SUNHELMET SUE

by ERICK BERRY

SUNHELMET
SUE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

GIRLS IN AFRICA

BLACK FOLK TALES

PENNY WHISTLE

HUMOO THE HIPPO AND LITTLE BOY BUMBO

ILLUSTRATIONS OF CYNTHIA

JUMA OF THE HILLS

CAREERS OF CYNTHIA

SOJO

MOM DU JOS

THE WINGED GIRL OF KNOSSOS

STRINGS TO ADVENTURE

THE HOUSE THAT JILL BUILT (Anne Maxon)

"If I wanted to dig for treasure the cave was just the place!"

SUNHELMET SUE

By

Erick Berry

Boston 1936 *New York*

LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD COMPANY

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

For 'Dorinda'
in appreciation of
charm and courage

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Chapter One

STOWAWAY

SUE MAY gave a final dab with the brush at her dark bangs and turned away from the mirror. With the gesture of habit she started to place the hairbrush on her dressing table, then setting her chin, opened the lid of a suitcase that stood on a chair by her bed and fitted the brush among the neatly packed contents. The suitcase really had no right to be there. It should have left this morning with the Dering's luggage. And the trunk; that should have gone by express two

days ago, south to New York for the cargo boat to Lagos, port of Nigeria.

Only—there it stood, large and brown and new, packed to the lid with pretty light dresses, neat little cotton sports frocks and all the other things she had thought she would need for a season in tropical West Africa. That is, if the trunk had really been going to Nigeria instead of remaining just stolidly here.

Through the open window came the deep harsh note of a strange plane. She glanced out. Yes, there it was, one of the National Guards' training machines, a fast, radial engine monoplane, an open seater of course. And that big shiny hulk of wood and linen and steel, just now side slipping to a skilful landing was what had robbed her of her trip to West Africa. Sue May slammed open the lid of the suitcase and banged her hairbrush back into its customary place on the dressing table.

Not, of course, that she disliked airplanes; nobody in the Innis family could do that. Both she and her brother Karl out there in the flying field had pretty nearly cut their teeth on propeller-bosses, and Dad had been flying even before he had joined up as part of a famous fighting squadron in France.

The note of the engine ceased momentarily, then whirred softly. That meant Karl was taxiing it into one of the hangars. Sue May glanced at her watch. Only half past eight. She wasn't due on the field till ten. Plenty of time to jump in the car, just as she was,

riding breeches, boots and soft silk shirt and run over to say farewell to the Derings. She *might* see the Derings in New York next week but . . . Sue May suppressed a sigh . . . she hadn't any real faith in that next week idea. The Dering plan had been off and on and off again too many times for that.

Hoping that Dad would be on the flying field she slipped quietly downstairs. She didn't really want to see him just now. He was as sorry as she was over the way things had worked out, but far more optimistic over the future. It took all Dad could make to keep the family together and run the flying field. It wasn't his fault that his son and daughter had had to throw in their little bank accounts to swing this last big demonstration of his. Actually Sue May had been the first to volunteer, even after her trunk was packed and her seat engaged for her to go with the Derings in the plane for New York. But she didn't want, just now, to bear the additional strain of Dad's sympathy.

The ancient six cylinder Buick was garaged in what had been the old barn of the farmhouse. Gas in the tank. Yes . . . good. No need ever to look at anything else since nothing mechanical ever went wrong, nothing ever squeaked or rattled or even seemed to wear out if Karl had the care of it.

Eyes squinting against the April glare she trundled out into the open and wheeled round the end of the house. And there, oh dear, was Dad, hatless, his old leather coat swinging open to his stride as he crossed

from the nearest hangar. Sue May tried not to see him, not to notice the lifted hand, but his hearty "Hi there, wait a minute," was too obvious to be ignored. The Buick purred to a halt.

"You're not forgetting?" he asked anxiously. "Ten o'clock was when they said they'd be here. We mustn't keep them waiting."

Sue May managed a smile as she shook her head. "No, Dad. I'm just . . . that is, it's just an errand." Better not mention the Derings, it would make it look as though she minded . . . well . . . as much as she really did mind. "I won't be long." Reassuringly.

Dad leaned against the fence with an appearance of nonchalance, while one hand fidgeted with the keys in his pocket. "Amazing piece of luck," he reiterated for perhaps the dozenth time, only half for Sue May's sympathetic ear, "Banfil and Ackroyd driving through this way and willing to watch a test of the C 37."

Sue May slid into low. It'd be rude, she knew, to break away since he wanted so much to talk it all over again. This parachute test was so tremendously important to him, to them all. But she hated his being so modest about it. The C 37 was so amazing, she believed in it so completely that she felt any airplane man ought to be proud to come any number of hundred miles to see it tried out. And it was the C 37 that had robbed her of her trip to Africa. No, she couldn't listen to Dad talk about it again. Not just now.

"I've got to hurry, honest I have. Daren't risk getting

back late," she murmured, and rolled out into the highway. It was five miles to the Dering's. Willow trees were a haze of cloudy catkins along full flowing streams, fences gleamed freshly whitewashed against the lush brilliance of new grass and from every barberry hedge and lilac breaking into leaf birds called, winging busily in the usual fever of spring house-building. But Sue May's thoughts were neither on spring nor budding lilacs. Down inside she was still all bleak and wintry. Though goodness knows, she ruminated, this is a big day for the Innis family. A Big Day . . . like that, all in capitals.

The C 37, known better as the Witch's Broom, was Dad's invention. C because it was the third type of harness he had invented, number 37 because no less than thirty-six parachutes of soft creamy-white silk had gone before it—and incidentally eaten deep into his own slight bank account.

Sue May slowed for what looked like a speed cop, but turned out to be a garage mechanic whom she knew.

"Hi, Bill!" She raised hand in greeting to the soiled grinning face and gathered speed again.

The C 37 wasn't so radically new; that was why it was so difficult to put over. It was just a tremendous improvement in every thread and curve, buckle and strap and cord. Looking back over the others Sue May was almost horrified to remember the flying carpets she had used in earlier parachute jumps; things that

might or might not open; parachutes whose silk might or might not hold the air; the double one that Dad had finally discarded because it was too complicated to refold; and there was one that always opened with such a snap it almost yanked you in two.

She turned up a side road. Another two miles. She wished now that she'd been less hasty and had 'phoned ahead, for she might find them already gone.

But as she rang the doorbell there was a reassuring patter of high heels. Mrs. Dering herself, a toothbrush, an odd slipper and a scarf in one hand opened the door.

"Oh, my dear! How nice of you! But I'm so upset. Gerald has gone on ahead to make some final arrangements. . . . I didn't have my bag quite packed. . . . I'm to meet him early for lunch at the airport lunch room. . . ." Vaguely she whirled up the stairs. Sue May followed, retrieving the scarf from the steps and gazing with amused consternation around a wildly disordered bedroom. Good gracious, but she should have come earlier!

"I know. It is awful, isn't it?" chirped Mrs. Dering. "But I'm always this way the last minute and Gerald always runs away and leaves me to handle everything alone. All this," she waved a toothbrush vaguely, "has to go into one suitcase." And without doing anything to further the process she sank down helplessly on the foot of the bed.

Sue May stood considering, one hand tugging at the

curl over her left ear, then without a word she began to fold garments and to lay them in neat piles on bed and chairs. Two stockings, only, to a pair and they really ought to match. All the underwear in one heap. And those shoes off the top of that pretty sports hat. "Any tissue paper?" she asked. It was soothing to be busy with her hands, not just thinking about how she too should be off to New York and Africa today.

"Oh, certainly." Mrs. Dering produced tissue paper from beneath the bed where it had apparently blown and sank back on her heels in the middle of the rug. "Oh, Sue May, you're such a comfort. If there weren't these new laws about kidnapping I swear I'd take you somehow! I don't see how Gerald will ever get along without you now, he's so accustomed to a secretary who understands what he's trying to do." She cocked a bright birdlike head on one side and frowned in charming perplexity.

"Gerald" was Professor Dering, an anthropologist already noted for his sympathetic insight into the native customs of West Africa, an expert on the little known primitive languages of the hill tribes bordering on the southern Sahara. For the past year and a half Sue May had been earning her pocket money and a little over by such secretarial work as she could do for him outside her school and study hours.

Anthropology was all right, but it was archaeology that fascinated Sue May. Archaeology. There was a

subject for you. Something real, something lasting, something you could study all your life and hardly do more than scratch the surface. The dictionary called it "the science that deduces a knowledge of past times from the study of their present remains." But it meant a lot more than that said.

It may have been because so much of Sue May's own home background was in the air, so much of it concerned only with machines, with modern inventions, with what happened today and was going to happen tomorrow that she had unconsciously tried to balance her air-mindedness with a desire for knowledge of the past and of what lay beneath her in the earth. Geology would have done that of course, but geology wasn't warm enough, human enough. Sue May wanted to embroider her knowledge of the past with a pattern of human contacts, human endeavors and ambitions. Not of today, or of tomorrow but of yesterday and the days and centuries and thousands of years before that. Ethnology and anthropology would have given her the human side of primitive life but they hadn't enough of yesterday in them.

So to the museums, Sue May had begun to go very early indeed, when she was ten, when she was eight or seven; she couldn't remember when she hadn't been hunting the museums and the libraries for more knowledge of archaeologists and excavations. Reconstructions of old ruins; what great men like Sir Flinders Petrie had deduced from the long barrows he excavated

in England; from the ruins of ancient Egyptian cities; what men like Sir Arthur Evans and the various learned societies from international universities had reconstructed of the life of ancient Crete and from Ur of the Chaldees. These were a daily balance to planes and parachutes, wing angles and trimotors. The past was something that gave a purpose and a reason to the present and future.

It was the museum that had brought her in touch with the Derings and especially with Professor Dering, a great man in his own line, with a whole string of impressive letters following his name. One day, two years ago, prowling about the museum library where by now Sue May was well known, she had reached for a book on one of the higher shelves. A long arm had reached above her.

"Allow me," said a pleasant voice, and the book descended to her own level.

Outside the library door, an hour later, she saw him again and they sat down on one of the stone benches to talk. Sue May told him that she was first year High, that she was trying to specialize in science and modern language, because so many of the big scientific books were in French and German, and that on the side she was learning stenography.

To her surprise, Professor Dering said he needed a secretary, someone he could train to his own way of working. It didn't sound, he said, as though the young lady had much spare time, but how would she like to

try putting his notes in order? For a consideration naturally.

How would she *like* it! Sue May knew Professor Dering's books. She would have taken on the job for nothing, have paid for the privilege. Anthropology was one of the sciences she must know about. If you were going to dig for ancient civilizations and knowledge of primitive peoples, reconstruct how they lived in the past, you had to know something about present day primitive peoples too. That was how Sue May became part-time secretary to Professor Dering.

And since the Professor lived mentally in the civilization of primitive Africa and Mrs. Dering cultivated an attractive helplessness, Sue May's duties ranged far beyond those of the usual secretary. Not only did she struggle with the elements of the Haussa language, which was the most used, semi-Arabic speech of West Africa, and attempt to sort out the main racial types of Nigeria, so that she could understand a little of what the Professor was writing about; but she organized every intricate detail of their coming expedition.

Of course she couldn't possibly know all that was wanted on such an expedition, and the apparently helpless Mrs. Dering would mention, just accidentally, that quinine bisulphate for tropical malaria was of no use compared with quinine hydrochloride, and that a sunhelmet in an African July was of little use without the kind of waterproof cover sold by Fortnum & Mason in London. In contrast the absent-minded Professor

would run through a five-page list of stores, apparently thinking of something quite different and see at once what small item was missing or could be improved. But to Sue May was the labor and the honor.

She had also grown very interested in primitive man, both because it was a wide and fascinating subject and because it was the nearest she could get to archaeology, the study of ancient peoples.

All that seemed a long way now from her present task. Her hands continued to pack, rhythmically, steadily folding, tucking in, arranging in neat order. A long way, this, from digging up stone implements and ancient remains as she had imagined herself doing, in some distant tropical jungle or African desert. Only once did she falter. That was when she lifted a bright negligée and a pile of photographs slipped to the floor. She stooped to recover them; pictures of Zimbabwe, those walls and towers of rude stone work, built it was thought, by some forgotten offshoot of the Zulus of eastern Africa and recently brought to public notice. It was a woman who had done the excavation. "What woman has done woman can do. . . ."

"Oh," exclaimed Mrs. Dering from her seat on the floor, "don't pack those, I'm sure Gerald has finished with them. How efficient you are, Sue May. I *do* hope that *something* will happen. . . . Gerald said that he'd hold your seat in the plane till the last possible moment."

The Derings were taking a plane for New York this

afternoon, where they'd have a bare two days to finish with equipment before catching a cargo boat, the only direct route for West Africa. There wasn't a ghost of a hope that in so short a time a miracle would happen to let her come by train and join them, for even though Professor Dering's passage and salary was paid by the Government that was employing him for his present task, and an allowance was made for a secretary, no Government had thought that he'd want a secretary all the way from the States to Africa. Sue May had planned to pay her own way out. If it hadn't been for the C 37 her trunk would now be on its way to New York and she herself about to take flight with the Derings. She must certainly remember to 'phone and cancel that seat they were holding for her.

"You *will* keep up your studies won't you, my dear?" urged Mrs. Dering.

Sue May nodded silently. Oh yes, she'd keep up her studies, though what use would she ever have for Haussa now? . . . scarcely a language you could use in daily conversation . . . and she could never hope to get another such chance to go to Africa. She stuffed stockings into the toe of a slipper and wedged it into place in the fast filling suitcase. "There's no chance of my coming out on a later boat. If we get an entering wedge with today's demonstration, Dad'll probably need me to help with more of them." It had been difficult to get Dad's consent to this trip in the first place, she'd had to work for extra high marks in school to

prove that the outside work didn't affect her studies. And he would never let her go out to Africa, alone, without the Dering's chaperonage.

"Oh, but you mustn't give up hope." Mrs. Dering, who had always had pretty much what she wanted, couldn't believe that anything might be really impossible. "It's just a matter of making up your mind and having courage, you know. And a girl who risks her neck three or four times a week in parachute jumping must have lots more courage than poor little me."

Sue May didn't know whether to be amused or cross. There didn't seem much connection between parachute jumping and working at archaeology with Professor Dering. "That's the other slipper in your hand, isn't it?" she tactfully switched the subject. "Better let me pack it. And where's your toothbrush holder? Are you sure Jones' garage know what time they have to send the car for you? I'd take you down myself but I have to be on the field at ten to meet some experts and demonstrate the C 37."

Her departure and farewells were tinged with some anxiety as to whether Mrs. Dering really did understand that she was leaving by plane for New York that afternoon. "You won't forget," reiterated Sue May amid somewhat tearful goodbyes, "that the plane leaves City Airport at one thirty. And tell the Professor that I'm just sick over not seeing him before he leaves. I'll keep track of his articles as they come out in the

Times and send him six clippings of each issue. . . . Oh well, never mind, I'll write it. . . . Goodbye, darling, you've been sweet to me. . . ."

As the Buick slipped into the highway the spring landscape was blurred to a fog of green. Sue May shook the moisture out of her eyes, fumbled for a handkerchief, and dabbed at her lashes with, regrettably, the sleeve of her blouse. Then she grinned firmly. She asked herself, Why go all tragic over this, which had seemed the biggest chance to do the one thing she wanted most in her life? This very morning she had a chance to put over the biggest thing in the history of the Innis family, the C 37. Concentrate on that, Sue May, and be darned to West Africa!

With almost a physical wrench she switched her mind from vain regrets to the business ahead. No more point in casting regretful thoughts towards the possible archaeology of Nigeria than in wishing yourself back in the plane, once you had bailed out. That particular jump had been made. Look round now and see where you were going to land. Hurrying back towards the Innis flying field she considered the plane that Karl had hired for the morning from the City Airport. They had needed it, a military type plane with open body so that she might get out more easily. Dad's own planes were all enclosed for passenger flight and anyway were getting a bit too obsolete.

There were three men coming; one a Major who had been with Dad in France and had some important

official position on the board for Government planes. Another was, she remembered, a Mr. Ackroyd with a more commercial interest in parachutes and flying. Yes, the chance of a lifetime, as Dad said. It meant that for the first time the C 37 would have an opportunity to show its qualities. There was plenty of demand for it, individual pilots had wanted it, but it had to receive the stamp of Government approval and be licensed and manufactured in just such a manner before it could be put on the market.

Would it be better if she got into proper flying kit, leather breeches, padded coat and all that? Sue May considered the question as she turned the Buick's nose into the Innis driveway, just dodging a pompous long blue limousine that was rolling out with three somewhat impressive male passengers. No, probably not. Even if the plane were open she didn't need all that paraphernalia, and she preferred to bail out in her usual costume.

She parked the car neatly above the oil drip tray in the garage, and closed the door without banging it. Karl was fussy about things like that. Glancing at her wrist watch she decided that she'd better report at the hangar so they wouldn't worry about her not being on hand.

The engine of the red plane was tuning up. To Sue May's critical ears it didn't sound too good. Someone was whistling as he slid back the doors of the autogiro hangar. Not much activity on the field this

morning. The blue hills to the west looked sleepily down on the wide sunny meadowland.

Good, there was Karl. He'd swept a length of smooth concrete, spread the parachute out upon it and stood waiting.

"Quick release or ordinary?" he queried.

She took a look at the windsock hanging listlessly from its mast. "Ordinary, I guess," she decided. Not a breath of air was stirring. It was only when there was a wind that you really needed the quick release so that you could snap yourself clear of the parachute the moment you landed, not taking a chance on getting dragged through trees and over ditches or cliffs.

"I guessed so." Karl indicated the cream-colored silk smoothed out upon the concrete. "But you'll have to check your folding and packing. I'd like to feel it wasn't all my fault if some day the thing didn't open and you made a dent in the earth.

That was ridiculous of course. If you could depend on anybody in the whole wide world you could depend upon Karl. But he'd always insisted that she must inspect her own parachute. She watched his careful fingers fold the delicate silk, checking the folds by eye, measuring them by handspans, testing each loop of the elastic. Those elastic bands were no special patent of the Innis 'chute but were used on most parachutes so that the thing would open progressively in a series of little pops and not allow the full weight of the body to come at once, with damaging strain, on the lines and

fabric. At the end of the process, at what corresponded to the mouth of the bottom edge of the parachute Sue May had to lend a hand. For here something had to be folded in under pressure. That particular thing was the secret of the Witch's Broom; its purpose was to make sure the 'chute would open, and not leave that all-important matter to mere chance.

Last of all, the release cord which held the neatly folded bundle together. Not till you pulled this cord did the parachute spread itself in the air above you. If you pulled it too early there was danger of the parachute's catching and tearing itself on the edge of the plane. And if you forgot to pull it at all or were frozen with fright, well that was all there was to that particular parachute jumper. A rather important little cord, that.

And that packed the 'chute and the rubber cords of the non-spinning attachment. The whole thing looked rather like a good sized cushion. Sue May checked over the harness and slid her legs through the two loops, buckling on the broad belt about her waist. Everything seemed all right, and the parachute lay against her back, no more uncomfortable than a ruck-sack, and not as heavy. She put on her crash-helmet but left the straps loose. It was hard to hear with them fastened.

"Better look over the bus now," Karl counseled. "Find out where you're going to step when you put your foot on the wing. Make sure you don't shove

a hoof through the fabric and get hung by an ankle."

It was a noble looking beast, a low winged monoplane with one of the very latest engines. Karl started to explain its points as one might those of a favorite horse. The red plane which had been warming up now swept a cloud of dust around them as it taxied to the takeoff, opened to a thunderous roar, surged forward, then up and up, turning silver as the sun caught it, then to a dark spot against the clear sky.

Sue May heard a shout behind her and turned. There was Dad hurrying towards them waving his arms and calling. Hurray, the people must have come!

But Dad's first words dispelled that hope. Killed it. Even buried it.

"A washout, the whole thing's a washout. They've come and gone." Anger and pain were in his voice. "They didn't even wait to see me. Left a note." Dad stopped, his arms hanging limply at his sides. Somehow he looked ten years older. "It wouldn't have taken ten minutes, twenty at the most to have shown them."

Karl was the first to recover from the shock. "So they came and went without even . . ." Somehow he couldn't finish the sentence.

"In such a blazing hurry that they couldn't wait to see me, just left a note," repeated Dad.

Why, those must have been the men in the big blue limousine! Gosh, if Sue May had known, she thought, she'd have sideswiped 'em with the Buick, done anything to keep them here, by main force if necessary.

But it couldn't be true, it simply couldn't! All their hopes, Karl's little savings, her own trip to West Africa and Dad's work of years just dissolving like this.

But Karl was still clinging to hope. "Did they say anything about coming again, or dropping in on the way back?"

Mr. Innis searched his pockets for the note, remembered that it was back in the house where he had crumpled it and tossed it down.

"Because if they didn't," continued Karl, "we'll cut our losses. I'll take the plane back to the City Airport as quick as I can. The less time we have it, the less we'll have to pay for it." Almost at a trot he and Dad disappeared towards the house.

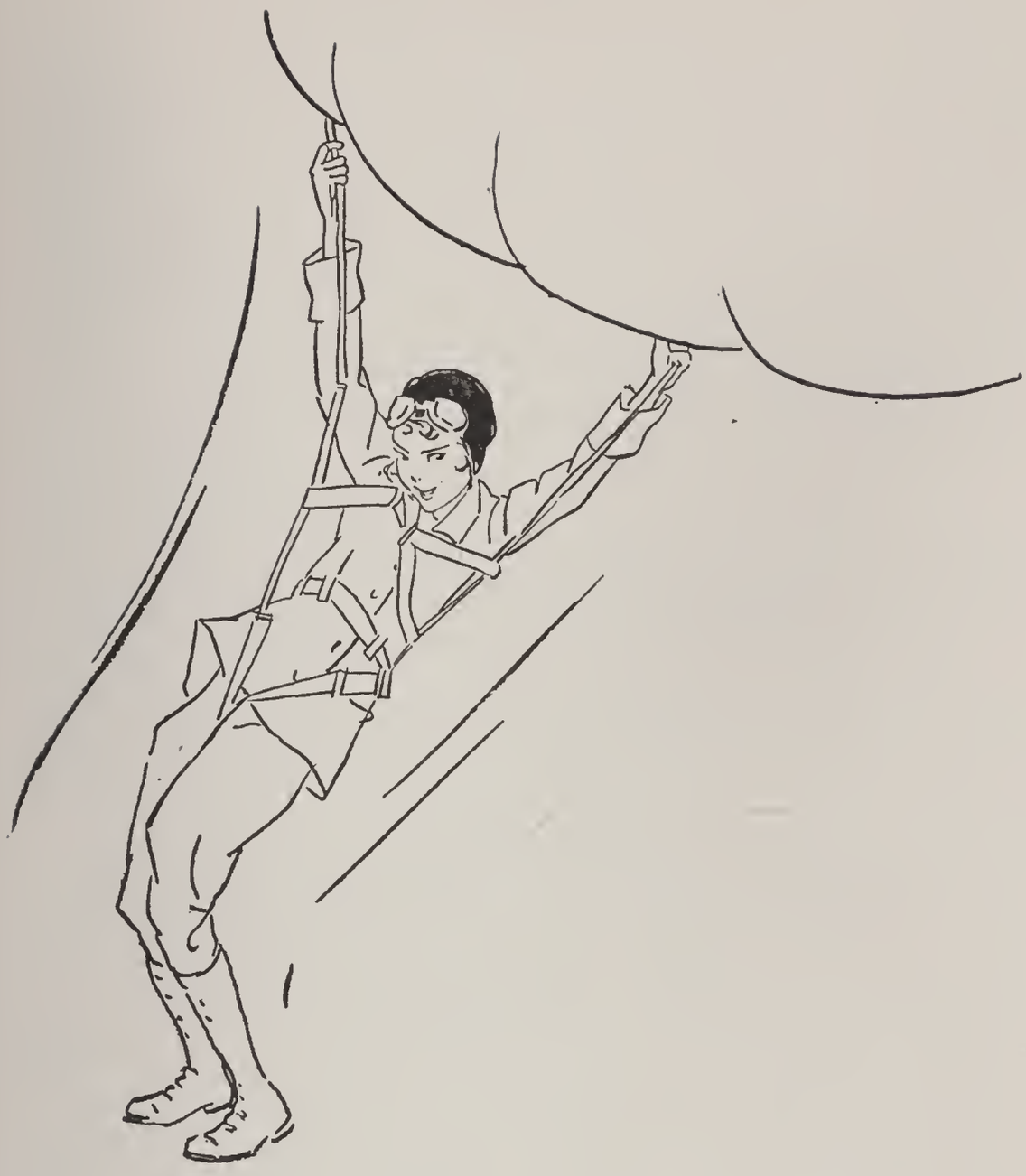
Sue May would have liked to sit right down and howl. This, she thought, had been the most horrible, the beastliest day of her whole life. Archaeology washed out. No goodbye to the Professor, no chance of following the Derings; she couldn't hope for such a chance again. And now that sacrifice too had just been in vain, it hadn't done a thing to help Karl and Dad.

Rocking on her heels on the concrete her eyes took in the plane, unthinkingly, automatically. What had Karl said about flying back with it? It was returning to the City Airport in a few minutes, if Dad had been right about the note. And it was from the City Airport in two hours that Professor Dering was to take off by plane.

Her sombre eyes lightened. Why shouldn't somebody at least get some one little thing out of this whole horrid mess of mishaps? Why not? She turned and glanced back towards the house. No Karl, no Dad in sight. No one else was watching her and even if there had been, no one would think anything of her movements. She approached the plane, set one booted foot on the toehold at the side, hauled herself swiftly over the edge, slid down inside. There was room behind the back seat, just clear of the aileron cables. Scrooging down she tucked herself in there.

Five minutes later Karl's voice sounded just outside. "Back in time for lunch, Dad. You'd better look after Sue May. . . . Wonder where she went . . ." His voice raised. "Sue . . . Sue May." No answer. "Getting done out of her archaeological trip with that whathisname man, and then losing this chance today, she'll be mad enough for anything. Guess you'll find her trying to bite the tires off the Buick. . . ."

There was the usual routine of starting, warming up the engine, the chocks being pulled away from the wheels. Then a sudden roar, a gentle bumping and they were up.



Chapter Two

A PARACHUTE JUMP TO AFRICA

It was snug in the fuselage, maybe a bit too snug. Also the moment the tail rose as they attained flying speed Sue May was almost standing on her head. Better let Karl make height before she showed herself, even get some way on her trip towards the city landing

grounds before shifting forward and changing the balance of the plane. Strange that he hadn't noticed the different loading from when he'd flown it over. He certainly would have in one of his own planes. She put it down to this one's being strange and thanked her lucky star, which, up to this moment hadn't been very efficient today.

The blast from the engine eased to a benign roar. That meant they'd climbed enough and had flattened out. Sue May loosened a couple of small wingbolts on the back of the seat behind which she crouched, tipped the seat forward and scrambled cautiously over. Sitting down on the edge of it she tightened the bolts again. Karl never turned his head.

He must have corrected unconsciously for the change in balance. Sue May looked around her. Quite a lot of gadgets that she didn't know. Those must be machine gun mountings, though there were no machine guns in sight. Dual controls too, in case the pilot got shot, for this was a fighting plane. Altimeter, speed gauge, oil gauge, gas gauge and several other instruments; she glanced over her instrument board at Karl's shoulder. All seemed well so there'd be no danger now in getting his attention.

Where was that stub of a pencil, the little pad of paper she always carried when she was going to bail out? You couldn't talk to the pilot in the open machines used for parachute jumping.

A smile twinkled in her brown eyes as she scribbled.

But standing up to pass the paper forward she was startled by the force of the wind. The slip-stream from the propeller seemed to want to tear her head off, and thrusting her hand forward was like trying to drive it against the force of a firehose. Not only was the speed of the plane struggling against her, but the airblast from the propeller, an airblast of perhaps two hundred miles per hour.

She felt the paper drawn from her fingers and had an impish desire to see the expression on Karl's face when he read it.

"Drive to the City Airport, James, we're seeing the Derings off for Africa."

You couldn't tell anything from the mere top of his helmet, but he was writing and in a moment the pad came back.

"Sue, you brat! I could cheerfully wring your little neck."

Sue May giggled. This was rather fun. You didn't often get a rise out of Karl unless you committed some fool carelessness about the car. And that was different of course. She glanced up. Karl's fingers were wriggling above his head. Oh, he wanted the pad again. Sue May thrust it into his hand and waited for the next communication. When it came it was a shock.

"Military plane not allowed to land lady passengers at City Airport. Have to take you back."

Gosh, that was true! She hadn't considered that in the fever of her sudden brain wave. No, she couldn't

let him take her back, that would mean a longer and hence a bigger rental for the plane, and it was Karl's savings as well as hers that was paying for it. She wrote hastily.

"Thanks no. I'll walk back."

The pad was returned with a large penciled question mark in its center. Steadying her wrist against the vibration of the powerful engine, Sue May scrawled on a new sheet. *"Got my parachute, goof!"* and passed it over.

Karl's head bobbed to one side. He was cocking an eye over the edge of the plane, scanning the flat, chessboard-like landscape over which they seemed to hang poised like a humming-bird. She followed suit. You couldn't just land anywhere with a parachute. If you landed in water and tangled with your 'chute you didn't stand much chance. To get mixed up with trees or telegraph wires was about as bad. Usually of course you bailed out over a nice smooth landing ground, but each one of the fields below, though flat enough, seemed to sprout a farm building, a clump of trees, a stream or something equally hazardous. You could be almost sure of barbed wire too. The only part of the country that she felt was safe was the new arterial road which ran almost straight past Dad's air field to the city and the City Airport. That was too new, thank Heaven, to be built up with houses or even hot-dog stands and was absolutely smooth landing if one could only hit it.

Karl seemed to have the same idea. *"How about road?"* came the scrawled message.

"O.K." scribbled Sue May. *"Pick me up in your car as you come back if I don't get a lift home first."*

He was losing height now. Of course the higher you were the safer your jump as it gave more time for the 'chute to open. But with the C 37 you could cut things pretty close. They were over the wide, six-car road now with the broad grass plot down the middle. Circling, flying back over it. Now he swung off and crossed it once in each direction. He was trying to gauge the wind. There was a bit of smoke from a chimney too and he scribbled back a report which checked with the chimney smoke.

"Wind is straight along road towards city. Speed about twenty to thirty."

That meant miles per hour. Stiffer than she had thought possible from the limp windsock on the flying field. But that sometimes happened because the home field was a bit sheltered by the hills to the west.

Sue May fastened her helmet, wrote *"O.K."* on the pad and passed it across. It came back:

"O.K. nothing. Wind too strong. Am taking you home."

She bit her lip and glanced over the side again. No, no, he mustn't do that. What she saw below increased her determination, a car that might or might not hold someone she was especially anxious to see. She raised head and shoulders from the protection of the airplane

body and was thrown violently back against the seat. Terrific, the combined force of wind and slipstream. Never had she bailed out from so fast a plane. Could she manage it?

Fingers took tighter hold, one leg swung out over the side. A metal footplate on the wing. Somehow, though a thousand invisible hands seemed to thrust her back and back, she must manage to reach that. She was out, still clinging precariously before Karl's head turned. No chance for any further written notes, but Karl understood. Sue May had taken decision out of his control, now all he could do was co-operate.

Eyes weeping with the strength of the wind, eyelids forced back so that she couldn't close them, but still she was aware of the world slowly spinning beneath her; that was as Karl turned the plane. He nodded. That was the first signal he always gave.

Sue May nodded confirmation. She was ready.

Karl's head moved again. Then one counted One . . . two . . . *three,* and he dipped the nose of the plane in a short dive. With all her strength Sue May thrust herself forward, leaning against the wind almost as against a solid wall. A short shuffle sideways and she stepped backward calmly as you would step off a bus. Into nothingness.

She felt the blood rush through her body, tingle quickly to fingers and toes as she dropped like a stone. These few seconds were the most exciting part, when you delayed opening the parachute to make sure you

were free of all entanglements. The ring of the release cord was round her finger. A gentle pull, then a sound above her, *plop, plop, plop;* the little elastic bands on the 'chute.

And with each plop an invisible hand gave a gentle tug at the harness. Now came the strange sensation of being disembodied; real flying, this. Far more what flying should feel like than in the noisy rush and roar and vibration of the big motor. You felt as a jellyfish must feel, floating silently on a sunny warm sea, and looking up you could see the friendly great umbrella, white and golden with the sun upon it, blue in the shadows. Beneath, as the parachute ceased spinning, an earth frozen into immobility. It might have been dead except for the sound of a distant farm dog and the honk of cars along the highway.

Sue May began to sing. Nobody could hear her up here, as sound travels upward, not down. It was fun, this singing into the void as she'd always done since her very first jump. An absurd little skylark song of triumph. It was useful too, because, like swallowing, it relieved the changing pressure of air on the ear-drums. Her eyes no longer streamed now that she was just floating. The cars on the road were more distinct. What if she could intercept Mrs. Dering and go on to the port to see the Professor after all? She looked down, counting them. About ten coming from the city. Then as she swung round with the 'chute she could see almost the same number that had passed. Curious how

squat and square they looked. One of them though, the particular one she had spotted from the plane before she jumped, in fact the reason for her coming down here, was a luxurious brute, almost double the length of the old Model T behind it.

That was some way behind where she would land. If that was the car she thought, it must have stopped for gas after leaving the note for Dad. She chuckled to herself. They'd get a demonstration of the C 37 now, whether they wanted it or not.

A siren shrilled along the black ribbon of road. What on earth was that for?—a fire engine or an ambulance probably. Then she saw that the cars streaming countrywards were being halted like beads stopped upon a string. People descending from their cars were craning upwards. But Sue May now had her own problems.

Karl had been right about the wind. Not a breath of air upon her of course, for she was travelling with it like the jellyfish in a current of water, but the ground was slipping away behind her faster than she liked. Thank goodness there were no trees here, along this new road, no telegraph lines. Reaching up to the cord she began to spill air from one side of the parachute to bring herself more directly over the center of the road. Wouldn't do to slap one of those windscreens as she swept along at twenty-five miles an hour.

That lawnlike strip in the middle of the road looked inviting if she could only make it. These were her best

riding breeches, donned specially for today's demonstration and she didn't want to land in a muddy bit or a grease patch.

Dare not spill any more air now. Need all the support just before the bump. Have to face the direction you're going. Then you get thrown on your face with your arms to save you, not the back of your skull.

The ground swept up with increasing speed. No time to look at cars now. Only to hope.

Bend your knees, Sue May. Relax, ready for the bump. Just as you would in a jump from a wall.

Feet on the ground and running like blazes to catch up with herself. One hand fumbled for the quick release at her belt. Then she remembered. She had told Karl the "ordinary." That darned old deceitful windsock again.

The parachute no longer holding her up, but hurtling her forwards, sprawled on her face and still travelling. She made a snatch at the ropes, trying to spill wind again and so collapse the parachute. But the pull was too strong. She might break an arm that way if her wrist got caught in the rope.

The blue limousine again. Someone had leaped from the car just ahead of her, hurled himself bodily into the billowing folds of silk, collapsed them, and was lost to sight beneath the vast mass of the umbrella. As he did so, Sue May felt the drag on her harness lessen, then cease. She knew what she had to do.

Gathering herself to her knees she flung herself forward, pinning down the remaining folds. Something struggled beneath her, choked and swore lustily.

The parachute ought not to be struggling like this, now that the wind wasn't under it. Sue May threw herself on all fours rather like a seal diving into cream-colored waves. Her head emerged from the folds to encounter the astonished eyes of another seal, a masculine one sprawled in a precisely similar position.

"Oh . . . I'm sorry . . ." began Sue May somewhat formally.

"C 37 I presume!" snapped the other seal. Then shrouded alike in the vast mass of cream silk the two collapsed on the curb of the parkway choking with laughter.

Sue May gurgled and giggled and choked. The masculine seal choked and giggled and gurgled. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ho! Ho! Ho! It was such a relief to laugh. She had been scared there, really frightened for just a moment. And the man in the parachute gown might have felt the same way.

From the parked limousine ahead of them two figures, more men, had come forth. They also were holding their sides with laughter. A worried young motorcycle cop just arriving on the driveway . . . it must have been his siren that had stopped the cars . . . joined in the ridiculous situation. Then one of the men from the car came up, grinning, and offered his hand.

"Oh, I'm sorry!" began Sue May, somewhat formally.

"Can I help you with the buckles?" he said. "Are you Miss Innis? I must say you take a unique method of demonstrating your father's parachute."

In a moment she was free. The other occupant of the cream-colored silk was dusting off his knees, and bundling up the folds. Somebody who had run across the grass strip, he looked like a newspaper man, was hastily dismissed. "No. No publicity on this please. I'm Major Banfil. Mind what I say now! Beat it, sonnie."

The speed cop produced some string from his pocket. This, with the belt of the harness served to confine the 'chute into a bulky parcel. One couldn't refold it here.

A lift? Yes, Sue May would be glad of that. The drone of an engine overhead. From the limousine window she glanced out to see Karl dip a wing in farewell. It said as plainly as words. "Good work, brat. I see that you're going in my direction. Meet you later," and zoomed off towards the airport.

Sue May had rather dreaded this part of the demonstration. Of course she hadn't very long, only a few minutes from the time she glimpsed that bright blue bonnet from the sky to the moment she sank back in the cushioned seat, bowling along towards town. But she needn't have dreaded it; that laughter had broken the ice. They already knew who she was, already, it seemed, knew what the C 37 could do.

Remembering first to thank her brother seal, she ex-

plained why she hadn't worn the harness with the quick release this morning.

"That's right," said the one named Ackroyd. "I noticed the limp sock as we passed your flying field."

He would of course. Sue May could see right away that he was a flying man. Well, of course he would need to be, in his job.

"Wasn't it rather dangerous, doing such a short jump?" asked the round faced one, whose name seemed to be Major Banfil. "I noticed the 'chute didn't open right away." An eye for technical details had the Major.

Sue May shook her head, meanwhile wishing she could get just a brief glimpse of herself in a mirror somehow. Never would she fly again without a vanity case. You couldn't tell just whom you'd descend on socially.

"No," she said, switching back to the question in hand. She'd delayed pulling the cord on purpose. And that gave her the chance to remark that of course the C 37 couldn't possibly fail to open.

"Not?" queried the Major in a sceptical tone.

"No, it couldn't hang fire an instant," continued Sue May in tones of assurance, "once you've pulled the cord. It doesn't depend on the speed of your fall to open it, on the air getting under it. It opens of itself."

The third man, a little gingery person with a fox-like, pleasant face leaned forward in his seat. "The method, I suppose, is the secret?"

Sue May hesitated. "Not exactly. The method's been used before but Dad's improvement on it is quite new. And most of the pilots we know want to use our 'chute instead of the obsolete official one, but it's against the regulations."

"Obsolete, h'm?" snapped the gingery little man.

"Yes, obsolete," Sue May was firm. "I wouldn't trust my life to most of them and I've bailed out Heaven knows how many hundred times." She intercepted a humorous glance between the Major and Mr. Ackroyd. Perhaps she'd been too outspoken, but she did know her facts.

The gingery man wanted details and more details; the number of panels, superficial area, the cord. Sue May had all these and more at her fingertips.

"Hmm," the foxy one grunted, then returned to the attack. "We've seen this unofficial test. Now what sort of test would you propose between the C 37 and the official 'chute which you condemn?"

That was an easy one. Sue May had often thought about it and she'd heard the pilots talk it over with Dad too. She'd bail out half a dozen times, twenty times, and she knew several pilots that would do it for them if there was any objection to a girl in so official a test. All this demonstration from lower down than anyone would dare to with the official 'chute.

"Care to take her on?" Major Banfil quirked a quizzical eyebrow at the gingery little man.

For the first time the other man smiled. "Somehow I think not."

"It wouldn't be fair of course," Sue May came to his aid. "Dad says you could pretty nearly use C 37 off a high bridge. And his next parachute—"

"Will be to save a man who falls downstairs!" sniffed the Major, but he chuckled.

They were turning in to the airport now. "By the way," asked Mr. Ackroyd. "I suppose this was where you wanted to go?"

She explained that her brother would be waiting for her here with his car, but she was still watching for some word or sign from the three, trying hard to guess their reactions to the C 37, her demonstration and her selling talk. They weren't angry, she was sure of that. But she couldn't guess enough of each man's personality, even of each one's particular job in the airplane business to get any result. Were they going to see Dad for a further tryout, make another appointment, a real one this time?

The gingery man paused with his hand on the door of the car. "This your brother?" he bobbed a head towards Karl, crossing from a hangar. "I'd like a few words with him, Miss Innis."

"Don't scold him for letting me bail out there," begged Sue May worriedly. "I stowed away and he didn't know I was going to jump till I was already over the side."

"Oh that?" No, the gingery one didn't mean to

mention it even. "Glad to have met you," he added briefly. It was Major Banfil who said he hoped they'd meet soon again and asked. "I suppose you're going to be a pilot later?"

Well at least he'd said "later", not "when you grow up." Sue May, with her mind all on the Derings now and whether they'd be here and how soon till their plane left for New York, shook her head. "Pilot? No, I don't know anything about planes really, except to go places in them. I'm going to be an archaeologist." She nodded goodbye and dashed off towards the big airport center.

But Mrs. Dering hadn't arrived, the Professor was nowhere in sight. Hurrying back she saw that Karl was free now, had just left the little gingery man. Better ask him to pick up the 'chute from the big limousine. But Karl was too excited, almost, to listen.

Oh bother the old 'chute. Yes, of course he'd get it from the car. But what in heck had she done to the three old geezers? The one with the red hair was head of the purchasing department for the City Airport and he'd made a definite date, definite mind you, for an official test, with their own pilots, of the C 37 tomorrow at four. Said if it did half the things Miss Innis claimed for it there was more than a prospect of large-scale manufacture for it immediately . . . and Karl paused to catch his breath.

Sue May forgot to watch for the Derings and did a jig step on the path. "Oh Karl—we must phone Dad

right away—he'll just about die with joy—oh poor Dad!" She wanted to laugh, she wanted to cry. She wanted to hug someone. But Karl'd faint if she hugged him right here. What was he saying?

"And look here, brat, this African trip? Got your place in the plane still?"

"Why . . . why yes. Mrs. Dering said the Professor hadn't cancelled it, and I forgot to, though I meant to do it."

"Well then, looky." He grabbed her arm. "I'll hurl round to the bank and get the money. My account'll stand it to get you down there. On the strength of this promise you got from ginger whiskers . . ."

What on earth was he raving about! It took Sue May a minute or two to switch her mind back from the C 37 to West Africa. When she did—

"Passport?" he was asking, worriedly.

"Oh yes, I got that weeks ago—don't you remember? But it's home in my top bureau drawer."

"Right. We'll get that. Anything else? Oh Heavens yes, your luggage." His face fell. "You can't go off without clothes."

She would have gone in a bathing suit. But that wasn't necessary. Bless her idiocy for not having unpacked after all! She raced beside him as he hurried to the car. Yes, her trunk could go down by train tonight and would just catch the boat and as for her suitcase, that too was all ready. And if he couldn't get home and back in time she could borrow clothes

from Mrs. Dering, just for New York, they were almost of a size. Would he hug Dad for her?

He would not! Karl switched on the engine and grinned. "Go wash your face, brat," he commanded in the old brotherly tones, but there was immense pride behind them. And he slid into low gear.

"Hi," Sue May, remembering, raised her voice above the sound of the motor as he rolled away down the drive. "Put my brush from the dressing table into the case, will you? . . ."

She turned back towards the airport. There were the Professor and Mrs. Dering coming towards her across the grounds. West Africa was, airily speaking, just across the corner.

Chapter Three

BY CARGO BOAT TO NIGERIA

TWENTY-ONE days on a tiny cargo boat to West Africa, without a single port of call, should have been dull. But to Sue May Innis it was just one long exciting moment. Almost before dawn she would awake and bounce from her bunk, to thrust a curly brown tousled head through the porthole and survey the skies for a weather forecast; then fling her dressing gown around her, thrust feet into slippers and race for the deserted deck. Anything might happen along while she wasted precious hours in sleep, anything from a mermaid to a whale.

Actually she did see a whale once. And there was a land-bird that rested for half a day on the masthead; and schools of porpoises, always thrilling; the triumph of mastering ships' bells and watches, lines of phosphorescence around the bows at night; and sometimes, turtles and flying fish. What idiot had said that the sea was always the same!

Mrs. Dering stayed below, even on the calmest day. "No use, my child, in courting disaster!" And with incredible quantities of fruit, novels and an enchanting

negligée she turned her cabin into a pleasant little boudoir. Professor Dering, bless his whiskers, had just about worn a track across the Atlantic, he'd crossed so often, but that hadn't dampened his enthusiasm. Deck tennis, shuffleboard, quoits, were a pleasant part of Sue May's secretarial duties. When she and her boss had exhausted one set of opponents they gaily took on another. In between times Sue May was kept busy with her lessons in Haussa.

One passenger, Mrs. Fish, was of no use in any kind of game. But she had a game of her own. She would come up as Sue May leaned on the rail watching the bobbing line of the patent log or the porpoises playing; a prematurely stout person who reserved all her prowess for the dining table.

" . . . So I said to the Ambassador," she would burble in Sue May's impatient ear, "My de . . . ar Charles . . . you know we always call him Charles in our family . . .! You really *must* make me known to the Governor. He might think I was just anybody!"

Sue May was always trying to escape from what she called Mrs. Fish's line. On the particular morning of the conversation just related she was glad when the ship's bell indicated ten o'clock. "That's my factory whistle," Sue May tried not to sound too relieved. "I must go and punch the time clock."

When she arrived, with portable Corona and an armful of papers, at the door of the dining saloon the Pro-

fessor was already seated at a green baize-covered table. The Captain had allowed them this room as refuge and workplace between meals.

"Got hooked by the Fish this morning again," announced Sue May. "In the ten minutes before I could break away she dragged in a Rumanian Count, a Scotch laird, and of course our old friend, Charles the Ambassador. West Africa, I gather, is to be handed to her on a flower-decked platter." She whirred a fresh page into the typewriter. "Now what do we work on this morning?"

"I'm afraid it's Edible Grains again, a bit hard, so soon after breakfast."

This monograph on the Primitive Processing of Edible Grains was a hobby of Professor Dering's. As an expert on primitive African languages his interest had swung to the lives and the customs of the people themselves, to anthropology in general. Sue May, would-be archaeologist, future delver into the unwritten past, felt that a knowledge of present-day primitive life would help her to understand the primitive life of far-off ages; this made her perhaps more of a student than a paid secretary and the Professor welcomed questions, heard her daily Haussa lesson, explained as much as he could, but also set her a higher standard of endeavor than would have been required of her as a temporary secretary and typist.

Immediately Sue May settled down to transcribing some of yesterday's notes. She was quick at her seek-

it-and-sock-it typing method, she'd taken great trouble over that, and neat and accurate.

"I wonder," said the Professor suddenly, looking up from the galley proofs in his hand, "whether you'd mind reverting to longhand, Susan. Your handwriting is very pleasant and legible."

"Is it the noise?" asked Sue May. "If that bothers you I'll put some sort of pad under the machine."

"No, not the noise." The Professor removed his spectacles and smiled disarmingly. "Not the noise, but—how shall I put it?" No scientist such as Sue May wished to be, he submitted, could afford to be tempted by immediate results. For instance in the archaeological line that would mean mere "treasure digging" as opposed to the slow, minutely painstaking labor of excavation.

Sue May tugged at the curl over her left ear and wondered how this applied to her typing. She knew that she was accurate and careful.

"We will concede that your present typing meets with the needs of the present," the Professor enlightened her. "But with a wise eye to the future would it not be better to master the touch system? Anyone can type with one or two fingers, just as anyone can plunge with clumsy pick and shovel into an ancient burial barrow. In both cases it's the way, the exact method that matters. And the archaeologist has a special responsibility, since his job is such a destructive one."

Sue May was shocked. Surely people couldn't be

called 'destructive' who brought to light the unwritten history of the past, who had built up from the smallest traces the intimate daily life of a thousand, of ten thousand years ago, adding so greatly to our wealth of knowledge. To rebuild forgotten palaces out of unwanted potsherds, was surely constructive if anything was!

The Professor, reading her thoughts, smiled. "'Destructive' was the word I used. Once a place has been dug up, whether it is a barrow or a city, it has been exposed to the light, its message has been read once and for all. Its soil has been disturbed and can never be replaced as it was. Each site is like a book which may be destroyed as it is translated and it must remain then, a final monument to the clumsiness or delicacy of the first man who excavated it."

Sue May nodded. Professor Dering was right, of course. Archaeology wasn't just the digging up of buried treasure; it was doing skilled detective work on ancient material, making each discovered article yield up all that it had to say. From the manner in which it was found, how it lay, where it lay in regard to other objects, how it happened to be there, the archaeologist could deduce many things. A broken bit of ugly brown pottery might be a far more exciting clue to the entire origin of an ancient people than the golden hoard of some pirate chief. And how deep it lay, in what kind of soil, was usually far more important than the thing itself. That was what he meant when he talked

about disturbing the soil. But, writing laboriously by hand throughout the remainder of the morning, she *still* didn't see how archaeology applied to her typing.

A brazen clamor sounded along the decks and came to a climax in the corridor; a steward entered to stow away the gong and lay the long table for the dozen passengers. Half an hour to lunchtime. The Professor, briefcase under arm, disappeared through the door and Sue May shuffled her papers together.

Outside the dining-room an officer was pinning to the notice board the usual radio news of the day. This was never of great interest, and she would have hurried by, down the companionway to her cabin, if Mrs. Fish, peering at the typewritten pages, hadn't turned to her and beamed.

"Isn't this exciting?" She pointed with a pudgy finger.

Sue May bent closer and read: "Sioux Forks . . . [why that was quite near home] . . . Today two young farmers digging in a pasture discovered a pottery jar with a quantity of gold coins and some jade. Beside it was a skeleton and the evidences of an ancient stone building." Jade . . . jade? What was jade doing, so far north of Central America where it had once been held almost in reverence as the most precious of stones. And the two farmers, how much had they destroyed in uncovering this gold, as though they were merely digging at the end of the rainbow?

"Buried treasure!" gushed Mrs. Fish. "You know

that happened right in my home town once too. Just in our back-yard. It used to be an Indian burying ground, and we found a lot of turquoise beads and some blonde hair."

Jolted momentarily out of her indignation Sue May asked "Blonde hair? How awfully interesting! Did you get an expert in to examine the place?"

"Oh no, there wasn't anything else there, we dug all round to see. Of course we burned the hair, the person might have died of most anything. But my sister wears the beads,—and they are lovely."

Sue May daren't say what she felt about it. She turned and whirled down to her cabin. Just plain greed, it had been, for the silly string of turquoise beads . . . and was it ignorance that couldn't see what it had destroyed? Both probably. People, quite educated people too, grabbed at a trinket and destroyed forever all the trinket implied. One didn't find blonde hair in an old, old Indian grave and just forget about it. And as for that Sioux Forks note, why that simply screamed aloud for an explanation.

With a shaking hand she ran a comb through her bobbed curls, dabbed powder on her nose and blindly glared at the reflection in the dim little cabin mirror. Why had there been an Indian skeleton beside that jade? And why the remains of a stone building? Indians hadn't built in stone, not North American Indians, and . . . the question marks spluttered angrily through her brain.

But Mrs. Fish was irrepressible. Even at the lunch table. . . . "So you're going all the way to Africa to dig for buried treasure, Professor Dering? How exciting!" She smiled coyly and the long gold chain about her neck clanked against her plate.

"No," said the Professor, and took a spoonful of soup.

"Oh, but I'm sure it must be. Quite too fascinating!"

"But you see," Professor Dering paused with the spoon halfway to his mouth. "I'm not going to Nigeria to dig buried treasure."

"But Africa was what I heard . . ." Mrs. Fish seemed able to talk and eat at the same time. "The Canaries then? How interesting. Now I knew the name of . . . let me see, . . . would he be our consul there?"

"I can't say," said Professor Dering wearily, and cast an appealing glance towards his secretary across the table.

Mrs. Fish caught the glance. "And your sweet little secretary will be in Teneriffe too?"

"No," said Sue May, wickedly still further snarling the tangle. "I'm going on to Africa you see." She wondered how she finished her soup without choking on her inward giggle.

"I'm sure if I could only remember it there was something very interesting I've read about the Canaries."

"They sing," murmured Sue May into her napkin.

" . . . A big book you know, with, let me see, a red cover." Her hands described its approximate size that

the Professor might have no difficulty in recognizing it. "Or, no, was that the one about Atlantis? No, yes . . . No, let me see. Surely they were the same book?"

Sue May was well along in the next course, she could afford to draw Mrs. Fish's fire now while the Professor, a slow eater, caught up with his meal.

"But Atlantis was supposed to be a lost continent. The Canaries aren't exactly lost, you know."

The woman ignored Sue May. "Perhaps the dear Professor will tell us his theory of that fascinating subject."

Hastily Professor Dering disclaimed authority. "You're asking a carpenter about a mason's job. You should consult an archaeologist—my learned colleague." With a grin of mischief he bowed his head towards his secretary.

Well, she'd brought it on herself. Sue May drew a deep breath and in a very passable imitation of the Professor's platform manner, took the plunge. Of course she'd read about Atlantis, what would-be archaelogist hadn't thrilled to that story, and as she grew older had been greatly disappointed to discover that no huge inhabited continent had ever actually sunk beneath the waves of the Atlantic Ocean. "But the day has passed," she rounded up her slight fund of information, "when the pseudo-scientist could involve himself in an elaborate and imaginative cocoon. Guess work as to where and what Atlantis is has been halted

by the geographer who assures us that Atlantis is not, and never was."

O . . . o, that was a good sentence. She caught the Professor's eye, which nearly proved fatal to her gravity, recovered, and went on. "No inhabited continent has ever existed between Europe and America. As for Lemuria and Mu . . . the Pacific counterpart of Atlantis . . ." Airily she dismissed those before going into further detail of the legend, reported by a Greek philosopher, taking, as it were, Sabbatical leave in Thebes, of ancient Egypt.

Mrs. Fish had laid down her fork and was gazing at her in open amazement. There were conspiratorial signs from the Professor that she should continue.

"Though Atlantis never existed, no legend such as this could be lightly ignored. Was the tradition," she asked of the dining-room, "a far off echo of that wide flung story of the flood?" Sue May left the answer to her audience. "Or again the legend as handed down would fit an Egyptian's half-forgotten memory of the fall of that great sea-empire based on Crete . . . the faintest tremor of a far-off crash." On which note, Sue May thought it would be wise to close—she couldn't hope to better it and anyway the Professor had choked as though on a bone.

"Oh," Mrs. Fish gulped, "oh, I had no idea it was so interesting."

"Few people," said Sue May, choking in turn, "ha . . . have!"

Lunch had been fun; the Professor had a happy knack of turning even that deadly woman into an amusing pastime. But on deck again Sue May relapsed into a former mood. Here, alone except for the rise and dip of the bluff-bowed old freighter and the steady sound of the breaking waves, Sue May hauled a deck chair into a sheltered corner, cocooned herself in a steamer rug and opened her grammar to the Haussa lesson for the day. But between her eyes and the page swam irrepressible remnants of the morning's conversations. "An archaelogist has a special responsibility . . . Sioux Forks . . . two youths dig up buried jade . . . golden hair in an Indian grave. . . ." She closed her eyes and concentrated on the elaborate Oriental Haussa greeting, so difficult to memorize. A moment later she heard the Professor's voice above her.

"Shall I hear the lesson?" he asked.

Sue May handed him the grammar. But she had something to talk over with him before she could think of anything else. "Yes, but did you see the radio news this noon? And that idiot Mrs. Fish told me about blonde hair found in an Indian burial ground—" She sputtered on for a full five minutes, ending with "My brother Karl often drives over to Sioux Forks. I've half a mind to write and ask if he can't do something about it . . . destroying a good bit of archaeological evidence like that. Gosh, I wish I'd been there." She dabbed at the angry tears in her eyes.

Professor Dering was more lenient in his judgment.

Even a trained archaeologist is a vandal in the eyes of his successors, he told her. "People would give a fortune to undo the work of Schliemann, for instance, who discovered the site of ancient Troy. Yet Schliemann was among the leading prehistorians of his day. And you should read Flinders Petrie's strictures on the work of his brother excavators in Egypt. Don't be too harsh on the amateurs who make these chance and dramatic discoveries," he ended. "They often lead the way to real scientific investigation of hitherto unknown sites."

"But modern scientific digging—" Sue Mary started to protest.

"—Will be condemned, even within our lifetime, as obsolete and unscientific. It's difficult, I know, to imagine it. But supposing, in a few years, invention should place at your disposal something like a stereoscopic X-ray camera, focusing sharply to within an inch, so that without disturbing a spoonful of earth you could record the outlines of each object below the surface, . . . an inch, two inches down and so on for the depth of many feet."

Eyes gleaming, Sue May sat bolt upright in her chair. "Zowie!"

"It would make our present dig-and-damage methods a bit out of date, wouldn't it?

"And in the meantime, we're all vandals, in the sight of the years to come." He leafed through the grammar. "All you can aim at in any science, whether

your archaeology or my anthropology, is to do the very best in every detail, since you cannot know what may or may not be important.

And after hearing her lesson, the Professor drifted off in his usual vague, long-legged manner.

With the departure of the Professor, Sue May's mood swung back. She should be studying Haussa but she reconsidered again that radio news note. She'd let him half persuade her to leave the business alone, but if she wrote home to Karl, perhaps, since he knew how keenly she felt about this digging business, he'd be able to do something about it; see one of the local museums, get them to send a man down to Sioux Forks and investigate whatever was there. Somehow for the moment Sue May felt that she was the only possible person who could have recognized the peculiar significance of that strange combination; that it might even be an outpost of a wandering group of Mayas in the north before the slow Indian trek to Central America.

She'd do it now. She unwound herself from her steamer rug and scurried along the deck. Once in her cabin with her open typewriter on her knee she started to compose her letter.

"Karl dear," swiftly she picked out the letters with two fingers of her right, one of her left hand. Then she stiffened and sat back.

"We're all vandals," came the memory of the Professor's voice, ". . . in the sight of the years to come. All you can aim at in any science, archaeology or my

anthropology, is to do the very best in every little detail, since you cannot know what may, or may not be important."

One couldn't know of course. Sue May pushed away her machine and turned to look out of the porthole.

To play safe, one would have to extend that idea to one's whole life. Aim at the highest possible and only that . . . even in . . . perish the thought . . . learning to type by the touch system!

Chapter Four

THE SUNHELMET BECOMES A FIXTURE

TENERIFFE, in the Canary Islands, name of romance and magic, and Sue May's first sight of land other than America. Bobbing boats on the blue, blue water round the blunt nose of the anchored freighter, like terriers about a mastiff; and dark-skinned Portuguese selling laces and small ebony elephants, native baskets, French perfumes and China shawls. Sue May's first sight of palm trees, her first sniff of hot spicy winds from the plum-purple hills. That too was the day she first wore her sunhelmet, that contraption of cork and linen with which for the past sixty years the white man has protected his ridiculously thin skull against the sear-

ing rays of a tropic sun. Sue May wore hers with a long green veil fluttering down her back, and the brim cocked jauntily over one eyebrow.

And eyeing herself in the cabin mirror, she murmured, "Not too bad, my dear. And it just better not be, because they tell me it's all the hat I'll wear till I pass this way on the trip home."

Gambia, several days later, was disappointing. Just low mud flats. Freetown in Sierra Leone really seemed tropical, really Africa. Tier after tier of noble mountains, crowned with heat haze, rising steeply from the milk warm sea; hot red earth, lush vegetation and again that smell of spices and jungle. Even, one was sure, the far-off sound of drumming such as one dreamed was Africa. Maddening not to have time to go ashore. Monrovia, like Gambia, was flat. Here a single small boat rowed out to bring aboard some cargo, but the boat sported a tattered American flag at the stern, fluttering from a newly peeled stick. But Lagos, their own port, was now only four days distant.

And when they slowly steamed down the long lagoon between waving palms and red-roofed Government bungalows small as toys, Lagos was sheer enchantment. One gasped and looked and gasped again. The strange red of earth roads slashing like a wound through lush green foliage. See, that tall man in the spotless turban and long white embroidered robe. Look, there's a Negro mammy who might have come from home, bandanna and all, and with the

same flash of white teeth. Look at the native policeman, in spotless helmet and dark blue uniform and bare feet. Sue May's head was in a whirl. And to think that she would have three, four months of this country, of this richness and color and sunlight! She found even the heat exhilarating, though Mrs. Dering looked white and drawn and the Professor said he'd be glad when they got farther north again.

Once off the boat there was a short call to be made at Government House, to write their names in the calling book. Their luggage was sent off to the station resthouse . . . for Lagos had no hotel nor was there one in the whole country of Nigeria, and tonight they would be off on the "Rich Mixed."

Sue May chuckled at the name. It was just another of those half affectionate labels which the English pin on things; in this case the tri-weekly express, carrying first class for whites and third for natives, as opposed to the daily train that took only natives, or the bi-monthly that carried upcountry passengers from the big English steamers. Rich Mixed . . . it was full of flavor, like this town of Lagos.

The formalities over, and lunch out of the way, she escaped back into the town in search of more mixtures, more richness, and someone on whom to try her partly acquired Haussa. It was an up-country tongue, belonging to the Mohammedan half-Arabic conquerors of the north. But the Haussas were traders everywhere, any man with a long full riga and big turban would

speak the tongue and Sue May felt an urgent desire to know that this new language wasn't just so many words and phrases, like Latin, in a book; that the pleasant sibilant speech over which she had toiled so long would really work when she spoke it.

Up and down the narrow, noisy, crowded streets she wandered. The tropical sun glared down, dust rose in clouds, and the ping of bicycle bells, the honk of motor horns began to jangle in her ears. The white sunhelmet. . . . Sue May lifted it to let the hot air pass beneath. Whew! It felt like a red hot saucepan over her ears. Close to teatime now, and an emptiness beneath her belt. How far back to the station resthouse? And how did one get there?

On the corner, languidly directing traffic lounged a smart young native in white helmet, dark blue uniform and spiral puttees above bare brown feet. Well, that was easy, one could recognize a traffic cop in any climate. Crossing to his side Sue May stammered in Haussa.

"Ina . . ." that meant "where." . . . *"Ina bakin jirigi . . . "* Where is the railway station?

Indifferent spaniel brown eyes regarded her vaguely. "No savvy, m'a," was his reply.

Before she could translate herself back into her own language a sonorous voice behind her gave greeting. *"Salaam Alaikum.* Peace be upon you."

Almost as she thought of it the response was on Sue May's tongue. *"Alaikum es salaam.* Upon you be the

peace!" She'd actually remembered it and it was understood! A real live native, complete in gown and turban and sandals, bowing low, one hand to ground in the stately fashion of the northern provinces. Now what did one do next?

A smile wrinkled the purple brown skin beneath the spotless, intricate turban. A string of words, incredibly rapid, and he gestured behind him with one slim hand whose palm was stained with henna. Grasping at the last word of the sentence she held on till she could slow it down and recognize *"chiniki."* Why, that meant "trade." This man was really one of those traveling traders from the north. But they couldn't continue to chat here in the middle of the road.

In the shadow of one of the little match-box stores, against a background of Standard Oil tins, fluttering bits of Manchester trade cloth, cheap white garments on a line, machine-made embroidery from Japan, and curious peering dusky faces, the trader prepared to spread his wares. A small boy, clad in a single shirt, discard of some whiteman's wardrobe, deposited his head-burden on the sidewalk and untied it. Sue May bent forward and scarcely suppressed a gurgle of delight. No trade goods here, these were the real thing.

Long strips of webbing-like cloth of native weave; those must have been woven on a very narrow loom. Knives, their blades elaborately chased, in colorful embroidered red goatskin scabbards. Small quaint animals, antelopes made of parchment with the head re-

movable to make a stopper. She'd like one of those.

"How . . . how much?" asked Sue May in Haussa.

"*Sulai biyu.*" The trader held up two fingers.

Two shillings? Not bad. But one must bargain with these people, they expected it. Then she caught sight of the little brass figure, some sort of long legged animal resembling one of those many bat-eared pi-dogs that roamed the Lagos streets. But a wriggly horn rose from the center of the creature's forehead. Careful not to reveal her eagerness she picked it up, laid it down with apparent indifference. "What . . . ?" she asked in Haussa.

A string of words, then in faltering English. "Rhino, *Baturia* . . . Whitewoman."

A rhinoceros? Surely not. But then there weren't any rhinos in this part of Africa, so undoubtedly this was the natives' conception of that almost fabulous beast. Whereupon Sue May began to bargain.

She got it at last, in exchange for three brass West Coast shillings, and proudly tucked it away in her handbag; an authentic piece of native work from the northern provinces. A good archaeologist must begin early to spot the genuine and the imitation. And here, right away, she had been able to, bargaining for it moreover in the trader's own tongue!

"*Sai wata rana.* . . . Until another sun." She bade goodbye.

The trader, smiling widely, placed hand to ground in half kneeling acknowledgment. "*Su-nana Garuba*

Jos," and waved a graceful hand northwards. One trader named Garuba from Jos in the north, in case she should wish him again.

It wasn't till she was a block away that she realized she had forgotten to ask the way to the station rest-

house. But dropping into English now, because she had given her Haussa a good airing, she found at least one native out of five who could understand her. And the long walk back was sped by the consciousness of an afternoon well spent. Even the little brass animal heavily weighing down the hot leather handbag against her arm was no burden at all, she felt so content with her bargain. She took it out again just as she turned

into the resthouse compound, turning it over in gloating pleasure.

Beneath the little beast's stomach was a fine line of some sort, a roughness perhaps in the making. Peering closer Sue May could make out very tiny letters, and in English, they read quite plainly, now that she came to examine them, "Made in Birmingham!"

"Well!" said Sue May, stopping short in her tracks. "Well of all the . . . silly fools. You did get stung that time, didn't you?" The original might have been Haussa, but this was a machine made copy, cast in England.

How hot it was, beastly hot. And how tired she was, how dry her mouth, and how heavy, now, the leather bag. And what a cocksure little idiot she had been to think that she could tell the fake from the real. Smug little know-alls never learned anything, never could become good archaeologists. Her hand made a gesture to hurl the brazen insult into the bushes beside the verandah steps. Then Sue May grinned, reluctantly, began to laugh. At least, thank Heaven, she could take a joke on herself. And what's more she would turn the joke to good account. She'd keep the rhino as a mascot, a talisman, a Dreadful Warning! She ran lightly up the verandah steps.

Chapter Five

TO YAR?

MRS. DERING, from her perch on a pile of tropical tin trunks in Sue May's bedroom waved a pretty pink tipped hand towards the frocks spread out on chair, bed and boxes. "I'd suggest, Sue darling, something ceremonious and dignified, without of course being actually grandmotherly! Since this is the Governor's own dinner it wouldn't do to make him feel too young and callow!"

Sue May turned, starry eyed and chuckling, from the mirror where she was brushing her curls; this steaming moisture kinked her locks into little watch-springs. She waved a brush towards a May-green organdie whose long full skirt and big puffed sleeves were thick with tiny embroidered daisies; it had been too elaborate to unpack for the cargo boat and now it seemed hopelessly wrinkled.

"We can give it to the resthouse steward boy," was Mrs. Dering's suggestion. "There's always a cookfire somewhere and he can heat an iron."

The invitation, an engraved card with the Nigerian crest at the top and their names filled in, had been at the railway resthouse on Sue May's return from sight-

seeing. This evening's dinner was important. Of course, it was nice of the Governor to have asked them, but she gathered this wasn't just a social invitation; he would want to meet them, talk over the trip into the interior and find out whether their small party could be trusted to look out for itself and not offend the natives. She knew what the Professor had said; that if visitors to Nigeria should prove to be lacking in tact, resourcefulness or equipment they would, without realizing it, be allowed no facilities for leaving the usual beaten track, would never be allowed away from the watchful eye of the Government. In a country where there is no hotel, no transport except by Government railway, one has to use the Administration for everything from resthouse to carriers.

The Derings of course had been out before, though not under this particular Governor. Actually it was Sue May who would be under scrutiny, and though no one had told her she was keenly aware of the terrific responsibility. At this dinner, she resolved, she'd be as inconspicuous as a salt cellar; good and quiet and . . . demure. As she did her hair before the mirror she tried on her new demure expression till Mrs. Dering asked if the sun had given her a headache.

She had time for further practice as the car drove them to Government House. Announced by the butler, introduced by two A.D.C.'s, received by the Governor and Lady Goodyear. Sue May got through it bravely, though she felt as though she'd been presented at

Buckingham Palace. Then she had a free moment and could look around and wonder what next. And there . . . good Heavens! was Mrs. Fish. Majestic, stately as a square-rigger under full sail; diamonds, lorgnette, white satin and all.

"My dear!" The woman moved towards her. "I hadn't realized that you too had letters of introduction to our dear Governor."

"We hadn't!" Sue May felt that demon imp rising again. "But there's no hotel here you see, so they asked us just to drop in for a meal." Oh dear, this was no way to begin an evening! How could she be demure if the Fish was to be at the same table.

Not only at the same table, but it proved, almost in the seat opposite. For, to her gratification the Professor and Mrs. Dering were guests of honor, partners to host and hostess at distant ends of the long room. That left Sue May stranded in a strange country somewhere near the middle of the glittering, crystal-decked board. Her partner was a young Assistant District Officer—known as an A.D.O.—and at first she found the conversation a little difficult.

She'd used up "horses" about which subject she knew nothing, was completely lost on cricket even when it came to comparison with baseball. Then somehow the talk swung to flying; some army planes, it seemed, were coming out from Egypt this season.

"I want to get my pilot's license next leave," confinded the A.D.O. "Have you flown?"

Had she piloted? No, Sue May admitted regretfully. Her brother Karl always took her up. "But I've done a lot of parachute jumping."

"By Jove, have you?" His face split in a grin of surprised admiration. "How did that happen, a little thing like you? I'd be scared stiff. What's it feel like?"

"It's grand, really. Like taking a long smooth dive through clear water." And she forgot her awkwardness, her difficulty in understanding her neighbor's strong Oxfordisms and plunged into talk of the one thing she knew best and loved next to archaeology. Funny though, she'd never have expected that three years as a demonstrator for Dad's C 37 parachute would prove to be a social asset at a Governor's dinner in West Africa! Airplanes and flying carried her easily through the remainder of the long function, up to the time when the ladies rose and left the men to their cigars and port.

It had certainly been impressive. Sue May hadn't expected this almost royal display of silver and crystal, shining white linen, the servants in spotless white with red tasseled fezzes and cummerbund sashes. Certainly not what you'd picture as West Africa. In the long drawing room she looked for an inconspicuous corner and sat down to collect her impressions of the evening. Mrs. Dering was talking 'Paris' to Lady Goodyear. Oh, here was the Fish again!

"How the dear Professor has been hiding his light under a bushel!" she complained coyly subsiding into

the next chair. "We had no idea on shipboard that he was so important. And Mrs. Dering—but of course we scarcely saw her, did we?"

This sudden enthusiasm for the Derings, thought Sue May, was because they were guests of honor, and she slipped her hands behind her. Surely the woman wasn't going to ask *her* for a letter of introduction . . . to some native Emir perhaps!

"I was so lucky when I called and presented my credentials this afternoon," Mrs. Fish's eyeglasses glittered delightedly. "*So* lucky, the Governor has promised me that I may penetrate right into the interior, right up to Railhead. That's nearly a thousand miles you know."

Sue May bet herself that that meant Kano. And she knew that Kano had electric lights and ice, and a municipal water supply. Not very exciting, why you could get those comfortable adventures without leaving the States. She felt a moment of panic; what use would Kano be to Professor Dering, if that should prove to be as far as he was allowed to go?

The men entered from the dining-room, and there was a buzz of talk, as people shifted chairs, formed new groups.

"We struggled for years before we could get anthropology recognized as an essential of Government Administration," the Governor was saying earnestly to Professor Dering. "It may take further years before we can get a backing for archaeology. Nowhere in

Europe is it admitted that West Africa can possess a prehistory . . ."

Sue May pricked up her ears. This was her own stuff.

". . . like Topsy, we 'just growed!' I understand, Miss Innis, that you're an archaeologist?"

"Oh no," she began. Fortunately Mrs. Fish had been drawn away in conversation with Mrs. Dering and Lady Goodyear.

"But may one ask," the Governor took the seat beside her, "just why you have apprenticed yourself to an anthropologist?"

That was easy. Anthropology, Sue May explained, helped one to understand archaeology. If one had never cooked with anything but electricity and gas, how could one expect to know or to recognize those firestones used in an earlier civilization to heat water in a calabash? You had to see what people were doing now, how primitive people lived in the present, to know the uses of the things they made in the past, didn't you? And if you bought your flour all ground and blended in a patent container, with no closer contact than the corner grocery, how could you know about flails, winnows, all the varieties of grindstone, pestle and mortar which you must learn to recognize in the reconstruction of the life of an ancient people?

"Obviously," concluded Sue May, forgetting to be inconspicuous, "if you want to interpret the primitive

life of the past, it won't do any harm to have a pretty sound understanding of present-day primitive life."

The Governor smiled and nodded approval. "But," he cautioned her, "you can't expect a Tutankhamun's Tomb in Nigeria. We've too much damp and heat here for anything to last long."

"It isn't just the rich and striking things that really matter," Sue May wanted to make her position clear. "Surely there will be something, caves to be explored, early camp sites, burial grounds to be recorded and mapped and studied? After all, Zimbabwe in East Africa was almost unknown till recently."

Her eagerness stirred the Governor's interest. There were, he told her cautiously, a few old hut circles, mainly on the plateau where the Derings were going, which might be very ancient. Or might not. There were crude stone bridges at Bokkos, some burials in giant pots up Bornu way, near Lake Chad—

Frantically Sue May tried to jot these down in her mind. It was such an opportunity, probably nowhere else would she find someone so full of interest and information. The Governor paused as though about to reveal a secret of his own: "There is also a place called Yar, concerning which I have a little theory: that it was the dispersion point from which a series of our present tribes derive their origin. Whether up to that point there was one tribe or a confederacy of tribes we have as yet no data. And as to the importance of Yar, I may say that no one agrees with me."

"Yar?" Sue May pondered on the name. "Where is it? What is it? A town? Is it still inhabited?"

"It's a freak hill, up east of the Plateau where you'll be going. You can see it from the hills on a clear day, three huge rounded rocks of utterly smooth granite rather like newly poured pancakes, but surrounded by miles of grey looking thorn trees which would be exceedingly difficult to penetrate. It's uninhabited, so there's never been a reason for an official visit."

Yar. Three rocks like pancakes. Thorn trees.

"And," he was saying, "the 'Ngas tribe still invoke it in their seeding. 'We sow in thy honor, Yar!' But whether you make a striking discovery or not, Miss Innis, let me know how you get on, won't you?"

Among the small crowd of white people awaiting the midnight "Rich Mixed" beneath the glaring, insect-haunted station lights, Sue May could recognize none of the steamer passengers. There were hundreds of natives further down the platform; one, in voluminous robes and big turban seemed familiar. Might it be that trader, whatisname, who'd sold her the little rhino? She couldn't be sure, and though she'd been able to laugh at herself over that sale she didn't really want to see him again.

Professor Dering was shoving his way through the crowd with two boys and their hand baggage when Sue May found herself buttonholed by Mrs. Fish.

"So sorry I can't come with you. I'm getting Letters

of Introduction Upcountry." In an awed whisper, "The dear Governor assures me I shall be Quite Safe. I'm going all the way to Zaria. And you, my dear?"

You couldn't, felt Sue May, bear to spoil things even for the Fish when she was so simple and enthusiastic.

"Not going far." Oh dear, what should she say? Why Zaria would be just the *beginning* of their trek. "Not as far as you, probably. Just to . . ." hastily a name slipped into her mind. "Just to a place called Yar." And she hurried after the Derings.

Now why on earth had she said "to Yar?" Yet the words sounded almost a prophecy.

Chapter Six

THE SECRETARY HIRES A SECRETARY

The first class carriage, airless, ovenlike; shoutings in half a dozen languages; scuffling of bare brown feet; the night punctuated by the brilliant floodlights; hurrying dark forms with headloads, straining, sweating, scurrying here and there; a crescendo both of heat and noise. Then the guard's whistle, the sharp slam of carriage doors, a slow grinding of wheels as the train began to move. One panted in a cavern of hot stickiness, then the relief of movement and oh . . . h, a breeze. The "Rich Mixed" gathered speed for its three and a half days towards the northern provinces.

Sue May woke in the morning to lush green jungle crowding against the tracks, seeming to press against the very windows with their queer twilight blue glass. It looked cooler, but whenever the train paused at a small clearing or tiny wayside station one knew that already, so early in the morning, the tropical sun was potent, overpowering. Strange names; Oshogbo, Offa, Ibadan, Illorin; strange dark faces pressing at the open window, tiny sweet bananas, green oranges bought from a shy gazelle-eyed native girl for a penny a double handful. Then on again.

It was late afternoon before the jungle began to recede before bush country; flat, covered with tall, sparse dry grass and a scattering of stunted umbrella-shaped trees. Names too were changing, and the big, square mud-walled houses had altered to small circular groups with conical grass roofs. Sue May began to hear voices in a language she felt she almost understood, words and odd phrases which she came so near to catching. Haussas, these people, more and more at every station; long, thin-limbed men in tattered white garments to the ankle, wide flopping straw hats or intricate turbans, and the women in bandannas such as Aunt Jemima wears on the pancake box.

It was a busy three days. Professor Dering's monograph on Primitive Food Preparations had gone off from Lagos, but there was another book half finished with daily notes to clarify and file. Once Mrs. Dering stuck her head into the compartment where Sue May was literally sweating over a combination curse of this newly acquired touch system and the spelling of strange Haussa names.

"How wise I was to marry the man," she made a laughing face at her husband, "and not hire out as his secretary. Have a good time, darlings!" A moment later Sue May heard her in the corridor ordering iced drinks for them.

At odd times Sue May scribbled on her letter home, or plunged her nose into the worn Haussa grammar,

and at stations hung head and shoulders out of the window, shamelessly eavesdropping on any near-by native conversation. Even at night she could scarcely bear to waste hours in sleep. She would wake as the train paused long enough to unload some District Officer, dismounting for his long trek to his lonely station in the bush; wake to the sound from the native town of far-off drumbeats which persisted like the rhythm of a pulse. A cheery English voice chatting at the carriage window, cries of carriers loading and moving off, hails and farewells. Then on again into the moon-drenched silence of the tropical night.

So through the last day. Their next destination was Zaria. Sue May, forewarned by the map, had gathered up papers and repacked her personal belongings; there was no repacking to do for the Derings. Mrs. Dering had suddenly developed a quiet efficiency for which she seemed to feel she must apologize. "You see I'm accustomed to this sort of thing. It's civilization that leaves me all of a dither, darling." The Dering's secretary didn't understand, but she was grateful; just at the moment she had more than her share keeping up with new impressions.

Grateful to be out and stretching her legs again. Grateful too, Sue May was, for the young official in white uniform who had been sent to meet them with carriers for their fifty odd boxes of food stuffs, supplies, instruments, camp kit and clothing. The Resident's

personal car carried them swiftly to the Resident's rest-house—one hadn't expected Africa would be so organized and so simple.

But it was disappointing to be so far out from the native town.

"The white stations are always a mile or so away," explained the young A.D.O. "It's safer, on account of epidemics, town fires and things."

"I suppose." Sue May peered from the car window into the warm scented dusk. Zaria—it sounded romantic, and she already knew that it was a city of a quarter million Mohammedan Haussas, with an Emir of its own and walls and gates, and a civilization, so it was said, half as old as Christianity. Would there be any work here for a striving young archaeologist?

Not, she soon discovered, archaeology "the study of ancient peoples," but perhaps a knowledge of present day folk was just as important. They were staying here only long enough to pick up houseboys, cook, and assistants.

"Why not," suggested the Professor to Mrs. Dering, "let Sue May try her apprentice hand at hiring the boys? It will force her to plunge in and use her new language, instead of continuing to shiver on the brink, grammar in hand."

The Dering's secretary uttered an almost audible groan. First the touch system—and now this! She'd never run a household, she'd never hired a servant, she'd never spoken any language but her own. "If I

come home with a camel instead of a cook, well, it'll be on your head, Mr. Dering."

"So be it." The Professor's eyes twinkled behind his glasses. "But I don't think you will." Funny how confident these people were in her when she had so little confidence in herself.

So while the Derings made duty calls, for Zaria had a large white station, officials and army, Sue May began to discover to her surprise that she wouldn't swap places with them for anything. Through the Resident's chief steward boy she broadcast her help-wanted ad., and applicants began to trickle in from the near-by market.

It wasn't, she found, just a matter of what pay the Derings could offer and what qualifications the native boys could show. One smart looking lad in a long-tasseled tarboosh and immaculate cotton robe was on the point of being hired as houseboy when he began to shuffle from foot to foot and protest his unworthiness.

Sue May was puzzled. His references showed that he'd been for ten years headboy to a recently retired Commissioner of Police, and before that second boy in a Resident's household.

"But—" she called forth her small stock of the native language, "the Master good . . . not big house . . . travel—" she waved an explanatory arm.

That, it appeared, was just the snag. "I savvy Zaria proper," in English as halting as her Haussa. "And all Master who live there. I no be fit go for bush," which

either contained for him unknown terrors or a complete lack of those civilized comforts to which he was accustomed. Apologetically he withdrew from the picture.

Another boy, highly recommended as knowing bush life, was sent for but never arrived. He was sick. He was away. He was this, that and the other, till she found he had worked only in bachelor households and was scared of working for a woman.

Well, that was the history of the next few days. Sue May was getting a lot of practice with her Haussa, but the Derings were no nearer acquiring a household, and nobody knew better than their secretary how pressed they were for time. Darned decent of them she thought, not to utter a word of criticism, nor even, unless she asked for it, any suggestions. Somehow, she worried, there must be a good way round this problem. She'd already interviewed boys who had been in prison, boys who were dirty, boys from down-country who spoke neither Haussa nor English, boys who were "boys" no longer, too superannuated for the rough bush life, and others who had no experience of white people at all. There was no time to teach a green boy, accustomed to the simplicity of a straw mat and a calabash feeding bowl, all the elaborations of the white household, from table silver to camp beds, boiled water, daily quinine and mosquito boots. As much as Sue May could do to remember it all herself.

Almost in despair, almost ready to throw herself on

the kindness of the Professor and ask for his aid, she started, one blazing morning, to walk to the native market, down the long red laterite road between frangipanni trees, and the flamboyants, red as flames. Just beyond the railroad were the canteens, British trading stores, the last outpost for shopping before one "went to bush"; tinned meat; tinned milk; bolts of print cloth; petrol; kerosene; matches. For one shilling she bought a tin of chocolate biscuits—at home it would have been called a "box of cookies," and nibbling these she pushed on towards the town walls. So much to see, all so new and colorful.

The town wall, almost as thick as it was high, still with a few crenelations—Sue May half closed her eyes to the glare and considered. Oh yes, those would be to shelter archers. The gates showed signs of having been recently widened. That, of course, would be to admit the motor trucks, though the older shape, a sort of monstrous keyhole must have been to accommodate a tall camel, with a wide load on his high back. There was no portcullis, no drawbridge, but signs of an old dry moat.

She took another chocolate cookie and turned aside for a long string of donkeys, each loaded with twice its own bulk of goods. What might the loads be? She sniffed speculatively. Fertilizer? No, hides, folded and as hard as planks.

All the way to the market she played this game with herself, trying to picture what each thing was, what

was its use, looking back to see what it might have been before it was in its present form. It was grand practice and she felt so triumphant when the guess could be proved correct. For instance, why was there so much space, free of houses, between the walls and the town? Because, said Sue May brightly to herself, in time of siege the people needed protected pasturage for their flocks, their only form of wealth. Then why also these great gaping holes in the ground? The thick-walled houses supplied that answer—the mud for building must come from somewhere.

The market was a regular box of puzzles, color in riot and profusion, movement, new sounds and smells. Were those small red peppers, spread in tiny pinches on a mat? Yes, but what was that food alongside?—mounds of rice perhaps. The next was completely new to her, and even if she had asked the name she wouldn't have been able to guess what it tasted like.

Fulani girls, in bright skirts and head cloths, with gleaming rings of brass aswing from brown ears, sold milk and butter in great orange-hued gourds and small limes green like spilled jewels. Tiny girls balanced sweetmeats on a tray as they circled, calling their wares through the cheerful noisy crowd. Sue May's head began to ache with so many new impressions and the blaze of sunlight began to scorch through the thin sleeves of her cotton dress. For a moment she stopped in the shadow of an iron-roofed stall where salt, in long cone moulds, was being sold. Then she saw him

again. Crouched placidly in the shade of a mat shelter, with red and green goatskin goods spread before him, Garuba Jos, the trader from Lagos. So she had been right, he must have travelled by the same train from the south. It was pleasantly thrilling to meet someone you already knew in this vast crowd of strangers, and this time she wasn't out to buy anything.

Sue May smiled uncertainly and Garuba's grin answered her, even before he rustled forward to stoop ceremoniously.

Greetings came easily to her lips. It was so like meeting an old friend that she felt he must understand her stammering Haussa. Almost immediately she began to tell him her trouble, "But the servants I seek are as scarce as fish in the desert."

The old man, crouching gracefully in the dust nodded grave understanding of this housewifely problem. "Your need is already known to me." Sue May had heard of the incredible speed with which gossip travelled in African towns. "For news," he continued, "passes more swiftly than money in the market place. But here in this land of thieves—" He checked himself and Sue May spluttered into a laugh. She knew that his home town, Jos, of all cities of the north had the worst reputation. And what about that brass rhino that Garuba had sold her for native work?

But had he? Come to think of it, she herself had been so terribly sure of her own judgment that she'd never even asked.

"In all Zaria," he was saying, "there is one honest man." The trader turned and beckoned with a scooping gesture of his fingers.

He who came running from the neighboring stall was the same that had carried Garuba's load in Lagos. But scarcely a "man." His single garment, long and shirt-like was gleaming white; the melting eyes in a face black as tar were wide and long lashed as a gazelle's. In height he came just above Sue May's shoulder, and Sue May was not tall. She judged him about ten.

"This one, Audu, the worthless son of worthless parents," the trader paused, examining the boy as though trying to find something good about him, "of my own household, first-born of my youngest daughter." Sue May wondered if one must assume that as a certificate of good character.

"No," continued the trader. This one had never been a servant. But he knew much of people, even of the Turawa, the white people.

"Yes, M'a," confirmed the small boy. Startling, that "M'a," but Sue May already knew it was the equivalent of the Indian "Memsahib," or the English "Ma'am."

"And moreover," continued Audu's grandparent, "he speaks many languages. Thus has he been of service to me in my trade."

Sue May eyed the boy gravely. Unsmiling he gazed back. She liked him, he looked sturdy and clean and

dependable and whether he was good or bad she'd reached a stage of desperation where she felt she must acquire one servant, no matter of what age or size. But he'd scarcely fill the role of a cook; laughable to consider him as the Dering's chief steward boy . . . and as for smallboy, most stewards preferred to hire their own.

Reluctantly she shook her head. Scarcely would one so young and inexperienced suit the household of the Learned One. Yet even while she refused she felt that somehow a place must be made for him. The question was—how?

Garuba, watching her face, had a solution. "The Baturia herself has need of aid for the packing of loads, the running of errands, the washing of clothes, even the giving of orders."

Sue May considered. Two shillings a week for chop money. That was fifty cents a week for food, the wages of a smallboy in the whiteman's household. And she herself as secretary had a small allowance—could it run to personal servants— say one, pint-sized?

"Okay," said Sue May.

"Ban ji ba. I did not understand."

Sue May laughed and bobbed her head. *"To Na yarda.* It is agreed."

There were loads, perhaps purchases made in the market by the Baturia, to be carried?

No, none of those.

Then perhaps the load in her hand?

She glanced down. One four-by-six-inch cracker box, now nearly empty. Gravely Audu accepted it, placed it atop his shaven head.

"Thank you," said Sue May to her servant's grandfather. *"Sai wata rana.* Goodbye." And so marched back to the station.

"Behold," said Sue May, mounting the resthouse steps under the amused eyes of the Derings and guests. "Behold, I have brought home the first of our household. My own personal secretary!"

Chapter Seven

ALONE IN AFRICA

AUDU, in spotless white coat and trousers, his new robe of office as secretary's secretary, had rounded up a fresh batch of applicants and throughout one long breathless morning, on the hot resthouse verandah, Sue May received and sorted.

Audu stood beside her table, gravely considering the boys as they passed. His impassive face gave no clue to his impression of the applicants, but once, as she came too close to engaging a tall, rather fine looking southern boy, she was halted by her secretary's nervous shift

from foot to foot. Excuse was made to draw him aside and a brief explanation extracted:

"No M'a. He no be houseboy. He be thief boy." And with a gesture Audu indicated the polished ankles of a chain-gang man, newly released.

Returning to her seat she examined the boy's credentials with greater care. The name agreed with the one given, but the description showed that the papers were borrowed or stolen. Others of the would-be household were comically self-eliminating. One testimonial read, "Suli Yola calls himself a cook and has been with me two years. During that time he has learned to play the flute and I am being invalided home." In the hands of the same boy was another that caused Sue May, choking, to hurry indoors and recover her gravity. "Suli Yola insists on a testimonial for my fortnight in purgatory. I strongly recommend that you give him a berth, the wider the better."

But Audu was the main critic and by lunchtime they had two very presentable boys, willing to go on trek, who met the Derings' approval. These guaranteed to find their own smallboys, and Sue May, mopping back the moist curls from her streaming brow, felt that she had already earned her passage to Africa.

With such household matters settled, the Professor decided to leave for Jos the very next morning. His work lay beyond Jos, in the hill country among the primitive, non-Mohammedan peoples. He could go by road or bush path, taking Mrs. Dering on the pillion

of the motorcycle, and since roads were too bad for a truck, their loads would travel on the heads of stout native porters.

Sue May expostulated. That recording phonograph and other special apparatus he had ordered out from England, had he forgotten those?

"They might come on the next boat, or the one after that." The Professor's time was limited and he didn't feel he could waste any more days in Zaria.

"Sue May, be a dear," said Mrs. Dering. "Wait here for them, and bring them on to us. There's a train three times a week to Jos, and you can pick us up there."

Sue May's heart hit her little white doeskin sandals. They were going towards Yar, the Yar that she wanted to explore, they were going into the real Africa, away from white men, uniforms and calling cards. For a moment she was silent, then she stiffened and summoned a weak smile. "Of course," she murmured. Perhaps the wait wouldn't be so long.

Perhaps it wouldn't. In the meantime she helped with arrangements for tomorrow's trek, found that you ordered carriers by sending a request to the Provincial Office, and that you had to take bags, literally bags of nickels, pennies and half pennies, on trek with you, since each man received three pence a day when you weren't moving and six pence, about ten cents, a day when you were. At the end of the trip there was another three pence due to them for every day you'd journeyed. Moreover, each load must weigh no more

than sixty pounds—an appalling weight, but a good carrier could carry a load of a hundred pounds for miles and miles and never feel it, and seventeen miles was the official day's trek. "Whew," thought Sue May, "what a lot to learn!" And that wasn't nearly all of it.

All the Derings' possessions except camp beds, breakfast kit and toilet articles were packed and ready that evening, and it was still dark when Sue May paddled sleepily out in dressing gown and tall mosquito boots to say goodbye.

"If you have any problems, take them straight to the Resident or the Station Magistrate." Professor Dering tickled the motor bike's carburetor and gave a violent kick to the starter. "But you're even safer here," he shouted above the din, "than at home."

Mrs. Dering leaned from her seat to kiss Sue May. "You'll be along soon," she assured her.

"Well, goodbye," the Professor's voice roared to be heard above the roar of the engine. "And don't take any . . ." he groped for the term, "any Birmingham rhinos."

"'Bye . . . e. And don't . . . meet . . . any . . . cannibals. . . ."

The motorcycle's din faded to a distant *put put* down the dusty drive, already growing lighter with full dawn.

The resthouse with its one little hurricane lamp, her own small luggage, the folding table, chair and bed looked as forlorn as a poet's garret and it would be hours yet to breakfast. Sue May kicked off her boots

and tucked the mosquito net in close behind her. Oh dear, she wasn't going to cry, was she, just because she was alone in Africa! Why, this was excitement, this was mad adventure, this was—what—she—had—come—for—

"Tea, M'a!" A faint scratch-scratching on the mat over the doorway broke through her dreams. Rosy dawn streamed through the windows, birds were shouting what a fine clear African day it was and Audu had brought that tropical necessity, early morning tea.

"Bless you, my child," murmured Sue May. Kind of fun at that being on her own. Here too was a note, a chit as they were called out here. Would she come along to breakfast with Mr. and Mrs. Station Magistrate? *Would* she? Sue May popped three lumps of sugar into her teacup and bit hungrily into a honey-ripe mango.

It was two hours later, on her way over to breakfast, that she had her brain wave. She passed a group of natives: one husband, smiling, garbed in a loin cloth, with bow and arrows and tin teakettle, and two or three women of his household each carrying the woman's load, a large calabash gourd with a string net over its assorted contents. Behind manfully strutted a small child, scarcely three years old, an apple-sized calabash balanced on his shaven poll.

The whole group gave cheery greeting. Sue May found that she had answered mechanically, as one who says good morning on a country lane at home.

Why, Africa was friendly, Africa was kind, not one bit the country of dread and terror, the dark continent she had expected to find. Why couldn't she. . . . ?

Well, why not? Over bacon and eggs she cautiously tested her idea on the Station Magistrate. Was Africa really so safe now, that anyone, say herself for instance, could just walk from place to place without fear of being robbed or starved?

"Nigeria? Yes, perfectly safe." The S.M. was obviously proud of the fact. "Your only enemies would be the sun and malaria and bad water."

That did seem pretty definite although he wasn't applying the idea to Sue May herself. And what was the easiest method of travelling in this country?

"Oh, a push-bike of course," she was told.

"A push-bi . . . ?"

"You know, an ordinary pedal bicycle, as opposed to a mo-bike." Sue May sometimes felt that she had more difficulty understanding *English* English, than Haussa.

She accepted a healthy second cup of cocoa and ventured further. Those loads from England that Professor Dering had been enquiring about?

No, the Station Magistrate hadn't been able to locate them as yet. He'd rung up the Resident's office and the railway station. Anyway the next boat wasn't due for some days yet and what was Sue May doing for tennis this afternoon? Would she care for a horse and a spot of riding? Mrs. S.M. remembered the club dance to-

morrow night and stated that there were any number of nice young men who wanted to meet the pretty little American.

The "pretty little American" smiled and was tactfully vague about frivolous activities, evaded yet another invitation to play golf and returned to her own domicile having given the impression that she had urgent work of the Professor's to finish. Actually she intended to go into conference with her secretary about those two loads which all the King's horses and all the King's men hadn't been able to round up. It was just barely possible, of course, that they had come out by an earlier boat, and that nobody had thought of that.

But for once her omniscient ten-year-old seemed to fail. He could only suggest that they ask his grandfather. And not a bad idea at that. After all, the native trader must have goods of his own going astray and some method of recovering them.

An hour later Audu returned from the market with the word that Garuba Jos would *buga* the wire to a fellow trader in Lagos. Sue May reached for her dictionary and puzzled out that "buga" meant "strike" and that the trader would send a telegram for her. Why hadn't she thought of that? But then, she wouldn't have had the faintest notion of whom to send it to.

Tennis on the hot laterite courts after teatime, her mind still on those annoying boxes. Back at the rest-

house again for a nap before the evening's social round, and there stood Garuba Jos.

"Two loads?" he enquired. "That is all?"

Sue May nodded eagerly.

Garuba Jos preened himself as he smoothed out a pink telegram on the verandah steps. "Then even at this hour they are leaving *Ẹkọ* . . . Lagos."

How wonderful! Gratefully she started to pay for the telegrams but was only permitted to give thanks for service rendered.

That evening at the club she mentioned the odd affair of a mere market trader's being able to find her loads.

"You can't tell about these mere traders," laughed the S.M. "There was a trader chap on the Benue, went round in plain white, never put on side of any sort and sent up a wail to high Heaven when they raised his tax from ten shillings to twenty a year—say about four dollars. This our dance, isn't it?—Oh, about the trader. Well, a little while after that, as his duty as a good Mohammedan, he decided to give his tithe to the poor. So he sent out orders up and down river to withdraw all his loans, take stock and bring in his capital. You should have seen it! Canoe loads of money sailing up and down the Benue and up the Niger. Banks had to call on Government Treasuries to come to their aid with hard cash. Oh, it was a time!"

"But—but how? I don't understand."

"You see," explained the S.M., twirling her in a

bumpy old-fashioned waltz, "the old boy had proposed to have every cent of his money poured out into the courtyard and every tenth coin set aside. The D.O. had an awful time, explaining how it could all be done by accountancy, on paper, without spending money on canoes and paddlers. And I believe they made up for the struggle by raising his tax to five dollars a year!"

Sue May chuckled, thinking of Garuba and of how he had sold her on the idea of a personal servant. Yes, it was possible he too was one of that sort, simple in appearance, but underneath that a wily Oriental. And certainly he had influence.

Then for two days, almost for two nights also, she planned and plotted, dropped artless questions in the middle of a dance, managed to get a detailed hand-drawn map of the route over which the Professor had gone, with lists, distances and descriptions of resthouses on the way. Also she had the mysterious Yar to follow up, for she felt that here in Zaria, with so many white men from so many corners of the country, was her best chance of getting information.

The Station Magistrate had never been posted in the province which contains Yar. Soldiers and rail-road men had no knowledge of it, since no railway line ran within days of it. The Resident had once, years and years ago, been in that neighborhood but had not visited Yar. It grew more and more mysterious.

Then at a tennis party on Sue May's very last day,

at Zaria, a chance survey man, on the very eve of his retirement from the country, established the ancient city as a fact and not a fable.

"We had a minor triangulation point (whatever that may be, thought Sue May)—on a hill; just a huge outcrop of granite you know. It's not marked on any official maps. It's a group of three dome-shaped rocks, almost surrounded by deep thorn brake." And he made a little sketch on the back of an envelope to show her exactly where it was. That was cheering, that meant she might be able to find Yar. "But how does it come to interest you?" he asked.

That was difficult to explain to any but a fellow archaeologist. She said she didn't really expect to find anything concrete; it was the clues that the place might furnish that she was after. The Governor had said that it was the splitting up point of a great tribal migration, possibly of several, over hundreds and hundreds of years. What had drawn the wanderers there, why did they split up there, what could she expect to find? Old walls, perhaps; old pottery; incredibly ancient caves with drawings; old stone implements? It was the nearest thing to a clue she had had since she reached West Africa. It didn't seem to belong to anyone else; Sue May meant to follow it to the end.

With the two maps in hand and, the missing loads on their way up by train, she checked over further needs. Money? She had enough to pay the carriers for her half dozen or so personal loads and she'd need

food and water for only two or three days. But over that matter of transport she had to ask point blank for assistance. She couldn't afford to buy a bicycle.

The Station Magistrate received her wild idea with almost deflating calm. "You won't have any trouble on such a short trek, but if you do, send for the nearest Village Chief and let him cope with it. Bicycle? You might as well take mine; we use a car round Zaria. Eight carriers? I'll see to that. What time'd you like 'em? Better start before daylight, then you'll make Zangon Aya resthouse before midmorning."

Sue May gasped. With a long and complicated list of arguments up her sleeve as to why she thought she must push on and just how well she had made her plans she felt like a pricked balloon, to have no use for them, no opposition to overcome. She went home wheeling the S.M.'s push-bike—it had been years since she'd ridden one and she preferred to do her preliminary falling off in privacy.

Since it was a man's machine she had to don jodhpurs and even then, with the saddle lowered as far as it would go, she couldn't mount without some sort of step. Once up, it was all right and perhaps her legs would grow a bit in the next few days. The problem was, mounted, how to get down? On a man's machine you couldn't just step off.

Sue May rode down the long stretch to the courthouse, shakily negotiated the turn, wheeled back to the railway station, turned and whizzed past her own

house once more. But she couldn't get off. Was she fated to spend her time in Africa riding round and round Zaria, a sort of feminine Flying Dutchman? Sue May giggled nervously and visioned Audu bringing out her meals on a tray, to be grabbed, a spoonful at a time as she cycled past.

Finally she set her jaw firmly and bracing herself for the inevitable turned into the compound. If there was no other way, she'd have to let gravity settle it; after all a parachute jumper must keep in practice. Picking a spot that looked comparatively yielding she took one foot off the pedal, balanced to one side, hopped frantically for a moment and came down in a confusion of wheels, legs, arms and dust. At least that had saved the machine.

From the resthouse dashed an anxious Audu, clucking reproaches like a mother hen, and sorted Sue May from the bicycle. Why then had the Baturia not called, that one might hold her steed?

"I never thought of that," said the Baturia in English.

That was the fateful evening. Taking her courage in both hands, Sue May told Audu, "Let all be made ready, for tomorrow at early dawn we start."

And Audu answered in a tone of new respect, *"To, Baturia.* Very good."

But were, or weren't those loads arriving? Would they be the right ones? Did they, or didn't they contain the whole of the missing goods? Sleep that night

After all, a parachute jumper must keep in practice!

seemed almost impossible. Once she heard the up-train whistle, and it was difficult not to leap from bed at one in the morning to go down to the station. A little later came the soft murmur of the arriving carriers, and she was dressed, ready to start long before Audu appeared with breakfast on a tray. He must have been taking lessons of the Resident's cook, for the boiled eggs and toast were excellent. In the light of a hurricane lamp Sue May had her six boxes arranged in a row, watched the camp bed taken down and rolled with its net into a bag, selected the two strongest looking men and let the others hoist their loads.

A plaintive little two-note whistle from the head carrier was the signal for the loads to move off. Soon the little caravan faded into the dawn dusk. Remained two carriers, one Audu, one bicycle and one American archaeologist. Sue May sighed and turned towards the machine.

Audu proudly wheeled it forth, and, as though it had been an Arab stallion, held it while his Baturia vaulted into the saddle. With a gesture that the others were to follow her, she turned out of the compound, too concerned to bid the resthouse goodbye, and wheeled towards the station.

Now to know her fate. She'd been telling herself that the boxes *would* be there. But if they weren't how could she summon back the carriers and return to the resthouse?

Sue May fell off her bicycle. There were two boxes,

with a native policeman in white and red riga standing guard over them and a courteous chit from no one she'd ever met saying that the writer understood from the Station Magistrate that Miss Innis would require them before the station opened.

Restraining an impulse to dance a fandango on the dark station steps but inwardly one broad grin of triumph, she ordered the loads onto the carrier's heads, and remounted from the station steps.

This time she was really off—on the trail of an unknown Yar and an unknowing Professor, her movable home spread out over half a mile of Nigeria.

Alone in Africa! And the sun rising thrillingly before her.

Chapter Eight

THE LITTLE JUDGE

SUE MAY sat on a resthouse floor and gazed about her. She felt tired, hungry and hot. Also slightly apprehensive. Suppose, she thought, her carriers had lost their way, or had taken a different turning, and never showed up? She'd be unpleasantly in the stew, with all this alone-in-Africa business. A stranger without food, money or possessions. Then she grinned at herself. Those boxes had come all right. Why couldn't she just relax and let things happen, not worry so about them? Sue May relaxed and surveyed the resthouse.

A funny little place, hardly bigger than a playhouse. Just a bit of the field turned into a hut, for there was the grass thatching the roof, its under side like the spread ribs of an umbrella, and there was the red brown earth, mixed with water probably—she must find out all about building later—built into the foot-thick, windowless wall.

Through the doorway a shimmer of heat, a narrow, bare and dusty trail. Down this would come the carriers following her wheel marks. She wriggled her

back against the wall and hoped it would be soon. How many miles an hour could a carrier do? She'd passed them more than an hour back along the road.

What was that, a bird call? It came again, faint and far off. Jumping up she gazed down the road. The whistle grew louder as around the bend came one man, then another, then the whole file of eight with Audu in the rear, moving easily, tirelessly, loads balanced on heads with not so much as a hand upheld to steady them. Almost immediately the little compound was full of noise and pleasant orderly activity. Audu moved about directing. A chair was set under a tree. There was a chop-box with a miraculously cool drink of lime juice on it; one of her books lay open beside it. A thin thread of smoke began to ascend from another of the little group of houses that formed the compound. Sue May glanced at her watch.

Fifteen minutes. And already she felt thrillingly at home here. For sheer efficiency you couldn't beat the African native on trek.

The head carrier stood before her. Would the Baturia wish to sleep here, or only rest and eat?

Sue May considered gravely. Apparently it made no difference to these hard peasants whether they did eight or eighteen miles in a day. "I rest only," she said. "When the sun has lessened I take the road."

"Daidai ne. Very Good." The carriers were straggling in groups back along the way they had come, that would be to the small stream half a mile back.

Not all, however; one, enormously tall and broad, with the typical carrier's wrinkled brow where many loads had pressed, was cheerily acting as "smallboy" to the diminutive Audu, opening a can of something, setting out a dish from the open chop-box, bringing in more faggots for the fire.

Over lunch, which she ordained should be served beneath the tree, Sue May felt like one of those intrepid African explorers who are always being snapped for the pages of their geographical memoirs. Only there should be a lion corpse or two, some she had just shot, hanging in the background, shouldn't there? Lions. . . . There was a thought for you . . . nobody had mentioned lions! Anyway the thought of them didn't spoil her appetite, that is, not much.

After lunch, Africa disappeared and returned again to her consciousness with a shock, as the sun was growing low. She was curled up on a coat inside the rest-house and everything had gone strangely silent. Grabbing up her coat and sunhelmet she hurried out. Yes, the carriers had gone, by her orders. So had Audu. In something of a panic she strapped her coat behind her bicycle and wheeled it to the road. It was reassuring to see scuffled footprints in the dust along the way the men should have gone. She mounted from the low wall that encircled the compound and made off on the trail of her household goods.

Presently her progress was checked by a fork in the track. But not for long. A friendly carrier had barred

off one fork by scraping his foot through the dust. She went on with an added feeling of warmth for Africa and Africans.

Every five minutes was cooler now and it was fun trying to balance the bicycle round the twisting narrow track, more like a gutter than a path. In spite of the many hundreds, perhaps thousands of years this path had been used, worn deep by bare brown feet, washed in runnels every rainy season, it twisted and wound still to the vagaries of the first marcher along it. She tinkled her bell as she came up behind a man and a girl, saw them make a startled jump sideways, then dip in greeting. The girl waved after her, applauding one of her own sex on anything so revolutionary as a bicycle.

She passed odd groups of people who made courteous salutation, some tall reddish monkeys, like large airedales which loped across the road at the *ping ping* of her bell, then more people, a whole family down to the smallest infant, toddling in a line.

Slivers of sugar cane cast along the road gave notice of a wayside market, like the litter of cigarette and chocolate papers about a candy stand. The smallest possible market under the hugest of trees, three little stalls no more than sunshades of matting on sticks, but doing a roaring trade. Bowls of fermented milk, bowls of *fura,* round balls of guinea cornmeal seasoned and rolled in flour. A score of shoppers gave greeting as she wheeled past.

She identified her destination, among the other huts

of a small village, by the low wall of the resthouse compound. Audu must have been watching for her, for he raced alongside and grabbed her handlebars. Sue May dismounted with dignity.

The *Sarakin Barriki,* the chief of the resthouse, and the *Sarakin Gari,* chief of the town, bade her welcome. Food had already been prepared for the carriers, since news of them had gone ahead. But of course the men would need their chop money to buy it.

Audu staggered forward with Sue May's tin trunk. At sight of it the carriers lined up. To them this must be routine, but to Sue May it was An Occasion. With a gesture she produced her keys, unlocked the trunk, brought forth a green canvas bag of coins. In nickel pennies her little stock of money was heavily imposing. A check-off of carriers. All complete.

Counting out six coins into each horny palm she passed down the rank feeling like an inspecting general. Really, she thought as she retired to wash off the stains of travel, if you followed the established customs, Africa was ridiculously easy.

A well-earned glass of lime juice and water, and Sue May brushed her curls and was mopping her face with a sponge dipped in water when sounds of violent and frightening argument penetrated the shadows of the rest hut.

"It's no business of mine," she reassured herself. "I'm not a policeman, I'm not a magistrate or a Government official." And resolutely she considered what

dress would be cool and restful after jodhpurs and the dust of the road. Then Audu scratched at the matting-covered door.

There was a dispute between the carriers and the resthouse keeper concerning the price of their evening meal. Sue May threw up her hands in dismay. "But they can't expect me to settle this!"

"Yes M'a," said Audu impassively. And this just as she had been congratulating herself on the simplicity of African travel!—She followed him out into the compound, where, against the blaze of a dramatic sunset eight tall carriers were gesticulating with an almost Mediterranean ferocity, and a wizened old man, the resthouse keeper, made gestures as though fending them off. Beside him, taking no notice whatever, was the Village Chief.

"What," Sue May strode into their midst and hoped that she looked imposing, "is the meaning of this noise?"

Everyone seemed to speak at once. She stilled the riot with an uplifted hand and turned to the resthouse keeper. With Audu's help she got at the problem. The Baturia's carriers were asking return of their payment for the food provided by the resthouse keeper. They claimed that his price was too high for the food he gave.

"Then let them buy from someone else," suggested Sue May.

In this small village there would be no other food

ready for them. The resthouse food had been prepared since noon when passing travellers had reported that Sue May's carriers were on their way.

"Oh," said Sue May, temporarily stumped. Vaguely she regarded the round floury ball of food in the gourd bowl. What did they call that? she asked. It was *fura.* She stood for a moment thinking frantically; surely there was some way to get at the exact value of this stuff. She remembered the *fura* she had seen at the wayside market.

"Bring," she commanded Audu, "my bicycle."

Audu brought. In ten minutes by her wrist watch she was back, facing the momentary problem of how to avoid falling off her wheel with a bowl of *fura* in her hand, a descent hardly fitting to the role of a would-be Solomon. But a large tree close to the compound gave her a chance to stop close to its support. She hopped once and let the wheel slide from beneath her, and landed safely upright.

Without words she placed the bowl of *fura* beside the row of calabashes containing the carriers' food, compared the size of the *fura* balls, the color, and even, taking a little pinch of each, the taste.

"No difference," she announced.

The Village Chief, interested, took samples and confirmed her judgment.

"The price of this *fura,* which I bought, was threepence at the *zungo,* the wayside market." She gestured back along the road. "So let the money paid to the

Sarakin Barriki be placed on the ground beside the food, then for each bowl of *fura,* like unto mine in size and weight, let threepence be counted from this money which I have brought."

Ah-ha. They'd got the idea, were clustering round, interested, while the headman measured out the food. She caught excited murmurs. *"Fura ya fi yawa . . .* the *fura* is the greater!" *"Aa kurdi ya fi shi. . . .* No, the money is the more!"

Halfway through the bowls of *fura* and still you couldn't see which side was going to come out ahead. It was more like a game now than an acrimonious dispute. Getting towards the end now, only two threepences left and even Sue May couldn't see what the result was going to be. One bowl more . . . and at last the headman held up a small ball of *fura.* That was left over when all the money was exhausted. Really, the closest finish she'd ever seen.

Ceremoniously the surplus was handed over to her, there was a sudden white grin across the wide face of the Chief; a chuckle ran through the defeated but good-natured carriers, and Sue May, smiling broadly, turned and handed the *fura* to Audu.

"There is the salary of the judge's assistant."

Chapter Nine

WET SQUEEZE

It might have been a rather fearsome night. Tucked inside her mosquito net, flashlamp beside her hand, Sue May saw eerie shadows cross the doorway, heard the swish-swish of silent feet. Then came shuffling sounds and a snarl.

"Don't be a fool," she told herself, relaxing. "They're only dogs, stray pi-dogs." Lean hungry creatures from the village, but welcome to whatever chicken bones they could pick up around the compound.

And again almost immediately Audu's tactful scratch at the door. "Tea, M'a," and it was another day, or nearly. The dawn breeze stirred the sluggish air of the hut as she crept from bed and scrambled into her garments.

Outside in the compound sleepy carriers were assembling in the semi-darkness, and somewhere near by a bird began to wake and there was a pleasant creosote odor from Audu's cook fire.

Quite a veteran, she felt, later in the morning as she halted her bicycle against a convenient stone and passed the time of day with fellows voyagers. Yes, there

was a whiteman ahead, *Maitambaya,* the Questioner, he was called, one who asked of people the most foolish things; matters of common knowledge—such as who were allowed to marry whom; whether a child took the name of its father; how corn was ground, how fire was made . . . and would you believe it? . . . this was really comical . . . how water was drawn from a well!

Sue May learned more of this strange person as she went further on her route: as "inquisitive as a *kadangare,* a lizard," "as simple as a newborn child, yet of marvelous understanding." Garnering the choicest items she saved them for Mrs. Dering's amusement.

Lunchtime brought her triumphantly to her first halt. The resthouse was long disused, roofless, and the compound overgrown with weeds, but once it had been planted with trim lines of *baure,* false-fig trees, and their thick black shade made pleasant shelter for her and all her carriers, with room to spare. Then as she was finishing the dish of canned raspberries and cream from a can, something on the broken wall of the resthouse caught her gaze. Carvings? No, it couldn't be that; people would scarcely carve in unbaked clay.

Mouldings, they must be, round what had once been doors and windows. A good archaeologist lets nothing, however unimportant, pass without explanation. She put aside thought of an afternoon nap and went out into the blaze of sunlight to examine her discovery.

Yes, mouldings they were, by someone obviously untrained but with considerable talent. A man with a gun, both, for convenience, shown in profile, about a foot high. Lizards and scorpions flat against the wall and of the same dimensions as the man with the gun. Others too, men with headloads, with bows and arrows, one with a drum and another with a long horn which he blew lustily with puffed cheeks. She'd never seen anything like them.

Sue May wondered if she could photograph them. No, they were of dark red earth and on the shadowed side of the resthouse, with no brightness to give contrast. Now, later in the afternoon . . . she glanced about her . . . she might be able to get a good picture. But surely there was some better way.

How about a wet squeeze?—the moulding wasn't too deep and undercut for that. Sue May turned back to gaze speculatively at her loads. The whole job would have to be improvised of course, which would make it harder but all the greater triumph if she succeeded.

Audu, hastily summoned, was sent to collect all paper in which household goods might have been packed. She looked it over with despair. Nearly all was brown paper, but she selected a dismembered copy of the *London Times* which had been used to keep cookpots from rattling. There wasn't nearly enough. Then she remembered a half dozen pulp magazines which she had been reserving in case she felt utterly bored

and desperate. Ruthlessly she sacrificed them to the cause of science.

How much of the moulding could she cover? Not all. Better pick out some characteristic bit; the man with the gun for instance. Audu was told to bring a calabash of water, the brush with which the Baturia scrubbed the ends of her fingers, and the large rubber sponge from her washing things.

Mentally she marked off the area of her labors, dampened it carefully all over with the sponge, dampened it again and still again. But still, as the hard earth sucked the moisture up, it continued to look as dry as a bone. Now what? The books didn't tell you how to dampen a thing that refused to get wet. Audu brought more water and she tried again.

Well, if it wouldn't dampen, it wouldn't. She could wet the paper, however, and handling a large double sheet of the *Times* so as not to tear it, she plastered it tight against the moulding. Then with a wet nail brush, first gently, then more firmly she pounded it into all the crevices and corners. The paper tore a bit and looked hopeless, but the next double sheet covered the tears, and the one after that the tears in the second. She smashed it all in, driving out small bubbles of air. *Westerns* and *Creepy Tales* went to join the staid and stately *Times* to preserve a record of primitive African art. At least one hoped they would, though all the thing looked like now was a dingy grey pancake.

Sue May sucked her bruised knuckles and decided

that nothing more could be done with her attempt; it must be left to dry. It wouldn't take long in this hot air. For the first time since lunch she became aware of her surroundings and turning from her work discovered a semicircle of interested carriers, wandering travellers who had drawn in from the road, some small boys from the village and the usual collection of scratching pi-dogs.

She'd give it half an hour to dry. An hour later she was still giving it half an hour. The shadows were getting long, if she didn't want to spend another night on the trail of the Derings, her loads must go forward.

Half an hour later the carriers had gone and Sue May was still waiting hopefully. At last, just as she'd decided to risk it and remove the squeeze, wet or dry, she heard a slight plop. The poultice had also wearied of waiting and fallen from the wall. With a rush she was on her knees beside it. Undamaged. Cheers! And quite definitely you could recognize the impression of the man with the gun. Too damp to travel yet. Cautiously Sue May slipped both hands beneath it and brought it round to the sunny side of the hut. Once this was dry you could use it as a mold; plaster of Paris poured into it and allowed to set would come away, a perfect reproduction of the original, and could even be colored red brown if you wished. It would look nice on her bedroom wall at home.

Carefully she rolled the squeeze in her coat and

strapped it on the bicycle, mounted and was off. Pleasant through the cool of the late afternoon. She must hurry, must not lose her way, for sunset came promptly at six o'clock and once the sun was down it was dark almost immediately.

In half an hour's pedaling she had overtaken her loads. In an hour and with the sun just dropping behind the horizon she came within sight of an obvious resthouse standing alone amid some flamboyant trees. Silently her pneumatic tires turned the corner, swung into the compound. There were three deck chairs outside, two of them, hurray! occupied.

From still a few yards away Sue May called cheerily, "*Salaam Alaikum, Maitambaya.* Peace be upon you, Oh Questioner!"

Unexpectedly came the Derings' assured reply, "*Alaikum es Salaam. Karamin Alkali.* Upon you be the peace, oh Little Judge!"

So the story of the carriers' dispute and her arbitration had brought her fame, and that fame had already travelled on before her! The Little Judge grinned. The Little Judge fell off her bicycle.

Chapter Ten

ON THE TRAIL OF YAR

SUE MAY liked their next place, Pau Bam. It was cooler than Zaria or Jos railhead, being on the high plateau country of north Nigeria. It was wild enough to suit even her ideas of darkest Africa; white men were scarce, in fact except for the Derings and the local District Officer who paid them a tactful visit on their second day in camp, they hadn't seen anyone but natives for ten days.

And such natives. Every tiny village different from its neighbors, as Turks differ from Scotsmen; speaking a different tongue; wearing different garments; shaving their heads in a different manner; using a different type hoe, with a crop peculiar to each village. And of course it was these divergences that the Professor had come to elucidate and record for the Government. In another generation they would all be smoothed out by the rising tide of civilization. A pity, that, she thought.

But most of all she liked it because it was close to the mysterious Yar which she had vowed to explore. Latterly there hadn't been much chance for archaeol-

ogy. It wasn't the Derings' household that deterred her; fluffy Mrs. Dering seemed not so much to run the household as graciously to let it run itself in such a way that meals came on time and nothing ever got mislaid or broken. But the Professor's studies kept his secretary fully occupied; so many important notes to tabulate and file. She was learning a lot but she ached to be off for a few hours, at least, to look over the land, and with Audu as interpreter to see if she could find just where Yar lay and what it was worth to an archaeologist.

Day followed day and still she couldn't get away. For instance there was all one hot and breathless afternoon she'd spent transcribing word lists for the Professor. That was a never ending job. It meant ruling long sheets of foolscap and on the left hand edge of the first of them writing a list of simple English words: goat, mother, child, house, corn, and the like. The next column would be the same words in some native language, recorded in phonetic script according to their sound, for, of course, these natives had no written language. Phonetic script has dozens, almost scores, of sound symbols, dots and dipthongs, hisses and strange gasps and r's and gutterals. Column followed column to the full width of the sheet, transcribed from the Professor's cramped handwriting in his notebooks and his secretary must be absolutely exact about it all, for if mistakes were made, it might mean tracing the migration of one tribe, based on its language likeness,

through an entirely wrong channel. It was tiresome work for a hot African afternoon.

When teatime came Sue May was flushed and breathless.

"I do believe," said Mrs. Dering, "the child has a fever. Have you taken your quinine today?" with a faint frown of concern between her eyes.

"I do believe the child needs a holiday," said the Professor solemnly. "How long since you had a holiday, Susan, to go on a regular razzle-dazzle?" The Professor liked slang, he said it tended to keep the language alive, though Sue May was sometimes puzzled to know just what he meant by it. Razzle-dazzle was easy.

"Not since I met you at Zungon Aya," admitted the Derings' secretary.

"Tut-tut! As long as that? Then let's see nothing of you all day tomorrow."

"Have a late breakfast in bed," was Mrs. Dering's characteristic suggestion, "and there were some really good books out on the last boat train mail."

Books indeed! Why one was living a story here, no need to read adventures, this was the real thing. Sue May was up by daylight and checking her necessities for the day's trek. They had been collected at odd times during the past week, whenever she had thought of this trip and what she intended to do on it. But surveyed now in the practical light of dawn it was an appalling heap.

A big, felt-covered water bottle, it wouldn't do to drink unfiltered water; a prismatic compass—well, she could scrap that, the African sun didn't fail at this season of the year; binoculars, a map—those would have to go with her, a heavy bag of nickel coins, a bundle of folded newspapers for a wet squeeze, and a brush and sponge. She had even rounded up a pick and shovel, but she just couldn't manage those. Some passing native would be sure to have a hoe, and after all this was a prospecting trip, not actual excavation. A camera, of course, she'd carry that herself; Audu could manage soap, a towel and her sandwich lunch. A notebook and pencil and of course an empty chop box or two to bring back whatever specimens she picked up.

Even without the pick and shovel it was quite a pile for one small secretary's secretary. "Can you manage it, Audu?" If not, what could she leave behind?

"Yes, M'a," Audu assured her. "I be fit."

The empty chop-boxes would serve as containers, at least on the journey out. Audu vanished for an instant and reappeared in travelling kit; a discarded haversack of Mrs. Dering's, a calabash water bottle to balance it and oh . . . Sue May gasped in horror.

"But Audu, that hat!"

It was a purple homburg; really there ought to be another word for "purple," it just about dimmed the rising African sun. A ribbon of deeper hue encircled

the crown and behind, Tyrol fashion, a rakish yellow feather. Audu almost strutted.

Here was need for tact, for subtle diplomacy. Choking down her mirth Sue May pointed out that such a hat should be reserved, like the Bature's stiff shirt, only for greatest occasions. Supposing it rained? —the sky was cloudless. Supposing it got blown off into a stream?—not a breath of air was stirring. Or, what if it should get stolen?

Audu's hand went up to insure present safety. "Yes M'a," and tact had prevailed. A hasty retreat to his quarters and he reappeared in the usual red fez.

It took courage to start. For lack of any other archaeological prospects, she'd built up this village of Yar until, if it didn't exactly gleam with ancient white marble palaces, it still held all her hopes. And fears too. Now it was within reach, even fairly easy reach. Sue May touched the folded envelope map of the Zaria surveyor in the breast pocket of her white silk shirt. Supposing, after all, there was nothing there? She felt her pace slackening until Audu's footsteps behind on the dusty road were overtaking her.

"No, Sue May," she told herself, "if you're ever going to be an archaeologist you must learn to face defeat as well as success. If Yar is a washout, the sooner you know it, the sooner you'll get on to something else." She settled her sunhelmet firmly and stepped out with quickening stride.

She became aware of shuffling feet and voices in the

rear. She glanced back to make sure that her load was following, and chuckled. Audu as usual had exceeded expectations, adding a little refinement of his own to her plans. Needless to have worried about his being overladen; somewhere, quite close to the resthouse he must have picked up those two small boys, even smaller than himself. Each was nearly naked, each bore atop his thick-skulled little head one of Audu's chop-box loads . . . and moreover beamed at the honor. Ahead of the little *safari* gloriously unencumbered, strode Audu.

Half an hour of plain, straightforward marching. Then giant granite rocks, like spilled lumps from a giant sugar bowl, and studded green, pasture-like fields. The ground rose slowly ahead, trees became more stunted, with poorer soil. No signs of cultivation, no signs of natives, even the path showed no recent footprints. Someone to act as guide, or merely to tell her she was on the right track would have been reassuring. Then the trail took it into its head to fork. Sue May consulted the penciled map and the sun.

Yar should be due west. One fork ran northwest, the other southwest. What about Audu's small carriers? They must know Yar if they lived around here. Sue May halted for them to come up and went into consultation.

But they wouldn't, or couldn't say. Sue May's Haussa and Audu's grasp of their own particular tongue were together unequal to the task. Thrown

back on her own judgment she chose the northwest fork. Twenty minutes of dusty travel and it swung north, even perhaps a bit northeast. Sue May groaned. That meant going back. She retraced her steps. The *safari* followed unconcernedly.

As the sun grew hotter she swung her thoughts more and more to Yar. The theory of the Governor's that several tribal migrations had reached Yar and then split up, and in the course of centuries formed several tribes, had, she knew by now, definite basis in fact. Tribal traditions, as she had gathered from Professor Dering's notes, pointed to it—oh hang, this track was growing fainter!—but, even better testimony than mere legend was the languages of the tribes.

Unable to dig in Yar itself she had been excavating through those notes of the Professor's, and even the transcribing of vocabularies had yielded some slight clues. Root words, such as *mother* and *father, water* and *fire* were practically identical among a certain group of wide-spread tribes. This surely indicated that they had once been one. Thus, among Aryan languages you got *mutter, mother, mater* and the French *mère.* And *father, vater, pater,* and again the French contraction *père.* On the other hand among these tribes, new words like *tobacco,* which, widespread as it was, was comparatively alien to Africa, and also the big white humped-back cattle, "shanu" in Haussa, were called by a different name in each tribe. The little humpless cow of the hills, called "muturu" obviously

hadn't been known to the original people either, but must have been introduced before the tribes were as widely spread as they were now, for quite a number of them had the same name for it.

A low bough smote her helmet and she glanced up. The path still lead ahead, faintly, but by the way thorn trees were closing over, it was nothing more than a game trail. Yar, it was true, had been "surrounded by thorn trees," but soon sharp thorns tore at her legs, grasped at her hands and even if she could possibly manage to wriggle through there was no chance for Audu's little carriers to follow with their headloads. Duiker and oribi and other small deer might go this way to Yar, but she was barred by a fence of spikes.

Defeat number two!

It was Audu who suggested lunch. A good idea, it would at least postpone retreat. And in the meantime some native might bob up from the bush and say, "Good morning! You want to go to Yar? This way, Madam!"

Sandwiches and warm lemonade were heartening. But no miracle happened, no helpful native appeared. She might as well pack up and call it a day. Audu and his satellites saw nothing extraordinary in this; after all if the whitewoman chose to walk several weary miles in order to lunch uncomfortably in the bush and return, it was no funnier than the other things white folk did; collecting stones and useless words and ask-

ing questions to which anyone with sense already knew the answer!

Something within Sue May refused to accept such obvious defeat. About twenty minutes back along the trail a thin fork led off to the right; that was going due south and directly away from the hypothetical Yar. Still it wasn't going home, so she took it.

The track widened, grew more distinct. It must be a hunters' trail since there were no farms around. A broken piece of pottery beside the path. She picked it up. Modern stuff, by the sharp edges of its fracture, just red earthenware. A little further and a field of corn. Come, this was encouraging! If there was a village here there'd be a guide to Yar.

A goat, balanced on its hind legs tearing leaves from a bush, the sound of hens somewhere in the distance. Thorn trees had fallen behind, the ground was rising sharply. All the better because all the oldest villages were built on hilltops for defence. More tiny farms and a patch of tobacco, which meant by all the rules that she was on the very outskirts of habitation. Pouff, it was a hard, hot climb! Rocks and still higher ground lay ahead with jagged boulders, large as houses, cutting out the view.

A bobbing head, the swish of leaf skirts and a yelp of dismay. A woman had seen Sue May, and bolted.

A sharp cleft between the rocks, the gold of newly thatched roofs, and she had come out into a little cup

in the hills. There lay the village, its outer huts with mud walls touching mud walls, as tightly as the cells of a wasps' nest. Within they seemed less closely spaced, low mud huts dotted along worn narrow paths. More like a fortress than any of the open, hospitable villages she'd seen in the plains.

The only opening seemed a circular window-like door, high up in the wall of one of the huts. Sue May cautiously squeezed through. Dark after the blaze without. Then into sunlight again and an open space.

Hurray! She could smile, wave her arms, make gestures, wait for Audu, then gather together the Elders of the village and find out all she wanted to know.

Already people were running out of their huts. Perhaps they hadn't seen her, for they all seemed to be going in the opposite direction. But if so, why in such a hurry? Then the meaning of this buzz, as of frightened bees, dawned on Sue May.

When Audu arrived she was sitting on an upturned wooden mortar doing her best not to laugh. Nor, exactly, to cry.

"*Sun gudu. Sun gudu duka.* They've run away! Everyone!"

The sweep of her arm indicated a village, completely silent and deserted.

Chapter Eleven

TO YAR BY A SHOOT-THE-CHUTE

This was ridiculous. Not what one expected of the "savage" tribes of Africa. Here she was, with three small native boys, quite alone and unarmed, and the entire village had bolted as though they had seen a hippogriff. And by the way, what *was* a hippogriff?

Sue May giggled and felt better. There must be some way to capture a guide to Yar. She got up to look for one.

For the next half hour it was a game of hide-and-seek between Sue May and the villagers. She'd pop

round the corner of a hut to hear a stone slide beneath a bare foot, see a shadow slip ahead of her, hear the rustle of a leaf skirt, but find nobody there. She shouted and waved her arms encouragingly at a head that appeared for an instant above a boulder. The head dropped and was seen no more. Audu, calling reassurance in a piping boyish treble, tried Haussa, tried several other tongues, but all to no effect. Hot, exhausted and discouraged Sue May sank on an upturned calabash and chin in hand considered what to do.

Obviously nothing, in the village. What if anything lay beyond it? "Come on." She jerked her head at her small *safari,* "We'll take a look at the back door."

Obediently they picked up their loads and followed. But the back door, when found, was certainly puzzling. Well-worn tracks led from huts and the mud threshing floor upward, out of a hollow, and there they stopped. With good reason. Beyond lay the bluish, distant horizon, further in, treetops and the plain below like patches of green moss on a yellow wall, and just at her feet as she stood and gazed, a smooth grey slope of unbroken granite like the roof of a house seen from the ridgepole.

Nothing less than a human fly could walk down there. Audu drew up alongside and joined in the gaping. His two followers downed loads once more and opened their mouths, perplexedly scratching one ankle against the other.

The smooth, even slope was simply asking to have something rolled down it. Sue May looked round for a smooth pebble, but generations of small children must have had the same idea for no stone of liftable size was within reach. A round cracker then . . . but only crumbs remained in the lunch box, nor was there anything else she felt she could spare. There *must* be something. Then her eye caught the bag of coins, small coins at that, a tenth of a penny apiece and each about the size of a nickel. That was an idea.

She scooped up two cents worth, poised the first on the edge and sent it spinning down into the sunlight. At least if this village would give her no information she'd have a good game out of it.

The coin rolled, bounced and vanished into the distance. Two more, and each one she traced a little further on its course. What lay at the bottom there?

And now she'd made a fresh discovery. The course those tenth-of-pennies followed was smoother, far smoother than the surrounding surface. By moving to one side she could catch the glint of the sun on it. It was darker too, either from polishing, or somehow greasy. O—o, was she getting an idea?

If the path continued down this polished streak, yet people couldn't walk on it, then what?—did they roll, or slide? Rolling would be too bumpy and painful,—so they slid!

And thousands of people over hundreds, perhaps thousands of years had given this glassy polish to the

village backstairs or emergency exit. What man has done, woman can do. Sue May hoiked up her jodhpurs and sat down.

A rush of bare feet. Sue May stopped herself just in time. What was happening now?

Four children of the village, naked of anything but grins, had rushed out, each with a small strip of some kind of heavy matting. With a plop the first to arrive dropped upon his toboggan, made signs of shoving himself off the edge, then leaped to his feet and handed the mat to the Baturia. A-ha, so that was it!

It felt stiff one way but flexible the other as she settled herself upon it and gripped her fingers into the edge. Exciting. Like a Luna Park shoot-the-chutes. A scoop of her heels, an exultant yelp and she was off in a rush.

Hastily she tucked her heels onto the mat in front of her. Picking up speed now. Supposing she began to spin! Wouldn't do to think of that. A rush of air past her ears, whistling beneath the brim of her helmet. Her helmet tugged at the chin strap, her shirt whipped tight to her body.

Yells behind. The three small boys, scared perhaps of being left alone had taken courage in both hands and followed, fortunately—she turned her head—yes, even with the boxes safe in front of them on the mats.

Swifter and swifter. She had a momentary wish that she had known where she was going to land. This couldn't go on forever,—ouch, that elevator feeling she

always got when the parachute opened. Losing speed with a jerk that almost shot her off her seat.

Then she was sitting once more in motionless African surroundings and gulping to clear her ear passages. A swish behind her. Hastily she jumped to her feet and grabbed her mat.

Audu, gathering together remnants of mat and dignity leapt to his feet as—*swoosh,* box number one and porter number one arrived. *Swoosh*—came another. Then—it looked as though the skies were raining villagers. Whooping they came. Not only the four boys who had so kindly provided mats, but others, young and old, boys, girls and Elders in one grand avalanche of yelling, waving arms and legs, pell mell down the cellar door of the village. One even vainGloriously standing on his mat, like a ski jumper.

For just an instant Sue May felt a touch of panic. But no, this must be the traditional village amusement. She herself had been nothing more than a pebble touching off a landslide. The villagers, upright on their feet were looking at Sue May, looking at each other. Now that they were all together how did they feel about her?

Sue May produced a wavering grin, a woman caught her eye and chuckled sheepishly, as though ashamed to find this not a hippogriff at all. Someone produced a loud guffaw and slapped a bare brown knee. It was as infectious as the landslide and instantly the whole collected village was roaring with laughter as this huge

joke on themselves. The white person from whom they had fled in fear had tempted them down their own toboggan slide. *Ha ha, ho ho ho!* She wasn't anybody to be afraid of. *He, he he!* Oh dear, oh dear! Sue May mopped at streaming eyes with her handkerchief and relaxed on a chop-box. Oh . . . ouf, she hadn't laughed so much since she came to Africa, not since she got caught under the parachute way back home.

Well, that was that. And now what? Two Elders had retrieved their dignity and were in argument over something. They drew another into the discussion, pointed at Sue May, then addressed her directly.

Audu translated into halting Haussa, "From long ago has been dispute among these people. Now that a white person has come, and moreover one of great understanding . . ."

Sue May caught the drift. But this was a job for the English District Officer. Furthermore she wanted to get to Yar.

"They say," Audu translated the reply, "not for five seasons has the whiteman come to these parts. And how can they know, without seeing him, that the whiteman is one of understanding?"

Good heavens, did shooting-the-chutes qualify one as a judge? Oh well!—she let herself, chop-boxes and attendants be ushered down onto level farmland and onto the lower threshing floor, where they were established beneath the welcome shade of a large tree. Here

A rush of air past her ears
whistling beneath her helmet

she sat down again and took out paper and pencil, a good move, manifestly approved by the court assembled.

"Behold . . ." Behold a tree grew upon the land owned by . . . but the tree itself was owned by . . . who leased its fruit to . . .

It was complicated even from the beginning. For as soon as that witness had finished another sought to prove that the tree in question was not of the kind which could be owned apart from the land on which it stood. Sue May knew that there were trees that could be so owned—and that it certainly possessed no fruit that could be rented out.

The next witness cast doubts upon who was actually the owner of the land, the following man gave a long, genealogical table to prove that, although the land on which stood the tree had been cultivated by . . . , yet this was only by permission of the true owner who had inherited it from his paternal uncle. That, one supposed, involved all this complicated business of maternal uncle-to-nephew inheritance, instead of the plain father-to-son. And to get at that she'd have to dig into the whole customs of the village, perhaps the tribe.

Sue May held her spinning head in her hands and desperately searched the faces before her for inspiration. She hadn't *time* for all this, she wanted to get to *Yar,* and this complicated case would take, surely, a week, even for a skilled arbitrator, who knew where to shortcut.

More witnesses. The tree in due course had blown down, part of it falling upon the field of yet another claimant. When dead, could it, or could it not, be the subject of ownership apart from the land on which it stood or lay? Sue May got more and more frantic. In all this tangle of words it would be refreshing to see something concrete, something to which she could tie her decision—the tree itself for instance. It was when they began to send away for more witnesses, an old man, who had once borne testimony, but was now too old to appear but would be brought, and others and others, that she jumped to her feet.

"Show me, then, this tree," she commanded.

"The tree," said an Elder, passing on Audu's translated command.

"The tree?" said another, a little doubtfully. Sue May caught the same word, changing its inflexion, acquiring a note of interrogation. Then the assembled court fell silent.

"Well?" said Sue May, still waiting.

"Well?" said Audu, or words to that effect.

"H . . . rump," said the first Elder, clearing his throat, and began to explain further. Sue May, having had enough of words, was firm.

"Take me to the tree."

Audu begged leave of the court to explain. "This matter is one of *tuni-tuni*—of long, long ago. It is for this reason that it is of such great importance. But the happenings, even to the blowing down of the tree,

were before the birth of even this Elder's grandfather. Wherefore it is regretted that the wood of the tree has long since been burnt, and none can point even to where the tree once stood."

"Omigosh!" said Sue May, and choked.

"Since then, the tree is long since dead," she said for Audu's translation, "and its spirit has joined the spirits of the Ancestors, who are we lesser ones below that we shall place fingers on such matters? Doubtless the spirit of the true owner now possesses the spirit of the tree."

"Ah!" said the Elder in the tone of one relieved from a great problem.

Sue May sat down again. Perhaps now that was settled and she could get to the thing she wanted to know. On which road lay the traditional village of Yar?

Chapter Twelve

LONG AGO A GREAT CITY

She could see now why she hadn't got to Yar without a guide. There wouldn't have been a hope of it if sheer luck hadn't led her to this village. The village itself was like a gate in the thorn fence, while behind the huts lay mile after mile of farmland which must, at some time, have been hewn out of these vicious grey spikes and granite boulders.

Soon the country began to rise again. Farmland ended and a narrow path stretched ahead between more thorn trees—metallic, grey, dead looking things interlaced as tightly as a hedge. Perhaps at some time of the year there were leaves, but now it was like a dump of tons and tons of hopelessly tangled barbed wire. Before her strode two of the Elders, self constituted guides, though obviously puzzled as to why the Baturia should want to go to Yar. No one lived there now, it had been deserted before the memory of the oldest Elder's oldest ancestor.

Behind followed Audu and the infant class, still carrying the chop-boxes.

Sue May plodded doggedly. Not so much tired now

as hot and hungry. No breath of air crept between these grey piled boulders, no spot of green was in sight and it had been a long time since her early lunch. She'd give a lot for something cool and liquid, but she didn't like to finish off the water in the water bottle, not knowing what lay ahead.

She had tried, through Audu, to add to her scant knowledge of Yar.

"Kufai ne," was the scant information he passed on to her. "It is a place deserted."

It was old, very old, admitted one Elder. No one ever went there, said another. Once the dwelling of the Ancestors when the tribe had been large, very large indeed.

"The Ancestors of this village only?" asked Sue May, dodging a thorn branch and trying to keep her mind off heat and hunger.

"Oh no," one of them admitted. "The Ancestors of all the tribes, of all the world indeed, came from Yar."

That,—making an anthropologist's cautious correction—was confirmation of the theory that a large wave of migration, or confederacy of tribes, had split up from Yar. Sue May felt less hot for a moment.

Rocks again. A narrow cleft, barely the width of a man, and twenty or thirty feet high.

The gates of Yar, she was told. In the old days these rocks would close of their own accord at sunset and open again only at dawn. And this was the only way to the ancient city.

That legend, thought Sue May, would take Professor Dering to disentangle. Did it mean that once there had been a gate here, which the guards had closed at night? Or was it a rationalized version of a series of earthquakes that for a time had closed this gap and later allowed it to open again?

A sound. Water, trickling water. A hut, tiny and ridiculously isolated by the side of the trail and in its doorway crouched an old woman. By the side of this a five foot waterfall poured down through the rocks. Her guides were already scrambling for drinks. Audu, more ceremonious, spoke to the old woman who popped back into her hut and returned with a bowl. This water ought to be safe to drink. It seemed to come from a spring high up in the rocks, but Sue May thought it wisest to enquire.

No, there were no houses beyond; only *kufai* (deserted site), and Audu was back with a brimming bowl. Sue May sipped, drank deep of the deliciously cool contents, drank again and filled her water bottle, splashed face and wrists. Then her attention was caught by the bowl. It was thin as a calabash, but too heavy for that light, nut-shell-like material, and black.

Pottery? They didn't make pottery like that around here. She tapped it with a finger nail. It responded with the clear thin note of unflawed china. There were some scratches on the fragile base but no other ornament of any sort. So uniform that it had surely been thrown on a wheel, but so smooth and polished

that there were no lines to prove it, and anyway the potter's wheel hadn't penetrated to this part of Africa.

The old woman had been talking to the Elders for

some time. "She says," reported Audu, "that if you wish it, the bowl is yours."

"But where . . . what?" For the moment Sue May almost forgot about Yar itself.

Audu straightened out her incoherent question, speaking, not to the woman but to the Elders, who in turn translated to the woman. Back, after a pause, came the reply. "She says at one time many. But now only a few upon the Three Hills."

Three Hills. There were three hills marked as the site of Yar on the Surveyor's map in her pocket. That meant that at Yar there was pottery, some evidence of the former city. What lovely stuff too. Sue May ran her fingers caressingly over its smooth texture. If there was this on the surface, what might not lie beneath the silt of centuries!

But she must make some return for the gift, something this old crone would value. There was so little choice. Her watch? . . . That would be wasted, and she wore no rings. But what about the bakelite Woolworth bracelet on her wrist, wide, covered with apparent carving and of a lovely lush red. Sue May had worn it because of the color, and catching the woman's eye upon it slipped it over her hand. It was difficult to make the woman believe it was really hers; and the bowl was carefully wrapped in many pages of the *Times,* the procession on its way again towards Yar before she had finished protesting at the too great value of the gift.

Sue May didn't exactly run; she mustn't outpace her guides. An open glade of close cropped grass. And now the thorns drew back reluctantly from two gently rising domes of granite like "unbaked pancakes," one on either side of the path. Between them, and ahead, rose the third.

Yar, surely. It could be nothing else.

"Yar," confirmed one of the Elders with a gesture,

as though echoing her thoughts. They halted for instructions.

"Before the first pick point touches the ground an archaeologist should exhaust the possibilities of a thorough reconnaisance of the terrain," quoted Sue May to herself. There didn't seem any choice between these three hills, she took the one on the right and led the ascent. It was easy going, just a convex curve of granite with pits here and there on its surface such as you found near any hilltop village, where countless women had ground corn or pounded the fruit of the *kuka,* or the *doruwa* tree with which they seasoned their foods. Potsherds galore, but only one small fragment of this black kind, the rest all thick brown earthenware such as was found everywhere. Of course there wouldn't be any marble towers, any great monuments, inscribed obelisks, Sue May reminded herself. But all the same . . .

The flat summit of the rounded hill showed only the two other flat summits, they might have been triplets. If people had ground the corn around here, then the village huts must have been built actually on these three giant mushrooms. But long ago thatching and rafter had decayed, the mud of the walls had dried and flown away. There was unworked building stone scattered about, just pieces of odd rock which had once been distributed through the mud walls. Sue May, standing on top of the hill and gazing about her

could even imagine that those nearest her formed patterns and had once been the outlines of the huts. But distributed throughout the whole three hills these odd remnants looked nothing more than grains of sugar on three doughnuts.

Wasn't there *anything,* anything at *all* to be seen? Was this *all* there was to her trip to Yar?

Nothing but three round hills, tightly enfolded in thorn trees, grey, secret and uninteresting as the granite itself. And over their tops the grey blue haze of the horizon.

She gazed back at her boxes of tools, brought so hopefully this morning. The chief Elder was speaking and Audu relayed the words.

"*Tuni-tuni,* long long ago a great city. But now—nothing."

Sue May found it difficult not to slump down on the scorching rock and burst into tears.

Chapter Thirteen

ANOTHER ARCHAEOLOGICAL TIP

Zaria, July 15th.

A DEFEATED archaeologist places typewriter on chop-box and addresses you.

You've heard, Karl dear, all about Yar and what Yar was agoin' to do for me and The Career. Well, it just wasn't, that's all. Three granite blisters and a thorn brake that'd keep out an armoured armadillo. Let's forget the place. I mean to.

Total results of one trip to Africa and all my plans to date; one piece of black pottery. Not found in *situ* so most of its sense missing, like a word taken out of its context. Professor Dering, bless his whiskers, being a perfect lamb about same black bowl and is having it packed in kapok from a local silk cotton tree and forwarded down to the Governor. With, if you please, my compliments. He guesses . . . I must have babbled a lot coming back . . . what a disappointment Yar was. Or perhaps he really is a little excited over the bowl for it's certainly a new type of pottery to him. But then of course his knowledge of pottery, a huge subject, is limited to native ware of the present day.

Well, I'll drop the bowl. Metaphorically, I mean, before I start building up hopes on it and get another sock in the jaw. I've just got to learn to take it in this business.

As you see, we're back in Zaria, your little sister feeling quite the seasoned sandal, as the native calls the itinerant trader.

—Ten minutes intermission to settle dispute over whether two large flatirons shall or shall not be packed with Missus' pet teapot. Back again, nobody killed, nobody injured, even teapot saved for a little longer life. For you see we are always packing and refinements such as not letting the heavy iron teakettle rattle loose among the crockery, or the kerosene among the flour and sugar are looked upon as absurd whims of the whiteman. After all, if you're a healthy being, why worry about a kerosene flavoring in everything you eat? And if the flatiron runs amok and pounds the dinner set to pieces, why 'tis the will of Allah.

We're off for Katsina in the morning, which you'll see if you look it up on a map, is close to the desert. I'm quite excited over my first taste of desert life, of veiled Tuaregs, of camel trains and of a town which they say is more picturesque than Timbuctu; with an Emir, and great gates and walls and a market marvelous to see.

But I want to tell you about my old friend Garuba Jos. He was actually waiting to greet us on arrival here at the resthouse. Of course he knew all about us,

where we'd been and what we'd been doing, even to the Yar debacle. For regular old gossips you can't beat Haussa traders. With him was another grandson, smaller than Audu, a sort of cousin I gather and I've an idea, in training as servant for another unsuspecting white woman. I accused granddad Garuba of this and he just grinned. Regular old employment agency for grandsons, he is. But you should have seen Audu, strutting like a sophomore before the freshman class! He has presented the young cousin with one torn dress shirt, once the property of Professor Dering, by way of setting him up in his new profession.

Of course Garuba knew that we were off soon for Katsina, that was easy to find out since we'd sent for carriers for tomorrow's loads. And this morning when I made an occasion to visit the market again he invited me into his stall where I sat on a priceless old Persian rug, sipped some excellent *shayi*—tea to you, sir!—and exchanged gossip with the old boy. Either my Haussa is vastly improved or he's getting better at thought reading; with gestures and a word of English now and then we got along without a hitch.

Garuba, being Haussa, thoroughly approves of our going to one of the great northern Emirates. To him the people of the south, and even of this great middle belt are fair victims for his trading operations, as I was over the brass rhino, but otherwise scarcely human.

"Before the coming of the whiteman" he tells me, "all wisdom was from the north, from the Bahr el

Malia, the Mediterranean. As a goat is penned during harvest time, so, by the wisdom of Allah, were the people of the south fenced between sea and forest." And much more of this local Rotarian-boosting of his native north. But I guess he's right at that. Katsina used to be the main route for camel caravans bringing down salt from the desert and taking back hides and corn. Then a too-greedy Emir of Katsina took to butchering the caravans instead of merely robbing them, and the trade swung across to the rival city of Kano. The moral, my lad, being . . . oh something about the golden goose's egg, isn't it?

Of course I'm thrilled to the back teeth with all this talk of camel caravans, bells a-tinkle, like animated Christmas cards. And of tall towers and gates thirty feet thick and walls ten times the height of man and the palm trees and all that. But I'm still more excited over something else Garuba told me. And now watch Little Sunhelmet Sue, the Infant Archaeologist of America, revoking her vow not to get thrilled again over any more buried cities and whatnots! I guess my head, though bloody, is still unbowed!

Well, to relate a long story; before there was any real trade route through the Katsina district, long before the first white explorers crossed the desert, long, long before the legendary Queen Amina and her twin sister, the Amazonian warrior, built Katsina and Zaria, longer still before the Mohammedan conquest, people were already sweeping down from the north, driven

south by the increasing drying up of the Sahara. This, before the early iron age, in neolothic and palaeolithic times, cut deeper and deeper into the forest belt of the south. . . .

And by the way, young fella, did you know they'd had no bronze age here? Fact!

Some day perhaps we'll get up to, and examine the north-east to south-west route of migration, which broke against Yar and dispersed. But at the moment we're off to investigate the north-west to south-east route which passed through Katsina. And here's my story. (Fingers crossed and hoping it doesn't turn out just another Yar washout.)

A trading friend of Garuba's was following this same, age-old route, with an unusually large string of camels, down through a place called Ruma. That's northwest of Katsina. Something happened, maybe some camels went lame, I don't know. Night approached apace, and there was a heavy tropical downpour. No village. But somebody in the caravan had heard from somebody who'd heard from somebody else that there was some sort of shelter here among the rocks. Of course in the last generation or two anything might have happened to it, but as the rock around here is granite that seemed unlikely. Garuba says they did find the cave, lit fires and spent the night there. Garuba's friend, the leader of the caravan, found that the further he penetrated the warmer it was. With the bright light from several hurricane lamps, the first

the old cave had ever known, he saw carvings on the walls! Not, I gather, sculptured reliefs, though Garuba can't say, but probably outlines filled in with black and white.

Wild beasts, they were. And some of them representations of men . . . to the horror of the strict Mohammedan.

You can imagine that at about this stage of the tale I began to bounce up and down on my Persian carpet and demand: "What sort of men? What sort of animals?"

Garuba displayed well-bred astonishment. His point was that if I wanted to dig for buried treasure the cave was just the place. A sort of bandit hang-out, like Ali Baba's cozy little glory hole.

Whereat I interrupted again. How did I get there? Could he let me have the name of the trader for guide? How far was it from Ruma and in what direction? And how far was Ruma from Katsina?

Well, he's sworn to do his best for me, and as Audu is a fair example of his best along other lines, I feel we may pull it off. But it all depends on whether we get hold of this friend of his. Garuba hasn't seen him for a year but is hopefully expecting him to turn up at any time. You can guess the awful dither I'm in. After Yar I won't bank on a darned thing and of course I don't believe a word of this story! But still . . . and after the failure of Yar, I feel I should leave no stone implement unturned.

. . . Loud crashes from kitchen. Not . . . I hope, the last of Mrs. Dering's lovely blue casseroles. I fly . . . I fly . . .

Which reminds me. Ten thousand congratulations on the success of the C 37, and many thanks for the copy of the contract. It looks as though we might begin to bank our money instead of pulling it out in handfuls, doesn't it? Oh we'll yet own two pairs of shoes apiece!

A kiss on Dad's old bald spot. If you dare.

Your Sunhelmet Sue, the Child Explorer.

D'you remember our Mrs. Fish, of the trip over? Well, she's buzzin' round Zaria, too too thrilled over the dear natives, planning a book on My Bright Days in Africa, and a lecture tour on The Footsteps of Stanley and Livingstone. Nobody's had the heart to tell her they passed some thousand or two miles to the south of Nigeria. She makes me feel about ninety, but I kind of like her at that.

Chapter Fourteen

EVIL SPIRITS

I'm sorry, Sue May, but you really will have to fire him. In the two weeks since we've been in Katsina . . ."

Sue May wasn't listening. For the hundredth time in West Africa, she was envying Mrs. Dering's cool freshness in all this heat. Her sheer green voile was as crisp as new lettuce, every blonde curl was immaculately in place and a spotless white sandal dangled from one pretty bare foot. Already, at the breakfast table, Sue May felt as limp as boiled spinach, her hair in such tight little curls across her hot forehead that she had half a mind to emulate Audu's shaven poll.

"Oh," she jerked herself back to attention. "Oh, I'm sorry. Who is it that you want me to fire?"

"The garden boy. Maigona, isn't it? Really he's quite impossible." Maigona had refused to draw water from the well of the Dering's house. Perhaps not actually refused, but he simply didn't do it. Instead, with countless lame excuses, he'd been depleting the well of the neighboring resthouse, temporarily vacant. "And now, with those men flying down from

Egypt, and going to live next door, we really must respect our neighbor's property. If he can't agree, he'll have to go."

So there it was. Mrs. Dering, perfectly right and quite unshakable in her position; Maigona, perfectly wrong and equally unshakable. Might as well get this unpleasant business out of the way. Sue May shoved back her chair and picked up her sunhelmet from the verandah railing. "Tell Audu the executioner will have another cup of coffee when she returns." She marched off across the sun-drenched compound.

The garden boy, followed by his pet goat was ambling peacefully from tree to tree, brushing off the brown covered-ways built by termites the previous night. Katsina grew white ants if nothing else. Now for it . . .

"Maigona, since you will not obey orders and draw from our well, we permit you to depart."

"To. Na ji!" Maigona looked hurt, but accepted his dismissal. His brown hands, a moment before so industriously brushing off the termite work, dropped emptily, pathetically, to his sides.

"But why?" Sue May covered her sympathy with a show of anger, "Why won't you use our well?"

"No water," affirmed Maigona definitely.

"But there *is* water," said Sue May. "If you throw in a stone you can hear it splash."

"Little water," said Maigona.

"Well, tomorrow is pay-day. You may work today and that is all." Sue May whirled away angrily and marched back to the verandah. "The firing party's over," she announced and sat down to the coffee Audu had poured for her. "But," she quirked a quizzical brow over the rim of her cup. "There's more in this than meets the eye. I'd sort of like to know what it is."

That same evening she had a chance to find out. Quite a little procession approached the verandah steps. Garden boy and goat silhouetted against the sunset, and behind, as though driving them on, a woman, or rather, a girl. Sue May knew her. She was one Laraba, affianced bride of Maigona; that is in native fashion he was slowly purchasing her with the bride price, paid out of his wages, to her father. As Laraba was late in her teens and so well past the usual age for African brides she was not at all an unwilling chattel.

Sue May got up from her deck chair in the cooling compound. "Man's work is from sun to sun," she excused herself to the amused Derings, "but a secretary's work is never done. I'm in for it now I guess, with the whole family to face." They assembled by the well. The bride-to-be came swiftly to the point. "He says," she jerked a disdainful brown shoulder towards the apprehensive Maigona, "that he has disobeyed and is therefore dismissed. Now I say," her tone included Sue May who would doubtless see eye to eye with her, "it

is better that he should obey and earn the money for my *kurdin aure.*"

Sue May nodded. Quite reasonable. While Maigona shifted unhappily from foot to foot she explained the matter of the well. It was wrong that they should draw from a store of water not belonging to them.

The bride-to-be rattled off a staccato question. Maigona hung his head and muttered something.

"*Aljannu.* Evil spirits," the girl explained. "He says that the well is haunted. Nonetheless, since it is your wish, he will draw water from it."

Sue May tried to smother a smile. Her wish? As though her wish had anything to do with this strong minded fiancée of his! Then she remembered; Maigona was fired, and you had to keep to your word with these people. Too late now. But it was a pity Laraba hadn't intervened earlier.

Laraba was practical enough to see the point. It looked as though negotiations had broken down and the delegates must go their way, when she produced an idea. "If the worthless one, my future husband can no longer be gardener, is it not true that the well is in need of someone to clean it?"

Sue May saw Maigona shiver. Even his slow mind caught the drift.

"And in that case, who better to do the digging than Maigona? The well is not a deep one, calling for special skill."

The procession turned towards the well in question.

It was dusk now, the water below eerily echoing back the sound of their voices, even the goat jibbed away, and Maigona could be neither persuaded nor shamed into further examination of the place before daylight. So it was postponed until the morrow.

Of course that was the end of that. Maigona would appear only for his wages, a difficult problem would be solved, another garden boy hired and that would be all. But Sue May was wrong.

Not long after cockcrow, which is just before six so near the Equator, Maigona appeared, under light but effective escort and apparently garbed for labor. Sue May, who was wandering in the garden hatless and enjoying the best part of the tropical day saw them arrive and joined them at the well-head.

Laraba was making it clear that Maigona should descend. Maigona appeared to be pleading that there was *aljannu* in the well, and, alternately, that the well didn't need cleaning.

Also that the well needed such thorough cleaning that only professional cleaners should do it!

"Ba . . . a!" said the goat.

"But," pleaded Maigona, apparently in answer to the goat, "in a well so old, doubtless the footholds will be missing, I shall fall to the bottom and be drowned."

"Ba . . . a!" said the goat.

"It would indeed be necessary that one be let down by rope." He picked up the light but tough rawhide

line which passed over the native-made pulley at the wellhead. "And that would require that other men be called."

Sue May, stifling her laughter, considered Maigona, herself and Laraba. Maigona was right of course; even working together the two girls could hardly lower him into the well.

Laraba waxed impatient. "Then will *I* descend. That I myself may collect the bride price and marry one who is not afraid of a well in open daylight!"

But the girl, plump and pretty, was almost as heavy as Maigona. Sue May saw her opportunity. "Wait here till I return," she commanded, and in a moment was back with several objects. The depth of the water must be tested with cord and weight. That was easy. Six inches or so at the bottom of a twenty foot shaft. Next the problem of foul air such as, an archaeologist knew, laid traps for the unwary in wells and tombs. A lighted candle let down on the same rope that had been used for sounding answered that question. Four heads bent anxiously above the well-head, but the candle went out. What did an archaeologist do now? Air pumps? But there weren't any.

Laraba had a system far more simple. In Sokoto, where she was born, where wells were very deep, deeper than the tallest house, the diggers poured sand, almost grain by grain, down one edge of the well. Sand? There was plenty of sand. While the garden boy was sent to bring headloads of it, Sue May con-

sidered how this sand business could do the trick. Presumably the fine drizzle of grains down one side of the well forced the air down with it and so started a current that drove up the other side. In which case a lighted candle, hung as far down as it would burn on the opposite side, would help the updraft.

It did work too. Slowly, as the sand dribbled in she found the candle could be lowered yet further down the narrow shaft, inch by inch, till, still burning, it touched the water, sputtered and expired. The time had come to descend.

Sue May grasped at a courage which, like the candle, had been slowly sinking. By the candlelight she had seen toeholds in the side of the well, but for reassurance she would need a rope sling to sit in. Laraba protested; it was not fitting that the Baturia should descend. Maigona echoed her, feebly. Even the goat seemed to think well-descending a gesture unbecoming a white girl.

Sue May left them protesting and stepped over the side. There was nothing left but for Laraba and Maigona to grasp the rope and hang on.

Slowly, inch by inch they paid it out over the creaking pulley. Sue May's groping tennis shoes found the second, the third, the fourth toehold. Shoulders against the opposite side and outstretched arms to steady her. Lucky that the well was a narrow one for her reach was small. Sand trickled down her sleeves, down the back of her neck, loose stones

splashed into the shallow water; good to remember how shallow it was. The blue circle of sky receding and the air growing cool and musty. It was horrid, you couldn't blame Maigona for not wanting to go down.

Sue May glanced back at the three anxious peering heads above her. "Continue to give rope," she called up, and groped for another foothold. It would be better if she went straight to the bottom first, thus proving to Maigona that the well was harmless. Coming back towards daylight would be easier.

It wasn't much further before Sue May's tennis shoes struck water, and then mud, not really oozy mud, just a mixture of sand and water and . . . her foot hit against something. She worked it upward with her toes. Only a cheap and rusty remnant of a whiteman's kettle. Well anyway it wasn't *aljannu* and that let her out, now she could return to the cheerful morning sunlight above.

Ah, but what would an archaeologist do? Sue May, chilly water about her ankles admitted with chattering teeth that, apart from actual excavation, which could now be left to Maigona, here was a grand chance for a little elementary stratigraphy.

"Send down a calabash," she called to the helpers at the wellhead. She heard Laraba's command to the garden boy, the silence and a short wait.

Then Maigona's voice in sharp argument. "But it is light and will it not break!" Good heavens, the

man was going to drop it on her! Shortly afterwards the calabash bowl scraped against the wellside, dangled within her reach. Next she sent for a kitchen knife. That too descended upon a string.

To kill two birds with one stone, Sue May enlarged the toeholds with her knife and treated the soil as samples. Her own height gave her an estimate of the height of these samples, one above the other, and Maigona and Laraba, hauling industriously on the string were told to empty the earth samples one behind another in a row, starting from the wellhead.

Except that the bottom had more granite in it, and higher up it grew more like a soft sandstone, the ground seemed much the same to the touch, and there wasn't enough light to examine it carefully here. Slowly she worked her way up the side, forgetting, in this new interest, her cold and apprehension. Laraba was proving an excellent foreman above, lowering and pulling exactly as directed. Sue May was more than halfway to the top, had her foot firmly in a toehold and was groping for the next above, when suddenly she was jerked violently against the rope sling, heard a clatter and a splash below her and found herself swinging in the air, her feet on nothing and her elbows badly scraped from the wellsides.

Shouts from above. What had happened? Then the native girl's anxious voice. "Are you there?"

"Okay," called back Sue May reassuringly. "I am

The native girl's anxious voice asked "Are you there?"

here." And groped for the toehold again. There wasn't any. That's what had happened, her weight had loosened the niche, and sand and stones had clattered into the water. But if she appeared at the wellhead shaking like this it would scarcely reassure the timid Maigona.

"Lower again," she called back. She ought to return and cut another foothold. Slowly the rope was paid out again, Sue May felt along the wall with her hand for the firmest place to dig with her knife. Something was hanging from the place where the niche had been, probably an old treeroot, and that's what had loosened the earth.

But it wasn't a treeroot. Sue May gave a tug. It was knobbly and would stand investigating. And an archaeologist, my good gal, doesn't tug!

Then the empty calabash floated down to her. Knife in hand she began to scrape and ease away the soil around the puzzling string of knobs. At last it came loose, but here in the dusk you couldn't guess what it was. Anyway, not another whiteman's teakettle.

Conscientiously she squared off the niche and cleaned out the next ones, then gave the order to be hauled to the top.

"Except for meals," Mrs. Dering on the verandah was pouring tea for the Katsina District Officer, "I haven't seen the child all day. I don't think she's left

the compound, but she's just disappeared as though the ground had swallowed her."

"Well, it's disgorged me again," said Sue May, suddenly coming out in a clean white tennis frock. "Hello there, D.O. Sir! Sorry to be late for tea, but for a cool damp place on a tropical scorcher I can recommend your well, Mrs. Dering. And thank you, yes, the usual four lumps." Sue May seated herself.

"A somewhat original refuge, wells," remarked the D.O.

Sue May unrolled her handkerchief and displayed a necklace, some two feet long, of a blue smoky color beneath the soil which incrusted it, the large beads strung along a thin wire. "What," she asked, "are these? Ancient? Modern? Native? Whiteman's work, or what?" Oh if they could only prove to be something rare and valuable! Perhaps . . . dug up from the ground like that. . . .

Mrs. Dering stroked the beads with long fingers and shook her fluffy head. "I haven't any idea."

"Allow me," the D.O. leaned forward in his chair. "Brass wire, probably native work, made from a beaten out coin perhaps." He rubbed a bead with a dampened handkerchief, tried another, then shook his head and passed the string back to Sue May. "Afraid not, Miss Innis. You found them down the well? They're European work, just glass. Been restrung out here of course, that's why they stayed together, but otherwise just cheap market beads."

"Period, early Woolworth," Sue May tried to grin, but it was awfully disappointing. "We made another find too, but there's no problem about its value; it's worth exactly four shillings and sevenpence in tenths of pennies. The main point is, who it belongs to? It was lying, in small coins, in the mud at the bottom."

For a moment the District Officer was puzzled, then his face cleared. "Without being an anthropologist I think I can solve your problem for you. A former D.O. staying at this resthouse had cause to fire his servants for some wilful negligence, breakage I think. He took them out to the wellhead and for object lesson, to show them how they deliberately wasted money, tossed the exact sum of the breakage down the well."

"And now it's up again who would you say it belonged to?" asked Sue May.

The D.O. chuckled, "I think I will transfer the case to my colleague of the bench, one who has been called the Little Judge."

"All right," grinned Sue May. "I said it belonged to Maigona, the well cleaner."

Mrs. Dering queried this. Surely Maigona had been discharged?

"Oh yes, as garden boy. But he's water boy now, with complete charge over the well and all the water from it. His girlfriend Laraba and I arranged that between us!"

Chapter Fifteen

THE HEROINE OF KATSINA

ANOTHER of those oblong wooden cases, containing two sealed cans of gasoline, eight gallons in all, showed slightly discolored at the edges. Sue May bent over and sniffed. Yes, leaking. She hefted it by one end. Almost empty.

Calling the red-robed native policeman, she ordered the case to be set aside. The huge stack that still remained seemed enough for a transatlantic flight, but six heavy Army bombers would, she knew, simply drink it up. And there they stood, three in a line, wing tip to wing tip, and three in front of those; gorgeous machines glittering in the tropical sun, as spruce and trim as though they'd never left Egypt.

Gosh it was exciting! You'd never expect anything like this, anything that was so much of Sue May's own home background, out here in Africa. Their coming hadn't seemed possible, even when Professor Dering had offered the D.O. the services of his secretary, who, he said "was something of an expert on planes," for a last-minute check-over of the landing field. Sue May knew she was no expert but she'd

been able to make sure that the layout of the grounds took into account the prevailing wind and above all she'd persuaded them to loosen the surface where it was hard and shiny, and not to crop the grass too close.

All this between keeping Maigona on his job of well-digging and reassuring him, at least twice a day that *aljannu* had not returned.

What a thrill it had been this morning! Sue May had cycled out soon after dawn, with a borrowed pair of binoculars, sandwiches and water. But not before a few thousand natives had formed a circle about the field. She was glad of that; they defined the limits of the landing ground, dark faces and festive white rigas almost like a black-and-white painted outline on the dark red soil. Just as the residents of Katsina arrived in cars and on horseback six spots appeared on the north-eastern horizon, grew to droning insects, to birds, then open cockpit twin-engine bombers. Not the last word in planes, but to Sue May it was like home, coming out to greet her. She wanted to rush right forward and pat each plane, sentimentally, as it landed! And as it was, she was milling around the stationary planes among the horde of excited natives when she should have been present among the white people at the official reception.

Lunch, afterwards, at the District Officer's had been fun too; next to her at table had been a flight sergeant to whom his lunch partner had talked polo and

horses. With relief the poor young man had turned to Sue May. Sue May had said something casual about engines and that had set him off on an eager lecture about static and dynamic balance of engine components and . . . Heavens! . . . the insoluble problems of gyroscopic inertia. A spindle in the supercharger of his engine, was, he claimed, too lightly built. Anyway, they'd had trouble with it on this morning's flight. Sue May forgot how many thousand revolutions a minute the blower had to run, but so fast that when you dived the plane abruptly it put unfair strain on the spindles.

Engines weren't in her line, but Karl at home was just like this; she'd had to learn how to listen intelligently and to ask the right questions in the right places. And after lunch as people were climbing into their cars to go down to the polo ground for the afternoon game she'd slipped away. No chance of getting the bike, that was in full view. Dodging round the back of the D.O.'s stable she cut across lots in her white sandals and sheer, grey-pink organdie, and here she was, using the gasoline tins as just an excuse to haunt the landing ground.

She rounded the tail of the sixth plane. The leader was parked right in front of it and from it came sounds of metal on metal. Oh dear, where was that policeman? Nobody was supposed to be allowed near these precious machines. Hurrying to the front to identify the intruder she came full on a slightly

smudgy countenance below the crisp blonde hair of the Flight Commander. He looked up, grunted absently.

"Oh," said Sue May, "not a native thief then, after all." Then, impishly, she added, "Doctor Livingstone, I presume?"

The man, his name was Jamison, grinned. "So you're the little girl who was talking engines at lunch to my rigger? Rather envied him."

The "little girl": archaeologist, secretary to the famous Professor Dering, parachute jumper, and inspector of landing fields replied meekly, "Yessir!"

The Flight Commander stood off and scowled at his machine. "Any quick change of direction, particularly at high speed, and she loses power in her engine." He was talking more to himself than to Sue May. "Control's all right. Petrol feed all right; and it's not an ignition fault. . . ."

"Perhaps it's in your blower," she suggested. Not in vain had she listened to the N.C.O. during lunchtime.

"In the supercharger? But I don't see . . ." This time the little girl was included in his remarks. "They're tricky things, but all the same. . . ."

Sue May explained demurely. "The high-rev. blowers are built too light in the spindle for their heavy periphery. They've got an appalling gyroscopic force at full revs." Was she remembering this correctly? "And when you make a quick change of di-

rection the blower tries to lag and makes the spindle whip. As it straightens up again . . . of course it's only minutely . . . it vibrates like a tuning fork. And practically jams in its bearings." There, she'd done it! She gave a sigh of relief.

"Good Lord! It might well be!"

Sue May had just one more scrap of knowledge. "Of course they ought to stiffen the spindles to damp out the vibration; even a lead core to the spindles, like the lead in a pencil, would do it."

"I think my mechanic was saying something of the sort."

"M . . . m. You'll find he agrees with me," said Sue May. She'd got even anyhow for that slur on her five-foot-one.

Obviously there wasn't anything he could do to the supercharger, that was a task for some specialist in the Flight, but Captain Jamison continued to potter around, mainly for the pleasure of it. "Shan't need to do much tinkering here in Katsina," he murmured once. "Main trouble on these flights is damage to the undercarriage, due to bad landing fields." He glanced round the field. "Best one we've met so far. Somebody here knows their business."

"Yessir." Sue May continued noncommittal.

Then came a phenomenal stroke of luck. "Think we could get somebody to fill up?"

Oh yes, that was easy. Sue May exerted her Haussa, produced policemen and willing assistants while the

Flight Commander himself did the actual replenishing.

"And now," he said, "I'm going to smash quite a number of Air Force regulations and test this theory of yours about the supercharger spindle. Care to come?"

"O . . . o!" said Sue May, forgetting white sandals, organdie frock and all.

He glanced at her finery, then reached in the cockpit and hauled out grease stained overalls and a leather jacket. "This isn't a passenger plane, better climb into those." As the engine warmed up Sue May crammed herself ruthlessly, ruffles and all into the borrowed and enormous garments, tightened the strap of her sunhelmet and was ready.

Then he tossed her a parachute. "I'm taking no chances. Better put on that. Know how?"

She nodded silently. Of course it wasn't a C 37 but by the look of the outside was pretty up to date.

Like old times, to taxi into position, to hear the sudden roar of the open throttle, to feel the rush of wind, a gentle bump or two and then find yourself floating, apparently motionless while the earth slid past under the keel and tilted away. These army planes could certainly climb.

They were still climbing when they passed over the government station; the buildings made of the red earth from which they rose were scarcely distinguishable, but laborious care had surrounded each

with a little patch of green trees and even a few flowers, which made it stand out against the desert. Then Katsina city. The sun was low enough to cast it into a jigsaw puzzle of gleaming white walls and corresponding black, impenetrable shadow against the uniform brick red of roads, market squares and open lots. But how well the ancient city moat showed up! Sue May held more firmly to her sunhelmet and peered over the side.

Come to think of it, this was the first time she'd been up since she deserted parachute jumping for archaeology. Despite the familiar knapsack weight on her back she needn't bother now to look for a safe landing place, she could give her whole attention to the sprawling outline of the ancient town. Those mounds near the saltpits looked awfully like tumuli. But weren't, unfortunately. No, there seemed no ancient earthworks. Inside the town you could see where buildings, now gone, had once stood; their pattern, invisible from the ground showed up from the air like a design. If only one could charter a plane for a day, similar outlines might even be visible through the thorn brakes of Yar.

Out beyond the polo field was the Ruma road, you could see where the new road cut across the old, and along it a string of camels, Sue May counted twelve, with the white garments of the Tuareg drivers. Back towards the town, startlingly bright against the dusty field, the white shirts, helmets and breeches of the

Sue May crammed her ruffles
into the enormous garments.

polo players. For an instant she even tried to count them too.

She felt the plane cease climbing and flatten out. Where would Captain Jamison be heading now? As though in answer she saw his head turn, a fierce grimace and a hand signed for her to duck her head. She guessed what was coming, and it came.

A brief, screeching power dive, and sharp zoom and a racking sideways turn. Ouch! Sue May clasped her stomach hurriedly then wondered if it wouldn't have been wiser to hold her head. Well, if the what-doyoucallit in the supercharger felt as she did, no wonder it went on strike!

What was the pilot aiming at now? He seemed to be drifting in slow circles. One of the engines was gone, that was it, the whole plane vibrating under the unequal thrust. Another short dive. Oh, he was trying to shake the engine into life again.

No result, and they were a bit lower. They hadn't any height to lose either, if they were going to make the landing ground.

Another, and yet another sharp dive, each leaving them with less of the valuable height. Obviously the pilot hadn't any hope of getting back to the field as things were and was making desperate efforts.

Lower still now. One engine had ceased working entirely and the other seemed weaker. Sue May, thinking rapidly, glanced over the side.

Yes, it could be done. Now which way was the

wind? Ah, you could tell that from the cloud of dust which rose from the galloping hoofs on the polo ground.

She yelled at Captain Jamison in front of her, but with no hope of making herself heard. If he tried to land in the middle of that field he'd certainly kill horses, players and spectators, probably even himself and he hadn't enough engine left to dive in warning, climb, wait till the field had cleared and then land safely.

Sue May lurched from side to side of the narrow cockpit by way of calling his attention. As Captain Jamison looked back she was already casting one foot over the side, hanging on against a gale that almost tore her from the ship. Her sunhelmet parted it's leather strap and went, just as the pilot looked round and shook his head in violent disapproval.

Sue May grinned reassurance and jerked her chin back towards the parachute. Would he think to dip his plane as Karl did, so that she'd swing free of the tail? She tried to gesture down and forward with her chin, having no hand free.

Yes, he'd got that, and flung up a hand in acknowledgment. Time for no more. Here was the place to bail out if she were to hit the polo ground.

She let go. Well clear now. She pulled the rip cord, somewhat earlier than with the C 37, but she couldn't be sure how this chute would act. A series of tugs on the harness; floating now, no longer falling.

And there was the plane circling round, just a little above her changing horizon. Going to be a race too. If she didn't touch ground in time to warn the polo people, get clear herself, she'd only have added to the dangers and difficulties of the forced landing. She was dropping fast, but the plane too was losing height, though Sue May could tell the pilot was driving it for all it was worth on the single engine, letting it run in tight circles to avoid losing way by too much rudder.

Below her the polo had come to a standstill. Yes, she could see people's faces now, they were looking up, but oh, how slowly they grew! With hands grasping the cords, first on one side, then on the other she spilled wind, increasing the rate of descent.

Horses and men had disappeared from the field. Below her a blast of heat from the sun drenched ground. The earth was slipping past her. She half turned herself in the proper direction, then struck, a scrambling run, fumbling at the release of the parachute belt. The 'chute would have to take its chances.

The polo players had caught the idea and were clearing off the crowd of spectators, shouting urgent directions. Above them the roar of the engine. The plane was coming in, barely clearing the white polo helmets. But it did clear them.

No time for Sue May herself to run; better stop where she was, then the pilot might be able to dodge her. Drop flat, to clear the propellors.

A roar, a blast of wind. A tail skid gouging the dust. And . . . Hurray! The plane was right side up and rolling to a stop.

Funny, the crowd running to her, not to the plane. Oh yes, she was down, of course they thought she was hurt.

Quickly Sue May scrambled to her feet, in time to reassure the first comers. If they'd just catch the parachute for her, to see that it didn't get torn, please? Whew, that had been a strain. Her shaking knees still told her that she hadn't liked taking a chance with a strange parachute.

What a jumble! More and more people crowding up to ask if she were hurt; the pilots and N.C.O.'s of the Flight explaining to the polo players; the D.O. translating to the Emir and his court. Sue May dragged off her leather jacket and hauled it over her head, since it was dangerous to be without a sun-helmet or some headcovering, and began to struggle through the crowd. These congratulations, anxious enquiries were embarrassing. Then, complete with parasol, spotless white gloves and supercilious smile appeared Mrs. Dering's pet aversion, the wife of one of the station officials.

"Rather unnecessary, my dear," she addressed Sue May, "to land in the middle of the polo game. Even if . . . er . . . ," her smile was a little sharper. "Spectacular."

But the effect was spoiled, her parasol almost swept

aside by Captain Jamison right behind her. He'd climbed out of the plane and plunged his way through the crowd.

"Dunno how to thank you. If the machine had been wrecked . . . no spares . . . all my own fault. . . . However did you think of it, do it?"

"Is the plane all right?" Sue May hoped her knees wouldn't give way completely. Somehow plain back-slapping would have been easier to meet than the awed, silent admiration of flying men and officials. Captain Jamison was even asking now if there was anything he could do, anything to balance what she had done.

"Sure," Sue May produced a wavering grin. Mustn't let him know how scared she'd been. "Take me up again some time, won't you?" And then, because it had been so in her mind. "Perhaps, if you've time, over a place called Yar. But just now, could I have a long cold drink of water?"

Chapter Sixteen

A REAL DISCOVERY

THE organdie dress was done for, at least till she could get home and send it to a cleaners: grease spots, a tear where she'd caught it on an overall buckle, and as wrinkled as a prune. But Sue May was feeling festive. She scarcely gave a glance at the grey-pink organdie; it was an evening for the embroidered green, the best she could produce. A dance at the Resident's tonight for the Flight men with at least five men for every feminine partner, surely the answer to a maiden's prayer. These Englishmen were marvelous dancers too.

Singing lustily, she gave that wayward curl over her left ear a final lick of the hairbrush and turned from the mirror. A gentle scratch at the door.

"Yes, Audu. What is it?"

"Garuba Jos is come."

"Your grandfather?" Why, what on earth could have brought him clear to Katsina!

"He brings news," announced Audu placidly.

Sue May glanced out into the compound. There in the sunset light against the compound wall, spotless white turban above wrinkled plum black face, in a

riga of white cotton embroidered in green from neck to hem, sat the old man, feet tucked beneath him, almost as immovable as the wall itself. She felt a warm pleasure at seeing him again.

Greetings were performed with punctilio, Sue May rather proud to show her mastery of their oriental intricacy. Then Garuba rose and gazed upon her with wonder, even perhaps with anxiety. "Only today, it is told, that you leaped from a *jirigin sama,* an engine of the skies, yet fell to earth unharmed. Truly the *annabawa* must have borne you in their hands. And it is further said that by so acting as a forerunner you saved the lives of many who would have been crushed when the machine came to earth."

Sue May was astonished. Already the story was current in the market place! And the correct version too, with of course the unimportant exception that she had descended by parachute! But surely Garuba hadn't come just to congratulate her on this?

No. He was a bearer of news. "He who knows of the cave at Ruma is in Lagos, and for the time is a contractor for the Government and therefore cannot come. But in Lagos I spoke with him regarding the cave."

Curiouser and curiouser! Garuba had then been in Lagos since she saw him, and had now come clear to Katsina!

"Moreover I bound him to tell this to no other, until your permission is given. Is that well?"

Yes, of course she was pleased. But Sue May continued to tell herself that the cave was scarcely worth all this fuss. Why, even the Governor had warned her, at the beginning, that she would find nothing spectacular in West Africa. The cave would be just the fizzle that Yar was, and anyway she had very little faith in second-hand directions for finding a place.

Garuba was already embarked on a description of the route from Katsina. The landmarks: the forehead shaped rock where the road forked to a stream in which once there had been crocodiles; half an hour further to the well at which a man died of thirst—

Sue May sent Audu for paper and pencil and tried to jot these down, but they meant nothing to a stranger like herself. Garuba had a better idea.

Tucking back the sleeve of his robe he smoothed a little area of the dusty earth with the palm of his hand, then with forefinger began to draw. "Now here is the compound wherein we sit. And the road to the *birni,* the walled city, thus. Passing through it, thus and thus." His long finger traced in the dust. "Here is the gate whereby you leave it." Sue May's pencil hurried to follow on paper. "And here on the left the ground where the game of polo is played."

She could check the accuracy so far, the plan might have been made from an ordinance survey; it was exactly as she had seen it from the plane this afternoon, even to the points of the compass.

Once on the Ruma road, having followed these

directions, you just, it seemed, kept on trekking. Until . . . and here was the problem; you had to recognize a certain landmark. Sue May tried, and tried again to get something to go by. But skilled as had been the old man's map making, he, like other natives, had no measure of distance. Obviously, to a native, this tree, of a certain rare type, would have been instantly recognized and the tree was important for beside it branched the road towards the caves.

Garuba considered for a moment how this unforseen difficulty might be overcome. "The place could be shown you. On foot it is distant, but on your *keki* . . . he must mean the push-bike, . . . you could go and come within a day. I myself will start at dawn, heading a camel train for Ruma." His tone politely suggested that she also might wish to go with him that way.

Well, that was a thought. And the camel idea certainly sounded thrilling. But there was also the Yar trip to consider, Sue May had specially asked for that and she couldn't go off tomorrow if that was the day for Yar. Then she remembered that Captain Jamison had said that the Flight would be busy in Katsina for several days before they moved off, and she could make sure of that this evening. There was also the matter of what the Derings would think of this trip to Ruma?

"Even as your grandson is in my hire," she told the trader, "so am I a *mallam,* a writer, hired by the

Learned One. I must consult him before I can make decision."

Professor Dering agreed at once, and brought out a lamp into the dusky compound to examine the map. Even Mrs. Dering was interested.

"Couldn't you, Gerald," she suggested, "run Sue May out and back on your motorbike? I'll stay and hold the fort for a day and cope with these Air Force festivities."

The Professor was checking Sue May's map with the one on the ground. "I expect she would find the camel more interesting. Why not," he glanced over his spectacles at Sue May, "travel out with Garuba's camel train tomorrow? Then let me come out late in the afternoon and bring you home. I'd like very much to see this cave."

So that was settled, and with Mrs. Dering's blessing. "Go ahead with your exploring, you two children. I'll be glad to have the house free, for a few hours, from the unfortunate natives who have to answer the Professor's endless catechisms."

Sue May's feeling of adventure lasted well into the middle of the next morning, but then slowly began to give way before a growing conviction that her back was going to snap right in two! True, she had the pick of the riding camels, a tall, gangling, grunting swaying brute, and her high saddle was well padded with luxurious oriental rugs. And it had all looked so easy when she'd seen the blue-veiled Tuareg

camel drivers of the Emir's stables disdainfully swaying through the town. But now at every stride her backbone seemed to bend like a hinge and—she did a rough calculation—that hinge must have bent and straightened well over sixty thousand times since they left Katsina at dawn. Oh glory be, they were going to draw up for a midday halt!

Someone caught her camel, and in camel language ordered it to *"barrak!"* Two last final jerks which put her sunhelmet over the back of her ear and then . . . how glorious! She slid to the ground, staggered a few steps with cramped knees and looked with surprise at the landscape, now ceasing to rock and dip.

Garuba Jos came forward with a belated *"Sauka lafia.* Alight safely!" And a request that she would deign to eat. This was a meal especially for her benefit. The native, while he rests at midday and drinks water, does not eat between breakfast and nearly sunset.

And such a meal. Sue May in a deckchair beneath a wide spreading tree tried not to smile at this white-man's food. Spread at her feet on two clean but gaudy towels were opened cans of sardines, a sweet kind of condensed milk with a spoon inserted to show that it was to be eaten direct, a large tin of assorted chocolate biscuits, Garuba, like a good host had remembered her taste for these, and two small calabash bowls, one containing peanuts only half roasted but shelled. There was also a dish of really

delicious ripe dates and a pot of excellent tea with lumps of sugar.

One of Garuba's servants brought water to pour over her hands. Sue May was beginning to feel like something out of the Arabian Nights.

The tea was good after the thirsty morning's ride but it was difficult to know just how to combine the other courses. Did one eat the sardines plain, or should they be sandwiched between chocolate biscuits! No time to ask for the advice of Emily Post.

Lunch over, she was shown a near-by resthouse where rugs had been spread for her. Sue May gratefully made a pillow of her raincoat and slept off the effects of the meal. She awoke feeling rested and refreshed but started up with a little screech of dismay; her backbone seemed set in a permanent kink.

More camel riding. The day growing cooler, the kinks in the back less viciously painful. Then a halt and Garuba Jos explaining that here they must leave the camel train, strike off into the bush. He would, he said, leave word and a guide for *Maitambaiya,* the Questioner.

In this open, semi-desert country walking was easy. The path led gently uphill, then down again towards the stream bed. Because of the need for secrecy Garuba had left his servants and camel drivers behind and Sue May was silent, busy thinking how she should thank him for his hospitality and courtesy. She was beginning to suspect that he had made the trip all

the way down to Lagos especially to find his friend who knew of the cave, though a native Haussa will welcome any excuse to travel anywhere. And this trip to the caves—he had told a tale of a relative in Timbuctu and of combining trade with a visit, but that also might be only an excuse to cover his kindness.

She was almost sure, she was thinking, that the caves would be another flop, like Yar. There had been so many years since Garuba's friend had taken refuge there in the storm, plenty of time for amateur archaeologists and just plain robbers to find and destroy anything of value. And once on the spot, facing this almost certain disappointment, she knew she would find it difficult to render gratitude and appreciation. Better build it up here and now, before she was again disillusioned.

But Garuba waved away thanks with one thin silver-ringed hand. "When young, one who has long heels will always travel, for adventure, for the seeing of new lands and people. Later for profit, for trade. But still later, when one is old, if one has still the wandering foot, it is needful that one find occasion, pretext, that one may travel." Practically making it a favor that she had conferred upon him.

Trees and huge granite boulders by the stream, and pleasant green places. On the further side of the stream a granite mass, with a flaw like a jagged pencil stroke down the center. Garuba drew her attention.

"The place whereof my friend spoke."

What, that narrow fissure?

Yet as the path dropped again towards the stream bed the rock seemed to grow above them. Not a true cave, Sue May reflected, like those in limestone. Yet in a tropical country it might serve as well, or even better since limestone would have been damp shelter for the primitive, far-off people who used it. And through the treetops she could see a hopeful sign, ground sloping up like a cone, its tip pointing directly at the crack.

A talus, the geologists called it, didn't they?—the jumble of fallen rocks leaning against the base of a steep hill. But this couldn't be a talus. Granite, if it had fallen, would have stood about in rough chunks and this was a long smooth slope as of something that had long flowed from the cave mouth. She wouldn't admit, even to herself, all that this ought to mean.

If only Professor Dering were here, to add some sort of reassurance, or to dispel her hopes before they rose too high.

The faint *puta-puta* down the road. Ah, that would be his motorbike. Garuba too had heard it. *"Maitam-baiya* approaches."

"Let us await him," said Sue May, plumping herself resolutely on the ground, looking resolutely away from that talus.

It seemed an age before she could say, "So glad you managed to get away so early."

"Dodged another luncheon to the Flight people," Professor Dering grinned cheerfully. "They'll be really glad of one male the less. Now where's this cave of yours? That it?—By Jiminy!—" He checked further comment. But Sue May's heart gave a wild summersault. So he too thought it good, did he!

A rush down to the streambed. Precarious leaping from rock to rock. The Professor led the assault on the further slope. Perspiring they slowed to a gasping scramble up the steep talus.

Overgrown. But of course it would be, after how many hundreds, thousands of years?

"Notice the vegetation here is different?" said the Professor. "That means that the nature of the soil is different too." Then—"Of course everything outside will have rotted down, this isn't the dry Egyptian climate that preserves for centuries. But there's always a chance inside the cave. . . . Petrification. Pity it's granite though." He continued murmuring almost to himself, but Sue May knew what he meant about the granite. Limestone would mean dripping lime inside, which in many years forms a preserving coat over all it touches.

Then she paused with a yelp. When the Professor looked round she was holding a stone in her hand.

"A Neolith! An axe head!" Polished. A perfect beauty. She was stammering with excitement. This, this alone that she'd found on her own site all by herself with no one to show her or to identify for her,

almost repaid her for all her trip out to Africa. Even paid for the disappointment at Yar. It was her first real find.

But the Professor held up another. "A fairly common type which survived until quite recent times. But this of course is only the top surface of the 'Kitchen midden.'"

Kitchen midden! Those were the words that had been singing through her head, the words she hadn't dared admit even to herself. That's what it was; not a talus just left by nature but a pile of household rubbish, invaluable to the archaeologist, thrown out by generation after generation of cave dwellers back through uncounted centuries. An inch of depth might mean a year or many years. It was awe inspiring, all this slope of unwritten history, of prehistory.

The top of the mound levelled off where doubtless families of a forgotten race had sat before the cave mouth to sun themselves, had ground their corn, in earlier times had skinned their prey and sharpened their stone axes. They probably hadn't looked African at all, those people of the lower layers; hadn't yet begun to develop the tightly kinked hair and broad noses and other special characteristics which suited this hot, changing climate.

Gosh, she thought, it might even have been a different climate, so far back as that!

Tactfully and also for his own comfort Garuba Jos had made no attempt to keep up with these two

enthusiasts. Perhaps he found them a little madder even than the usual whiteman. Sue May didn't care. The Professor's obvious excitement gave solid support to her wildest dreams. And he too might have been thinking along the same line, for at the entrance to the cave he stopped and waited.

"Do we park our stone axes in the umbrella stand, as a sign to the Ancestral Spirits that we come in peace?" he enquired.

"Dump your mastodon outside," Sue May frowned in mock sternness. "You know I never allow you to skin them in the house." Oh, the Professor was a dear!

And then they entered.

A passageway, ten feet wide, extending upward in a giant crack. Twenty paces or so and the last little stunted shrub, the last little blade of grass gave way before the bare flat surface, almost like cement. A slight curve in the wall presently cut off the light, and they produced electric torches.

The crack seemed to go on and on, indefinitely; the floor sloped, as the life of those ancient householders had been lived at the cave mouth and in the sunlight outside, where slowly was built up the pile of dirt and rubbish.

Garuba Jos rustled behind them. "Yet further it was, that my friend said the hole grew wider, and drawings had been made upon the rock."

Down, inward and downward, the slope growing

almost as steep as that outside the cave mouth. Packed tight and smooth by damp and years but without an atom of vegetation. It was cool, smelling damply with the condensation of the hot air from outside and Sue May shoved back her helmet, letting it hang by the strap. There was even a slight breeze, the crack above them acting like a chimney.

A stir, a murmur and then a roar overhead. "Bats," said the Professor. "The cleft must be full of them."

Then Sue May, torch in hand, saw it first. The almost impossible was true. Garuba Jos had been right, right to the letter! Sue May could almost have turned and hugged him.

There were animals and birds and birds and animals, carved on the hard and jagged rock. Only the tips of some of the drawings were visible as her torch played over them, the remainder of the creatures lay hid beneath the piles of debris that formed the hard cave floor.

"Unique," murmured the Professor softly to himself. "Unique. No other example known, that I've heard of. Excavation will reveal the growth of pictorial art, each stage lower will show, almost certainly, what the one above has grown from."

The searching torches discovered more and yet more of this amazing prehistoric art gallery. Not content with the almost impossible task of carving on the hard granite without metal instruments, the early artists had gone even a step further, with incalculable

labor they had actually smoothed down the granite face in some places. These might be the more recent ones, perhaps only a thousand years old. The artists had by then stopped trying just to copy birds and animals, and had begun to compound imaginative pictures of fabulous beasts. One looked like a bee with a human head surrounded by an elaborate geometrical pattern, and yes, the whole body of the bee, if it were a bee, had been covered with another sort of pattern. Sue May bent nearer to examine it close to the ground. Scales those were, weren't they? Each scale filled with a still smaller ornamentation. She wondered whether, with his rude stone implements one man could complete one of these pictures in a lifetime, or would it be an inherited task handed down from father to son?

Sue May was growing scared. If this were a dream, she hoped she wasn't going to wake up. It was too much, she felt, to be anything but a dream, and if so, more disappointing than she could bear.

And further still in the cave they came on human figures. Of course that was frankly impossible!

They were elaborate drawings of single individuals, showing even their weapons and ornaments. And less elaborate, more conventionalized were scenes which might have been the development of pictograms, those rebus-like forerunners of regular writing. The drawing of a man for instance had become, in some cases, little more than a conventional symbol.

"No," Sue May spoke aloud in the silence. "No. I can't! I can't!"

"Can't what?" The Professor's tone was anxious.

"I've got to get out—it's all too much—nothing stops—it just goes on and on!" She began to stammer. "The c-cave, it keeps on going down and down through the years. The people keep on living and dying generation after generation! And there isn't any end to the pictures, or the years—or the centuries. Or *anything!*"

"We'll turn back," was the Professor's firm decision, and he took her arm. He slanted the torch downward to light only the slope as they scurried up the path again. It was friendly, the narrow circle of light, cutting out all but the cool present, cutting them off from the too much that had gone before.

At the cave mouth as she drew a long breath of the fresh warm air Sue May's knees were steady again. "Sorry I made a fool of myself." Nice to be out here, back in our own century again, looking over the familiar African landscape in warm sunset light.

"I know the feeling. I had it when I got pretty deep in astronomy, as a young man. The stars do it more even than the generations that have gone before."

They waited a moment there before starting down. "And by the way," he asked. "What are you going to do with your discovery?"

Sue May protested. It wasn't hers, not hers alone. It was Garuba's, and his friend's, and the Professor's.

Sue May was scared. If this was a dream she didn't want to wake up!

But Garuba would have none of it. He was a trader, and this was nothing that could be bought or sold.

"And I," declared the Professor, "am an anthropologist. I believe that a cobbler should stick to his last. I'll help of course in any way you like, but you, Susan, are the archaeologist of the expedition and to you belongs the honor."

Sue May hoped she wasn't going to get shaky again. It was all too much. She had wanted a nice little dinky cave with a few caveman scratches, some stone implements and maybe a bone or two, a sort of archaeological baby rattle to play with, and now she'd got this. This!

"Reputations," said the Professor as they slithered down the slope, "will be made and broken over this discovery of yours."

Though it was hot, Sue May shivered.

Chapter Seventeen

YAR YIELDS UP A SECRET

DEAR KARL: Well of all the little salesmen! How did you happen to go into the job of author's agent? When your letter arrived with the check you could have bowled me over with a palm leaf. Not that I'm not grateful, I am, I am, I am! And if Dad ever consents to my taking that French Archaeological course I wrote you about, the check will keep me going for a couple of weeks on it. But . . . did you bump the editors on the head, or was it just chloroform? If I'd had any idea that my letters to you were going to appear as newspaper articles I'd have been completely pen-tied. At any rate I'm relieved to hear that you omitted bits, such as that part about the local witchdoctor resembling the principal of Senior High!

Please, please, though dear Karl, don't print the bits about Yar. It's a washout of course, but somehow I still have a tender place in my heart for it and would like to keep it to myself, specially now that the Ruma cave business has turned out so big . . . see accompanying letter. There's been more about Yar lately, and as the mails don't push off for another hour I thought I'd tell you about it.

It goes back a few days to when the fliers droned in from Egypt, a whole Flight of 'em, and except for the non-coms., most of them looked, in their pink and white English way, as though they ought still to be in High School. But can they flop a wicked wing! Well, I was up with the Flight Commander one afternoon and had to bail out of his army crate bang into the middle of a polo game, and as advance agent, gave the pilot a chance to make a forced landing on a clear field.

Wild acclaim for your Sunhelmet Sue! Pilot particularly grateful, "if it hadn't been for me he'd have wrecked the bus and perhaps killed people, disorganized the Flight". . . and pretty nearly bust up the British Empire I suppose!

He said he simply had to do something for me. He was so pink and embarrassed that I suggested another flight!

"Where?" sez he.

"Yar," sez I, almost without thinking.

"Yah?" says he, puzzled at my crude American way of saying 'yes.'"

"No, Yar. Y-a-r," says I, "name of a place."

But first we had to refold the parachute. The only place long enough and wide enough and flat enough was the smooth concrete of the native court polished like black ice by many bare feet. The Emir was so impressed by the need for a clean floor that he sent a galloper ahead and when we arrived with the para-

chute there were twenty people flat on their tummies, a long line, blowing the dust away!

And then as soon as the captain had the spindles of the supercharger fixed, round comes a chit. (That's British, or I guess Hindustani, for a small note, Karl. Not a diminutive female native!)

"I shall be so glad if you'll take flight this afternoon, the objective as you suggested." So I replied more or less to the effect that Sue May Innis had much pleasure in accepting the kind invitation of Captain Anstruther Jamison for the afternoon of the tenth. And well, we hopped off.

Yar isn't marked on the map but I'd jotted down its position on the official 1; 250000. Of course the map itself was no flying map but we followed rivers and roads and by the time we'd got fairly near I'd begun to recognize the lay of the land. It helped a lot that we were then out of flat desert country, with fairly characteristic hills and valleys to guide us. I don't really know what I'd expected, but there was the wide stretch of almost grey blue thorn trees, looking as disarmingly smooth and soft as grey lichen, nothing like the vile, ferocious stuff it really is. And in the middle, almost the same color, the three hills in clover leaf shape, with the green stalk which was the stream up which I walked, you remember, that day I went down the shoot-the-chutes.

Certainly I hadn't expected to find much more, though I'd brought the old camera and heaps of

film. I wasn't going to let that place trick this little archaeologist again. But with the oblique sun, it was getting around four then, I began to imagine things, sort of patterns in the grey thorn trees like the raised design that shows up in some lights on a damask dinner cloth. Only even vaguer than that.

Captain Jamison pointed downward and looked as brightly intelligent as one can behind a pair of air goggles. Having armed myself this time with our old friend pad and pencil I shoved it over, and he wrote back. "Photographs? What for?" "Probably," thinks he, in his bright British way, "the gal wants a picture of some place she fell out."

But I wrote back, "Buried city" which ought to have been exciting enough to stir even an Englishman. He said, "Where?" So I made a little sketch of the three mushroom stones and the thorn brake. We were right over it then.

At his suggestion we dropped lower; there wasn't a landing ground for miles if we'd had any more trouble, so it was pretty decent of him. There was a clock, altimeter and compass among other dials in my cockpit, it being a dual control machine. While he kept the plane on a straight course at a fixed height I was to take my photos at so many seconds intervals, and note down height and course on each snapshot. But the intervals were too short, it couldn't be done, so we had to fly back over the first course twice and I do hope that the second lot of exposures filled in

the gaps between the first—though I was using twelve exposure film, I seemed to be changing every minute. We got better on the second and third strips and by the time we'd circled round for an oblique shot I felt like a hardened professional. The first lot may be a flop because I was resting the camera on the edge of the cockpit and had forgotten about vibration; and then I'd taken off my goggles and my eyes were watering like an onion peeler so that I may not have read the instruments correctly. You see I'd just thought of taking a few casual snaps, it was only for convenience that I'd brought along the whole carrier of films. But I've certainly had a splendid lesson on aerial surveying.

Anstruther Jamison got right chatty on the way back, via the memo pad. I'm saving the conversation as it's a pretty fair manual of instruction for beginners. He's terribly keen and never goes anywhere without a camera or two in the plane, the expensive kind of course, electrically driven, that shoots through the floor boards. But as they had to cross French territory on the trip out from Egypt the French authorities wouldn't allow them so much as a vest pocket Kodak. He's going to develop these films for me if he can, though where he'll get the chemicals or the apparatus I don't know. Almost nobody out here does his own darkroom work because of the heat and the dubious chemicals in the water; even the Professor sends all his back to England immediately they're

taken. But my pet of a Flight Commander says that this is no hotter than Egypt and that if you use the right method there's no trouble at all.

On which hopeful and optimistic note we will close, my dear Karl. No forced landings, no parachute descents this time and . . . so long until tomorrow. . . .

Your Sunhelmet Sue

Sue May had dragged her camp bed and mosquito net out on the flat roof. Cooler here, but the full moon was so bright she found it hard to sleep, and this had been an exciting week, too exciting to stop thinking about. Below her lay the garden, all blue green space and furry black shadow, somewhere a *kura,* a hyena, howled far out across the sandy flat country and there was a light in one of the servants' huts behind the kitchen. Sue May closed her eyes again. But they would pop open.

That was how she happened to see someone enter the side gate, a small boy in a short white robe. He paused a moment as though doubtful whether to come to the dark house, then turned towards the huts at the back. Sue May's heart began to pound; Captain Jamison had said that he might develop the films tonight. Could this be . . . ? She flung out of bed, thrust feet into slippers and was downstairs before the boy had reached Audu's mat-hung doorway.

"*Takarda,*—Paper," said the small boy.

Sue May opened the folded chit. Yes, for her. And

yes, that duck of a flying man had got hold of chemicals, materials, somehow somewhere, and was actually now, this very minute, working on her films. Did she want to come along and see whatever there was to be seen?

Did she? Sue May forgot that there wouldn't of course be anything visible, anything worth photographing on the Yar pictures, forgot that this had been the first big disappointment of her archaeological career.

"Wait," she said to the boy. "Wait here, I'll come with you," and tore back to her room. Five minutes and she had slipped on skirt and pullover, thrust her feet into sandals, run a comb through her hair, . . . turned back to dab powder on her nose, and was off with the small boy.

The boy led the way. Not back to the D.O.'s house, where Captain Jamison was quartered, but across moonlit fields, by a short cut to the Katsina clubhouse, a musty deserted little place where old magazines and ancient books collected among broken arm chairs and wobbly-legged tables. It looked deserted, but the boy scratched on the door covering.

The bright flare of the club acetylene lamp perched shadeless on the end of the library table. Propped against a pile of old *Punches* was a printing frame and a red developing light burning itself out in one corner beside a smelly collection of buckets and trays. Jamison and the D.O. were striding about, jacketless,

collarless, the sleeves of their evening shirts rolled up to their elbows.

"Good, you're here," said Jamison. "Got something, I think."

"Don't be too sure," said the D.O., but with the same fanatic gleam in his eye.

"Take a chair, won't you?" said Jamison, "won't be a minute now before we get a definite print. We sent one of the planes to Kano for ice, and at ten o'clock practically pitched the last bridge four out of here to get a place to work."

For a minute that seemed like twenty Sue May waited and held her breath. Captain Jamison glanced at his wrist watch.

"Time," he said.

Click click went the clasps of the printing frame. Then all three heads were bent over the shallow developing tray in the ray of the red lamp.

Of course they'd developed several spools of negatives before starting to print. But . . . Sue May looked anxiously at the developing blur; these air photos showed no striking contrast of light and shade, land and sky. But underneath, fair and clear in her own handwriting, scratched with the camera stylo, "Yar, South Three."

From the developer to the fixer, standing in its dish of ice water. The faint tick of Jamison's watch was the only sound in the room. Then—

"That'll do it. And we've still got the negative if we spoil the print."

Back to the full glare of the acetylene lamp. Sue May didn't know whether to laugh or to cry.

Clear and sharp on the little print there was part of one of the stone domes of Yar. And all around it, patterns, patterns, patterns! Like an elaborate water mark, showing through the uniform grey of the thorn trees. Lines that were straight, lines that were curved, circles and ovals. A town wall, yes that was clear. Wide roads, wider than those in the present native villages. And the others . . . they might be huts, they might be palaces, gardens or grazing land, but the foundations were all there, underneath the thorn growth for whoever started to dig.

"By Jove!" exclaimed the D.O. "You *have* found something this time! Looks like the work of a stone age town planning committee. Congratulations, Miss Innis."

Chapter Eighteen

THE FLIGHT AGAIN

AUDU, looking worried, reported "Cook no be fit to catch chicken for lunch yet."

Oh dear, and lunch only an hour away. Sue May, peering over the pile of tin trunks and stores of household goods swung round from her improvised chop-box desk and wrenched her mind from the Professor's present manuscript to this urgent domestic problem.

Mrs. Dering in the doorway asked sweetly, "You know, Sue May, the Station Magistrate is going to give us a lift to the dance tonight, but there was something about a new battery to his car. Wonder if you could drop him a tactful note and find out? You're better at that than I am."

Heavens, another dance! Oh yes, the Flight men. Zaria these days was just Katsina all over again, only fifty times worse. Sue May ripped the manuscript out of her typewriter and stuck in a bit of notepaper. Audu could take this chit off to the S.M. before lunch . . . vaguely in the back of her mind there was something too about what she was going to wear. It

seemed as though she had hardly an evening dress left.

Another voice asking a question. Mrs. Dering had melted away, this was the Professor. "Almost ready with those notes, Susan? I want to get them off on the mail train tonight if I can. . . . Oh, you're busy with them, I see. . . ." He was gone too. But there was someone still in the door. . . . Sue May signed the chit to the S.M. and glanced up again. Audu, oh glory!—and still that problem of the chicken.

How about a tin of salmon? No, they'd had that yesterday. But this thank goodness was Zaria, not Katsina, and there were shops here, whiteman's shops. She solved two problems with one move. "Go, Audu. Take this paper to the Station Magistrate, and bring back from the Canteen in the town two cans of little French peas and two of . . . Wait, I'll write it down for you." Another sheet in the typewriter, hitting now on all fingers; wonderful how much time this touch system saved. But it didn't save enough. Time . . . time . . . time . . .

Good, Audu was gone. Alone again, and she could get back to the Professor's work. It'd been like this for . . . ten days was it?—two weeks, ever since the Flight had come from the north. After Ruma and the Yar discoveries the planes had gone of course. But almost immediately the Derings had moved too. To Funtua, a hundred miles down towards the railroad; mobike, push-bike, boxes, carriers and all, a small

army to organize, pack, arrange, feed, pay off. Entrained for Zaria.

Here, thank goodness, it would be quiet. Sue May, three days ago had drawn a full breath of relief. A little resthouse, tiny, compact, comfortable, right away in the Forest Reserve. Not in Zaria station this time. No social activities, no need to mingle in the whirl of Zaria station life. Time to get on with her own packing, before she had to sail for home, time to finish the exacting needs of her secretarial job, time to breathe. So she had imagined.

Oh yeah! Sue May grinned ruefully now at the thought. For here, right in Zaria were, of all people, the Flight, intact to a man, but all looking slightly faded and weary. And again the round of dinners, dances, teas and whatnots. It was certainly exhausting. Sue May almost wished she'd never have to hear a rumba record again, dance another dance. Almost, but not quite.

The last page, the very last page of the Professor's notes. She could correct them if necessary before lunch, and after that manage to get half an hour to go on with her packing, mending, sorting, that simply had to be done. Why, she was going home on Elder Dempster steamer, first class, in ten, no, nine days now. Horrible what tropical sun, trekking, and sunlight did to one's clothes out here. If she didn't get a rag or two mended pretty soon she'd land in the States looking more like an applicant for Government

relief, than a successful archaeologist who felt she must persuade a reluctant father that archaeology is the one job in the world.

There, the final paragraph. Sue May glanced through the pages, made a note or two, heard footsteps on the laterite gravel and thought that the Professor could take his manuscript now.

But it wasn't the Professor. A deep voice said, "Does anyone live here?"

"If you'll lift one of these chop-boxes!" Sue May shoved back the damp curls around her forehead and wished she didn't feel so hot and shiny, "you'll find me somewhere underneath." Then standing up, emerging from her barricade, "Hi, 'Cap!' " She'd had to start calling him "Cap" to avoid the temptation of "Annie," short for "Anstruther," which was what the Flight called him.

"Good Lord. You here? I was looking for a bit of peace . . . that is . . ."

"This is no place to come for it. More like a three ring circus. Have a chair will you? One of these deck chairs, on the verandah. I'll get something cool, we've got ice here anyway." That'd give her a chance at the powder box!

When she reappeared on the verandah, a pleasant tingle of ice from the glass of lime juice in her hand, Captain Jamison lay limply in his deck chair.

He half opened his eyes. "Wish I lived here in the cool peace of all these trees. I've drawn the best host

A deep voice said;
"Does anyone live here?"

in all Zaria, a man who won't leave me alone for a moment, who hops back from his office half a dozen times in a morning to see that I'm being entertained and taken care of! And on top of all the other hospitality it's just getting me down. But here it's peace."

"Peace!" Sue May's burst of laughter scattered two lizards basking on the wall, made her guest sit up and open his eyes.

"Why, what have I said?"

"If your idea of peace is a mad-house . . . Gosh, that reminds me." She dived for her memorandum pad and pencil. "Passports, steamer tickets, railway tickets, hunt up . . ." she jotted an addition at the bottom of the full list.

"Yours?" asked the Captain. "Oh, of course they are. I'd forgotten. Somehow I'd looked on myself as the transient and yourself as the resident. You know, meeting you in Katsina and here too made you seem even more permanent than the other people."

Sue May explained. In a few days' time would begin her seven thousand mile trek home. Via England this time, as cargo boats running direct to the States wouldn't take a lone girl. And somehow she must manage to be back at High School at the beginning of her senior year.

"High School?" asked Jamison. He seemed surprised. "But I thought you were an archaeologist and an anthropologist and a lot of white-bearded things like that."

"Oh, I'm going to be. That's why, among other things, I'm specializing in French next year. I want to sell Dad on letting me go to the American School of Archaeology in France."

The Flight Commander was silent a moment, then seemingly switched the conversation. "You know flying and polo in Egypt, flying and fox hunting in England, they don't take all one's time or all one's thought. Of course I've been running a sideline of aerial survey and that's made me rub up my math an awful lot. But I've been wondering . . ." he gazed reflectively into his empty glass, "ever since we took those photos of Yar; can't one combine archaeology and flying?"

"You can," said Sue May. "People do. There's Woodhenge, near to Stonehenge in England. Most of the discovery of that was done from air photos, and a lot of bronze age sites in other parts of England have been spotted the same way. Roman encampments too, shown up by their different shades on the wheatfields. And of course on our side of the water, more Aztec and Mayan temples have been found that way in the last few years, than were ever discovered by wading through the jungles of Yucatan."

"*Garuba Jos ya zo.* Garuba of Jos is here." Silent footed the Dering's houseboy appeared on the verandah.

"Oh? Good heavens, that man is liable to pop up anywhere. Shouldn't be surprised if when I land in New York he is already there, hobnobbing with the Statue of Liberty." She turned to the houseboy.

"Ask him to come here, will you?" And as the boy disappeared she explained, "I want you to meet him, Cap. He's been my lucky piece ever since I landed in Africa. He's Audu's grandpop, and a perfect old darling."

Then came grandpop, rustling lightly up the verandah steps and sinking as easily as a ballerina into his deep bow of great ceremony. His quick eyes seemed to take in the flying man with one unobtrusive glance.

To Sue May's inward delight Anstruther Jamison rose from his chair to acknowledge the low sweeping greetings, both courtly gentlemen, though of such different color, of worlds so far apart. Sue May made simple introductions but Garuba as usual seemed posted in all the news.

"It is he then from whose *jirigin sama,* sky engine, you leapt to the polo ground at Katsina? *Yowwa!* What a leap!"

Sue May translated. For some few minutes they exchanged news of the Flight. Where it was from; where it was going; how fast the speed of the planes, —when Jamison had an idea. "Look here, if he's interested ask him if he'd care for a flip."

"To sit as in a chair and see the world pass beneath me?" The old eyes crinkled with pleasure, the kind mouth spread in a wide white smile that accepted the invitation in advance of his words. "Never since my birth had I thought it possible; always to my old age shall I remember."

"What about today then? This afternoon?" He turned to Sue May. "I can drive him down to the flying field in my borrowed car here."

And five minutes later Sue May addressed an empty verandah: "To work, my child, to work!"

Ten minutes later Sue May glanced up from her typewriter. "Yes, Audu, what is it? . . . oh Heavens, that hat . . ." She'd hoped it was lost, was stolen, was buried. But here the purple homburg had bobbed up again, more sleek, more engulfing, far grander than her memory of it.

"*Takardu.* Letters," said Audu.

Oh yes, the local mail had come in. Two for the Professor, one official. That would need an immediate answer. The third for herself. Sue May slid a finger into the envelope and ripped it open. One from the Governor. What . . . ?

"Sue May, be a duck. . . ." Mrs. Dering's curly head again. One always knew it was going to be something specially difficult when she started that way. Sue May sighed.

"Be a duck and think up some excuse for me to dodge this deadly bridge four this afternoon. Short of leprosy and smallpox I have used up every excuse in my repertoire."

The Professor was right behind her. "Just a few changes in these notes before they go off tonight. I should have made it clear that the *æ* was a diphthong . . . my awful writing I'm afraid."

That half hour of peace with Captain Jamison vanished like mist in sunlight. Sue May concocted the brilliant excuse that Mrs. Dering had conscientious scruples against playing bridge on Thursdays. Was it Thursday? . . . No, Friday. Well it would just have to be something more sensible than that. She changed the Professor's notes, then was conscious that someone still hovered in the doorway. Audu, still in the purple homburg. Sue May blinked.

But Audu was the first actually to reduce the work she had on hand. It seemed that the letters of recommendation she was going to write to help find him a new position on her departure, would not, now, be needed.

"Oh?" asked Sue May, interested. "What then is this new position?"

"Second boy," Audu swelled visibly with pride. "In the household of the Station Magistrate."

Yes, a distinct step up for Audu. But S.M. . . . oh Heavens, she must remember to return his bicycle and thank him for it. One more thing to do. She scribbled a note on her pad, glanced up again.

"That's splendid, Audu. I'm so glad. But," she hesitated, then took the plunge, "You won't wear that hat, will you, Audu?"

Audu's eyes danced with delight. "The hat, M'a," he exulted, "that hat she got me new job."

Chapter Nineteen

LOST: RUMA CAVE

THE Governor's letter had been courteously enthusiastic. But . . . Sue May, on the clubhouse terrace, awaiting her partner for the third dance of the evening, found herself still quoting bits of it to herself.

Yes, when you considered it carefully it had been very enthusiastic; it was the Ruma cave part that hurt so terribly. Why, Ruma cave was her own, her very own discovery; it might have lain buried, lost, unexplored for years and years longer, perhaps another century if she herself hadn't been a friend of Garuba Jos', if Garuba hadn't had the absurd idea that she was hunting buried treasure, if she hadn't taken Audu for her own secretary . . . if, oh any number of things. But all hers. Her very *own*.

And now the Governor, quite reasonably of course, wrote to her: "Sir Alexander Murdock himself may be available to direct the excavation. A Government grant is definitely forthcoming for the purpose. I can give you my personal assurance that nothing but the most up-to-date scientific means will be employed; if anything less than the best obtainable is suggested

I will refuse to let a trowel-full of earth be turned. I think however we may say that this amazing find will be the beginning of archaeology in this country and I can only express myself as deeply grateful to you for placing this information at our disposal." There was some more of course about the black bowl from Yar which was already on it's way to London to an expert.

Well, that was all right. But Ruma, her pet Ruma cave, had been taken completely out of her hands. Oh well . . .

Her partner appeared, that keen-faced young N.C.O., who was Captain Jamison's mechanic and technical expert on the Flight. They swung at once onto the floor. An efficient dancer, but his soul was still in engines.

"I haven't had a chance to thank you," he saw Sue May's look of perplexity, "about those spindles, I mean. They've cabled home and the design's being changed. I'd told them and told them, but it was only after you told them," he grinned down at her, "that they began to listen."

Oh yes, of course. Sue May remembered now.

The N.C.O. developed his subject. "There's been forced landings and forced landings on account of those cussed spindles; must have cost the Government thousands of pounds and there'd have been some bad accidents before long . . . there'd be a lot of people grateful to you, Miss Innis, if they only knew."

Of course he was exaggerating but all the same it was balm to a wounded spirit, and this would be something to tell Karl too. But it wasn't the same as Ruma and after all gratitude should really be to this N.C.O., not to her; it was his discovery not hers. Just as . . . well, just as the rock paintings in Ruma cave had been hers.

Zaria Club was very gay tonight. Long temporary leads had brought electric light from the railway, there were festoons of colored paper, and lanterns dangled from every beam. Oh, quite a gala evening. And hot! Hot as West Africa was ever thought to be. Only at dances did you get the Equator doing its worst. The airmen, very red and shiny as to face, very jaded and somewhat hollow eyed from nearly two weeks of tropical entertainment, circled languidly in their white uniforms. There were other uniforms too, the West African Frontier Force, known as the Waffs, and stationed permanently in Zaria. Never any lack of dancing men in this station. But Sue May was beginning to tire of station dances.

"Let's go outside," she suggested as they swung near the open doorway.

"Thank heaven!" breathed the N.C.O. fervently. " 'This Africa is nice to visit but I wouldn't like to live here.' " He quoted the ancient platitude. "Don't know how you keep up the pace out here."

"We don't!" gurgled Sue May. "Each station turns it on to welcome the heroes, and collapses as soon

as you've flown off again. It's better out here isn't it? I almost think there's a little breeze."

The moonlight had at least the appearance of coolness. Soon Captain Jamison, who had been patrolling the floor with the stout and beaming wife of a railway official, appeared and claimed the next dance with Sue May.

"Let's stay out here, and the further away from the music, the better," was her idea. "I know that rumba record, the High School band played it two years ago and the boy next door used to practice it on his cornet for weeks; I don't feel I can bear it again." Sue May had a small white purse in her hand and as they paced along the road she slipped a heavy article from it. "Since you're interested in this country, Cap, would you care for a memento of Nigeria? It was the first thing I bought when I landed in Africa, it's brought me luck". . . she had a twinge as she remembered Ruma Cave, "sort of."

He balanced the foolish little brass rhino on his palm. Nice the way his face lit up. "Yes. Fake, isn't he, but isn't he jolly!"

Oh, that was smart of him to guess right away, and even in the moonlight, that it wasn't genuine native work.

"That comes of being stationed in Egypt," explained the Captain. "It's got to such a state there that they've local imitations of Birmingham fake antiquities. By the way, I had a great trip with your old pal Garuba.

Thought he'd fall out of the bus, the way he craned overboard. He'd taken up a bag of shillings, about fifty pounds I should guess, and wanted to drop it over Zaria market by way of largesse. I persuaded him to drop a message in a streamer instead, as it wouldn't kill so many people! Now he wants to buy a plane for his own use I gather. Grand old bird, isn't he?"

For once Sue May wasn't interested in Garuba Jos. Now she was alone with Captain Jamison and there was time for a talk, she wanted to share with him her secret of the Ruma Cave, a secret not much longer if it was about to be given to the world. It would ease a little the ache and hurt pride over the Governor's matter of fact assumption that the discovery belonged to everybody, to the public, if she could talk to someone about it. Then too, at the back of Sue May's mind was tugging a horrid little temptation. Soon Captain Jamison would be gone, on his way to another station and another, with the Flight. She might never see him again. Probably wouldn't. And except Jamison, nobody but the District Officer of Katsina knew about Yar and her photographic discoveries there. She herself had the photos and the negatives . . . why she hadn't had time yet even to share that with Professor Dering, and by some miracle—if they were going to take Ruma Caves away from her like this—she hadn't written about it to Karl. Why not . . . she turned the thought over in her mind . . .

why not keep Yar to herself, keep it as her secret—photographs and all? Nobody need know. Sometime, years from now, when she'd finished the French course in archaeology, she could come back, spring her discovery on an astonished world, and have that at least for her very own. It certainly wouldn't be robbing anybody. Yes, it surely was an idea. Sue May began to talk very fast. All about the Ruma Caves and what she'd found there.

The Flight Commander had sufficient knowledge of archaeology to be properly impressed. "By Jove, a kind of ancestral portrait gallery! Gosh, I'd like to be there when they uncover it and photograph it! Hope they have the sense to use special lenses and color screens, you can get a lot that way that's too faded for the eye to spot. And you've surrendered your whole interest in the discovery?"

A loose stone on the road came at just the right moment. Sue May kicked it to release her suppressed resentment. "The Governor assumed that I would. Oh he was quite right of course and thanked me very nicely for it and now Sir Alexander Murdoch, the biggest man in his line, will probably take it over. Of course I couldn't have handled it, it was unique, but . . . " If she kept on talking, like this, she'd burst into tears. Nobody made two discoveries like Ruma in a lifetime. Yes sir, she was certainly going to keep Yar to herself till she could come back and have it for her own.

They had swung round, were drawing close to the clubhouse now and consciously the Captain hung back, slackened his pace. "Pretty fine to give it all up, takes a scientist to do a thing like that; like handing over a great cure or a great invention as a free gift to the world." His voice was warm with respect. "And look here, Miss Sue May Innis," he tossed the little rhino in his palm, apparently too embarrassed to look at her, "I've . . . I've got to see you again you know, this isn't going to be goodbye. You'll write won't you. . . ?"

Yes, she'd write, Sue May assured him, a little absently, preoccupied with all those nice things he'd said about her.

"That is . . . I mean to say . . . Oh dash it all, you're so darned sincere, so honest . . . I've never met anyone like you . . . that's one reason I want to go to that French school you spoke of."

Sue May grinned in sudden relief. Something inside her mind had given way, melted, showing her what she was going to do. "That's all right. I promise to keep in touch with you." They were almost on the terrace now, bright with its lights and gaiety. And it did seem gay. Funny it hadn't, just half an hour ago.

"When do you leave Zaria? A week? And then where. . . ."

"The States of course, by way of England. But first—" Sue May took the first step of the terrace and

her resolution together. "First I'm stopping in Lagos to see the Governor. I've got to show him some photographs you know. And tell him all about our discovery of Yar. That too is something to . . . to tell the world."

Chapter Twenty

CONSPIRACY

SUE MAY felt as though the town band and the village fire department had turned out to speed her departure, so many of her friends were gathered this evening on the Zaria station platform. As the flying people had gone two days ago, Zaria, thrown on its own resources for entertainment, had flocked down en masse, in evening dresses and black or starched white dinner coats. People whom Sue May had seen before but had never spoken to and people whom she was sure had never seen her before nor even heard her name had been drawn into the eddy. Anyway, seeing people off on the boat train for home was one of Nigeria's social amusements, a sort of foretaste of England to these homesick white people.

Sue May, the busy and efficient, would at the last minute have forgotten half her belongings if Mrs. Dering hadn't accidentally and with seeming casualness reminded her of this and that, and if Audu hadn't bicycled down on her own, or rather the S.M.'s push-bike, with the small purse that held all her loose change and the key to her typewriter, carried beneath his purple homburg. But she did get off in the end.

Goodbyes to other homegoing travellers echoed and swirled around her.

"We're going home next month, if you stop over in England long enough . . . " That was the S.M. and Mrs. S.M. Yes, Sue May had their address. But she knew she wouldn't be in England longer than to change to her ship for home. Her home.

And that beefy red faced soldier man, quite pathetically, "You'll be in time to see the huntin' in Devonshire."

Well, the maples on the hill back of the aerodrome would be all aflame when she arrived.

Garuba Jos was there, bending low in greetings, Mrs. Dering smiling a little tearfully, the Professor grinning, broadly and reassuringly. The guard's whistle. But where was Audu? Sue May craned her head out, looked for him in vain. The goodbyes grew more facetious.

"Don't forget that parrot for Aunt Maria . . . don't forget to send the ship back . . . "

"Goodbyeee . . . " called Sue May frantically. Waved. Waved. Waved for the final time. Zaria was gone. Would she ever see it again?

Better get busy and make oneself comfortable in here. She turned to rearrange her dressing case and hatbox, and there was someone already putting them in order. Audu!

"Why why," gasped Sue May in English. "I thought you had another job, Audu. . . ."

"Canton menti. . . . The Station Magistrate . . . He tell me I go with you to Lagos, and give me ticket."

Oh, how nice of him!

An old stager now, Sue May no longer, as on the way up, stretched her ears to catch casual phrases in the magic new language, but actually leaned from the window to chat with the Fulani milk girls, with the women who sold bananas, with the boys who brought fresh peanuts, grounds nuts, to the train. She haggled at Illorin for a woven grass dressing basket in bright colors, giving back to the toothless old trader his own coin in repartee.

Shabby of clothes after the long tour in the bush, other leave-goers joined the train, surged up and down the corridors and greeted each other, loudly, cheerily. All this forward-looking talk of home and England made it easier to think of America, of High School and of Dad and Karl, made it easier to realize that she was going home herself. She'd been working so hard right up to the last minute that she'd never quite taken it in before.

And over and under and round it all came the thought of Yar, of surrendering any claim she might have as discoverer of that ancient buried city. Now that she'd made up her mind it was no longer depressing. She was giving something to the world. Captain Jamison had put it that way, doing in her own small way what Carnegie and other big public

benefactors had done. And it wasn't so *very* small at that!

A night of rushing through the darkness, a day and a further night through the thick jungle of the south that had been her first introduction to Africa. And never quite absent from her thoughts the names of Yar and Ruma. So it seemed quite natural that the Governor's personal car should be at the wharfside railway station and that the private secretary whom she remembered from the Governor's dinner should come up to her and say "Miss Innis? His Excellency would be much obliged if you'd let me drive you round to breakfast at Government House." And then reassuringly "There'll be no danger of the ship sailing without you."

And then, for the Governor was a busy man, Sue May opened a package at the breakfast table. It wasn't a big packet, for prints of airplane photographs take up little space and the note inside had been briefer still.

The Governor read it and smiled "Incredible. And . . . but I'd better explain . . . that Ruma find of yours Miss Innis. It had to go to the public of course. Too big for just one person. Though ever since I wrote to you I've been worried. Nobody, it seemed to me, could make two such stupendous finds in a lifetime and to take this from you, even with your consent seemed intolerable. So much so that I haven't, in point of fact gone any further in the matter."

Oh that was decent of him, thought Sue May.

"Of course you could have been financially compensated," Sir Henry accepted another cup of coffee from Lady Goodyear. "But that really wouldn't make up for taking from you what might be even a lifetime occupation. But I was mistaken. You apparently, can make two such discoveries in a lifetime!"

He was looking through the airplane photographs, making a mosaic of them, pushing aside the breakfast dishes that lay before him.

So he really did think the Yar photographs were important? Curious that he didn't mention the name. Did that mean . . . ?

It did. Lady Goodyear had left the breakfast table, the private secretary was given some urgent duty elsewhere, then Sir Henry spoke freely for the first time.

"We haven't of course the necessary funds for both Yar and Ruma excavations and . . . amazing, most amazing, these photographs . . . Yar may well prove to be the more important of the two. A city, an entire city . . . one can trace walls, separate quarters of the town." He shuffled through the photographs. "One can say almost what were their occupations by the design and character of roads and buildings. And my theory about Yar,"—he beamed above his glasses at her, "it confirms it completely. But goes far further than I had dreamed. A civilization must have indeed ended there. There perhaps in earlier days a civiliza-

tion may even have been born. We will have no inexpert hands meddling with this site, will tolerate no partial hasty work such as would be demanded by public clamour were your discovery made known."

So that meant, that must mean . . . Sue May anxiously, hopefully screwed her napkin into a dishrag.

"Without considering your claims as discoverer, or your personal wishes. . . ."

Sue May wondered whether she could bear the blow. To hand the place over with a gesture was one thing. To have it coldly appropriated like this was another. And he wasn't being very tactful either.

". . . it would still seem that there is only one person who should be placed in charge, who would take the greatest possible interest in the work. I have given my reasons why the excavations must be postponed; as lack of public funds. Then perhaps in five, or at the most ten years' time we could consider the expense of a preliminary clearing of the site of Yar. If by then you can have acquired the formal training such as would justify us in calling in your aid and if you are willing and able to undertake the task. . . ."

All the remainder of his words meant the same inconceivable thing. That Sue May was to keep the Yar secret. Her secret. That she was to hurry and collect all possible qualifications for the job. And was then to return to West Africa, and with all the resources of the Government behind her, to lay bare the long-forgotten secrets of this town she had discovered.

"Keep the photos," the Governor handed them to her. "Or if you have the heart, burn them for yet greater safety. And when you are ready and furnished with the diplomas of your profession, Miss Innis, cable me the one word, YAR. Well," he shoved back his chair and rose from the breakfast table. "I wish you bon voyage; and frankly, Miss Innis, I envy you."

Oh it was totally, supremely impossible. Her mind still occupied with the impossibility Sue May was driven to her ship, mounted the gangplank, found her own small cabin, went out to wave goodbye to Audu, standing on the wharf as they pulled slowly away. Audu, who would return to Zaria tonight on the Rich Mixed, but who had promised to come to her as her secretary if ever . . . no, *whenever* she should return to Nigeria. Impossible!

And there had been a cable too. Almost sensible, matter-of-fact, in comparison. From the States and reading: "Big government contract for the C 37. If still wish French archaeological school money available and thoroughly agree."

Good old Dad! Good old C 37! Good old Governor! And good old Yar!

Beside all this it was almost prosaic to find Mrs. Fish at the luncheon table as the ship steamed down the bay. Not really surprising to hear her introduction of some important personage she seemed to have in tow. . . .

"And this is dear Miss Innis, of whom of course

you've heard. The young American archaeologist you know!"

Just as though, well just as though Sue May had already finished High School, had won all those foreign diplomas and things in France, had excavated Yar the Forgotten, and had written her monumental treatise;—"Some Aspects of Early West African Civilization."

Just as though, in fact, Sue May had already arrived and was one of Mrs. Fish's dear pet lions!

Sue May sank into her chair at the table and reached for the butter. She simply couldn't take in any more thrills before lunch, thank you!