"You're a fool to pass it up! You'll get just as much credit and reward for taking back proof of my death as you will for taking me back. And I got papers and stuff buried back near the Yunnan border that you can have to back up your story; and you needn't be afraid that I'll ever show up to spoil your play."

The gaunt man in faded khaki frowned with patient annoyance and looked away from the blood-shot brown eyes in front of him, over the teak side of the jahaz to where the wrinkled snout of a muggar broke the surface of the river. When the small crocodile submerged again, Hagedom's gray eyes came back to the pleading ones before him, and he spoke wearily, as one who has been answering the same arguments again and again.

"I can't do it, Barnes. I left New York two years ago to ;get you, and for two years I've been in this damned country—here and in Yunnan—hunting you. I promised my people I'd stay until I found you, and I kept my word. Lord! man," with a touch of exasperation, "after all I've gone through you don't expect me to throw them down now—now that the job's as good as done!"

The dark man in the garb of a native smiled an oily, ingratiating smile and brushed away his captor's words with a wave of his hand.

"I ain't offering you a dinky coupla thousand dollars; I'm offering you your pick out of one of the richest gem beds in Asia—a bed that was hidden by the Mran-ma when the British jumped the country. Come back up there with me and I'll show you rubies and sapphires and topazes that'll knock your eye out. All I'm asking you is to go back up there with me and take a look at 'em. If you don't like 'em you'll still have me to take back to New York."

Hagedorn shook his head slowly.

"You're going back to New York with me. Maybe man-hunting isn't the nicest trade in the world but it's all the trade I've got, and this jewel bed of yours sounds phoney to me. I can't blame you for not wanting to go back—but just the same I'm taking you."

Barnes glared at the detective disgustedly.

"You're a fine chump! And it's costing me and you thousands of dollars! Hell!"

He spat over the side insultingly—native-like—and settled himself back on his corner of the split-bamboo mat

Hagedorn was looking past the lateen sail, down the river—the beginning of the route to New York—along which a miasmal breeze was carrying the fifty-foot boat with surprising speed. Four more days and they would be aboard a steamer for Rangoon; then another steamer to Calcutta, and in the end, one to New York—home, after two years!

Two years through unknown country, pursuing what until the very day of the capture had never been more than a vague shadow. Through Yunnan and Burma, combing wilderness with microscopic thoroughness—a game of hide-and-seek up the rivers, over the hills and through the jungles—sometimes a year, sometimes two months and then six behind his quarry. And now successfully home! Betty would be fifteen—quite a lady.

Barnes edged forward and resumed his pleading, with a whine creeping into his voice.

"Say, Hagedorn, why don't you listen to reason? There ain't no sense in us losing all that money just for something that happened over two years ago. I didn't mean to kill that guy, anyway. You know how it is; I was a kid and wild and foolish—but I wasn't mean—and I got in with a bunch. Why, I thought of that hold-up as a lark when we planned it! And then that messenger yelled and I guess I was excited, and my gun went off the first thing I knew. I didn't go to kill him; and it won't do him no good to take me back and hang me for it. The express company didn't lose no money. What do they want to hound me like this for? I been trying to live it down."

The gaunt detective answered quietly enough but what kindness there had been in his dry voice before was gone now.

"I know—the old story! And the bruises on the Burmese woman you were living with sure show that there's nothing mean about you. Cut it, Barnes, and make up your mind to face it—you and I are going back to New York."

"The hell we are!"

Barnes got slowly to his feet and backed away a step.

"I'd just as leave—"

Hagedorn's automatic came out a split second too late; his prisoner was over the side and swimming toward the bank. The detective caught up his rifle from the deck behind him and sprang to the rail. Barnes' head showed for a moment and then went down again, to appear again twenty feet nearer shore. Upstream the man in the boat saw

the blunt, wrinkled noses of three muggars, moving toward the shore at a tangent that would intercept the fugitive. He leaned against the teak rail and summed up the situation.

"Looks like I'm not going to take him back alive after all—but my job's done. I can shoot him when he shows again, or I can let him alone and the muggars will get him."

Then the sudden but logical instinct to side with the member of his own species against enemies from another wiped out all other considerations, and sent his rifle to his shoulder to throw a shower of bullets into the muggars.

Barnes clambered up the bank of the river, waved his hand over his head without looking back, and plunged into the jungle.

Hagedorn turned to the bearded owner of the jahaz, who had come to his side, and addressed him in his broke Burmese.

"Put me ashore—yu nga apau mye—and wait—thaing—until I bring him back—thu yughe."

The captain wagged his black beard protestingly.

"Mahok! In the jungle here, sahib a man is as a lei Twenty men might find him in a week, or a month, it may take five years. I cannot wait that long."

The gaunt white man gnawed at his lower lip and looked down the river—the road to New York.

"Two years," he said aloud to himself, "it took to fin him when he didn't know I was hunting for him. Now-Oh, hell! It may take five years. I wonder about them jewel of his."

He turned to the boatman.

"I go after him. You wait three hours," pointing over head, "until noon—ne apomha. If I am not back then do not wait—malotu thaing, thwa. Thi?"

The captain nodded.

"Hokhe!"

For five hours the captain kept the jahaz at anchor, and then, when the shadows of the trees on the west bank were creeping out into the river, he ordered the latten sail hoisted, and the teak craft vanished around a bend in the river.