



*It needed a brave man or a suicidal fool to tame Anea, hell-hole of the Islands
. . . and Stinger Seave was both.*

THE career of Stinger Seave falls roughly into four divisions. There was the first period of about ten years, when he first came to the Islands and roved the South as a free-lance trader and adventurer. Then there was the second period of some fifteen years when he became rich and powerful, owner of many ships, plantations, trading posts and lagoons. Then there was the third period which lasted about six years, when ruin fell upon him and he returned from respectability to roving and adventuring again.

Lastly, there were those years when

the Administration, waxing powerful itself and despairing of ever making Stinger Seave realize the old wild days were gone, drafted him into the Service so that instead of breaking the Law he enforced it.

The year that Stinger Seave was ruined many other famous men were ruined, too. The Pacific was swept by an unprecedented series of hurricanes and typhoons which wrecked ships and sent fine plantations back to the desolation of the jungle. Dozens of planters, ship-owners and traders went into bankruptcy and had to start again from the bottom, or else shot themselves.

Stinger Seave, Cassidy, Chang, Gunther and others were hard hit but they would have weathered the storm had not the Bank of South Fiji failed as a climax to the year's disasters. Fortunes were swept away. Cassidy found himself an old man and thousands of pounds in debt. Gunther was cast penniless on the beach at Ponape. Chang had to sell even his beautiful schooner yacht, *The Middle Way*, to pay his bills and Stinger Seave was reduced to one ship, the schooner *Parruiata*.

With Chang as his mate, the Stinger tramped up and down the Pacific once more, ruthless, cold, shooting and fighting his way. The Administration, which thought they had forever done with his breed, woke up and sent their cutters and gunboats abroad again. Not only was Stinger Seave back on the old trail once more but many another famous adventurer who had been retired and grown fat and lazy. Necessity drove them, and the old days came to life again.

Governments which had allowed old charges and warrants to lapse began to demand their delivery. Rewards, long since forgotten, were posted again. Stinger Seave went in danger of his life. Fifteen years before, the situation would have caused him to smile his wintry little smile, to laugh, perhaps, to stick his head deliberately in the lion's mouth and come back unscathed. But now he was a little tired, and there came a day when he didn't care.

Even so, despite his apathy, he would have fought and won to freedom, perhaps, had not the governor of New Guinea, a new man, adopted a different attitude from his predecessors toward the old adventurers. The new governor had been a Pacific trader himself before chance and politics had raised him, and he understood the breed with which he had to deal. When Stinger Seave shot two of the miners on Woodlark Island over some trouble that had to do with an unsettled debt,

the new governor did not send a cutter, a resident magistrate and a police force to arrest Stinger. Instead, he had a message delivered to Stinger that he wished to see him. And when Stinger found himself in Port Moresby soon afterward, he responded.

THE *Parramata* had been anchored scarcely an hour when a white launch came out to her and a youthful, white-clad official climbed to her main deck.

"Captain Seave?" he inquired pleasantly. Seave's bo's'n, who stood by the rail jerked his thumb aft to the poop and the youthful official made for the nearest companion. He went up and stopped. His attitude was one of curiosity mingled with respect and a little awe, for he had heard much of the famous man but had never met him.

Stinger Seave sprawled in a cane chair under the awnings, smoking a cheroot and holding a drink in his hand. His eyes were half closed and he looked very tired. His frail little body sagged wearily; his ragged mustache and his hair, once sandy and sun-bleached, were now white and thin. Surely, thought the young official, this isn't the notorious man who's caused the department so much trouble all these years!

"Captain Seave!" he said respectfully. "I am Carruthers, assistant secretary to His Excellency."

Stinger Seave opened his eyes. They were clear blue, innocent-looking, but shadowed now with the deadly tiredness that oppressed Stinger.

"Well," said Seave quietly, "what am I wanted for this time?"

"His Excellency sent a request to you," hinted the secretary. Seave smiled his little wintry smile.

"I received it at Cape Nelson. It was rather unusual, the governor of the territory asking me to call." The blue eyes twinkled a bit and the thin lips curved in a light laugh. "I

have never been to the Administration house ... er ... socially."

"Well, His Excellency requests that you call on him now at your earliest convenience."

"Why didn't he come with you?" inquired Stinger Seave.

The secretary's jaw dropped. He had never heard of such a thing! The captain of a small trading schooner wanting to know why His Excellency did not call on him! The secretary drew himself up stiffly and his voice was cold.

"His Excellency happens to have broken his leg and is confined to his room. Shall I tell him what you say?"

"Oh, no," drawled the Stinger softly. "I wouldn't want to hurt George's feelings. I guess he'd have come if he could ... Will you wait for me?"

The secretary could only nod, quite astonished. George indeed! Calling the governor George! Stinger Seave rose from his chair, threw his cheroot away and went below to change his whites and get a clean sun-helmet. He reappeared after a while and followed the still amazed secretary down to the waiting launch.

II

HIS Excellency, Sir George Thomas, G.C.M.G., C.B., etc., etc., governor of British New Guinea, sat in a comfortable chair behind his great desk in the center of a cool dark room while a young, white-clad man stood before him reading a report. The governor's bandaged leg was stretched on another chair before him, he had discarded his tie and hung it over the inkwell, his thin face was furrowed in a scowl and he chewed savagely at the butt of a dead cigar.

The young man before him was resident magistrate for the worst district on the main island, about to depart on six months' leave after two years of fever and fighting and worry. The governor was glaring at him as if

he were a native caught in the act of theft.

"The last half of the current year was quieter," the young man was reading from his report. "There was a murder at Awaiama; a man cut his wife's throat. We ran him down in four days and he was killed while offering resistance. I surveyed and bought land from the natives for the Mission at Cape Scott. Anderson, the trader at Trobriands, reported he was in trouble and I took the cutter there to straighten it out. No one was killed but I arrested a native named Mawa for attempted poisoning. A prospector named Fellowes shot a man at Ferguson Island. I arrested him. German Harry collected a lot of orphans at Dobu whom I mandated to the Mission at Cape Scott. Patten had trouble with natives at the south end of Goodenough Island which I straightened out. A man named Jonson started a coconut plantation on the east side of the island and violated some native taboos. I went and saw the thing arranged. I arrested a witch doctor named Kiraku for killing a man of the Mambare. Captain Brown of the schooner *Wirawira* was killed by natives while smuggling liquor off Cape Vogel. I left my assistant to run them down...."

He droned on, an endless list of murders, captures, petty native wars, arrests, sieges, famines, fevers, sorceries, troubles between white men smuggling, quarrels over taboos and so on.

"That's about all, to make a rough survey," he finished, folding up the long report and laying it on the desk. His Excellency scowled and hammered on the desk with his fist.

"It's too much," he roared. "Your district's more damned trouble than it's worth. Six months' leave? You ought to be at work."

"Well, seeing I've had only twelve men and the operating expenses...." suggested the R.M., smiling. He knew the governor of old.

"Don't give me any excuses!" His

Excellency roared. "I know the pay's rotten, the grub's worse, the stores are inadequate and you ought to have five hundred men. But I expect results, not explanations. Fifteen murders in a year and five police killed! I'll have to take over the division myself."

"Yes, sir," said the R.M.—His Excellency simmered for a moment and then held out his hand.

"Well, have a good time. We've got to do the best we can with the money we're allowed. Don't get too drunk and don't get married." The R.M. saluted, turned on his heel and went out through the door. The assistant secretary came in. His Excellency looked up from the R.M.'s report and scowled.

"Captain Seave, sir" he said.

"Why didn't you send him in?" roared the governor. "How long has he been waiting?"

"About fifteen minutes, sir," said the amazed secretary. His Excellency groaned.

"It's a wonder he didn't turn round and go back.... Well, hurry him in."

Stinger Seave appeared in the doorway, his sun-helmet in his hand, blinking a little in the cool dimness. The secretary withdrew, rather stunned. Stinger Seave saw the lean figure in the comfortable chair and came forward.

"Can't get up," growled the governor. "Slipped downstairs yesterday and broke my leg. How are you?"

They shook hands. Seave sat down. His Excellency bit the end from a fresh cigar, lighted it and pushed the box across the desk.

"It's got to stop, Stinger," he growled at last. "I can't have half my force busy running after you. The old days are done. You can't run around shooting and smuggling and looting any more." His Excellency let his eyes wander to the R.M.'s report before him and he had the grace to blush. Then he roared, pounding the desk: "I tell you, we've got to have law and order! The Islands are settling

down. You old fellows have got to face the new situation.... Stinger, I've got a stack of warrants and charges against you that'd fill my desk. I can have you arrested right now and give you a sentence that'd put you away for the rest of your days."

Stinger Seave smiled faintly and tapped the ash from his cigar.

"Well, go ahead," he suggested. His Excellency scowled.

"I don't want half a dozen men shot," he said. "Be sensible, Stinger. The Islands aren't what they used to be. Here we've got a few men, only a little money and few enough boats to rule all New Guinea. It takes all our energies to keep the natives quiet and protect what respectable whites there are. In a few years the politicians'll wake up and we'll have enough men to hold things down. But as it is, we have to make up in excellence of material what we lack in quantity. Thank God, the Service attracts the best! The pay's rotten, Stinger, the grub's worse, and there's a first class chance of getting killed. And yet the fine young men still come for the job."

"What's all this got to do with me?" murmured the Stinger.

"I'm trying to get you to stop being a nuisance," snapped the governor. "You and Cassidy and the rest don't seem to be able to settle down to honest trading or planting and you're too quick to get into trouble. Now, I seem to have read somewhere that in the old days of the American West it was the custom when a man got too bad to make him change sides. I'm offering you, Stinger, the toughest division in the territory. I'm offering to make you a resident magistrate, an officer of the Law. We need your kind. These young men are sound but they haven't the knowledge of the Islands your kind has, and mine."

FOR perhaps the first time in his life Stinger Seave laughed with all his body. He opened his mouth and shook. It was a superb joke as he saw it—Stinger Seave, the biggest thorn in

the side of half a dozen Administrations, being asked to enforce the Law. His Excellency waited until he had finished, then leaned forward, tapping the desk edge with his forefinger. "I'm serious, Stinger. You know me. I've got the toughest job a man ever had and I'm going to see it through. We'll have law and order in the Islands if it kills me. And I give you fair warning, if you don't come over to us I'll carry out the warrants. You'll get twenty-four hours' start from Port Moresby and if you show your nose anywhere in these waters hereafter you go to jail. You've had a good run. We've all been friends to you, fought beside you, even broken the Law with you in the old days. But that's done. We filed away warrants because we understood you, knew you were doing more to tame the Islands than any of us. But that's finished. I'm not threatening, Stinger, I know you too well to make idle threats. But I'm in dead earnest and I put the matter straight to you. You can do one of three things—stick to straight trading or planting, take this R.M. job, or skip out!"

Stinger Seave brushed his hand across his eyes. He knew that what the governor said was largely true. The old days were gone. The Law was being enforced more and more every year. There were still islands and coasts where white men were unknown and the Law was still that of rifle and dynamite, but even if a man spent his energies there, there were times when he must come to some civilized port to outfit or sell his cargoes. And if the officials in the ports ceased to regard with a certain tolerance the free-traders, the old semi-pirates and adventurers, then, indeed, what was there left?

"Ten years ago, even five years ago," said the Stinger quietly, "such a flat ultimatum as you have just delivered would. . . ."

"Would have sent you out on some mad venture just to show us how good you were," agreed His Excellency. Then his voice

dropped, softened and even grew a little pleading. "We're getting old, Stinger, you and I and Cassidy and Chang and the rest. It was fun dodging the Law when we were young and the Islands were pretty well wide open. But it isn't the same now. A man wants some peace. A man wants to settle down and be a bit respectable. I know you were on the road before the typhoon year came and the bank crash, and I'm not saying I blame you for going back to the old life to get some other fortune for your age.

"But this is the better way. I'm asking you as a friend to consider the proposal.... It won't be that you'll just sit back and twiddle your thumbs, Stinger. I'll give you the toughest division we've got. You'll need all your old shooting skill and all your courage and brains. And you'll be working for the Islands and not against them. In the old days free-lance adventure, hard-shooting, hard-sailing, hard-drinking men were a necessity. But now that period has gone and we need those men with us. What do you say, Stinger?"

SEAVE was silent for a long time. His Excellency settled back with a sigh and smoked his cigar. Stinger Seave smoked, too. The secretary came in the room, paused a moment at the spectacle of the two old men immersed in thought, and then as silently departed again. Nearly an hour passed before Stinger Seave roused himself.

"I'm getting old," he admitted slowly. "And I'm tired, George. What you say is about right. There isn't the old kick left in running about. And I'm not the trader I was. The last two cruises were failures. I was down at Ysabel this time and fat old Kawara, the chief of the river tribes ... you remember him? ... came out in his canoe unarmed and ate with me. It's the first he's done it. He's always before tried an attack first, threw a few spears, took a few shots in reply before we settled

down to business. We're all getting old.... I rather think I'll take you up!"

His Excellency tried to leap from his chair, groaned as his leg twinged, then hammered on the desk with his fist.

"This is the luckiest day the service ever had," he roared. "By thunder, Stinger, we'll tame the Island together! ... Let's have a drink."

He raised his voice. The secretary came in with glasses and a bottle. The two old friends drank, to the good old days, the days of youth and fighting and adventure; and then another drink for the days to be, Stinger Seave, R.M.

And it was in this fashion that Stinger Seave entered on the three last magnificent years of his life and took over the toughest division of New Guinea, with headquarters on Anea.

III

ANEA had killed three previous magistrates. It was an island huddled in the delta of a great river and tapping the trade of hundreds of miles of unhealthy coast, not to mention that of a dozen other islands near by. It was almost the exact center of the last utterly wild portion of New Guinea and for this reason it gathered to its bosom every bad character that sailed those seas.

Men driven from the quickly taming Samoan Islands, from the already settled Fijis, from the Societys and the Paumotus, Borneo and Sumatra, all came to Anea sooner or later, or to that other island, as savage and as lawless, Manoa to the north. But Anea at this time was the worst of the two places.

Stinger Seave anchored off the island in his own schooner late one afternoon. The Administration had had no cutter to offer him yet but they had come to an arrangement by which the *Parramata's* expenses were to be paid and she was to be used for government work only. His Excellency had sent with Stinger Seave just six native policemen, all

Papuans who had been in the force some years and commanded by a trustworthy sergeant named Kiwi. As his assistant magistrate the Stinger had obtained Chang, his Chinese friend and once a famous pearl buyer.

The Stinger came to Anea unannounced, very quietly and unobtrusively and with the name of Captain Smith. Under that name he was entered in the Administration's books. The warrants were torn up. Stinger Seave was officially dead.

Anea as an Island city consisted of two large galvanized iron trading stores, three saloons, some half dozen palm-thatched residences, a large native village, a small bungalow for the resident magistrate's home and a still smaller jail. The bungalow and the jail were almost in ruins, for Anea had been left unpoliced for two years, ever since the last R.M. had died suddenly and his native police had mysteriously disappeared.

Stinger Seave, or Captain Smith, landed his men and supplies that night and took possession of the bungalow. The *Parramata* lay at anchor in the really excellent harbor, between a large German bark in from the Solomons and a small schooner from the Bismarcks. There were also several luggers, and one or two other schooners in port, for Anea was a busy place and ships did not necessarily stop there to trade or get supplies. Captains weary with six months or more of the sea dropped in to get drunk, to pick up the latest gossip and to find themselves a temporary sweetheart among the girls in the saloons.

Anea was wicked, very wicked. Many men every year were found pitched in the mangroves with knives between their shoulder blades. Many more simply disappeared altogether, Malays, Chinamen, Germans, Frenchmen, Americans, Englishmen, Australians, all gathered there. Gambling, drinking and other things were always in full swing. Girls: white girls, brown girls, yellow

girls, half-castes and full-blooded natives, came from all over the Islands to help lighten the pockets of loot-choked adventurers. The toughest place in all the territory, as His Excellency had said, and too far from Port Moresby and Samarai for the Law really to reach. Stinger Seave felt quite cheerful when he surveyed it, for he had only been there once or twice before and never since its riotous days.

"I think we shall enjoy ourselves," he remarked gently. "I understand several of my old friends or enemies are gathered here."

"They have killed three magistrates," said Chang with a sigh. "One went out fishing and did not come back. One was found speared in the bush. The other died in a saloon riot. Will you never grow tired of fighting?"

The Stinger smiled.

"I shall die fighting," he remarked casually. "A wise woman once told me that. I shall die fighting and a friend will kill me."

"It is written also that I shall die with you," commented Chang. "We are growing old, my friend. Do you remember long ago when I told you that, that I shall die with you? I looked into the crystal and was eager to know the future. I am wiser now. Life should not be understood, nor the future of life.... Perhaps it is here we shall face the end together."

Seave did not answer. He only half believed his own prophecy but he knew that Chang wholly believed his. There was a time when Chang always consulted his crystal before going forth on a venture, though of late he had abandoned the practice. But what did it matter how or when they died? The Stinger was ready. He had faced death too many years now to be afraid of it.

THEY were sitting on the veranda of the tumble-down bungalow and smoking after dinner. The next day they would start work. The native police were camped around a fire a

short distance away, for the barracks were in ruins and new ones must be built. The bungalow was set on a rise and, looking down the slope, once cleared of jungle but now overgrown with weeds and vines and small saplings, they could see the bright lights of the small Island city, the fires in the native village with the dark figures passing back and forth, and the lights of the shipping in the harbor.

They could hear, coming up the hot wind, the shouts of laughter, the drunken cries, the noise of the tinny pianos in the saloons. Once there was a hubbub and the sound of breaking glass, followed by a shot. His Excellency had honored Stinger Seave, Chang thought, in sending him to Anea. Who else was there in all the South who would be expected to tame it with only six policemen? It was a job for a cruiser.

Presently up the slope from the town there came four or five dark figures, the leading one carrying a lantern. From the noisy talking and the occasional shouts of laughter it was evident some of them were drunk. Chang rose to his feet and folded his arms across his chest, his slant eyes glowing. Stinger Seave smoked unperturbed, though his right hand began slowly to stroke his throat.

RIGHT up to the veranda the strangers came and when the leader with the lantern caught sight of the two white-clad figures sitting in the semi-glow, he halted and put down his light on the cracked steps. The police, sitting round the fire, stood up and rested their carbines in the crooks of their arms and Sergeant Kiwi spoke to them in a low voice. Behind the leading stranger three other men had halted.

"We understand there's a new magistrate," declared the first man in an unpleasant voice. He was big and burly, darkly unshaven, with an out-thrust jaw and glittering cold blue eyes. He had his thumbs stuck in a sagging cartridge belt round his

waist and a pearl-handled revolver glimmered in the lantern light. Seave tapped the ash from his cigar.

“You were correctly informed,” he said gently.

“Stand up and let’s look at you,” said the man harshly. The Stinger obeyed, apparently good-natured. He stood up, came down the steps until the light shone on him.

The other man began to laugh. His companions laughed.

“What d’you think you’re going t’ do?” he said at last. “There ain’t enough of you t’ put in my pocket.”

“I am Captain Smith,” answered the Stinger, still gently. “I have been sent by His Excellency to restore order to Anea. May I inquire who you are?”

“I own the Mermaid,” jerked the other insolently. “Name of Crossly. When I say jump, on Anea, everyone does, see? This’s a sort of friendly visit, though. I’m warning you to walk soft and wide of us. You just stick to filling in reports, see? Don’t bother us and you’ll be left alone. The others they sent here had too many ideas about things and they ... er ... quit.”

“Remarkable,” sighed the Stinger. Then slowly his mild blue eyes changed color. They took on the cold, clear glint of ice and for some reason he could not fathom Crossly felt a chill run down his back and an uneasiness swept him.

“Now let me say something,” snapped the Stinger, his voice crisp as a whip. “I represent the Law here. I propose to enforce it. Tonight you can have full reign. Tomorrow at noon Anea settles down.”

Another man pushed forward, a slender, dark-haired, handsome man with a silky black mustache and bright black eyes. He was immaculately dressed in a fine suit of well-pressed whites, with a broad sash around his waist in which was stuck a neat Mauser.

“Captain Smith,” he drawled, in a not

unfriendly voice, “you are a brave man, yes. You must be, else they would not have sent you here. I am Charley the Greek and the Three Ships Hotel is mine. We wish no trouble with the Administration. We wish only to be left alone. You will walk softly, yes. You will make no arrests. Maybe then we shall be friends and you will grow rich.”

Stinger Seave smiled thinly.

“I take no bribes,” he said gently. “And I shall make no arrests.”

“What’re you driving at?” demanded Crossly roughly. Chang thought he resented Charley the Greek butting in.

“I mean,” answered the Stinger, tapping ash from his cigar again, “I mean the jail is in need of repair, so I shall make no arrests. Just that.”

“He means,” whispered Charley the Greek, “that he will shoot to kill.”

THERE was a brief silence. The four men from the town shifted uneasily on their feet. Then another of them, a short squat man with a scarred, evil face, pushed forward. He was very drunk but able to walk straight.

“You start anything like that and you’ll get yours,” he snarled. “Ain’t you got any sense at all? I warn you. I run the Frigate Bird and if you shove your nose inside my joint you’ll get lead between your eyes.”

“That” whispered the Stinger, “remains to be seen.”

The fourth man lurched into the lantern light and he was very drunk indeed, rocking back and forth on his feet. He was fat and moon-faced and his watery gray eyes blinked owlily up at Seave.

“Cap’n Smith?” he hiccupped. “Hell, what a name! Wait till Larsen of Singapore hears there’s a new R.M. around. He’ll send you packing.” Stinger Seave started at that, as did Chang. Larsen of Singapore was an old foe. The Stinger and he had clashed many times. If Larsen of Singapore were financially

interested in Anea, the task to clean it up would be much harder.

The very drunken fat man—his name was Collins, they later learned, and he was partner to Charley the Greek—stepped close and peered into the Stinger's face.

"Cap'n Smith?" he hiccupped. "Hell, that ain't your name. I seen you some-where afore ... somewheres afore, I know." He shook his head sadly and Crossly pushed him aside with a sharp oath.

"I don't give a damn who he is," he croaked. "But get this straight, Smith. You walk soft and easy and mind your own business and maybe we'll make you rich. Start interfering and you'll go under. Is that clear?"

"Very clear," replied the Stinger gently. "And I hope you understand as clearly that after tomorrow noon Anea settles down."

"You are foolish, yes," sighed Charley the Greek, as if he regretted the whole affair. Crossly shrugged. He picked up his lantern and moved away, pausing only to throw back over his shoulder, "We'll stand for no fooling, remember that, Smith."

IV

THE four men straggled back down the slope. Chang and the Stinger could hear the drunken Collins protesting, "I tell you I've seen him somewhere and his name wasn't Smith. He's well known in the Islands. You'd better watch out."

Crossly only laughed. Charley the Greek said smoothly, "He is not like the others, Crossly. Not young and green and foolishly brave. He is a wise man, yes. I do not like his eyes ... Who is it the Islands say has such eyes? ... We must take care. The governor would not send a fool to Anea."

"What can he do against the bunch of us?" inquired the short squat man roughly, he who owned the Frigate Bird which was the lowest dive in town. It was said the only man he feared was Crossly, though it was noticeable he took good care to be polite also

to Charley the Greek. Charley was perhaps the smoothest and best educated of them all, and, though he deferred to Crossly's greater strength and larger following, he had a way of speaking sometimes that made even Crossly wonder just how much he controlled the dark, slender man.

"What can he do?" inquired Charley the Greek softly. "Much or little. It depends on what he is. It would be well to walk softly until he shows us, yes, what he is made of."

"His name ain't Smith," hiccupped Collins, wagging his heavy head. "I see 'im somewheres ... Ponape? Brisbane? Moersby? Suva? Damned if I know."

They entered the little town back of the beach and parted to their respective resorts. Crossly went bellowing as to what he would do if any blankety-blank magistrate tried to sit on him. Collins swayed off mumbling about Captain Smith not being Captain Smith. The scarred, squat man repaired to the Frigate Bird and, calling his half-caste partner Lenaire, began to plan ways and means of eliminating the new R.M.

Charley the Greek reacted quite differently. He had a premonition that things were about to happen on Anea. His Excellency, it stood to reason, would not send any other but an exceptional man after three had already died. It was wisest to see which way the wind would blow before taking things for granted as Crossly did. Charley called his men together, his white bartender, his two native houseboys, his girls.

"There is the Law come again," he said softly, smoking his cheroot and smiling at them. "Perhaps it will be only a jest as was the Law before. But there will be no fighting, no anger, no quarreling, not too much drinking until we know. I am clear, yes?"

They all grunted or nodded and went about their jobs. Charley ran the best place on Anea and kept his own peace with his Mauser. It was his boast that no man, not even a

common sailor, was ever robbed or slugged or beaten in the Three Ships Hotel. He charged the highest prices, employed the newest girls and dealt quite impartially with all comers. Also he disliked Crossly and he looked forward to the day when he could expand his own place, when the Three Ships Hotel would be perhaps the only one on the Island, with Crossly and Barker and the rest forgotten or dead. Charley the Greek therefore did not wish to run foul of the Law if the Law showed the slightest signs of gaining the upper hand.

EXACTLY at noon the next day Stinger Seave came down the hill. He was immaculately dressed and was coolly smoking a cigar. He seemed unarmed. He seemed at peace with the world. He seemed merely a little elderly man taking a quiet walk before lunch. The native police he had left to build themselves a barracks. Chang he had left to superintend them, in spite of the Chinaman's heated protests.

"Anea is not a jest," Chang had insisted. "If you will not take the police on patrol, at least let me walk with you. Some one must watch your back."

"I have not anticipated so much fun since Larsen trapped me on Ysabel," returned the Stinger. "Let me be. If I should die you have my permission to burn the place to the ground." Chang had shrugged at that because it was hopeless to persuade Stinger Seave, once he had made up his mind.

So the frail little sailor walked calmly down the hill and entered the town, picking a delicate way between heaps of garbage and sleeping natives, through a pack of snarling nondescript dogs. The first place he came to was the Three Ships Hotel and he walked up on the broad veranda and stopped to survey the scene.

There were few about so early in the day. A mate from one of the schooners in the harbor dozed in a cane chair. Two dark-eyed

native girls leaned outside the wide dark doorway and smiled invitingly. The Stinger's mild blue eyes passed over them and for some reason or other they withdrew in some confusion. The Stinger entered the hotel. Inside a few men, white and half-castes, were sitting at the tables drinking and talking. Several girls were gathered on the raised platform at the other end of the room where stood the battered old piano. When night came and the crowd gathered, the girls would dance, the piano would thump out long-outdated tunes and the noises of talk would rise with the thickening tobacco smoke.

Charley the Greek, who had been watching from the balcony upstairs, came smoothly down, as immaculate as the Stinger, smiling, pleasant.

"It is quiet here," he said deprecatingly. "Too early for the ship men to come, yes. Will you drink?"

The Stinger nodded and sat down. He saw no signs of natives drinking, nothing much at all that he could take exception to. He was no saint himself. He had not the slightest intention of ordering the girls to be discharged or any such thing as that. No R.M. in all the Islands bothered about such minor things. The main point was to keep the peace, to stop the selling of liquor to natives, to stop the fighting and killing, the running of guns, opium, women and so on—but, most of all, to keep the peace.

CHARLEY came with a bottle of his best whisky, serving the new magistrate himself. When the Stinger threw down a piece of gold Charley pushed it back with a smile.

"The drink is for you from me," he said.

"I buy my own," responded the Stinger quietly. "But perhaps you will drink with me?"

Charley the Greek bowed, seated himself, poured two drinks. The men finished

them in silence. Then Charley asked if he might be permitted to buy the next. This the Stinger agreed to after receiving the change from his gold. Then he rose and started for the door.

"I shall be back," he said. Charley bowed again, and was motionless for a long time, his eyes fixed on the doorway through which the little frail man had departed.

"I think," whispered Charley to himself. "I think my friend Crossly will have a great surprise, yes."

Stinger Seave's next stop was at the Frigate Bird and there he found things already in full swing. Outside the place, near the veranda steps, a native snored in drunken slumber, full in the blazing sun. His lips were puffed and there was a bruise under one eye. Stinger Seave grunted and entered the place.

Half a dozen men were singing uproariously round the old piano. Several natives were squatted against the walls swigging cheap trade gin from square-faced dark bottles. A card game was in full blast near the dirty short bar at one end and Barker, squat, ugly and scarred, was surveying the players with a grin for his house man was winning heavily. Barker was still in his pajamas but he had his gunbelt buckled round his waist and a cigar stuck out of his thick-lipped mouth. One of the many girls moving about called to him and he looked first at her inquiringly, then swung rapidly to face Stinger Seave. He scowled.

The Stinger walked right up to him and a sudden hush fell over the Frigate Bird. Barker rested a hand on his gun and waited. Stinger Seave put his right hand slowly to his throat and began rubbing it as if an insect had bitten him there.

"It is against the law to sell liquor to natives," he said gently. "You will please put those men outside and take away their bottles. You will also refrain from serving them in future."

"Yes?" said Barker. He laughed. One or two other men laughed, evidently his friends. They backed up behind him to see the fun. This must be the new R.M. come to enforce the Law on Anea. Quite a joke, eh?

"Suppose I say you can go to hell?" inquired Barker.

"I warn you this once," answered the Stinger. His blue eyes slowly changed until they glinted like ice. "You put those men out. If I find any others in here drinking you go to jail."

"Don't be funny," snarled the squat man. "And get to hell out of my place!"

"Put those natives out!" commanded the Stinger, his voice crisp as a whip.

Barker laughed again but a bit uncertainly because of the other's eyes.

A man said, "Aw, kick him out. Barker, like you did the last one."

Barker grinned and stepped forward.

"Stay where you are!" snapped the Stinger. "I'll shoot you dead if you try anything."

Barker stopped. He was thoughtful for a moment; then he sneered.

"A gunman, eh? I suppose His Excellency thought he'd try something funny.... Well, go for it, you swine!"

He was jerking his own gun clear even as he spoke, but before the last word was out there was a crashing roar and his weapon dropped heavily to the matting from his stinging hand.

Two men behind him whipped out their guns with a startled oath and the crashing explosions made the place echo. One man took three steps back with a broken arm; the other dropped his gun as Barker had done. Barker was looking, stupefied, at a bleeding furrow that creased the back of his right hand.

The cold, icy eyes of Stinger Seave swept the stunned onlookers, taking no heed of the girls who were screaming and running for the rear of the house.

“That will be enough for now,” the Stinger said. “Put those natives out!”

“You go to hell!” choked Barker, red with rage and fear. “Who the hell are you, anyway?”

“I shall count three,” whispered the Stinger, his frosty eyes boring into Barker’s. “And then I shall shoot again.”

For a moment there was a tense silence while the powder smoke went up in blue wisps. “One,” said the Stinger. “Two....”

Barker ripped out an oath and, walking to the nearest native, kicked him to his feet and propelled him toward the door. Stinger Seave backed against a wall until it was all done; then he smiled his little wintry smile.

“Thank you,” he said gently. “I hope I never have to bother you again.”

In a tense silence still he left the Frigate Bird and, though his back was turned, not a man dared to shoot. He passed out into the sunshine and it was not until a girl giggled hysterically that the tension broke. And then Barker’s wrath was something to terrify men. He sent a houseboy to Crossly’s place.

V
STINGER SEAVE made for the Mermaid saloon in a silence almost as tense as that in which he had left the Frigate Bird. The sound of shots seemed to have driven all life off the dusty street. He had seen the houseboy run from the rear of the Frigate Bird and he knew that Barker had warned Crossly what had happened.

But the Stinger did not hesitate. He had loaded his gun while he walked and just before reaching the Mermaid he took an abrupt turn to the left and walked straight into the coconut groves that were thick behind the rows of shacks and saloons. This move was entirely unexpected and the man who was watching the Stinger’s approach from a window in the Mermaid uttered a cry of alarm and turned to tell Crossly what had happened.

Meanwhile the Stinger, once in the

trees, quickened his walk until he was sure he was out of sight. Then he turned to the right and ran swiftly for perhaps a hundred yards. This took him well past the rear of the Mermaid and brought him behind a big trading store. The trees ran right up to this, as he had noticed when surveying the lie of the land early that morning through glasses from the magistrate’s bungalow.

He walked boldly into the rear door of the store and found himself in a back room. A tall, lean man was leaning forward over a table and on the table lay a rifle and several boxes of ammunition. A native was fingering the weapon covetously with one hand while the other held a large bundle of bird-of-paradise skins.

“Pardon me,” said the Stinger. “But an order in council forbids the sale of weapons to natives without possession of a special permit.”

The lean man slowly turned, his jaw dropping, a look of utter astonishment on his face. The native backed off, gibbering, clutching his skins to him.

“And who the hell are you?” asked the lean man slowly.

“Captain Smith, resident magistrate on Anea,” answered the Stinger.

The other relaxed then and laughed.

“Oh, you’re the new man, eh? Well, don’t be funny. If you know what’s healthy for you, you’ll shut up.”

Seave looked at the native. The man turned and ran. The trader uttered an oath and reached for his hip pocket. The Stinger smiled frostily and watched him and the thin man produced a gun. He tapped with the barrel of it on the table and his eyes glittered.

“Listen, little boy,” he said rather grimly. “You see this? Well, I’m giving you a start just to that door.... And if you bring back a file of police I’ll give Crossly a yell and he’ll settle with you.”

“It’s remarkable,” said the Stinger,

apparently irrelevantly.

“What’s remarkable?”

“The way you seem to think you’re all tough here,” said Seave. “Now put that plaything away and talk sense. You’ll walk inside the Law in future or you’ll go to jail. Is that clear?”

The other shrugged and, lifting the gun he held, began to thumb the hammer.

“Beat it!” he snapped.

“Is that Crossly behind you?” asked the Stinger innocently. The thin man looked around. When he looked back again he changed color. He stared straight into a neat black muzzle and it was held with uncanny steadiness.

“You’re not tough,” said the Stinger contemptuously. “A child wouldn’t fall for such an old trick.”

There was the sound of shoes on the back porch. Seave moved swiftly aside. A rough-dressed and unshaven man burst in, very excited. He stopped when he saw the trader standing apparently idle at the table.

“Heard the latest, Andrews?” he commenced. “That damned new R.M. went into Barker’s.....” His word became a gurgle as he caught sight of Seave. And then like a flash his hand dropped to his side. The trader at the same instant ducked behind the table and shot upward.

There were exactly three explosions and two came from Seave’s gun. The man who had come to tell about Barker gave a howl and clasped his bleeding hand. The trader went sideways with a crash even as his bullet smashed into the wall several feet to one side of the Stinger. Seave waited a moment and then, breaking his gun, took out the two empty shells and replaced them.

“That man,” he said mildly, waving the gun at the limp trader, “is dead. The next time you draw a gun on me you will die, too.”

HE turned and walked not out of the back

door but right into the big store, leaving the wounded man staring stupefied at the neat hole that was between the trader’s eyes.

There were two half-caste clerks in the store but the Stinger ignored them. He made for the front of the place, approached a window, looked out, then paused. He could see a crowd of men issuing from the Mermaid by the rear way and hurrying toward the store, apparently to investigate the shots, possibly hoping to trap the new magistrate. The Stinger smiled, waited until they were well behind the store; then, stepping out, he walked calmly toward the front door of the Mermaid, keeping alert for any watchers who might take it into their heads to try and shoot at him.

He spotted one native gaping at him near the rear end of the Mermaid but the man after a moment’s astonishment turned and fled into the groves behind him with a cry of alarm. Stinger Seave went up on the Mermaid’s front veranda and stepping close to the house wall edged along until he could peer through the slits in a grass-slat curtain hung over one of the open front windows. He saw no one in immediate view and, apparently satisfied, walked boldly through the gloomy doorway, his gun ready in his hand and his eyes like ice.

The place was deserted except for a group of girls gathered at one window in the rear and staring toward the big store. A drunken man slept at a table.

A few natives were sitting with bottles. Crossly and his bullies had evidently all charged over to the nearby store. Stinger Seave smiled a little and sat down at a table, his back to the wall so he could command both front and rear of the place. He holstered his gun and slowly lighted a cheroot. Then he tapped gently on the table.

One of the girls turned and saw him and uttered a half-stifled cry. The rest turned.

“Whisky,” said the Stinger. “The best you have.”

As if fascinated, the girl who had first seen him went behind the bar, procured a whisky bottle and a tray and a glass and brought them to him. When the Stinger asked for water, that was brought, too, and he sipped reflectively at his mild drink amid tense silence. No one moved. The girls remained in a huddle to stare. The girl who had waited on him, a white girl, fair, blue-eyed, apparently not more than twenty-five or six, though she looked thirty, leaned on the table opposite him.

“You’re the new R.M., aren’t you?” she asked slowly.

Stinger Seave blinked at her and nodded.

“Well, it’s nothing to me what happens to you, but you’d better beat it. Crossly’s hopping mad because of what you did to Barker at the Frigate Bird and he’ll finish you. Take my tip and leave him alone. He’s finished three nice boys already.”

“You are very kind,” murmured the Stinger gently. “But there will be no more of that on Anea.”

He coughed a little as if smoke had got into his throat. He eyed the girl keenly, then tapped the ash from his cheroot and leaned nearer to her.

“By the way, if you happen to know of any women being held here ... er ... against their wishes, I’ll be glad to arrange for their transportation to Australia.”

The girl looked at him with sombre, brooding eyes; then she laughed bitterly.

“The others said much about the same thing. But they never had a chance to clean these joints up. You don’t think any white woman wants to stay here, do you?”

“No,” admitted the Stinger frankly. “I don’t. But then, some choose that sort of thing.”

The girl struck the table fiercely with her fist.

“Well, I don’t. Crossly brought me

here from one of his trips to Brisbane. There’s a few others in the same boat. Where the devil can we go? Most of the girls, especially the natives, don’t mind the life, but I’m not a native. Understand me, mister. I’m no lily-white saint. I was bad back ... there ... but I never had to stand being pawed by the sort of animals that come to Anea.”

“We’ll fix all that,” murmured the Stinger. He was a hard man, a ruthless, cold man, but he stood for utter fair play. He had not the slightest objection to and not the slightest interest in any girl who wanted to follow the life she led, but he knew, all too well, that many of the Island dives were stocked with women who would have given their right arms to be back in Australia. And he intended seeing that such women went. For the rest, those who chose to remain, what did it matter?

The girl who faced the Stinger seemed about to say more but suddenly she drew erect, muttered a quiet, “Well, don’t say I didn’t warn you, mister,” then backed off to the wall.

Crossly had returned.

THE big burly man came swaggering in by the rear door of the saloon, his thumbs stuck in his cartridge belt and his voice raised in bellowing scorn. His bullies followed him, laughing, sneering, agreeing with every word he said.

“Aw, he skipped for the woods,” Crossly was asserting. “He knew he was lucky to get the drop on Barker and he was riding the luck pretty hard when he dropped into the store. But he won’t come here. I’ll take a bet on it. I’m Buck Crossly and I’ve got rid of three magistrates. If they figure on cleaning up Anea they’ll have to send a cruiser, not a damned little shrimp ...” One of the girls had drawn up to Crossly and said something to him.

He grew rigid, jerked his head around

and saw the quiet figure seated at one of his tables. He was so astonished at the utter sheer nerve of it that he was silent and still for nearly a minute. Then he recovered himself, hitched his holsters around to the front, and laughed.

"Well, look who's here," he jeered. "The little boy's paid us a visit, after all."

The fat and moon-faced man, whose name was Collins, stood near Crossly and he plucked at the big man's jacket sleeve. Collins was still drunk but very nervous.

"You better listen to me, Crossly," he croaked with many hiccoughs. "He ain't Captain Smith. No such thing! I've seen him somewhere afore ..." Crossly swept him aside and strode down the big room to where the Stinger sat calmly sipping his mild drink.

"You got a blasted nerve," said Crossly hoarsely. "I guess you figure, 'cause you got away with Barker and the rest, that I'm soft, eh? Well, get to hell out of my place as fast as yer legs'll carry yer. Savvy?"

"You are breaking the law," said the Stinger mildly, blinking up at the big man. "You must not sell liquor to natives. Put those men out."

Crossly rested his hands on his guns. He packed two of them, swung low on his thighs.

"I'll give you ten seconds," he replied coldly.

Stinger Seave nodded. He finished his drink, set down his glass and began to rub his throat. Crossly thought he was about to rise and leave. Instead, the little frail man's eyes turned to twin points of ice and he whispered, "Well, start counting."

Crossly was astonished. No man on Anea dared face him. He was a notorious shot. Not even the other magistrates had stood up to him in this fashion, brave men as they had been. And as Crossly was astonished, so were his bullies, his men, his hangers-on. They stood back to give him gun room and

guffawed. It was funny. At least the other magistrates had been upstanding, big men, capable of holding their own, but this little old individual looked as if a good breath would send him outside.

"Chesty, eh?" grinned Crossly. "Well, all right. 'I'll count. One, two, three..." He went steadily on and the Stinger did not move. When he came to ten Crossly began slowly to draw his guns, his face threatening, expecting to see the other wilt and run.

Instead, the little man's hand snaked inside his jacket, appeared again and there was an explosion. Crossly rocked back, sagged at the knees and dropped. A trickle of blood appeared down his cheek. The Mermaid was deathly silent.

Stinger Seave rose, swept the place with his icy eyes, and the rest of the men wilted back, awed. Then the Stinger crossed to the natives in sight, kicked them up and ordered them outside. That done, he turned to the wondering crowd.

"He's only creased," he said, waving a contemptuous hand at the huddled, limp Crossly. "When he comes round, tell him I'll be back tomorrow at this time." He quietly walked out. It was a long time before anyone ventured to Crossly's side.

The fair girl who had first spoken to the Stinger stood with wide, shining eyes and she whispered, "He'll do it! I believe he'll do it!"

Chang was anxiously waiting on the bungalow veranda when the Stinger returned.

"I heard firing," said the Chinaman uneasily. "There was a killing, eh?"

"A little," replied the Stinger. He took off his sun-helmet, laid it on a chair, sank to another, and reached for the gin bottle. Not until he had sipped half of the liquor did he speak again. "Do you know, Chang, the Islands aren't anything like what they used to be. Men were tough in my day and yours. Now they're only a joke. I can't understand

why the governor thought Anea was bad.”

Chang sighed and shook his head.

“You must remember, my friend, that those other magistrates were clean boys, brave, strong and willing but inexperienced. They did their best and they failed. But you ... you are Stinger Seave.”

“I am Captain Smith,” said the Stinger gently. “Let us forget Stinger Seave, Chang. He was a bad man. Captain Smith from now on.”

“It may be you would forget,” answered Chang gently. “But how can the Islands? Stinger Seave you have lived here and Stinger Seave you will die.”

The Stinger shrugged and they dropped the conversation.

VI

ANEA was in a turmoil. Only Charley the Greek preserved his composure, and he was the only man on whom the heavy hand of the new magistrate had not fallen. Crossly, his head bandaged, his temper villainous, called a meeting in the back room of the Mermaid that night to discuss ways and means to combat this sudden menace of the Law. They had the situation over, Barker, Charley the Greek, Crossly and one or two others who were interested, and they had reached no particular conclusion when Collins, the fat, moon-faced man, burst in, slightly more sober than usual.

“I’ve got it,” the newcomer exclaimed. “I’ve got it, Charley!”

“Got what?” inquired Barker, with a scowl.

“That chap’s name! I know who Captain Smith is.”

“What is he?” choked Crossly. He ran off a long string of names. “That’s what he is,” he concluded.

“Maybe,” insisted Collins. “But do you know his real name?”

“No, and I don’t give a damn,” snarled Crossly.

“I have guessed it,” murmured Charley

the Greek. “There is only one man in the Islands who could shoot that way, except perhaps Larsen of Singapore.”

“*Stinger Seave!*” shouted Collins, quivering with excitement all over his fat body. There was a tense silence.

Crossly licked his lips and took an involuntary half step back. Barker nursed his wounded hand and muttered in an awed voice. Charley the Greek caressed his silky black mustache and nodded to himself. Collins gazed triumphantly from one to the other, and the rest of the men present went a little white.

“Stinger Seave?” inquired Crossly, with an uneasy look around.

“That explains it all,” said Barker. There was another silence. Stinger Seave’s name was known from the Pribiloffs to the Kermadecs. His gun play was almost a legend. If none of them had seen him, there was none who had not heard of him. His cold nerve, his ruthlessness, his exploits were the talk of the South. He was a survivor from the bad old days, companion adventurer to Cassidy of Apia, to Big Bill Gunther, to Black Len Carson and a dozen others who were almost legends themselves. Cold chills ran down the backbones of the listeners. Stinger Seave! Had they been trying to buck the Stinger? How was it any of them were left alive?

“Aw, that’s a lie,” declared Crossly at last, without much conviction. “What would the Stinger be doing here as resident magistrate? He’s wanted himself.”

“The new governor of New Guinea is an old-timer,” murmured Charley the Greek. “The Stinger and he were old friends. It is natural he should be here. Also he has with him a Chinaman, and his mate is supposed to be Chang, the Chinese pearl-buyer of the old Paumotus days. I did not know who he was at first, but I told you, yes, to be careful. I did not like his eyes. We cannot fight Stinger Seave.”

“The hell we can’t!” choked Crossly. He glared around, his eyes flaming. “There’s

half a dozen of us, good men. He got us unawares this afternoon. We didn't know who he was, and we were careless. But from now on we'll deal with him."

"We can jump him in the bush some time," agreed Barker. "We've got to get rid of him or quit Anea. He'll be stopping the blackbirding trade next."

The rest looked uneasy, excepting Charley the Greek.

"Count me out," he said gently. "I wish to live longer. The Stinger he is too good, yes. Men do not make such names in the South without there is cause. I shall walk softly for a long time."

"Always thought you were yeller, anyway," sneered Crossly. "Stay out, Charley, and we'll get you after we've squared it with the Stinger. There's no room on Anea for two sides."

Charley the Greek bowed a little, but his dark eyes glittered.

"That is to be seen," he murmured. "But I will not fight Stinger Seave."

HE turned and left the room, Collins following him. He had hardly gone when a new step sounded and the door swung back to admit a tall, lean man with a grim, scarred face and graying kinky hair. He looked coldly round on the assembly and then snapped: "What's this I hear? A new R.M. scaring you all!"

Crossly heaved a sigh of something very close to relief. The newcomer was the owner of the Mermaid, half owner of the Frigate Bird, half owner of the big store, the clearing house for all the illegal trade of the island, the real ruler of Anea—Larsen of Singapore.

"Where did you blow from, Larsen?" growled Barker. "Well, never mind. We need some help here all right."

Larsen frowned and looked from man to man. He took in Crossly's bandaged head

and then, catching sight of Barker's bandaged hand, he gave a violent start and with an involuntary motion rubbed a livid scar on the back of his own right hand.

"Word was sent me from Port Moresby that another R.M. had been appointed to Anea," he said slowly, licking his lips as if something had happened to disturb him. "A Captain Smith. I never heard of him. I left Singapore as soon as the news came and anchored here about two hours back. Felton of the *Leonora* met me on the beach and told me you'd had a run-in already."

"He shot us up," declared Crossly vehemently. "Got sore about us selling liquor to the natives. He got us unawares."

"Yes." Larsen smiled faintly. "How long has he been here?"

"Came in yesterday," growled Barker. "Do you know who he is?"

"No." The word came as if forced from Larsen's lips. He had a good idea, and something very much like fear was throbbing through him, but he dared not let these men suspect it.

"Stinger Seave!" jerked Barker moodily. In spite of the fact that he was prepared for the name, Larsen started violently and put his hand up to his mouth to hide the twitch of his lips. Stinger Seave! He had fought the man for nearly thirty years, ever since that distant day when the Stinger had brought "Bull" Nelson of Papeete to Singapore to confront Larsen about a broken contract.

THE feud had gone on intermittently through the years. If Larsen was the terror of the islands, Stinger Seave was the terror of Larsen. He bore a charmed life. Bullet, knife and poison failed against him. The very mention of his name was enough to cause Larsen's face to whiten even while it made him furiously angry and brought the oaths to his lips. Standing before his own creatures this

night, Larsen pulled himself together and essayed a smile.

“So it’s the Stinger, eh?” drawled Larsen. “Well, well!” He slipped a hand inside his jacket and caressed the gun he wore under his armpit, as the Stinger wore his own gun. He looked speculatively around. The others waited for him to speak again.

“The Stinger is an old man,” he said at last. “You are not a child, Crossly, nor you, Barker. Are you afraid?”

“He don’t mean a thing to me,” snarled Crossly. “He got the draw on me and creased me, and I’ll kill him for it.”

“It ain’t that we’re scared of him,” Barker growled. “But we gotta go easylike, now we know who he is.”

Larsen laughed. He was thinking rapidly. Stinger Seave on the high seas, the free-lance trader and adventurer, was one thing. But Stinger Seave ashore, a magistrate, was another. He could not run now after delivering his blows. He had to stick and carry them right through. It was an excellent chance to get rid of him to pay off old scores. But he must be very careful. Larsen of Singapore bore too many scars already from the Stinger’s guns to take any chances.

“We’ll try one or two things first,” Larsen stated. “Have you a man you can trust, a native, Crossly? ... Good! ... If that fails we’ll make a direct attack. I’ll pay a thousand Straits dollars to the man who brings the Stinger down. But mind, not a word I’m in port. If anyone asks what my bark’s doing here you can say my mate brought her in to pick up cargo. I’ll live with you, Crossly.... There’s no need for you others to feel afraid. The Stinger’s nothing like what he’s cracked up to be. He gets away with murder just because he looks so damned innocent and helpless no one’s ready for him when he jumps. Savvy?”

They all nodded that they did, but somehow they retained still a little uneasy

feeling that Larsen was not sincere.

VII

THE next day Seave made his quiet rounds of the saloons, but this time he came with his six policemen under Sergeant Kiwi. He was well aware that he might enter the saloons once and surprise men, but the second time would be taking too many chances. A rifleman could lie hidden and waiting. Something could be slipped into his liquor if he chose to drink. A revolver might blaze from a window as he passed. And so the Stinger took precautions. Chang walked by his side, the police to his rear. They found nothing amiss, no natives drinking, no sign of any plain law violations.

When they had returned to the bungalow up the hill Chang said: “That was Larsen’s bark in the harbor.”

“I saw it,” said the Stinger indifferently. “He’s interested in Anea financially, I understand.”

“If he has come,” went on Chang gently, “it would be well to watch.”

Stinger Seave nodded. No one better than he knew to what lengths Larsen would go to get rid of him, apart from anything to do with Anea.

After dinner that evening a nearly naked, fuzzy-haired savage trotted panting up to the veranda of the bungalow and delivered a note. Stinger opened it, as it was addressed to the resident magistrate. It said briefly in a shaking, scrawling hand:

Was taken sick this morning and fear poisoning. Witch doctor talking raiding in village. Fear attack before morning. Can you see me through? Bronson.

Now Bronson, according to the somewhat sketchy map of Anea that His Excellency had given the Stinger, was the resident manager for the fairly decent and straight-run Steinbloch’s trading post the opposite side of the island from Larsen’s

holdings, a distance of about ten miles as the crow flies, but nearly treble that distance by water which was the only practical means of travel as the hinterland was all hills and jungle without any defined road across to the opposite coast.

"Be careful," warned Chang. "Larsen is here."

"He's keeping under cover then," commented the Stinger grimly. "But this may be genuine. Bronson works for Steinblochs and for all I know this is his handwriting. He's entitled to ask for protection."

"He has soon found out you are here," commented Chang, suspicious and always watchful for his friend's welfare. The Stinger shrugged.

"Drums, Chang. The drums have been pounding ever since we came."

It was true. The jungle telegraph had been at work ever since the *Porradata* had anchored. It was impossible that Bronson should not have heard that a new resident magistrate had come to Anea. But it was also queer that Bronson should send for aid so soon. Traders, especially independent traders on rough islands like Anea, usually were able to meet any situation themselves and seldom bothered the Administration, which, in turn, seldom bothered them. If Bronson had actually sent for help he needed it very badly. The Stinger called for the native to come closer and inspected him by the lamplight.

THE man was still panting as if he had run far. But there was not much dust on him. In reply to questions he declared he had come around the coast by canoe and run up from the beach. Yes, Bronson had sent him and Bronson was very sick. Also there was raiding talk in the nearest village. He was Bronson's head houseboy.

Chang called their own houseboys and questioned them. They agreed there was raiding talk. The drums had been saying that

all afternoon, though it was strange, for there had been no such talk the previous day and raids are long in maturing, with many days of drum talk to precede them. But the houseboys were quite emphatic that trouble was afoot.

"Of course Larsen or Crossly could bribe the natives to use the drums," ventured Chang. The Stinger gestured impatiently.

"I begin to believe you're afraid of Larsen. You've got him on the brain, Chang."

"Your life and mine are not worth a dollar when he is around, my friend."

"True enough." The Stinger tugged at his mustache, then straightened in his chair. "I think you'd better go, Chang. Bronson may be in trouble, all right. Take three men and Sergeant Kiwi in the whale-boat. This native can tie his canoe behind the boat and show you the way. Better dish out ammunition and stores for three days. If there's no fight started, get what evidence you can and bring that witch doctor back here. Arrest him on a charge of disturbing the tribes or something. If there's a fight, kill him."

"You will watch yourself," insisted Chang. "I have a feeling this is a trap, whether for the man who goes or the man who stays I do not know. Perhaps for both."

"Run along," said the Stinger smiling. If he had not known that Chang loved him there were times when the yellow man's solicitations for his welfare would have annoyed him. But he owed his life to Chang, not once but many times, and he could forgive him much.

The Chinaman left in about an hour with Sergeant Kiwi and three men, the native who had brought the message leading the way. Stinger Seave called his three other policemen and ordered them to patrol around the bungalow, one man at a time in two hour watches.

Then, finishing a last cigar, he went to his room to get some sleep, a little uneasy though he would not admit it to himself,

because on board his ship when there was danger about he could lock his door and screw down his port, but in this open bungalow no such security could be obtained.

The Stinger told himself he was getting nervous and old, and with a brief smile at his own foolishness he examined his gun to make sure it was loaded and in condition, thrust it back into his arm holster and laid down on his bed in his pajamas. He slept tranquilly as a child while the native policeman outside paced steadily around the house.

IT was some four or five hours later. The moon had gone, leaving the world to the starlight. The jungle was hushed. The noise of the surf on distant reefs was a mere whisper. Even the town on the beach had settled down, the piano tunes stopping, the lights going out. The last drunken sailors had departed to their ships or were asleep in the saloons. Deep quiet brooded over everything.

The native policeman paused in his pacing, grounded his carbine and rested his hands on the muzzle while he leaned a little forward and sank into a reverie that had to do with a tall, deep-bosomed woman of the Mambare who would come to his quarters as soon as he had won his corporal's stripes and retired from the police to be constable of his village.

He did not see the shadow that drifted from the thickets covering the hill. If he heard the faintest of faint rustlings among the vines, bushman as he was, he was too sunken in his reveries to let it rouse him. His two companions slumbered by their fire near the half-finished barracks and he heaved a great sigh. He choked the sigh off half-way, for some sense of a warning seeped through him. He straightened and turned, lifting his gun; then an ax crashed into his brain and he fell with a little grunt, a huge black arm lowering him softly to the ground.

THERE was silence again then while savage eyes watched the sleepers by the fire. One of them stirred and rolled over restlessly, as if the sense of danger reached him even through his sleep. But he settled back, breathed deeply and after certain minutes there was a shadow treading softly up the worn and creaking veranda steps. They did not creak much this time, only making little noises as if the coolness of the night was straightening the warped boards. The shadow drifted to the mosquito netting that covered the doorway, drew it aside. A vagrant shaft of starlight glinted on a stained ax head.

And then a gentle voice said, "Stay where you are."

There came a sharp hiss of an indrawn breath, a low cry. The shadow lunged forward and there was an orange spurt of flame in the blackness, followed by a choking cry and a heavy fall. After that, silence again within the bungalow, though startled cries came from the wakened police by the fire and the vicious crack of a carbine was followed by a scream in the brush. Stinger Seave, who some men said never slept, stood up and lighted a lamp. Even as he did so there was a sharp whine and immediately afterward the dull *smack!* of a bullet in the top of the table, not an inch from his right side.

"Careless, careless!" murmured the Stinger, dropping like a flash. He must be getting old to make a target of himself by the light of the lamp. He crawled along the floor and inspected the dead savage who had tried to kill him, picked up the bloody ax and examined it. It was a cheap trade article, no clue at all. The Stinger crawled out to the veranda and found his two remaining policemen bending sorrowfully over their dead comrade.

"It would be well," said the Stinger calmly, "if you both watched until dawn. In the shadows, say, one behind the house and

one before.”

One of the men clucked angrily with his tongue.

“If I find the man who has done this, he will die horribly,” he said.

“He is dead,” said the Stinger shortly.

“And so is my brother,” added the policeman sadly. Then he gripped his carbine, gritted his teeth and glided round the back of the house. The other man squatted on the veranda steps, his carbine across his knees and his ears twitching as he picked up minute sounds from the night.

“They have gone,” he announced suddenly. The Stinger nodded. No bushman would be mistaken about that. Seave stood up, stretched his limbs, brushed the dirt from his pajamas, then calmly walked back to his bedroom. He threw the dead native out on the back porch, rolled back into bed and went to sleep as if nothing had happened. Chang was back two hours after dawn. The native they had taken to guide them had dived overside when they were well down the coast and had escaped ashore.

VIII

“HE never sleeps,” said Larsen moodily to Crossly and Barker as they sat at breakfast next morning in a back room of the Mermaid. “But I don’t understand how you missed a clear shot with him outlined against the lamp.”

“I wasn’t expecting him t’ do such a fool stunt,” swore Crossly, “and I got excited. A couple of inches to one side and he’d have been shark meat.”

“Well, what next?” inquired Barker, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand and reaching for the gin bottle to start his day’s drinking.

“Can we get to his food?” asked Larsen thoughtfully.

“He has one of the police boys cooking,” Barker growled. “No chance there. We might get one of the houseboys to put a snake in his bed.”

“That’s too old a trick to catch the Stinger,” commented Larsen. “Still, he was fool enough to stand against a light last night. We might try it. ... But the best way will be to get him in the jungle and ambush him.”

“Say,” put in Crossly suddenly, “the girls’ve been talking about the Stinger getting chummy with Mamie—you know, that blonde I brought up from Brisbane. She’s been squawking ever since and she got to telling the Stinger her yarn when he sat in my place drinking, with me over at the store.... Damn him! She told the girls afterward he promised that anyone who wanted to could go back to Aussy. He’d listen to her.”

“Wouldn’t she give him the tip?” said Larsen, his brow furrowed.

“She would if she knew what was going to happen, perhaps,” admitted Crossly. “But we’ve got to think up something so she don’t know. Make her think she’s giving this Stinger Seave a straight tip, see?”

“Listen,” said Larsen. “I’ve got it. How far’s Bogege’s village from the coast?”

“Three miles.”

“The path there runs through some pretty thick country, doesn’t it?”

“Thick enough. And there’s a sort of small clearing this side of the gorge where that rattan bridge crosses.” Crossly grew enthusiastic. “We could hide up in the groves and shoot ’em all down as they crossed the clearing.”

“Well, listen,” said Larsen and leaned forward to speak into Crossly’s ear. Barker chuckled when he caught the drift of the plot.

SOON after dark that night one of the policemen brought a native girl to Stinger Seave.

“She came to the house and wished to see you,” the man said. “I have searched her and she has no knife.”

“What is it, little one?” said the Stinger, pinching the girl’s cheek, for she

could not have been much more than ten or eleven though well-developed, as are all native women at that age. The girl giggled and handed Seave a note.

“Two nights running is pretty thick,” Chang protested. “Larsen must take us for fools.”

But the note said:

Can you meet me by the big mango behind the store at twelve tonight?

Mamie.

“Who gave you this?” demanded the Stinger.

“She of the gold hair,” answered the little girl.

Seave produced a silver coin and balanced it on the tip of his finger. The native’s eyes glistened but she stuck to her story. She of the gold hair had given her the note. She had also given her warning not to be seen. Seave dismissed her, delighted with the silver, and handed the note to Chang.

“Another trap,” said the Chinaman wearily.

“I don’t think so,” protested Seave. “This girl’s the same, I take it, as the one who warned me when I first went into the Mermaid. I think she’s on the level. Probably wants to put me wise to something.”

“You mean you’re going, then?” said Chang, incredulous.

Seave smiled his little frosty smile and nodded.

“I shall go, Chang. If it is a trap it is a challenge for me to walk into it and I never refused a challenge yet. But I think the girl’s all right.”

AT ten o’clock Stinger Seave changed his whites for a suit of thin dark serge and dark shoes. He wore, instead of his customary sun-helmet, a seaman’s dark cap, and this outfit

made him practically invisible in the jungle. Then, followed by Chang and two men, leaving Sergeant Kiwi in charge of the bungalow, the little sailor started up the hill behind the house. Instead of walking straight up to the big mango behind the store, he took a wide circle right around the spot, gliding, silent as a ghost, through the jungle until he was positive there was no one hidden and waiting for him. Then at last he moved up to the mango.

A glance betrayed the dark figure of a woman waiting near the tree but he searched the branches closely before he stepped into view. A man hidden in a branch can do a good deal of damage before he is located. No one seemed to be around now at all though, so Stinger Seave moved quietly over to the girl’s side.

She gave a frightened gasp when he loomed beside her; then she clutched his arm.

“I mustn’t stay long,” she whispered. “Crossly’d kill me if he knew I was here and he’ll miss me soon. But I had to see you. You must help us. Do you know what he’s going to do? He’s going to sell us to Bogege.”

“I don’t understand,” murmured the Stinger gently.

“Bogege’s a big chief about three miles up country,” said the girl desperately. “He comes down sometimes for gin and trade goods. He’s a filthy old cannibal. It’s the rule here the natives mustn’t touch white girls. Even Barker won’t stand for that. But Bogege’s taken a fancy to having white women in his harem and he’s offered to fill a bucket full of gold if Crossly’ll let him have us. There’s three whites in the Mermaid.... Bogege’s got some sort of a mine in the hills and he’ll get the gold, all right. Crossly’s taking the three of us up to the village the day after tomorrow. I heard him telling Barker about it.... Don’t you see? You’ve got to do something.”

Seave tugged at his mustache and

thought.

"Well," he said at last, "what time are you supposed to be taken to Bogege?"

"Day after tomorrow," the girl whispered. "We start at noon. The path strikes the beach between the Three Ships Hotel and the Frigate Bird and it leads straight to the village. What shall I do?"

"Just stop worrying," soothed the Stinger. "Go with Crossly and I'll meet him and you and the rest before you reach the village. Don't fret. Everything'll be all right and when this is over I'll send you back to Australia on my ship."

They had a little further conversation, the girl crying but apparently relieved, Stinger Seave coldly angry to think that any white man could contemplate such a sale. Then they parted, the girl to the Mermaid, Seave to where he had left the anxious Chang and the policemen. As the girl re-entered the Mermaid Larsen leaned across to Barker, who was standing with him near the bar.

"Here she comes," he whispered. "She swallowed it hook, line and sinker, and it's dollars to cents she's been to see Seave. The day after tomorrow we'll get him.... Now go and lock her up, or tell Crossly to, so she won't suspect anything.... She's not bad looking. I might take her to Singapore myself, once this is over." Barker chuckled and moved away.

IT must be confessed that Stinger Seave owed his life this time to a woman, to the fair-haired Mamie who had unconsciously sent him out to his death. The Stinger started with Chang and all his police boys while the stars were still glowing bright before the false dawn, on the day on which Crossly was supposed to leave for Bogege's village.

Mamie had said Crossly would leave at noon and Seave figured that some eight hours' start was plenty for him to get settled in ambush, even if he traveled over unfamiliar

ground and was forced to go slow for fear of wild natives. He had a police boy in the lead as a scout, came next himself with the other boys, leaving Chang to bring up the rear. As they progressed through apparently deserted thick jungle, drums began to boom either side and Seave cursed with an abrupt realization that Larsen and the rest back there in town would know exactly what he was doing. He called a halt and conferred with Chang.

"I forgot about the drums," confessed the Stinger. "Shall we go on? Crossly'll never make a start when he knows we're waiting for him. I'll bet the natives have been watching us since we first entered the jungle."

As a matter of fact, Crossly, Larsen, Barker and several other white men, lying already in ambush near the clearing, were growing profane over the drums themselves because they would warn the Stinger that his presence was known and make him at least cautious, more so than he would have been ordinarily. Crossly had sent runners out to his native friends, ordering them not to drum out the news of his own progress for fear the Stinger's houseboys would inform him. But he had forgotten to make the order a blanket one as regarded the movements of the magistrate.

"He'll never walk into a trap now," said Crossly savagely.

"Wait a while, wait a while," soothed Larsen. "You don't know the Stinger. If he doesn't turn back, which I admit he might, he'll go on to Bogege's place and threaten the old cannibal with all sorts of curses if he tries to buy white women. We'll wait until sundown and if he doesn't come we'll go back. It's a fifty-fifty shot."

IT was just exactly that and the game swung into Larsen's hands when Seave halted in his striding up and down and said, "Well, we'll go on and see this Bogege. I'll put the fear of God into him and he'll get rid of any queer ideas he still has about white women. It's a good time, anyway, for us to examine the

island's interior and get acquainted with the men we're supposed to keep under control."

Chang agreed with that and the march forward recommenced. It was halted half an hour later when one of the police boys flung up his head, listened, stopped, listened again and then jerked. "Someone he come, running." The party halted. A word from Seave and they faded into the jungle. Seave watched from behind a big koa tree his hand caressing his gun butt, and then he uttered an involuntary exclamation of astonishment. For there came into view down the narrow jungle-hemmed path not a man but a woman. Mamie of the fair hair.

"Larsen ... Crossly ... and the rest," she gasped, "left last night ... for ... Bogege's ... I only heard this morning and I broke ... through the thatched roof ... the others helped me ... and dropped down and ran to your place ... but there was no one, so I came ... along here ... to stop you. I think ... this was all ... framed!"

Chang uttered a crisp oath. Stinger Seave helped the girl to her feet and said gravely, "I think you have saved my life, my child. I should have known that Larsen of Singapore would think of such a thing. I would have walked to my death ... Sergeant Kiwi!"

The sergeant stepped forward and saluted.

"Escort this lady back to the coast. You will carry her if she cannot walk. You will take her to the magistrate's bungalow and you will guard her with your life. Do you understand?"

Sergeant Kiwi saluted, swung about and waited for Mamie. She was sobbing in deep-drawn breaths and Stinger Seave patted her shoulder encouragingly.

"Go back with the sergeant," he said.

"But what about you?" the girl protested. "Crossly and Larsen will kill you!"

"That," said the Stinger gently, "is humorous.... Now you run along." He snapped

out a command to his police boys, swung in the lead and disappeared round a bend in the twisting path. Alone in the jungle with a stalwart sergeant in the brown kilt and bandolier and cocked hat of the police, Mamie started a slow way back to the coast, a strong brown arm under hers to help her over rough places.

"There's only one reasonable place to ambush anyone," Stinger Seave was saying back along the path. "And that's the spot we'd picked on, the stony clearing that comes before the gorge and the supposed bridge. If our information is correct and the clearing and bridge exist, that's where Larsen'll be. And seeing we don't know where we're going to come upon it, we'd better take to the jungle."

X

THEY fought their way through unbelievably thick growths after that.

Seave was making a steady way toward the presumed gorge on a line some two hundred yards to one side of the path.

Abruptly the little party came to the lip of the gorge, breaking out of thinning jungle to a narrow ridge of barren rock that rose up, then suddenly dropped sheer down for a thousand feet. Seave surveyed the scene carefully but could find no trace of life. It might be that many eyes were watching him from across the gorge but he had to chance that. He judged he was about a quarter of a mile from the bridge and he sent his two best scouts to follow the gorge lip and survey the ground. Chang and Seave and the three remaining police followed slowly, well hidden in the jungle. The scouts returned.

There was a narrow, swaying rattan bridge, all right. There was a broad, rocky clearing on this side and around the clearing white men were posted. They hid in two parties, one each side of the bridge end, deep in the scrub so they could send a cross-fire across the clearing. They seemed to be at ease and were carefully watching the opening in

the jungle from which the path came. Seave grunted with satisfaction.

Silent as ghosts, the little party moved on, Chang and Seave in the center, the police spread out each side of them. After half an hour one of the natives hissed between his teeth and Seave, dropping to earth, wriggled forward and parted thick, leathery leaves that loomed before his face. Then he froze. Not a dozen paces before him stood a man in whites, leaning against a tree trunk and holding a rifle carelessly in one hand while he gazed through the jungle toward some point Seave could not see. The man shifted after a while and Seave saw his face, without recognizing him. Careful shifting gave the Stinger another view, of a man crouched behind a thick bush, and this man he recognized as Barker.

The Stinger looked back at Chang, who pointed and nodded, meaning he had located someone, too. A glance at the police showed them alert and ready, with knitted brows, savage eyes, guns ready, their attention fastened on someone. The Stinger sighed, slid his hand inside his jacket, aimed at Barker's back and shot him neatly in the base of the neck, just as he would have shot a mad dog.

THE crash of the explosion woke the jungle echoes and the next moment there was a blaze of firing.

From across the clearing came Crossly's voice, "Let 'em have it! The swine's got Barker in the rear!"

A shower of lead cut the trees over the attacking party's head and Seave motioned for them all to drop down and wriggle forward. While this was being accomplished the firing stopped for a moment and Crossly's bellow came from the brush as he crashed through.

"Come on," he was roaring to Larsen and his men and he burst into the stony clearing, his eyes snapping with rage and a gun in each hand. Four men followed him. Larsen was slipping from tree to tree, more

careful than the others and trying to work around on Seave's flank. The police stood up abruptly with wild yells of excitement and exchanged shots almost breast to breast.

Stinger Seave stood up and stepped to sight, his smoking gun firmly in his hand.

"I call you, Larsen! Stand up and fight!"

Larsen laughed mockingly from the shelter of a tree. He had courage, great courage, but he was not fool enough to commit suicide.

"There's always another time, Stinger," he jeered. "And take that!"

He fired twice and the Stinger staggered as lead thudded into his left shoulder. Then his gun talked and the edge of Larsen's face peering around the tree trunk was cut with splinters as the bullets ploughed through the wood. He turned to jump into the jungle and a shot seared his side. Then he was gone, crashing clear, oaths dripping from his hate twisted lips.

BACK in the clearing Crossly was shooting from both guns. Everything had happened in a few seconds, the Stinger's call, Larsen's reply, the fusillade of lead. And now Crossly was in action once more. Had his gaze not been blurred he would have killed the Stinger, who was paying no attention to him but staring with all his icy eyes to catch another glimpse of the fleeing Larsen.

Crossly's first bullets went wide because he had lost a lot of blood and his hands were shaking. He steadied himself to aim for the Stinger's body and at that moment the icy eyes turned to face him and he pitched forward with a neat hole between his brows. The police and Chang disposed of the other men, and they all stood breathing hard and listening to the last faint rustling of Larsen's headlong flight.

Seave almost ordered the police after him but checked the words as they rose to his

lips. To send the police after Larsen would be to send them to their death, for, after Seave, Larsen was the best living shot in the South and cunning as a Chinaman.

The boys hastily contrived a litter and put Seave on it, though he protested he was strong enough to walk. He actually was strong enough but Chang insisted that he rest and he complied with a sort of tired resignation.

The little party had not gone more than a hundred yards before the Stinger uttered a cry and sat up in the litter. His command brought the police boys to a halt. He climbed out and stood upright, a little dizzy but firm enough. Chang's protests he brushed aside.

"I've just thought," he said thickly. "Chang, that girl! Larsen'll either kill her or take her with him. He'll find out she warned us."

"We can't hurry with you in the litter," Chang protested.

"Throw it away," snapped the Stinger. The police boys looked from him to Chang and the Chinaman shrugged helplessly. There was no use arguing with Seave when he spoke like that. The litter was tossed into the jungle and the Stinger set off at a shambling jig-trot for the coast.

The exhausted party burst out on the beach after what seemed aeons about the middle of the afternoon. The Stinger kept straight on, staggering up the hill toward his bungalow. A glance at the harbor had told him that Larsen's bark had not left yet, though there were men on her yards and she was evidently getting ready to sail.

As Seave neared his house he caught the whip-like crack of a police carbine followed by a fusillade of shots from what sounded like Winchesters.

Seave staggered up to the ruined jail, not yet rebuilt, rounded a corner of it and saw three or four men headed by Larsen rushing toward the house veranda on which stood Sergeant Kiwi shooting at them. Seave choked

out a cry which went unheard above the noise; then, groping for his gun, he weaved forward.

Chang snapped an order to the police boys that followed him and they stopped, dropped on one knee and began to pick off the attackers. Two fell before Larsen realized it was not Sergeant Kiwi's shooting that had done it. Then the rush stopped.

Larsen swung around, and his jaw dropped. Seave was nearly upon him. Chang was not far behind.

"Damn you, Larsen!" grated the Stinger. "This is the last time you'll ..."

He shot twice and at the same instant caught his foot in a vine and fell headlong. Larsen swung half around with a new wound in his side, lifted his gun to kill the helpless Stinger, then found Chang on top of him. He shifted his aim to save his own life and brought the Chinaman down with a crash across the prostrate Seave. Larsen hesitated then. He had two of his greatest foes at his feet and just two shells left in his gun. He could kill Seave and Chang or he could use his shells to fight his way through the police, who were closing in on him.

He hesitated so long, torn between two temptations, that a carbine bullet nicked his throat. Then, with a furious cry, he charged down the slope, his remaining man behind him and weaving from side to side. Larsen won through, killing a police boy and seriously wounding another. And then he was gone, pounding for the beach where his whaleboat waited.

Sergeant Kiwi took a long drooping shot from the veranda and brought Larsen to his knees, but, apparently not hit in a vital spot, the man crawled along until his men from the boat came running for him and carried him out of range. The whaleboat set out for the ship. In fifteen minutes the bark was shaking out her sails and heading for the open sea.

Chang was moaning and recovering

from a bullet that had stunned him. Seave was cursing thickly and trying to throw the Chinaman's weight off his own body. As Chang began to crawl clear, the Stinger fainted. He came to just long enough to discover his head was in Mamie's lap, to give

a string of weak orders to Sergeant Kiwi, to hear with a groan that Larsen had escaped; then he dropped into unconsciousness again.

But he knew, even as the world went black about him, that Anea was tamed.