mission is, Lieutenant?"

"Affirmative. No secrets from our allies. We were out originally for the exercise and then word came in on the Japanese vessel. Kai Tak thought we might give you a few more pairs of eyes."

"Appreciated. There's another SA-16 out. Have you sighted it?"

"Negative. We'll just putter about as long as the petrol permits. Just might spot something you chaps miss."

"Good. We ought to be along in twenty-five minutes or so."

"I'll watch for you. And the other Albatross."

"Thank you. Over and out."

The aircraft shuddered again. *You mustn't hate, Steve, she had said. Not because of them. Because of what it will do to you.*

I tried not to, Lynn. And I managed it, I think, when I didn't have to see them and listen to them. Their uniforms—and Tomiko banging the sticks together to bring the gods—and things

like that. It all keeps coming back, Lynn, and I can't help it.

He felt Gregg touch his hand. The copilot was holding out a pair of binoculars and pointing forward. He took the glasses and looked down. Floating on the water were the remains of the superstructure of the sunken Japanese vessel. "No sign of life, sir," Gregg said.

Stevenson heard something in Gregg's voice and he looked at him. Gregg was staring down and his hands were working. He knew what had happened to Gregg in Germany and he knew nobody wanted to fly with him, and that was why he had ordered him on this mission. He would have liked to let him know in some way that he understood, but there was nothing he could say.

He smiled at the copilot, a sudden, warm smile. Gregg looked at him, surprised, and then broke into a grin. It wasn't a real grin but it was better than what he had had on his face before.

"You got it," Stevenson said. He raised the binoculars to his eyes again. "I'll beat the water with my eyeballs for a while."

With things to keep him busy Gregg would not have time to think. And thinking could be bad business. I can tell him something about that, Stevenson thought.

AT 1143 HOURS Major Cooper was on the radio. "We've located them, Colonel." Stevenson could hear the controlled excitement in his voice. "In a lifeboat, three or four women and a couple of kids."

Stevenson's voice was crisp. "What is your present altitude?"

"Five zero zero. I'm going to climb to two thousand and drop a bomb."

"Roger."

Stevenson took over the controls and in a few minutes he could see Cooper's airplane below him, bright silver against the dark sea. "One Three Two Six, this is One Three Two One."

"Come in, One Three Two One," Cooper replied.

"I have you in sight. Almost directly below me."

"I am climbing, approaching two thousand."

"I will come down to twenty-five hundred."

"Roger."

Stevenson began his descent, and as he turned he made out the British flying boat, about a thousand feet above him.

Cooper reached two thousand feet as Stevenson leveled off five hundred feet above him. He saw the smoke bomb go out of Cooper's plane. When it landed he clocked the time it took for five ocean swells to pass under the smoke. Forty seconds. Divided by five made eight. That was the "period." Eight. That was the key. Using it in the fixed open-sea formula to find the length and speed of the swells, Cooper would estimate whether he had a chance to make a landing.

Stevenson felt Gregg pull his arm again. He looked where Gregg pointed and for the first time was able to see the lifeboat. He made out four women and two children, one of them an infant. Two of the women appeared to be unconscious, one was suckling the baby, and the fourth was holding the other child and waving.

Cooper: "One Three Two One, One Three Two One."

Stevenson: "Come in, Cooper."

"The primary swell system is from six zero degrees with three two zero foot length at two four knots. Wind about three zero knots, from three zero degrees."

Stevenson considered the situation swiftly. Procedure called for landing the flying boat on the crest of a swell and down its length. It also was supposed to land into the wind. But when the swells and the wind were moving at opposing angles to each other, as they were now, it meant Cooper would have to quarter into the swells and quarter into the winds, which meant going the wrong way into both.

"You'd have to crab in," he said.

"Roger. I'm going down to have a closer look, sir."

Presently Cooper reported that he was at five hundred feet, then at fifty. There was, he said, a secondary wave system.

"What do you estimate the height of the swells, Cooper?"

"About twelve to fourteen feet, sir."

Stevenson looked at Gregg. The copilot's lips were tight and he was shaking his head. Cooper's information meant that in addition to the two forces working against him that he had calculated originally there was also a third force, the secondary sea system. And twelve-foot swells. Or better.

Stevenson rubbed his chin savagely. The SA-16 was not supposed to tackle swells higher than ten feet. "Stand by," he said to Cooper.

This was where the arithmetic came in. Five men in Cooper's airplane, six persons in the lifeboat. Two of the women in the boat maybe dead.

Three forces in the confused sea. Swells that might reach fourteen feet.

"How do you read me, Major Cooper?"

"Loud and clear, sir."

"You will return to base, Major. You will not attempt a landing. Repeat. You will *not* attempt a landing."

In Stevenson's earphones there was the hiss of silence.

"Colonel Stevenson," Cooper said.

"What is it, Cooper?"

He heard the empty hiss again.

"Colonel, I am going to attempt a landing," Cooper said.

Stevenson saw Gregg's head jerk up sharply. "I gave you a direct order, Major," Stevenson said. His fingers tightened on the mike. "I will repeat it: you will *not* attempt a landing."

Another silence. Then Cooper said very slowly: "Sir, you are not the mission commander. I am not required to obey your order."

"Cooper!" Stevenson saw Cooper's aircraft begin its climb to the five-hundred-foot altitude required to set up its traffic pattern and he saw the two disposable wing tanks drop off the plane.

He gripped the mike so hard his whole arm shook. "*Cooper!*"

He saw Cooper's aircraft begin its descent and he saw it riding over the sea and the flying wake as the aircraft made contact with the sea and he saw the aircraft plane up and then come down and now it was on the water and he saw it cant to starboard and the starboard wing submerge and then it straightened itself and was taxiing level and he saw the blast of blue smoke from the exhaust as Cooper threw his propellers into reverse pitch to slow his speed.

He breathed out hard and he wiped the sweat from his face with the back of his hand and then he heard Gregg say: "*Oh, God, he lost his starboard float, the float's ripped off,*" and he jammed his face against the cold window glass and saw the right wing go down into the water again and for two seconds, three seconds, four seconds, the aircraft slashed through the water on its side, as though it were banking in the air, and then it went into a tight, swirling turn and its tail erected in the air.

The tail held there, a shining silver monument in the black water, and then the plane went over on its back and lay there like a stricken bird and then it was gone and there was nothing but the water.

12:02 p.m. STEVENSON went down to five hundred feet and began a slow orbit over the area. After thirty minutes he said to Gregg: "Nothing."

He called the British Sunderland. "See anything?"

"Not a thing." Then the RAF pilot said: "Rotten luck."

"Yes," Stevenson said.

"I'm afraid we're just about to the limit of our petrol," Digby said. "We'll have to start back for Kai Tak."

"Yes," Stevenson said. He pressed his fingers against his eyes. Then he raised the binoculars again. He saw the child in the lifeboat trailing his hand in the water. The woman pulled the child's hand from the water and Stevenson could see her say something to him and then stare out again at the sea.

"Pilot to navigator," Stevenson said.

"Sumter, sir."

"Give me a heading for Ashiya."

"Yes, sir."

Stevenson handed the glasses to Gregg. The lieutenant's face was without expression. Stevenson looked back into the aircraft. All the men were staring at him. Then they all looked away.

Stevenson turned back. They wanted *him* to try it. They all saw what happened to Cooper and they all knew Cooper was more experienced in the SA-16 than he was and they knew if Cooper hadn't been able to make it they didn't stand a prayer with him. And they wanted him to try it.

He pressed his lips against the mike. "Pilot to crew. I am not accustomed to explaining my decisions but under the circumstances I will spell it out for you. It was my judgment that it is impossible to land an aircraft on the water below us. Major Cooper proved I was correct. It is too bad there are human lives on the lifeboat but I am not going to risk six more lives in an attempt at rescue. As soon as we are on course for base I shall radio in the position of the survivors and leave their rescue to surface vessels. That is all."

He pushed up the mike and wiped his lips. He had given the explanation impulsively, and he did not understand what had compelled him. There should have been no need to explain to five men why he did not elect to kill them and commit suicide at the same time.

And it had nothing to do with the fact that the human beings on the lifeboat happened to be Japanese. No. He corrected himself. The fact that they were Japanese *had* something to do with it. It was what was making him feel full of guilt or whatever it was he was feeling. He had to be careful he didn't allow himself to be trapped into landing just to prove to himself it was not his feelings about Japanese that was keeping him from trying it. He would have made the decision no matter who was in the water. Would you? he wondered. *Yes*. But would you? *Yes, damn it, yes!*

"Colonel Stevenson."

"Yes."

"Sergeant Warren, sir. I request permission to jump."

"You heard my orders. We are heading back to base. Who do you think would pick you up?"

"I'm not asking to get picked up, sir. That lifeboat must be shipping water. It ain't going to float long enough for any ship to get to it. Them rubber life rafts in the MA-1 kit, sir, they float for a long time. We could manage until some boat came along."

"Permission denied," Stevenson said harshly. He put the plane into a steeper climb. He knew what the men were thinking about him.

But that was why he was wearing the eagles. To do what he believed to be right even if everybody else believed it to be wrong. He had the responsibility *and* the authority.

And it wasn't that they were Japs.

But maybe it was. Maybe it was because all they had to do was help her a little, the way a human being helped another human being, and she would be alive today and not lost and gone and dead and three years of looking at the faces who killed her. All right, so it *was* that. But he was still right. Five men were dead. His responsibility was to the men who were still alive. And it didn't matter what the men thought. He was not in a popularity contest. He was a full colonel in command of an aircraft. He knew he was right.

The clouds began to close in again. He didn't want to look

down but he looked down and he saw the lifeboat and then the clouds closed in like a wet cloth over a blackboard, wiping everything off. It was as though there were no lifeboat and no people.

Only they were still there on the water. They were hearing the airplane going away and they knew they were being left there. He gave the engines more throttle. He wanted to get away fast. He wanted the sound of the airplane to get away from the people on the water.

"Colonel Stevenson." It was Sumter's voice.

"What do you want, Major?"

"I think—you're being unfair, sir."

"*Unfair!*" Stevenson exploded. At that moment that seemed to be the most ridiculous word he had ever heard in his life. "We don't owe those people anything!"

"I wasn't thinking about the survivors, sir," Sumter said. "I was thinking of Cooper—and the others."

"Go on, Major," Stevenson said levelly. "Get rid of it."

"I think you're making what happened to them—a waste, sir," Sumter's voice was quiet and a little nervous. "Now you're making it so they all got themselves killed for nothing."

"Is that all, Major?"

"Yes, sir."

Stevenson leveled off at three thousand feet. "You got it," he said to Gregg. He went back into the plane. No one looked at him. What kind of idiots were they? he thought. I just saved their lives and they act as though I'm a murderer.

You are. Four women and two children and a lifeboat that is filling with water. You know no surface vessel is going to get to them in time. Everybody on the airplane knows it.

I will not condemn the men in this aircraft to death.

He started to draw some coffee and then he crushed the cup and threw it away. He went back to his seat.

What kind of idiots are they?

He remembered one night at Ashiya when a jet pilot was sounding off, riding a Rescue flier about the slow airplane he flew, and how the Rescue flier said only: "I'd rather save people than kill them." And then he remembered who the Rescue pilot had been. Cooper.

Stevenson swung down his mike. "Sergeant Warren. Still want to go for a swim?"

"Yes, sir."

"Permission granted." Stevenson saw Gregg look at him, startled. "Get ready to make your jump, Sergeant. Sergeant Garrison."

"Yes, sir."

"I'm going to fly upwind to the lifeboat. When I give the order, kick out the MA-1 kit. Sergeant Warren, what altitude do you want?"

"One thousand, sir. We'll make out fine in the rafts, sir. Somebody'll come along and pick us up."

"Somebody sure will, Sergeant," Stevenson said. "Me." He saw Gregg stiffen.

"Rest of the crew," Stevenson ordered. "Get ready to fasten your safety belts and prepare for a landing."

He still didn't know the answers. He didn't know whether it was better to do the right thing for the wrong reason or the wrong thing for the right reason. He only knew, at last, what he had to do.

Now THE aircraft belonged to Sergeant Homer Garrison. As Stevenson brought the plane around in a great circle and began a steep descent, the heavy, lumbering engineer, now light-footed and exact, removed the door on the port side of the aircraft and then made a final, meticulous check of the MA-1 kit: two inflatable, rubber, twenty-man life rafts and three survival kits, strung together on buoyant polyethylene rope, two hundred ten feet between each unit, the rafts at each end of the rope and the kits spaced between them. Satisfied, he waited for the order to cast them out.

Stevenson brought the aircraft down to three hundred feet. He flew over the lifeboat and then made a 180-degree turn and came back across the wind on the boat's windward side. Garrison, his earphones clamped on, waited, braced, and then he heard Stevenson's voice: "Okay, Garrison, let it go."

Garrison threw out the first raft, waited one second, threw out the first survival pack, waited another second, tossed out the second survival pack. One more second and the third pack: a last second and the second life raft. The static lines triggered the containers of CO₂ in the rafts and they began to inflate while still in

12:54 p.m.



the air. By the time they hit the water they were fully inflated.

Now the entire kit was strung out in a straight line more than eight hundred feet long. The rubber rafts began to drift down toward the lifeboat. The survival kits, heavier, acted as sea anchors, dragging, so that the rafts began to swing around, like two great arms, and slowly passed the lifeboat and encircled it. As Stevenson began to climb again Garrison saw that the rafts would meet downwind from the lifeboat, and that the survivors soon would be in the center of the ring of assistance.

He heard Stevenson's voice again: "Good drop, Garrison. Tell Warren I'll level off at eight hundred feet."

"Yes, sir," Garrison turned to Mike, who was pulling on his yellow rubber exposure suit. He put his mouth against Mike's ear. "It's all yours." Mike nodded. Garrison said, "How can you look so happy?"

Mike slipped his arms into the rubber sleeves. Garrison knelt at his feet and began to squeeze up the excess air.

"Get it all out," Mike said. "You hit the drink and the air bellies up and clobbers you in the face."

"Knock it off," Garrison said. "I know my job."

Gregg leaned over to Stevenson. "Why are you letting him jump, Colonel," he said, "if we're going down ourselves?"

"I'm not going to try to sit down here," Stevenson said. "I've spotted a place where the sea looks a little calmer. By the time we've taxied back he can be doing those people some good."

Only that was not the only reason. The landing was going to be hairy. Cooper had proved it could be worse than hairy. If he didn't make it with the airplane at least there was a chance Mike would get there and the whole business would not be for nothing.

Garrison got the last of the air out of the rubber suit. Mike pulled the rubber hood over his head and tightened the drawstring around his neck. Garrison inspected the neck and the wrists. If water leaked in there it would fill the legs and there could be serious trouble. Next he slipped a Mae West over Mike's head, inspected it and fastened it. Mike buckled on his canvas belt and checked his knife, flares and water container. After that Garrison buckled Mike into his parachute harness. When he finished Mike was unable to stand erect.

A few moments later Garrison said: "Colonel says he's at eight hundred feet."

Mike nodded. He went, in his crouch, to the open door and looked down. He could see the lifeboat almost in the center of the circle formed by the MA-1 kit. He held out his hand. Garrison gave him two spotter chutes. He tossed one out and after a short while the other. He saw the chutes descend slowly and he calculated their drift, and when they hit the water, one inside the MA-1 circle and the other outside, he nodded again.

He picked up his medical kit, wrapped in its Mae West, and snapped it onto his harness, across his thighs. He took the free end of the ten-foot rope he had fastened to the kit and tied it to his canvas belt. He straightened up as much as he could and Garrison buckled the reserve chute to the chest of Mike's harness and made certain it was secure.

Garrison listened on the earphones. "Colonel says we're at one thousand now. He's going to land about ten miles northeast. Give him a flare when you hear him taxiing. He says good luck."

Mike went to the open door and attached the static line from the main chute to the cable on the airplane. He looked down. He had to pick the exact moment. He had to remember how the two spotter chutes went, and then figure when to go so the wind would carry him and deposit him, still upwind, as close as possible to the target.

He saw the survivors getting closer. He felt Garrison lean his mouth against his ear. "Tell me one thing," Garrison shouted, "before you go down and feed the sharks. Why would anybody in his right mind want to jump out of an airplane?"

Without turning his head, his eyes still fastened on the lifeboat in the middle of the floating ring, Mike said: "Just to get away from you squares." He didn't know whether the engineer heard him. He didn't care. Because it was now. *Now*.

He leaned far out of the aircraft and began to fall and there was the first feeling, the way it always was, the way nothing else in the whole enemy world was, being no part of the world, being alone and complete and free and not having to belong to what he never belonged to, and then the tug of the rip cord and the parachute snaking out and then filling with air into an open, scalloped hemisphere above him, and then the big jerk, all of his body weight and the momentum of the fall, the straps gouging his groin and his thighs, and then the slower descent with the cold air on his face and the sound of the airplane far away and then

gone and the water coming up slowly underneath him and the boy in the lifeboat waving his hand.

He didn't have time to feel any more. He had things to do and he had only seconds to do them in. With the main parachute open, the reserve chute was just an encumbrance, and he jettisoned it. He inflated the Mae West on his medical kit, un-snapped the kit and dropped it to the end of its rope. He inflated one half of his own Mae West so that if he got knocked out when he hit water he would float—only half of it so there would not be too much impact.

Finally he grasped each of the release catches for the parachute between his thumbs and forefingers to be ready to detach the chute instantly if it capsized when he hit water.

The water rushed up toward him. He filled his lungs with air. He hit and went down into the dark water. He kicked his legs. He felt himself slow and then stop and then begin to rise.

His head broke clear of the water. He emptied his lungs and pulled in fresh air. He checked his medical kit. It was floating safely near him. He inflated the other half of his Mae West. The chute canopy, still half inflated, was lying on the water. He grabbed the shroud lines and let the wind drag him toward the survivors.

STEVENSON climbed to two thousand feet over where the water appeared to be less turbulent and dropped his smoke bomb. He worked out the open-sea formula, then went down to fifty feet. Conditions were slightly better than those Cooper had had to combat but not much. The sea was still confused. The swells were better than twelve feet. The wind was wrong. When he knew as much as he ever would about the three forces he climbed again. "Pilot to crew," he said over the intercom. "Fasten safety belts and prepare for a full-stall landing."

He jettisoned his wing tanks and when the altimeter showed five hundred feet he ordered Gregg to read off the prelanding check list. Then he started easing the aircraft down. Just before he turned into the base leg of his pattern he said: "Fifteen-degree flaps."

Gregg reached up and pulled the lever. "Fifteen-degree flaps."

Stevenson made the turn on his final approach. "Thirty-degree flaps," he ordered.

"Thirty-degree flaps," Gregg said.

Stevenson brought the aircraft down to three hundred feet on his final approach. "Full flaps and high RPM," he ordered.

"Full flaps and high RPM," Gregg said.

The lights went on, indicating the engines were turning at their maximum revolutions per minute. When the aircraft was six feet above the water, Stevenson leveled off. He throttled down slowly. The classic full-stall landing, so that the aircraft would drop onto the water like a pancake. Except that the SA-16 stalled out at about sixty-five knots: when it went into the water it would still be moving at about seventy-five miles an hour.

Stevenson watched the water. From where the aircraft was now, less than seventy inches above the sea, it was alive, the ground swells writhing and foaming in convulsion. "Tell me when I get below seventy knots," he said to Gregg. He braced himself.

"Seventy," Gregg said. "Sixty-nine, sixty-eight, sixty-seven, sixty-six . . ."

Then the aircraft no longer had the power to fly and it gave up its struggle. It hit hard and it hit solid and the sea was a wall and the plane plowed into the wall and the wall shattered. The jolt hit Stevenson in the base of his spine. He felt as though his head had snapped off.

The hull of the aircraft was submerged and the plane was in darkness. Stevenson threw the propellers into full reverse thrust as the aircraft planed off the water, skimming up eight or ten feet. It stalled back on violently and planed off again and came down for the third time. This time it stayed, as Stevenson fought the sea and the wind. He heard Gregg say: "We're not an airplane any more, Colonel. We're a boat."

The windshield cleared. Stevenson said: "Pilot to crew. Everything intact?"

"All right where I'm sitting, Colonel," Sumter said instantly.

"Okay here, sir," Dennis said.

"Stand by," Garrison said. A few moments later he said: "Looks like we popped a couple of rivets."

"How bad?" Stevenson asked.

"I've got the bilge pump working. I think I can control it."

Stevenson looked dead ahead. Walls of water towered over the plane. "Gregg, send up a flare. Let Warren know we're down."

Gregg took the Very pistol and slid open the window and fired it. The airplane slid down the side of a swell and water washed in. Gregg forced the window shut. The fireballs arched into the air.

Stevenson began taxiing the aircraft toward the lifeboat, more than ten miles away. A few minutes later he saw smoke rising in the distance. He altered his course in the direction of the smoke.

MIKE'S PARACHUTE remained inflated until it came in contact with the polyethylene rope of the MA-1 kit and then it capsized. Figuring it might come in handy for something later on, he pushed it over the rope so that it floated inside the circle.

He unbuckled his thigh straps and held onto the rope for a moment while he looked around for the lifeboat. When he rode up on a swell he saw it and started for it.

When he was halfway there he saw the Very lights. He took a smoke flare from his belt, bit off the cap, held up the flare until the smoke was exhausted, and swam the rest of the way to the boat. He grabbed the edge of the boat and caught his breath. For him the journey which had begun more than seven hours and almost eight hundred miles ago was ended.

He looked up into the boat. Two of the women and the boy looked back at him blankly. "Anyone for outer space?" he asked. He brought out a grin. His eyes were on fire from the salt water and his arms felt as if they were going to fall off but he had to make the survivors feel good. That was medicine too.

"Anybody speak English?" he asked. Nobody said anything. They were all, he could see, in a state of shock after floating more than twenty-two hours in the open boat. The baby in the mother's lap began to whimper. The mother patted it automatically and stared silently at the man in the yellow rubber suit clinging to the side of the lifeboat. Mike looked at the boy. "You're going to be okay, George," he said.

The boy gave him a slow, uncertain smile. His dark eyes showed the beginning of life. "Okay," he said.

"You dig me, George," Mike said. "We talk the same language."

He raised himself and looked into the boat. The two women there were half covered with water. "No room for me in there, George," he said. "We'd all be in the drink."

He started to swim to the rubber life rafts. The boy cried out. Mike turned his head. "I'll be right back, George," he said.

He reached one of the rafts, tied it to the other, and then climbed into one of them. He paddled over to the lifeboat and lashed it to the two rafts. He pointed to the woman with the infant. "You first."

The woman shook her head and huddled away from him. Mike could see now that she was very young and so numbed she was rigid. Her face was covered with a white film of dried brine and her eyes were vacant.

He looked at the other woman. She was older and in a state of shock too but he could see she was in a little better shape. "Help me," he pleaded. "Please, help me."

The older woman's face remained blank. Then the boy said suddenly: "GI, I help."

Mike grinned. "George, you're my boy. You're on my team." The boy took his hand and climbed into the bobbing raft. Mike tousled his hair. "Wait till we get unpacked, George," he said. "It's going to be like Christmas." He looked back at the women. "Next," he said.

The older woman wet her parched lips and said something to the girl. The girl shook her head. The woman said something else, and then she took the baby from the girl and handed it to Mike.

"You're my girl," Mike said. He laid the baby gently on the floor of the raft. He held out his hand to the girl. He helped her into the raft and then held out his hand to the woman. "Come on, doll," he said.

The woman climbed into the raft. Mike gave her his canteen and made sure she didn't drink too much all at once. Then he climbed into the lifeboat and bent over the two unconscious women. He saw that one of them was badly burned on her back; the hours in the unprotected boat hadn't done her any good. He picked her up with exquisite care. She moaned. He carried her into the other raft and laid her down on her stomach.

He went back and examined the other woman. Her right shoulder was fractured. He picked her up and carried her into the raft. She opened her eyes and he got the canteen and let her swallow a little water.

He hauled in one of the survival kits and opened it and took

out some blankets. He took the baby from its mother and restored circulation and then wrapped it snugly in a blanket and put it back in the girl's lap. "Good as new," he said.

He bent down over the woman with the burns. She was very weak and he knew she must have lost a lot of body fluid. He opened his medical kit and took out a plastic bottle of dextran and a plastic hose fitted with needles at both ends. He plunged one needle into the top of the bottle. "You going to help me, George?" he asked the boy.

"Okay, GI, I help."

Mike gave the dextran bottle to the boy. "Hold this." He felt the woman's ankle for a vein and when he found one he waited until the raft steadied a little and then inserted the needle on the other end of the hose into the vein and taped the needle to the ankle. He took the bottle of dextran from the boy, patted him on the head, and then put the bottle under the woman's belly so that the weight of her body would force the dextran out of the soft bottle into the vein.

He gave her an injection of morphine and one of penicillin and then from his kit he took a packet of gauze soaked with petrolatum. He laid the gauze back and forth over the burns on the woman's back. Finally he covered her with a blanket. He grinned at the boy. "Okay, George, now let's have a look at our next patient."

He examined the woman with the fracture and then dove into the water and brought the canopy of the chute back to the raft. He took his knife from his belt. "You want to be a *samurai*, George?"

The boy nodded and laughed. "*Hai, samurai.*"

Mike gave the knife to the boy and gestured for him to slash the canopy into strips. When he had four or five long strips, he taped the injured woman's right arm to her body. He gave her another drink of water, a shot of morphine, and covered her.

He looked at the woman and the girl. "China Sea General Hospital," he said cheerfully. "Visiting hours any time."

The girl and the older woman appeared to be suffering mainly from shock and wind burn. He gave them ointment to spread over their faces and then he moved them, with the infant, into the other raft.

"Now let's have some Fourth of July," he said to the boy, and

he took a two-star flare from his belt. He put it in the boy's hand, raised the boy's arm and tore off the cap. The stars bolted into the sky. The boy laughed excitedly, and Mike broke open a package of rations and gave him a piece of chocolate.

He climbed into the other raft and looked at the baby and chucked it under the chin. He grinned at the mother. "Okay?"

The girl nodded slowly. "Okay."

He climbed back into the first raft and hauled in the other two survival kits and broke them open and passed out food, cigarettes and blankets. "Just like the PX," he said. "A floating PX. You never had it so good."

He took a URC-4 radio from a kit and flipped the switch. "Calling Rescue One Three Two One, calling Rescue One Three Two One."

Stevenson came in immediately. "One Three Two One."

"How's your airplane, Colonel?"

"Still in one piece. How are you doing, Mike?"

"We got it made, Colonel. We're having a little picnic right now."

"We've seen your flares. We ought to make it in half an hour. People all alive?"

"Yes, sir. One is burned pretty bad but I think she'll be okay."

"Give me another flare when you have me in sight or sound."

"Roger, sir, will do."

Half an hour, the colonel had said. He probably would make it but anything could happen to an airplane in this water and the SA-16 might never get there. He had to expect the worst and make preparations for it.

He went back into the survival kits and set up a solar still to purify sea water by distillation. He set up a radar screen. Then he sat back and put his arm around the boy. "What do you hear from the mob, George?" he asked.

He leaned back against the side of the heaving, bobbing raft, and waited.

THE SA-16'S HULL was shaped like a boat but it was not a boat. It could take a beating, up to a point. Stevenson thought of the damaged shell where the rivets had torn open and he felt the sea batter the fragile sides of the aircraft and he knew it was a question of how much time he had.

"Garrison," he said. "How's the leak?"

"I think we're on top of it, sir."

But for how long, Stevenson asked himself. He could not maneuver through the ground swells. The demands of time and fuel dictated that he go straight to the survivors.

The airplane pitched and tossed and yawed on the water, rising and falling twelve, fourteen feet with the swells. The air got stale and hot. Gregg opened his window a little but the next sea almost washed him out of his seat. He rammed the window shut.

Stevenson felt a clammy sweat break out on his face. He turned his head. Gregg's face was green. Stevenson reached over and shook his arm. "Next time try for the Air Force," he said. "In the Navy this happens all the time."

Gregg smiled a sickly smile.

"Rescue One Three Two One, Rescue One Three Two One."

Stevenson grabbed at the mike. "Stevenson."

"I can hear you now, Colonel," Mike said. "That sure is a noisy airplane you're ridin' in."

Stevenson peered out the window. "Can't see you yet, Mike."

"Well, I'll have my assistant George send up a flare."

After a moment Stevenson saw the smoke, slightly to left of course. The airplane was lifted by a massive swell.

"I can see you, Mike," Stevenson said. "I have you in sight. I'm going to swing downwind. Stand by for a Lyle gun."

"Roger, Colonel. And tell that fat engineer to aim good."

A little later, Mike watched the SA-16 swing into position for a raft approach, from downwind, so that the direction of the rafts would be toward it. The door on the port side was removed and the big figure of Garrison appeared. The engineer waved and Mike waved back. Then Mike heard the heightened roar of the propellers as Stevenson threw them into reverse pitch to slow the aircraft.

Mike watched Garrison aim the Lyle gun and saw the rope curve through the air. It missed the raft by more than ten feet and fell into the water.

"That fat slob," Mike said. "Marksman Tenth Class." He patted the boy. "Stay here, George. Don't move." He dived over the side of the raft, retrieved the rope and secured it to the rubber boat. He started to climb back into the raft but suddenly the sea rose in his face and tore it from his hands. He went under and

when he broke water the raft was more than twenty feet away.

He saw the boy lean over the side and stretch out his hand. He waved the boy back and started to swim. The sea pulled him the other way. He swam harder. The sea was like a hand in his face and chains on his feet.

He struggled in the water and then suddenly he was tired and he thought, Why bother? For what? He stopped swimming and turned over on his back and began to float away from the raft.

Resting on the Mae West, weary, it was like floating down in the air. Alone. It could be easy this way. He raised his hand and looked at the ring. The stone was green, like grass. You know you don't belong to nothing and it bugs you all your life, he thought, and if you wait long enough you can belong to nothing for real.

He raised his head slightly, feeling light and free and wholly separated. Because of the swells the rafts were almost out of sight. It didn't matter. It wasn't his problem any more.

He raised his head higher. "Watch out!" he yelled.

The boy was standing up in the raft, waving to him.

"Get down!" he yelled. His mouth filled with water. He waved back, choking, at the boy. "*Get down!*"

The boy leaned forward and beckoned to him with both hands and he saw the boy lose his balance and topple over the side of the raft.

He started for the boy. He saw his head in the water and then he went down into a trough and when he rose on the next swell he couldn't see the boy and he started to panic and then he saw the dark head again against the dark water. He clawed through the water, knowing now that he was not free or alone or separated. He reached the boy and caught hold of him. "How many times a day do I have to save you?" he asked.

He looked around for the airplane and saw Garrison at the open door. The engineer fired the Lyle gun again. The rope curved in a long, low trajectory and went into the water a few feet from them.

"Aim's getting better, like," Mike said.

He grabbed the line and snaked the rope around his arm. As they were hauled to the airplane, he looked at the boy and thought of the small Moslem children in the schoolroom in the Kasbah and how then he had been on the outside.

"You got it," Stevenson said.

Gregg turned his face from the now open window and nodded weakly. Stevenson made his way back through the heaving airplane. Sumter and Dennis were at the open door drawing in the rafts while Garrison pulled in Mike and the boy. Stevenson got down on his knees and held the nearer raft against the plane. Sumter climbed into it, picked up the baby and handed it to Dennis.

Stevenson looked at the baby and he remembered another baby he had taken from the hands of Caroline on a crowded road at Lake Lanao.

He watched Sumter help the girl and the older woman into the airplane, and then Sumter picked up the woman with the fracture, and he and Dennis carried her to a litter in the plane. Stevenson looked down at the last woman lying alone in the raft. He climbed slowly down, picked up the woman and held her in his arms.

The raft drifted away from the airplane. He stood on the swaying floor with the wind and the salt spray in his face and he looked at the woman in his arms. Her eyes were closed. Her wet, black hair was spread across her face. Her mouth was loose.

He began to tremble and the sea was gone and the wind was gone and he was in another time, another place, in a nipa hut on the campus of an ancient university. He pushed the hair away from her face and it was the same face. Death was waiting there. It was the face that death makes of every face; and it was the face of Caroline.

The woman opened her eyes and cried out softly and he heard the small sound in the deafening roar of the engines and the wind and the water. She clutched him and the eyes filled with terror, the old terror he had never been able to forget. He pulled her against him convulsively. "You're going to live," he said.

The wind raked his face and the raft lurched insanely and he felt something break inside him, the glacial pack, and he began to weep as he had never been able to weep since that other time when he held the other Caroline against his breast. He thought how he had not been able to help then and how he was able to help now. His tears fell upon her and he said: "*This time you're going to live.*" And he said to Caroline: "You died, Lynn." And for the first time it was true.

He held the woman tenderly as Sumter pulled the raft back. He climbed into the airplane, his face wet with tears and sea spray, and started toward the racks of litters. The sea thrust the aircraft up and threw him backward on the slippery floor. He thrust out his hand to break his fall. His head hit the side of a metal seat.

WHEN HE opened his eyes Mike was wiping his face with a wet cloth. "The woman," he said. "Is she all right?"

"She's okay. But looks like you busted your wrist, Colonel." "Get me up."

Mike and Garrison lifted him to his feet. He felt his way to the litters and looked down at the woman and then at the other women and the baby. He straightened and rubbed his eyes. "Garrison," he said. "Did you check over the airplane?"

"Yes, sir. There's a little more damage than we realized, sir. A plate has been torn out of the right elevator and the fabric is ripped on one of the ailerons and it looks like we tore off the HF antenna when we hit water."

"We don't need the radio to fly. Get ready for take-off."

Stevenson went back to his seat. He buckled on his seat harness with his left hand. When he tried to close the fingers of his right hand around the wheel they wouldn't close. He saw Gregg watching him. He adjusted his headset and swung down the mike.

"Lieutenant Gregg."

"Yes, sir."

"You'll have to get us back. You'll need JATO."

"Yes, sir."

"You got it," Stevenson said.

He heard Gregg on the intercom: "Sergeant Garrison. Attach the JATO bottles."

They changed seats.

Stevenson kept his eyes off Gregg. He wanted him to have all the time he could to build inside. He thought of the damaged elevator, of the ripped fabric, of the leaking hull. He thought of the high-frequency antenna, now a useless piece of wire. High frequency was the only frequency that could reach Ashiya or any other place that could do them any good.

The leak, the elevator and the wing. And Lieutenant John Gregg. And no way to reach anybody if any one of them failed.

"Engineer to pilot."

"Lieutenant Gregg," Gregg said.

"JATO installed, sir," Garrison said. "Doors are closed and latched." Then, after the most imperceptible pause, perhaps it was not even a pause, Garrison said: "Ready for take-off."

Stevenson looked at Gregg. He had not imagined it. Gregg had caught it too. Stevenson looked straight ahead. Gregg revved the engines and began his taxiing, seeking the place and the moment to take off. He jockeyed in one direction and then another, trying to get into a position where he could balance off the wind against the sea. He taxied for about ten minutes.

Now, Stevenson said soundlessly. Gregg did not make the move.

There was another moment and another place where Stevenson would have made his attempt, and then another. But each time Gregg gripped the wheel and passed it by. He worked for almost half an hour and by now the light was beginning to fail. Finally Stevenson saw Gregg reach up and arm the JATO bottles.

The JATO—Jet-Assisted Take-Off—rocket fuel in metal containers gave one thousand pounds of thrust out of each bottle for exactly eleven seconds. For those eleven seconds the JATO combined with the two 1425-horsepower engines to almost double their thrust. Then they fizzled out as fast as they started and if the aircraft was not clear of the water by then it might never be.

They were plowing through the sea at more than forty miles an hour. Stevenson thought of the solid water opening the gap in the hull, filling up the compartment faster than the pump could get rid of it, weighing down the nose of the airplane.

Gregg's hands were clamped on the wheel, his face dead white and the skin flattened against his jaws as though he were sitting in an open cockpit and the wind trying to tear his head apart.

And then Stevenson saw Gregg push the JATO button and the airplane jerked forward as the rocket fuel roared out.

Now it was how much water they had taken on and how the elevator would respond and whether Gregg would be able to do what he had to do. *Hold together*, Stevenson whispered to the airplane, *hold together, baby*, he whispered to the big, awkward, pot-bellied thing, the half-boat, the flying St. Bernard, *hold together*. . . . Eleven seconds. One. Two. Three. Four . . .

Lift it, he shouted in his head. *Lift it now*. . . .

The hull broke clear of the water.

"We're an airplane again," Stevenson said.

He looked at Gregg. There was a grin on Gregg's face. But that wasn't it. It was a new face. "Pilot to navigator," Gregg said.

"Roger," Sumter said.

"Give me a heading for home."

Flight Operations, that afternoon . . .

5:20 p.m. "ANN, YOU haven't heard a word I said," Judy Moore said.

"Yes, I have," Ann Sumter said. "You were saying something about feeding cows beer." She looked quickly at Judy. "Am I going crazy?"

Jo Cooper covered Ann's hand with her own. "No," she said. "That is what Judy said."

"Tell me about the cows that drink beer, Judy," Ann said. Her voice was bright as she lit a cigarette, her hand shaking.

"Well, there's a special breed of cattle here," Judy said. "They raise them for *sukiyaki*. They feed them mash full of beer."

"Clever, these Japs," Ann said.

"Ann, why do you keep staring at that girl?" Jo said.

Ann tapped her foot. "What's she doing here? She's a Jap. She's Colonel Stevenson's Jap girl friend."

"That's why she's here," Jo said. "Please stop staring at her. She sees you and it's making her uncomfortable."

"How can you tell? How can you tell with that face?"

"Ann, we're all under a strain," Jo said. "Even Tomiko."

"Is that her name? That's a silly name."

"You know that's her name. You know it as well as I do."

"I don't know what I know any more." Ann pressed her fingers against her eyes. "When are we going to know, Jo? How much longer can it be? Those damned airplanes can't fly forever."

"It can't be much longer," Jo said.

"Face like a mask," Ann said. "Can't tell what's under it."

At the desk, Captain Mound was telephoning Colonel Thornburn. "Just tried again, sir. I still can't raise anybody. I'll—"

"What's that, Mound? I hear a commotion."

"I'll call you back." Mound put down the telephone. "Lucille!" he said. "What's going on over there?"

Lucille rushed out from behind the counter and pushed her way through the crowd. She found Ann shaking Tomiko violently by the shoulders. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, sitting here all afternoon!" Ann shouted. "If it wasn't for the damned Japs none of us would be here!"

Tomiko made no effort to free herself. Lucille pulled Ann away. Ann struggled to get back to Tomiko.

"Damned Japs!" Ann screamed. "We die fighting them and now we die saving them!"

Lucille slapped her face. "I'm sorry, Mrs. Sumter."

Ann raised her finger tips slowly to her face. She began to shake and then she began to cry, an empty, sightless crying.

"Go ahead and cry, Mrs. Sumter." Lucille put her arm around her. "You'll feel better."

"Oh, God." Ann covered her face with her hands. "Dear God in heaven." She went to Tomiko and Lucille started to stop her but Ann fell on her knees, put



her arms around Tomiko's waist and held her, sobbing. "I'm sorry, Tomiko. I'm so sorry."

Tomiko stroked her head gently. "It is all right."

Ann pressed her head against her. "I didn't mean it, Tomiko."

"You did mean it, Mrs. Sumter. But it is all right."

The loud-speaker came to life. "Rescue Control, this is One Three Two One, Rescue Control, this is One Three Two One."

Ann raised her head slowly. The room was silent. She looked at the loud-speaker. Mound picked up the mike on his desk. "This is Rescue Control. Come in, One Three Two One."

"This is Colonel Stevenson. We are on our way back to Ashiya. We have six survivors aboard. Please have ambulances waiting on the strip."

"Affirmative. When do you estimate your arrival, Colonel?"

"Our present ETA is one eight four zero hours. We were unable to make contact before this. We lost our HF."

"Roger."

For a moment there was nothing but crackling on the speaker. Then Stevenson said: "Major Cooper cracked up attempting a water landing. There were no survivors. Over and out."

Somewhere in the room a woman screamed.

Ann rose slowly to her feet. She walked up to Jo Cooper.

"Jo," she said.

"Yes, Ann," Jo said quietly.

"Jo, dear."

Jo stood up. "You'd better fix up your face, Ann," she said. "You won't want Gene to see you looking like that."

She opened her pocketbook and took out a handkerchief and wiped away the tears on Ann's face. She turned toward the door, and Judy prepared to follow her. "I have to go now," Jo said. "I have to fix dinner for the children."

She walked quietly out of the room.

6:47 p.m. IT WAS DARK when Gregg landed the airplane at Ashiya. Three ambulances were waiting on the lighted strip. Doctors and nurses from the base hospital boarded the aircraft and took off the Japanese women and the baby.

The boy clung to Mike. Mike roughed up his hair. "You go with them, George," he said. "They got to look you over, like." The boy started to cry. Mike saw one of the nurses was Japanese. "Tell him I'll come over to the hospital to see him," he said.

He waved to the boy as he was taken into the last ambulance and then he gathered his gear and went into the Operations Building.

"Sergeant Warren," Mound called out.

He walked over to the counter. Mound, Lucille and several airmen were standing there. "Glad to see you, Mike," Mound said.

"Thanks, Captain."

"It must have been rough," Lucille said.

Mike glanced at her. "It was a gasser."

He went on to the locker room. He stowed away his gear and began changing his clothes. He knew Lucille would be waiting for him. But before he saw her he had a date at the hospital.

ANN SUMTER watched Gene as he climbed out of the airplane, carrying his navigator's brief case. He raised her chin with his fingers and kissed her. "Hi, baby. What's for chow?"

She slipped her arm under his. "I didn't get a chance to cook today. I thought we'd go out tonight. If you're not too tired."

"Not tired at all. Slept most of the way back."

They walked toward the building and he said, "Rough about Jerry and his crew."

"Yes."

"Went right down. Never had a chance."

It wasn't me, she thought. Next time it might be me, but this time it wasn't me. "Jo Cooper took it very well," she said.

"No other way to take it." He shrugged. "We'll have to make it early tonight. I want to do a little cramming before I hit the sack. Got to pass those exams tomorrow."

"Why?"

"Why? You know why."

"The hell with the exams."

He stopped and stared at her.

"The hell with the exams!" Her eyes were shining. "You know something? I'm proud of you. I'm terribly, terribly proud of you."

He shook his head and they resumed walking. "Kids okay?"

"The kids are fine."

"Anything happen today?"

She closed her eyes and felt the warmth of his body next to hers.

"Nothing," she said. "Nothing at all."

AFTER THE ground check was finished Stevenson said to Gregg: "I guess that does it, John."

"If there's nothing else, sir," Gregg said, "I'll take off."

"Lieutenant, you did a nice job. All around."

"Thank you, sir." Gregg started for the rear of the plane.

"John."

"Yes, sir."

"If you were to initiate a request for transfer back to helicopters, I'd be glad to endorse it."

Gregg stood silent for several moments. "Thank you, sir. I'll think about it." He walked slowly to the rear door and climbed down.

"Lieutenant," Mel Griffith said, "I got a jeep parked here."

They went over to the jeep. Griffith swung in behind the wheel. "Hear it was hairy," he said.

"Hairy enough," Gregg said. He got in next to Griffith.

"Too bad about that other ship." Griffith spat. "Well, that's the way the ball bounces." He stepped on the starter.

"Mel, pull over there for a minute, will you?" Gregg pointed to where a helicopter was parked.

Griffith drove over and Gregg got out and walked over to the helicopter. He looked at it for a few minutes and then returned to the jeep.

"Okay, Mel, take off."

They drove to the BOQ but Gregg made no move to get out of the jeep.

"Mel."

"Yes, Lieutenant."

Gregg did not look at him. "Mel, if I got back into choppers—would you trust yourself to fly with me?"

Griffith swung around in his seat. He said slowly: "You bet your life I would."

Gregg stared straight ahead. "After we landed out there, Colo-

nel Stevenson broke his wrist. I took the airplane off the water."

"Lieutenant!" Griffith shouted. "Lieutenant, you old bastard!"

Gregg climbed out of the jeep and went into the building.

TOMIKO pressed herself against the wall in the darkness outside Operations. She would see him once more but she did not want him to see her. She had not planned to look on him again but she could not deny herself that luxury.

She saw him come to the door of the airplane, climb down the ladder, drop to the ground and start toward the building. As he came closer she could see he looked very tired and she was happy that in a little while he would be able to rest.

When he had entered the building she walked swiftly to her car and drove to the small house. She undressed and bathed and put on a kimono. She arranged her hair in Japanese style. Then she put on a pair of soft slippers and went to the shrine in the garden. She bowed before the shrine, apologizing to her dead father and mother for what she was about to do. Then she rose and walked back to the house.

She filled a glass with water and, in the bedroom, she opened a small lacquer box and took out a bottle filled with yellow capsules. She thought there should have been something she could have said to him or some note she should write but she knew there was nothing left to say.

She lay down on the mattress and she opened the bottle and emptied the yellow capsules into her hand.

"I love you, Glenn," she said. She had heard the words many times in her heart but this was the first time she had ever said them. "I thank you for what you gave to me." She closed her eyes. "It is a pity you would let me give nothing to you."

She heard a car door slam. She opened her eyes. "No," she said. She heard a tapping on the front door. She started to rise from the mattress but she stopped herself.

"Go away," she whispered. "This is a house of emptiness."

She heard the door open and she heard his footsteps and she rose to her knees as he entered the room.

"Tomiko."

He came to her and knelt before her. She closed her hand on the yellow capsules. Perhaps she could make him go away. "What

has happened to your wrist?" she asked. "You should go to the hospital. You need a doctor."

"I need you, Tomiko," he said.

She felt the yellow capsules pressing in her hand.

"You are tired," she said.

"I'm very tired." His face, with its stubble of beard, was haggard. "I have so much to tell you."

"I will listen."

"It may take a long time, Tomiko." He touched her cheek. "It may take a very long time."

She lowered her eyes. The room was still. She said: "I will listen to you for as long as you want to speak to me." She stood up. "I will get you a drink."

She walked across the room, opened the door leading to the garden and stepped outside. She breathed in the moist, fragrant air. She tossed the yellow capsules into the dark night and they vanished almost as soon as they left her hand.

She returned to the house and poured him a drink. She went to the bedroom. He was stretched out on the mattress, his head resting on the straw-filled pillow.

He looked across the room at her and he held out his hand and when the beating in her heart quieted a little she went to him.



Elliott Arnold

ELLIOTT ARNOLD's close association with the Air Force began in 1942 when, after some years as a newspaperman in his native New York, he entered that service as a private. Three years later, he was discharged as a captain after serving on the staffs of General Ira C. Eaker in the Mediterranean and General George C. Kenney in the Pacific. He collaborated on two official Air Force histories, *Mediterranean Sweep* and *Big Distance*, and won the Bronze Star.

Three years ago the office of the Secretary of the Air Force asked him to write a history of the Air Rescue Service. He flew 75,000 miles to visit every base from Saudi Arabia to Panama to Iceland to Japan. The trip resulted not only in the factual story, *Rescue*, but in the keenest admiration for the heroes of our Air Rescue Service, and this led eventually to *Flight from Ashiya*.

Mr. Arnold is now living in Beverly Hills, working on the *Ashiya* film script. Since the war, he has published nine other books, including *Blood Brother* (the basis for TV's *Broken Arrow* series) and *The Time of the Gringo*, also to become a movie.

Camping, fishing, boating and travel are Mr. Arnold's relaxations, fortunately shared by his Scottish wife, Julie, who will travel around the world with him in 1960 for on-the-spot filming of *Ashiya*.