

Louis L'Amour's
THE DIAMOND OF JERU

By
Beau L'Amour

Sept. 20, 2007

Contact:

Beau L'Amour - (818)788-8030 beau@louislamour.com

Paul O'Dell - (425)392-5023 paul@louislamour.com

Laurel Marlantes - (323)509-9286 laurelmarlantes@louislamour.com

Or www.thediamondofjeruaudio.com

The Diamond of Jeru

Most of The Diamond of Jeru takes place around 1955, in Sarawak, a British colony on the island of Borneo (now part of Malaysia). Borneo is the third largest island on the world after Greenland and New Guinea. Even today much of it is still unmapped wilderness ...

All foreign language lines have both a literal translation in the script and a numbered reference recording made by a native speaker.

FADE IN:

1 KARDEC LEAVES THE MARINE CORPS **1**

SFX: Crickets, bugle playing taps, cars on distant road.

KARDEC

Sergeant? I thought you were up in Norfolk.

SERGEANT

I was. Can I carry that to the gate for you, Captain?

SFX: Picking up duffle bag.

KARDEC

It's lieutenant now. Doesn't matter, tomorrow I'm a civilian.

SERGEANT

You'll always be the captain, Sir.

KARDEC

Thanks.

SFX: They walk for a moment ...

SERGEANT

What will you do now, if you don't mind my asking? Where will you go?

KARDEC

I don't know. Someplace where whatever I'm doing ... I'm doing it for myself.

SFX: Distant thunder.

NARRATOR: Random House Audio Publishing and Louis L'Amour.com Present, Louis L'Amour's "The Diamond of Jeru."

Was it dreams or memories, the tropical heat or anti malarial drugs? By night Mike Kardec's soul wandered. Through the bloody snows of Korea, prison-like halls of the Veteran's hospital, fateful decisions made by faceless officers, a career lost and with it the thought of home or community.

Borneo came up over the horizon, a mirage of fantastically rugged mountains quickly obscured by ghosts of rain. Colonial era towns clinging to the coast. Shafts of sunlight solid as a slanting bar of glass cutting through the trees. Rivers, the veins of the island, leading deep into the unknown.

2 KARDEC WRECKS HIS CANOE AND LOSES HIS DIAMONDS

2

SFX: Rushing water, then more and more, roaring water.

NARRATOR: In his dream the river was an avalanche of roaring water. A boulder strewn rapid, hundreds of yards long, where rocks thrust out like broken teeth, where whirlpools gape and the snags of giant tree trunks threaten to turn the canoe into shattered fragments of kindling.

Somewhere though, in a place closer to the waking world, Mike Kardec knew that it hadn't been like that at all. It had been a middle sized rapid, the rocks had been low and the eddies manageable. It was malaria that caused the wreck on the (#76)Baram. Malaria, and damn fool luck that had caused him to make the biggest diamond strike of his life just after he ran out of quinine. *

SFX: Kardec wrecks his canoe. He cries out, rocks punch through the hull, water pours in ...

NARRATOR: Lunging forward, he tore open his pack, grasped the box that held the stones. He felt himself falling, tumbling in the thick rushing green and white. The sky flashed through his vision, the rocky bottom beckoned. Then the river spat him out, a newborn, crying, struggling for air.

In the dream he can see himself lying, half submerged, among the rocks and driftwood. In his out-stretched hand is an old Dutch cigarette tin, it's cover open, the water swirling his diamonds, washing over them, washing them away, returning them to the river from which they had come.

3 KARDEC IS SAVED BY INGHAJ AND RAJ, GIVEN LUCK

3

NARRATOR: Much later, a shadow fell across his body. A young tribesman; a boy in his late teens wearing a loin cloth and vine leggings looked down at this strange being washed up with the debris of his canoe.

He poked Kardec with the butt of his spear, wondering if this odd white man might be dead, and with that poke, Kardec ... the Kardec who now dreams, found himself in a (#66)Kelabit longhouse ... a huge structure of wood and thatch, with sunlight blasting through every gap in it's walls. *

SFX: Distant conversations in Malay, the sounds of cooking and daily life in a longhouse. A light, fast tapping can be heard.

NARRATOR: There was a burning in his shoulder, and he remembered being covered with sweat but icy cold.

INGHAJ

Forgive me. (#53)Obat ... this magic is dangerous. I must careful ... *

SFX: Tapping the tattooing needle. Tap-tap, tap-tap.

NARRATOR: Inghai, an old rhinoceros hunter and the grandfather of Raj, the young man who had found him, worked to place a tattoo over his heart. Sweat and blood ran off Kardec's skin. His eyes moved beneath closed lids.

KARDEC (**WILD LINE 1**)

(makes noises in his delirium)

RAJ

(Malay)

#1- Datuk ..?

#2- Dia bagaimana?

RAJ

#1- Grandfather ..?

#2- He how?

NARRATOR: The old man exhaled on the needle, breathing his life into the tattoo.

INGHAJ

I cannot save him, Raj ... but luck will follow this path ...

NARRATOR: He touched the spiral path he was marking over Kardec's heart.

INGHAJ

... If the (#56)Atoh are willing, English man, your soul, it will come back. *

NARRATOR: Mike Kardec, a man born to hard times and the dust bowl of the American depression, lay on a reed mat somewhere in the interior of (#74) Sarawak. He rode a line between life and death, pulled toward the darkness by malaria, exhaustion, and the battering of the river. *

By his head sat a pyramid of thirteen human skulls and in the smoky shadows a man and a boy waited. A boy who, in a manner far from Christian, prayed for him to live for one more hour, one more day, one more week. A man who was now bound to him by the intricate markings that he had made on Kardec's chest, balancing, in some ironic way, an older tattoo on Kardec's right shoulder ... a blur of fading blue ink: "Semper Fidelis."

4 KARDEC REEXPERIENCES FAILURE IN KOREA

4

NARRATOR: Now, in the obscure but undeniable logic of dreams, images of another place emerged.

SFX: Artillery shells fall from the sky. Explosions. People crying and calling for help in Korean. Small arms fire.

KOREAN TWO

(Korean)

#73 - Heo teun jit mal go,
jeo ee ga ha ra neun dae ro
hae.

KOREAN TWO

#73 - Stay here and do as he
says!

*

KOREAN TWO

(low and intense)

Help us ... you must help us.

KARDEC

Just stay below the ridge line,
understand? I'll cover you from behind.

Get started. Go!

(as they go by)

Stay down! Stay down!

4A KARDEC DISOBEYS ORDERS

4A

NARRATOR: A village on a bare Korean hilltop. A leaden sky. Geysers of mud and snow.

SFX: Tanks approach ... machine guns open up.

MARINE OFFICER

(on radio)

... Captain Kardec you are *ordered* to return to your position! *Damn it, Captain!*

NARRATOR: A sense of loss and failure so acute it was like cancer growing in his throat ... taking his life like a garrote, inch by fraction of an inch.

MARINE OFFICER

(on radio)

... Fox. Dog. Charlie. I want artillery on those tanks. Now! I don't care *who's* up there.

FIRE DIRECTION CENTER

(on radio)

Affirmative. Resuming fire. Report impact, Able 2.

SOLDIER ONE

(distant)

Captain! *Captain!* Come Back!

SOLDIER TWO

(distant)

Incoming!

SFX: The sounds build to a ringing intensity that rises like a cymbal roll to a sudden clap ... And Kardec is awake. Raj is knocking on the door.

5 KARDEC WAKES FROM DREAM IN BUNGALOW

5

KARDEC

Ungh.

SFX: Kardec flips the covers back. Clears his throat.

KARDEC

What?!

SFX: Truck horn honks.

RAJ

Come Mike. Wake up, we have to go.

RIGGER (**WILD LINE 19**)

(distant)

Kardec! Come on, bludger. Up and out.

KARDEC

All right!

Jeeze Raj, just gimme a stinkin' minute.

NARRATOR: Mike Kardec pulled on his pants, grabbed his shirt, shoes and hard hat from a chair. He looked around. He was safe; back in a dead end room in a dilapidated bungalow alongside a rutted road to nowhere.

Before leaving, he knocked back a mouthful of whiskey ... starting another day of another week, somewhere in the endless equatorial summer of 1955.

6 KARDEC HAS NO MONEY, WORKS ON DERRICK WITH RAJ

6

NARRATOR: Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the fleets of Imperial Japan had steamed southward to control the vast oil fields at (#77)Miri, (#78)Tarakan, (#79)Brunei, and (#80)Balikpapan. In a way, it was Japan's greed for Borneo oil that started the greater war in the Pacific.

*
*

That war had been over for ten years but wells sunk in North Borneo were still bringing up high quality crude in almost unlimited quantities. Exploratory fields drifted inland and it was in one of these, not far from (#81)Marudi on the Baram river, where Mike Kardec, once a diamond hunter, once Captain of B company, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, now spent his days ...

*

SFX: Drilling rig working.

AUSSIE ONE (WILD LINE 2)

(distant)

Round trip started, uh ... 23:15.

MADDOX

(distant)

Alright. Carry on.

NARRATOR: The rig on Hole Seven was the same as most of the new wells, a "triple." A derrick one hundred feet tall that could raise or lower three, twenty-seven foot lengths of drilling pipe at a time. Late last night the previous shift had worn out a bit and started pulling up the pipe-string to replace it.

SFX: The winch roars, huge wrenches clang against the pipe.

KARDEC

Alright, let's have another.

NARRATOR: The driller brought the hoist to a stop. Raj and Mike moved in, opening a joint in the pipe.

It had been over a year since Kardec had returned to Marudi, brought down river by Raj in a dug out canoe. He had still been recovering and Raj had never gone home. They lived separate lives but Kardec wondered sometimes if he was Inghai's eyes and ears, reporting the progress of whatever voodoo the old man had worked on him.

With the help of the derrick hand at the top of the tower, they manhandled the pipe into the slats and attached the hoist to the stub of the next section by their feet.

SFX: The pipe clangs into the slats. Kardec and Raj walk back. The heavy winch roars again.

MADDOX

Hey, Mike! How many sections you got there?

NARRATOR: Maddox, the supervisor, climbed up onto the deck tapping a pencil against his clipboard.

KARDEC

Thirty-three.

NARRATOR: Kardec pushed back his hard hat and wiped his forehead.

KARDEC

You, ahh, got any second shifts this week?

MADDOX

'might have one.

KARDEC

I'll take it ... I'll take whatever you got.

NARRATOR: Kardec started to object but the Australian raised his hand ...

MADDOX

Mate, you get hurt, I lose production. One shift. Right?

SFX: Maddox slaps the rail and goes down the metal stairs from the deck.

KARDEC

Right, right. Stingy, S.O.B.

MADDOX

I heard that ...

Look, take it tonight ... there's pumps going in at Mountain Camp.

KARDEC

Thanks.

MADDOX

They need two; bring the Dyak kid.

SFX: The winch grinds to a halt.

6A KARDEC AND RAJ GO BACK TO WORK

6A

KARDEC

All right. Raj ... You ready?

RAJ

Always ready, Mike.

SFX: The huge wrenches clang against steel.

7 KARDEC TELLS RAJ NOT TO BE AFRAID OF SPIRITS

7

SFX: A large truck climbs a hill in low gear.

NARRATOR: The Bedford lorry wound it's way up into the hills and the altitude gave them a few minutes more light. Then the sun dipped below the horizon and columns of gigantic trees closed in on either side of the narrow road. Soon they were riding down a dark tunnel of wood and foliage.

The truck labored up a series of switchbacks then followed a long straight stretch at the end of which the jungle fell away and they rode down into a man-made clearing, a dark landscape of steel and fire and mud.

Bulldozers scraped away at the edge of the forest like gigantic hogs rooting in slop. In the distance, derricks were silhouetted against the darkening sky but closer they had been replaced by the slowly nodding shapes of grasshopper pumps and a maze of tanks and pipe.

The scene was lit by occasional flood lights and gas flares, flames hovering and twisting at the end of the stand-pipes that vented unwanted methane from the wells.

SFX: The men unload and the truck pulls off.

RIGGER (**WILD LINE 20**)

(distant)

Mr. Maddox. Ian wants to see you on number 12.

NARRATOR: As they started into an alley between the tanks Raj hesitated, then stopped. Kardec turned to look back at him ...

KARDEC

Come on. Let's go.

NARRATOR: At the edge of the jungle was a looming ridge of rock, thirty feet high and some seventy yards long, it's profile shrouded in vines.

RAJ

No, Mike. No. Not to work here.

KARDEC

What's wrong?

RAJ

Pantang (#54). Uh ... taboo. You come too.

*

NARRATOR: Kardec shook his head. Borneo was a place where superstition and tales of magic lurked in every corner, forming a set of beliefs so complex that he often thought the natives were making it up as they went along.

KARDEC

Oh hell.

What's the problem?

RAJ

This bad place. Atoh. (#56)

KARDEC

Toh? What's Toh?

RAJ

A-toh. Spirits live in mountains, jungle, place where nobody go.

This longhouse, turned to rock ...
Balio.(#55) See ...

NARRATOR: Raj pointed to a rounded area bulging from the rock face some ten feet off the ground.

RAJ

You put dragon jar in door. Try to stop elmu hitam (#57) ... curse.

KARDEC

You're telling me this is where a whole village was turned to stone?

NARRATOR: The ridge was nearly the size of a native long house. And a shadowed area did look something like a piece of one of the Chinese or Thai ceramics so prized in Sarawak's villages ... on the other hand it also looked like randomly shaped granite.

RAJ

Yes. See, these ... these mans caught outside when all became stone.

NARRATOR: Trailing off into the night was a series of much smaller boulders.

KARDEC

Look, Raj. We're not working here, we're working down there.

It'll be okay ... look at that crap; this is a white man's place.

NARRATOR: He started off but Raj remained behind, staring into the night.

KARDEC

Come on.

NARRATOR: Raj finally caught up as he made his way down to the first of the partly assembled pumps.

8 KARDEC DEFENDS RAJ FIGHT WITH RIGGER AND LOSES JOB

8

SFX: A chain hoist raises the armature into position.

NARRATOR: Kardec was on the chain block adjusting the height of the pump arm and a bulky Australian was in place to maneuver it until it lined up with the bolt holes.

The trouble might have even been Kardec's fault because he hadn't rigged the chain perfectly and the Aussie had to push hard to get the holes to line up.

Raj was standing by to thread the bolts through and tighten down the nuts.

SFX: A distant crash of falling metal.

NARRATOR: At the distant sound Raj flinched back, staring off into the darkness.

RIGGER

Hey! Hey! Eyes on the job here!

NARRATOR: He turned back to the arm but ...

SFX: There is a scream of pain.

NARRATOR: ... fumbling, Raj dropped the heavy bolt.

SFX: The big bolt hits the pad.

RIGGER

Aww come on, you wog. I can't hold this all night.

NARRATOR: Raj climbed down and felt around in the shadows.

In the flickering light beyond the pump, two men carried a wounded worker toward the aid station.

RIGGER

Move it!

NARRATOR: The Rigger let go of the arm and dropped to the ground. Instinct almost made Kardec stop the man but whatever it was that brought him to Borneo held him back.

RIGGER

What the bloody hell's wrong with you, boy? When I tell you to pay attention

...

NARRATOR: He grabbed Raj by the shirt front and jerked him to his feet.

RAJ
I found ...

KARDEC
(under his breath)
Crap.
(to the Rigger)
Hey, hold off!

RIGGER
Now get up there!

SFX: The Rigger pushes Raj toward ladder. Kardec drops to the ground and blocks the Rigger.

KARDEC
I said, *Stop it!*

NARRATOR: The Rigger turned slowly to face Kardec. Then hauled off and swung a heavy, calloused, fist at Kardec's chin.

It was a mistake.

Kardec shifted right, letting the punch sail ineffectively by and stabbed a short left to the heart. The Rigger took a stunned step backwards and sat down.

KARDEC
A piece of advice. Never lead with a right.

NARRATOR: The Australian rolled to his feet and charged. Kardec caught one of his hands, ducked, shifted his grip, turned and straightened. The Rigger flew through the air and came up against the motor that would eventually power the pump.

The man struggled to get up ...

RIGGER
Aaagh.

NARRATOR: ... but his left arm was useless. He rolled over to face Kardec and Raj.

MADDOX
(distant)
Hey!

RIGGER

You watch ... yourselves. Both of you.
There's accidents up here ... all the
time.

NARRATOR: Suddenly, Raj stepped forward, drawing a short knife from his belt. He thrust the point under the man's chin, stopping just short of drawing blood.

MADDOX

(distant)

Hey!

RAJ

You want accident? I *make* accident! He
is my friend.

SFX: Maddox comes striding up.

MADDOX

Put that knife away, boy! I've already
got a fitter with a crook hand.

NARRATOR: Raj glanced from Kardec to Maddox and back. After a moment the boy stood up and sheathed the blade.

KARDEC

Look, Maddox, this was a
misunderstanding.

MADDOX

Shut up! You're fired. All of you.
Draw your time and get lost.

NARRATOR: Sometimes it seemed it was just his luck; no good deed goes unpunished. But luck both good and bad, tended to have it's own agenda.

MZK:

A9 VANDOVER SPEAKS TO FAIRCHILD ON HIS WAY TO SEE KARDEC

A9

SFX: Road and river port ambiance. Street speech in Malay and Chinese. Saloon conversations in English and Dutch.

NARRATOR: It was only the Baram river that reminded Mike Kardec that he was actually on a tropical island. In many ways the interior of Borneo was closer to the 'darkest Africa' he had read about in pulp magazines. But coastal freighters did occasionally make it the fifty miles up river to Marudi lending it the air of a minor seaport.

The Claudetown Saloon was just across the dusty road from the fueling pier and the corroding corrugated iron warehouses that stood on pilings along the water. Ceiling fans provided some relief from the heat and tended to keep the mosquitos to a minimum as long as the decrepit generator that provided power for the lower part of Marudi continued to function.

Mike Kardec leaned on the bar nursing a drink. As on any day the place had a few customers; there were the occasional rubber tappers, a Dutch geologist or two and, of course, the old British Colonials, living out their years in the last part of the world that they still understood.

SFX: The door opens and Vandover enters. He stops by one of the tables and greets Fairchild.

VANDOVER
(distant)
Hello, Bill.

FAIRCHILD
(distant)
Cliff. What brings you out and about?

NARRATOR: A man in his early sixties entered the room. He wore a white linen suit that was just beginning to bag from the humidity. He had a neat, close cropped mustache, and his face was the color of someone who had mixed the sun, alcohol, and quinine in nearly equal measure.

VANDOVER
(distant)
Just stretching my legs.

9 KARDEC DECLINES VANDOVER'S OFFER

9

SFX: He walks over to Kardec.

VANDOVER
Mike, 'been looking for you.

NARRATOR: Clifton Vandover was the District Officer. He'd come out as a young adventurer in the days when Sarawak belonged to Charles Vyner Brooke, the last of the "White Rajahs" who had been given the territory by the Sultan of Brunai (#82).

*

VANDOVER
Two G and Ts, yes?

KARDEC
A beer, actually.

BARTENDER ONE
Thank you, sir.

SFX: They move to a table and sit

VANDOVER
Heard you had a fight.

KARDEC
Yeah.

VANDOVER
And that you broke a man's arm.

NARRATOR: Kardec glanced up and held Vandover's gaze. This was *not* a social call.

VANDOVER
I'll have to take your passport until we have this cleared up.

NARRATOR: Kardec pulled the folder from his breast pocket and the District Officer casually tucked it away.

VANDOVER
Not to worry about it. A formality really.

SFX: The Bartender approaches.

BARTENDER ONE
Here you are, sir.

VANDOVER
Bless you, my son.
(to Kardec)
Cheers.

KARDEC
Selamat (#48)

*

VANDOVER
Still headed for home?

KARDEC
Slowly. Am I going to be asked to leave?

VANDOVER
I shouldn't think so. We just have to
keep you from becoming one of these ...
disaffected types the tropics seem to
attract.

When were you up river last?

KARDEC
A year, maybe more. Why, what's on your
mind?

VANDOVER
There's a guide job.

The man's an American named John Lacklan.
He's physicist with some sort of think-
tank in California. *Atom* bombs; that
sort of thing. He's got it in his head
to go looking for a diamond.

NARRATOR: Mike Kardec needed the work. He needed the money
to get home, needed it to get through the next week, needed
it like air or water ...

KARDEC
Uhh. I don't think so.

VANDOVER
It might give me some ammunition with the
magistrate ...

KARDEC
I'd like to help you out, but ...

VANDOVER
He'll pay good money.

KARDEC

Now you're hitting me with both the
carrot *and* the stick.

VANDOVER

Whatever it takes, old man.

KARDEC

You know I appreciate it ...

I don't want to end up playing commanding
officer again.

VANDOVER

Well. I understand.

Do me another kind of favor then ...

KARDEC

Sure.

VANDOVER

See that he gets whatever advice he
needs. Make sure that he's kitted out
correctly and find a guide that's
reliable.

It would be rather embarrassing if we
misplace this gent.

KARDEC

Alright. Sure.

VANDOVER

Then you can meet him day after tomorrow,
at the Singapore boat.

SFX: Vandover stands.

VANDOVER

Oh, and come around next Thursday in the
evening ... the Missus is having a *fete*.

SFX: The mail boat's horn blares out across the water.

10 KARDEC MEETS JOHN AND HELEN AT THE BOAT

10

SFX: Pier side businesses, vendors in Chinese and workers in Malay. Folk or Work song in Malay.

NARRATOR: The Mail Boat was a grubby coaster that seemed to exude rust from every rivet. It tied up to the fueling pier at three o'clock on the following Monday and began discharging passengers and freight. Kardec pushed his way toward the ramp, searching for the American.

He was a man who appeared to be in his early fifties, tall and wearing a pair of round, metal framed sunglasses under the brim of a Panama. The glass of the lenses seemed almost totally black. He strode forward quickly as if trying to find space in the crowd, to hold himself away from the mass of bodies on the pier.

KARDEC

Dr. Lacklan?

I'm Mike Kardec.

JOHN

Ahh, Excellent. I was afraid they were going to assign me a native. One moment

...

(to a porter)

No! Those tan bags, bring them on over here.

NARRATOR: Behind Lacklan, following a sallow little man with a cane, appeared a woman. At first Kardec saw her merely as a flash of white, and his eye was drawn to the brightness and movement. As he focused into the glare of sunlight off the river she stopped, looking around, and then, seeming to look straight into Kardec's eyes, came forward.

HELEN

Hello.

NARRATOR: She was lean and athletic, with dark blue eyes that shown in the shadow of her wide-brimmed straw hat. Her skin, where it disappeared into the fabric of her blouse, had taken on a healthy shade of copper; blessed by the equatorial sun.

JOHN

Mr. Kardec, my wife, Helen.

NARRATOR: Kardec pulled his gaze away, tried to hold on the unreadable darkness of John Lacklan's glasses.

KARDEC

My pleasure ... Welcome to Sarawak (#74).

*

11 KARDEC DISCOVERS HELEN INTENDS TO GO UPRIVER

11

NARRATOR: The Lacklans had a second floor suite at the Straits Hotel. It was up near the District Officer's residence and high enough off the river to catch whatever breeze was blowing at the time. The large louvered shutters had been propped open and much of the town could be seen below; tree tops rising above a maze of tin and terra-cotta roofs, dotted by the occasional form of a sleeping cat.

SFX: The distant sounds of the town, the Lacklan's talking in the next room, water running. Distant call to prayer.

NARRATOR: By the sofa several suitcases awaited unpacking and on a nearby table lay Mrs. Lacklan's purse, her gloves, and a novel that she had been reading. Kardec picked up the book. It was Somerset Maugham's "The Moon and Sixpence."

SFX: Pages flipping.

HELEN

It's good. Have you read it?

NARRATOR: She was standing in the doorway. Now that she had removed her hat he could see that the sun had also burned highlights in her honey-blond hair.

KARDEC

No, ma'am.

SFX: Helen comes on into the room.

HELEN

Take it with you. This is my second time through. I can live without it for a few days.

KARDEC

I don't think I should. I'll find my own copy sometime.

SFX: John enters.

JOHN

Go ahead, Mr. Kardec. My wife never errs on the subject of light reading.

NARRATOR: John Lacklan had changed into a fresh shirt and donned his jacket.

JOHN

She brought a case load of them. Like some women pack clothes, but heavier, of course.

KARDEC

Alright, I promise to return it.

NARRATOR: Before sitting down Lacklan placed a thick file folder on the coffee table.

JOHN

Now ... I understand you are the authority on diamonds.

KARDEC

Well, authority might be putting it too strongly.

JOHN

Vandover seems to think you know a thing or two. I hope he's right.

So, fill us in, what are we up against?

KARDEC

Ahh ... I don't want to misunderstand you ... Is Mrs. Lacklan going too?

HELEN

Yes ...

JOHN

Certainly.

HELEN

It's our project.

NARRATOR: Helen pulled at a chain around her neck revealing a silver ring ... but empty; the setting stared at Kardec like a blind eye.

HELEN

John gave me this ring five years ago. Rather than buying a stone, he thought we should find one together.

KARDEC

I don't want to offend, Mrs. Lacklan, but it's no country for a woman. To get into the mountains - and that's where the diamonds are - is quite an undertaking ... for anyone.

There'll be snakes and leeches.

KARDEC

We'll be on the water every day, you probably won't get truly dry until we return.

NARRATOR: But Helen Lacklan was smiling.

HELEN

It sounds perfect. We want to really see Borneo. The mountains, forests ... the leeches, everything. *

JOHN

What would the difference be, between where an average woman could go and ... more difficult circumstances.

HELEN

John.

KARDEC

Significant. No doubt there are diamonds in the lower elevations but the rivers are deep and they'd be buried under tons of mud.

HELEN

John ...

JOHN

I just want to hear the man out.

HELEN

... we made a deal.

JOHN

If possible, Helen. But I'd also like to succeed.

HELEN

Together, John ... remember what brought us here.

NARRATOR: A cloud crossed John Lacklan's features, frightened, hurt, apologetic, confused, Kardec didn't know.

JOHN

You must realize, Mr. Kardec, my wife was a top athlete, she's probably as capable as I am.

HELEN

I'm sure I can manage. This is our first vacation in years, a honeymoon really, it's supposed to be an adventure.

JOHN

She may want adventure. I, however, want a diamond, that's truly what we came for.

The first thing we'll need to discuss is where the best prospects are, and how we'll find a guide.

KARDEC

Yeah ... about that.

NARRATOR: Mike Kardec examined them both but he examined Helen Lacklan in particular.

She sent his thoughts in directions untraveled for many years: Heat lightning in summer twilight. Night-blooming jasmine, and how the first rain of the season could come down so hard that it made the dust jump.

Until that moment, Mike Kardec thought he had understood the effect a beautiful woman could have on a lonely man, even a complete stranger. But he hadn't expected to be taken back to the fading moments of his childhood when the days had been clicking away like the chain on a bicycle when you stop pedalling and just coast ...

KARDEC

Would you excuse me for a moment. I have a telephone call I have to make.

JOHN

All right. How about we meet in the bar in ten minutes, will that give you enough time?

KARDEC

More than enough.

SFX: Telephone ringing, picked up.

12 KARDEC CALLS VANDOVER TO SAY HE'S TAKING THE JOB

12

SECRETARY
(over telephone)
Division 4, Resident's office.

KARDEC
Is Cliff in? It's Mike Kardec.

SECRETARY
(over telephone)
I'm sorry, Mr. Kardec. Mr. Vandover is
out for the afternoon. May I take a
message?

NARRATOR: Kardec watched as John and Helen crossed the lobby
... Helen pausing briefly at the desk before they entered the
bar.

KARDEC
Yeah. Ask him if he knew Lacklan was
bringing -- no.

Just tell him ... Tell him I'm taking the
job.

13 KARDEC OFFERS HIS SERVICES, JOHN TESTS HIM

13

SFX: Lachlan stirs his drink.

KARDEC
(Mr. Lacklan, I'll do it.)

JOHN
Really?

I understood that you wouldn't be available.

KARDEC
I've reconsidered. When it comes down to it, I don't know who to recommend. And I believe you have a more serious expedition in mind than I'd realized.

HELEN
And you'll take us to the interior, the mountains?

KARDEC
Sure. Wherever you'd like to go.

JOHN
(to Helen)
Let's not get ahead of ourselves.
(to Kardec)
We were told that we'd do well to get you, but frankly, you don't appear the prosperous diamond hunter.

KARDEC
The fortunes of war, I'm afraid. I had a wreck.

HELEN
A wreck? What do you mean?

KARDEC
I ran out of luck, lost my boat, the diamonds ... everything.

JOHN
And now we're your ticket back up river.

NARRATOR: John Lacklan was hidden behind glasses that looked like they could protect his eyes from atomic fire.

KARDEC

Mr. Lacklan ... if you pick me to be your guide, then perhaps we'd be ... each other's ticket.

JOHN

So how would you propose to locate these diamonds?

KARDEC

We would have to find the right terrain. The last stones I found were washed out of a creek below a dried up waterfall. You use a pan, like panning for gold. They're alluvial --

JOHN

-- alluvial. Yes, I realize that.

SFX: John gets out file.

JOHN

This is a War Office Resource Survey ... Although Borneo has produced quite a number of stones, there has never been a Kimberlite or Lamproite deposit found on this island ... nothing proven as the source.

KARDEC

It's one of the local mysteries. There are certain things, like garnets, that you begin to find when you're close.

JOHN

I just want to be sure we're not wasting our time.

NARRATOR: Helen watched as Mike Kardec and her husband sized each other up. She knew how hard John could push, he liked results and he liked everyone to know who was in charge.

KARDEC

I've found diamonds. With luck, I can find more. Whether they are bort or gem quality will be anyone's guess.

JOHN

I suppose some samples would be too much to ask for.

NARRATOR: Kardec smiled; this was a question he was ready for.

KARDEC

Actually, no. You asked if I was an authority. I'm not. But I can introduce you to one.

SFX: The sounds of the Souk fade up. Music, both native and popular. Crowds, people selling their wares in many languages, Chinese, Malay, Dutch and English. Silversmiths tapping away.

MZK: Native music mixed with the crowd noise

14 THE LACKLAN'S REACT DIFFERENTLY TO THE MARKETPLACE

14

NARRATOR: The Marudi market was a broad square just back of the river. It was bordered on three sides by two story stuccoed brick buildings, each fronted by a wide covered walkway lined with shops and stalls selling everything Sarawak had to offer. Chinese lanterns glowed in the trees, and bare electric bulbs cast shadows in all directions. Bats dove for insects and rustled amongst the high branches.

Mike Kardec led John and Helen into the arcade; past stacks of rattan mats and baskets; a booth containing fancy parangs, the traditional machete and head hunting sword of the Borneo natives; and through an area of silversmiths sitting cross-legged on the ground making jewelry, cigarette cases and oil lamps that looked as though they could summon a genie.

SFX: A bird squawks.

NARRATOR: Helen paused to take in an Iban (#72) woman edging around a group of Chinese, her earlobes elongated down to her shoulders with brass weights and then at a large black and white bird in a wooden cage. *

JOHN

No. No, thank you ... excuse me.

HELEN

This is fantastic ... look.

JOHN

Berenicornis comatus; a White Crested Hornbill.

NARRATOR: Ahead two men were selling deer horn carvings, both had teeth and chins stained from chewing Betel nut and the legs of one of them were infested with scabies.

JOHN

Be careful, Helen.
(lower)
Don't touch anything.

NARRATOR: They moved on through the press of bodies.

KARDEC

Here he is.

JOHN

(to himself)
You've got to be kidding ...

15 PATEL GIVES A LECTURE ON DIAMONDS

15

NARRATOR: Sitting in a small bistro under a rusting tin awning sat an elderly Punjabi dressed in a tattered suit that looked like it had been the apex of style sometime before the First World War.

PATEL
Ahh, Mike Kardec.

KARDEC
Ishan ... Good evening.

I have brought friends from the United States. John and Helen Lacklan meet Ishan Patel.

PATEL
Yes, how do you do?

Come, come sit ...

NARRATOR: Patel nodded and they all sat down.

KARDEC
Dr. Lacklan is going to be prospecting for diamonds. He needs a better education than I can give him.

PATEL
So? An education then ...

NARRATOR: He reached into his coat and spread a black square of velvet on the table. Then came a small folded square of paper. Out fell three, beautifully cut, blue-white diamonds. John Lacklan's eyes widened.

PATEL
In the end, this is what is sold. These are quality gemstones, three to four carats ... this one is three. All are nearly flawless.

Here ...

NARRATOR: He opened another packet.

PATEL
... is how it begins. Raw, uncut. These are from the Sarawak River and, this and this, the Baram. Some are rough and some are smooth.

NARRATOR: He looked up and smiled.

PATEL

As Mr. Kardec knows, that will tell you how far you are from the source. Find a smooth diamond, you may or may not find more ... but a rough stone is lucky.

NARRATOR: Helen reached to touch the largest of the uncut stones.

HELEN

May I?

PATEL

Certainly.

HELEN

They are bigger than I expected.

PATEL

Yes. That stone is eight carats. But it will give up more than half it's weight to the cut. *

NARRATOR: Patel picked the stone out of her hand. He dipped it into a glass that sat at his elbow then lifted it out. He held the diamond at eye level, where they could plainly see it.

PATEL

A diamond is unwettable. It emerges from the water absolutely dry.

NARRATOR: He handed her back the stone.

Helen held the eight sided crystal up to the light. A vague rainbow of color fell across her face.

HELEN

Plato thought that diamonds were living spirits ...

NARRATOR: Her husband took it and gave it a careful once over.

JOHN

Better than that, it's the purest element in existence, the hardest element in existence.

PATEL

You are both more than correct. Look at the way they focus the light. Perhaps inside, spirit and science are one.

HELEN

Oh John, this is going to be fun.

NARRATOR: She turned to Mike Kardec, her eyes, a deep and fatal blue, sparkled with anticipation.

HELEN

When can we go?

A16 RAJ VOLUNTEERS HIS SERVICES TO KARDEC

A16

SFX: Road and waterfront. Distant conversations in Malay.

NARRATOR: Mike set up shop in an old Godown on the river. The cavernous building had wide doors with stacks of unclaimed freight piled along the walls. In the heat of the day it smelled powerfully of creosote and rotting fish.

He found a man who had a pair of Johnson outboards for sale and with Lacklan's money bought two twenty-five foot longboats. Then he began the process of repairing them and modifying the stern planks of each to fit the engines.

He was reluctant to hire any help Both in the handling of the boats and the heavy work of mining, the expedition would require a crew of four to six, counting himself. Mike Kardec realized that he was doing precisely what he had come to Borneo to avoid -- becoming beholden to and responsible for people other than himself. Eventually, he knew he was going to have to get over it.

RAJ

Hey, Mike.

You take American to look for diamond.

*

NARRATOR: Raj leaned against the doorway of the warehouse, a half finished bottle of Neptune Lime in his hand.

KARDEC

And what if I am?

RAJ

I worry.

Maybe I have to pull you out of river again?

KARDEC

(laughs)

NARRATOR: The process of finding a crew had begun ...

They began laying in supplies and trade goods, enough for the weeks they would have to spend up river. They bought a large pavilion style tent and modified it for greater comfort and to be easily packed in the boats.

Occasionally, a bellhop from the hotel would deliver memos from John Lacklan, typewritten lists of supplies or equipment some of which were ingenious but others foolish or impossible to obtain.

KARDEC

(to himself)

DEET repellent? As if the military would
part with a drop of it.

B16 KEBIR AND THE DYAKS SPOT THE LACKLANS

B16

KEBIR

(off Malay)
#4- Jangan tolak terlalu kuat, tali sawat hampir lusuh. Hati-hati.

KEBIR

#4- Don't push too strong, belt is almost worn out. Be careful.

SFX: The Land Rover horn beeps and the vehicle brakes to a stop. Malay conversation ...

DYAK ONE

(off Malay)
#5- Tuan, mereka sudah sampai. Lihat. Orang kaya dari England, dengan isterinya.

DYAK ONE

#5- Sir, they already arrive. See, Person rich from England, with wife.

KEBIR

(off Malay)
#6- Ya, tapi bukan orang Inggeris. Dari Amerika.

KEBIR

#6- Yes, but not people English. From America.

NARRATOR: They came down in the hotel's Land Rover, stepping out of the blasting sunlight into the dimness of the warehouse.

DYAK TWO

(off Malay)
#7- Dia ada senapang.

DYAK TWO

#7- He has gun.

NARRATOR: Near the door, a group of Dyak men were gathered around a belt sander, taking turns putting an edge on their parangs. They stopped and watched as the American couple looked around, getting their bearings.

KEBIR
(off Malay)
#8- Itu aku punya.

KEBIR
#8- That is mine.

*

16 KARDEC AND THE LACKLANS DISCUSS TRIP, KEBIR CHECKS THEM OUT 16

KARDEC
(distant)
Here! Down here, Mr. Lacklan.

HELEN
It looks like we're ready to go.

KARDEC
I think we're almost there.

This is Raj. There'll be several other men who'll crew our boats but, after me, he's the person to go to.

HELEN
Hello.

RAJ (WILD LINE 3)
Miss.

NARRATOR: The driver began to unload their bags ... they had brought everything they were going to take with them, from Helen's toiletries to John's custom Winchester Super Grade ... all so that it could be discussed and test fit into the boats.

Kardec ran through the things they had acquired and the short list of items still needing to be taken care of. The inventory took most of an hour.

KARDEC
Each boat will carry ten extra gallons of fuel. We'll need very little coming back down so, with what we can buy, it should be enough.

Shotgun shells and salt are the equivalent of money in the ulu, (#65) the interior ... these will be our trade goods for the next few weeks.

JOHN
Hmm. It looks like there's not enough food here.

KARDEC
Well, there's plenty of rice and some emergency supplies but it's always better to live off the land when you can.

NARRATOR: Helen turned to Raj.

HELEN

I'd love to learn how to make a fish trap. Can you show me?

NARRATOR: Raj nodded but threw a wide eyed look at Mike, suddenly on the spot ...

JOHN

Our ship leaves Hong Kong on the thirty-first. So the less time spent foraging the better.

HELEN

But that's weeks from now.

KARDEC

Well, canned stuff is going to be heavy. There's times when we'll have to portage around rapids and waterfalls ... we're already carrying more than we'd like.

JOHN

We have to maximize the time that we're panning for diamonds. Now ...

NARRATOR: He took a map from his pocket ...

HELEN

Will there be a long house we can visit, where people are actually living?

KARDEC

Sure. The village where Raj's grandfather lives would throw you a party like you've never seen.

NARRATOR: A Dyak kid of about twenty, in a gaudy Hawaiian shirt and aviator style sunglasses, left the group at the sander and wandered over to watch the discussion.

HELEN

Will we need gifts? Something to give in return for ...

JOHN

Helen, please ...

NARRATOR: John spread the map on the top of a packing case. Mike noticed areas along the Baram marked with a pencil, some had been carefully erased as John had rethought his plan.

JOHN

These are potential campsites. I've
calculated the miles between each ...

KARDEC

(in Malay)
#9- Hey! Apa yang awak buat?
Jalan, pergi!

KARDEC

#9- Hey! What are you doing?
Go! Get lost!

*

NARRATOR: The Dyak in the flowered shirt stepped back from
the pile of boxes where Lacklan had laid his rifle.

KEBIR

Ah. Jus' looking, yeah?

KARDEC

Look, once we get above Long Lama the
maps aren't much good.

JOHN

The Ministry of Defence issued this. The
British are very reliable ...

KARDEC

I agree. But the British administration
wasn't here before the war.

The Brooke family ... they didn't
encourage much exploration. They left
the Dyaks, the local natives, alone as
much as possible.

NARRATOR: Kardec bent over the map, peering at the bottom
right corner.

KARDEC

Here; 1945. This is considered a good
map but it was guesswork even then.

JOHN

Guesswork?

KARDEC

See, "Map sources irreconcilable",
"Relief data incomplete" ...

HELEN

It's Terra Incognita ... Here There be
Dragons ...

KARDEC

Exactly.

JOHN

Then how the hell are we supposed to know where we are?

KARDEC

For the most part, you don't. But if you know where to find the river you won't get lost, if that's what you're afraid of?

JOHN

Mr. Kardec, I'm not *afraid*. I just want a clear picture of where we're going.

HELEN

John, it's an opportunity to take a risk. I mean we'll see when we get there, won't we?

JOHN

Take a risk? Helen, for god's sake! Do you know what this being gone will cost me at work?

KARDEC

Would it help if I purchased military rations for ten more days?

Look, I'll add the details that I remember to the map and we can make corrections as we go. I'm sure Mr. Vandover could forward the results to the appropriate officials on our return.

NARRATOR: Though Kardec didn't think he could go head to head with John Lacklan PhD on Beat the Clock he still had the touch, unused for years, that made him successful with senior officers.

John picked up his rifle and slid it into it's case.

KARDEC

But it'll mean another boat ...

JOHN

(draws a long breath)
Well, I'm not made of money ... but we don't like surprises.

NARRATOR: John Lacklan and his wife walked back to the Land Rover and Kardec turned away.

17 KARDEC TAKES DELIVERY OF THE STOVE

17

SIKH

Ahh, There you are, Sir. I have found it.

NARRATOR: A small man in a turban had come in. He placed a wooden box on the work table ...

SIKH

One Handi Works stove for camping and ...
... three bottles fuel.

SFX: He taps the aluminium bottles.

NARRATOR: ... and that meant that he did not see the young Dyak in the flowered shirt open the rear door of the Land Rover for Helen and speak briefly to John before the vehicle drove off. It was a detail that, had he known what it meant, might have saved them all a great deal of grief ...

KEBIR (WILD LINE 4)

(distant)

You want diamond, Mister? Big diamond?
Yeah? You send me message. Here ...

KARDEC

Alright, Mr. Bidasha, you've got a deal.

SFX: In the background the door to the Land Rover closes and the engine starts.

NARRATOR: But then there were more preparations to be made and the days drifted by.

SFX: The click and then advance of Helen's camera.

A18 KARDEC TALKS TO MALAY VENDOR

A18

SFX: Work along the river, fixing boats, Malay conversations.

NARRATOR: Helen Lacklan peered down into the viewfinder of her Rolliflex, capturing a row of brilliantly colored birds standing along the rail of a launch trapped and rotting in the Baram mud.

She scanned the river, looking for another shot. Nothing. Nothing, and the light was getting flat. She strolled up the bank and watched the people fishing off of the oil company pier.

MALAY VENDOR
(distant in Malay)
#10- Mari, mari sini, Encik.
Aku ada durian, pisang.

KARDEC
(distant in Malay)
#11- I have enough.

MALAY VENDOR
#10- Come, come here, Mister.
I have durian, banana.

KARDEC
#11- Aku ada cukup.

18 HELEN AND KARDEC LIKE WHAT THEY SEE IN EACH OTHER

18

NARRATOR: Helen gazed down into the frosted glass, the world in reverse as she looked through the lens ... a man's belt buckle and course blue shirt came into focus. She looked up.

Mike Kardec, a bag of supplies over his shoulder was standing in the road.

KARDEC

Hello.

HELEN

Oh ... sorry.

When I take pictures the rest of the world just goes away.

How go the preparations?

KARDEC

As well as can be expected ... You can tell your husband not to worry, we're just about ready.

HELEN

John always wants to know where he's going before he gets there. He has to be ... mentally prepared.

KARDEC

I guess. How about you?

NARRATOR: She looked off. In the distance, blue mountains rose ... the peaks of the Kelabit(#66) Highlands reached eight thousand feet.

*

HELEN

I like a challenge.

KARDEC

Good.

I don't mind a careful plan, but you'll find Borneo rarely cooperates.

HELEN

That's alright ... I've been trapped in a world where nothing *unplanned* ever happens.

SFX: She advances the film in her camera.

HELEN
Pose for me.

KARDEC
What?

HELEN
Let me take your picture.

KARDEC
Memories of Borneo? I think there are
better subjects ...

HELEN
Mr. Kardec, you are certainly as much
local color as the natives. My
girlfriends would insist on at least one
picture.

NARRATOR: He stood awkwardly. She took the picture but it wasn't the one she wanted. She wanted something that said who he was, content that emphasized this man's rough good looks and might contrast with the thing that she saw but was not sure she could catch in a photograph; the slight air of sadness that surrounded him.

Out on the water a pair of native canoes drifted toward them, colorfully dressed tribesmen in beaded head dresses paddling with the current. That would make the shot.

HELEN
A close-up now. Stand here.

NARRATOR: He adjusted his position. She took out her light meter, held it by his face and gazed at it intently. They were very close to each other. She glanced out at the river.

HELEN
Do they still take heads? My guidebook
is full of severed heads and Dyak
pirates.

KARDEC
"If you can keep your head when all about
you are losing theirs?"

HELEN
Kipling.

"If you can meet with Triumph and
Disaster and treat those two imposters
just the same." Something like that.

KARDEC

That's right.

There's not much headhunting anymore.
They used to say that a freshly severed
skull had powerful magic. But the newest
heads I've seen were Japanese, taken
during the war. Away from the coast,
there's almost no crime in Sarawak.

NARRATOR: The canoes were almost in position ... some stray
hair had fallen across his forehead and she reached out to
comb it back but stopped herself.

HELEN

Your hair ... brush your hair back.

KARDEC

Like that?

Anyway, if we're careful ... we won't
have to worry about losing our heads.

SFX: She takes the shot.

HELEN

No, you're right. I should hope not.

SFX: ... And advances the film.

NARRATOR: She looked at him through the camera; trapped
forever. A latent image on a strip of celluloid.

19 VANDOVER FINDS KARDEC ON VERANDAH

19

SFX: Quiet music from the late 1940s plays from a record. Guests murmur in the background.

NARRATOR: Up at the residence, Jenny Vandover's party had been on for three hours when the District Officer realized that somewhere in the evening he'd lost Mike Kardec.

Vandover finally found him sitting on the verandah, looking out over the lower part of town and the river.

VANDOVER

Ahh. Jenny told me you'd be out here.

KARDEC

Listening to a party from a distance ...
it's good for thinking.

VANDOVER

Something on your mind?

KARDEC

Not that I could make sense out of.

VANDOVER

The curse of the tropics, I'm afraid.
Want a drink?

KARDEC

Lead on.

SFX: They walk inside.

20 PEOPLE AT PARTY GET BACKGROUND ON JOHN

20

JOHN

We're working night and day. It's not the kind of job where you can just go home at five. Teller-Ulam weapons have created completely new universe of policy requirements ...

DENTON

Teller-Ulam?

JOHN

H-bombs ... we're still catching up with how they will alter strategy.

BRITISH WOMAN

But you don't *make* the bombs?

JOHN

Hardly. We do modeling and analysis on warfare scenarios. Estimating losses, developing ways to objectively quantify suffering. We try to learn how to fight this new kind of war. The intellectual challenge is staggering. We have to carefully envision what we fear most.

DENTON

It sounds like you're a professional paranoid.

JOHN

In a way. The possibilities that arise in an Atomic war would terrify the average person.

DENTON

Such as?

VANDOVER
William, doing well this evening?

JOHN
Well, in an extreme situations triage would be carried out, contaminated food could be given to old people; people who wouldn't live long enough to get cancer.

FAIRCHILD
Yes, yes, well enough.

BRITISH WOMAN
What a horrible way of thinking. I don't see how you can stand it.

VANDOVER
Have you met our guest of honor? His lovely wife is just there, talking with my Jenny.

JOHN
You develop a certain kind fatalism. After all, *someone* has to make a dispassionate analysis ... You see, more than anything the enemy is surprise.

FAIRCHILD
We did meet. I was just listening to him go on about this Atomic War stuff. Makes the blitz seem like a picnic.

JOHN
You see, uncertainty becomes the monster under the bed, so we use our imaginations, prepare ourselves for the outcome in our heads ... where it's theoretical, where it's safe.

DENTON
Imagination? Don't you run the risk of over-reacting, causing what you are trying to avoid?

VANDOVER
Ahh, Denton, asked Dr. Lacklan any questions about physics have you?

You should, he's quite the expert in explaining the unexplainable.

DENTON
(to himself)
And I thought he was just at it.

VANDOVER
Mike, you know everyone ...

FAIRCHILD
Yes. Hello. What did you make of all that?

KARDEC

Not my kind of war, Mr. Fairchild.

I'm, ahh ...

NARRATOR: Kardec gestured toward the bar and then escaped across the room. He had almost made it when Mrs. Vandover reached out of a group of women and tugged at his sleeve.

21 HELEN TALKS WITH JENNY VANDOVER

21

JENNY

We thought you'd left.

KARDEC

No ma'am. Not without saying good night.

NARRATOR: Helen Lacklan turned toward him, beautiful in a black Chinese dress.

HELEN

Oh ... Mr. Kardec, our 'Passport to the Wilds of Borneo.'

KARDEC

Hello again, Mrs. Lacklan.

JENNY

Helen was just telling us how John decided to take her on this trip. It's all terribly romantic and adventuresome, don't you think?

KARDEC

Well, it will be something more than your typical trip to Acapulco. I think we can guarantee that.

I'm headed to the bar, anyone want another? Jen?

JENNY

No, thank you.

NARRATOR: Helen toasted him with her glass, showing that it was nearly full. Kardec turned away, toward the bar.

BARTENDER TWO (**WILD LINE 5**)

Good evening, Sir.

KARDEC

A stengah. Thank you.

JENNY

(distant)

Now, how did you decide on Sarawak. Cliff and I have been married thirty years. Half the secret is doing everything together.

22 FAIRCHILD OFFERS KARDEC A JOB

22

SFX: Drink mixing. Soda shoot.

FAIRCHILD
(approaching)
Mike, I almost forgot.

NARRATOR: Bill Fairchild wrote a name and address on a piece of paper, folded it and gave it to Kardec.

FAIRCHILD
There's another possibility for you. The old canal, out south of town? Freers wants it open again. I told him you could do it, bossing a native crew. They'll take whoever can start immediately.

We'll have you out of here yet.

NARRATOR: Kardec stuffed the paper into his pocket.

KARDEC
I may be coming down with an embarrassment of riches ... Cliff's got me guiding the Lacklan's.

FAIRCHILD
I thought you turned that down.

KARDEC
Changed my mind ... but thanks.

NARRATOR: Mike Kardec had got his drink and strolled back outside by the time John and the other men joined Helen and Jenny.

23 VANDOVER TELLS KARDEC'S KOREA STORY

23

VANDOVER

... so, I was just telling your wife ... they had pulled back and the North Korean troops were advancing. Artillery was shelling the town. But Mike, against orders it seems, went back to evacuate some civilians. He was wounded rather severely.

His superiors were a bit uncertain how to handle it, you see ... he was demoted, the end of his career, certainly, but they also gave him a medal.

JOHN

A medal?

VANDOVER

One of several, I understand.

24 KARDEC AND HELEN BOND, JOHN SEES THEM

24

NARRATOR: Kardec sat on the verandah, in the same chair where Vandover had found him, and stared off at the distant mountains, etched black in the brilliant light of the waxing moon. Out over the river there was the occasional dull flash of a bat's wing as it snatched up an insect or hunted fruit in the treetops.

There were times he thought he could feel the magic of the place, a vague sense that just beyond his perception vast but subtle forces were at work. A Dyak might say it was the spirits that possessed every rock and tree and Kardec wouldn't argue with them, there was a power out there a great organic engine of death and rebirth.

SFX: Helen's footsteps approach. She takes out a cigarette and lights up.

NARRATOR: He watched from the chair as Helen Lacklan walked to the railing and lit a cigarette, her face momentarily highlighted by the flame.

KARDEC
Another refugee? Welcome.

HELEN
Oh, hello.

KARDEC
I didn't realize you smoked.

HELEN
I don't ... much.
(she sighs)
I don't care for parties. I find myself saying things just because they sound right.

KARDEC
Yeah. I might have overheard some of that ... sorry. I just assumed this trip was more your idea than John's.

HELEN
Yes ... guilty as charged.

It was John's, years ago. I just thought we should try it ... while we had the chance.

*

HELEN

Don't think my husband doesn't know how to be romantic, He probably had someone from Stanford Research brief him on it.

KARDEC

(laughs)

HELEN

John's organization works with the Defense Department, did he tell you?

KARDEC

I may have overheard that too.

HELEN

It is an all consuming job. Lots of secrets. Lots of pressure. Sometimes he's afraid he'll talk in his sleep ...

You know I envy him; having something big enough to be worth losing yourself in.

NARRATOR: She turned away from him, leaning on the balustrade, looking off into the night.

HELEN

I had that once. When I look at myself now ... I feel sort of ...

NARRATOR: He stood, joining her at the edge of the verandah.

KARDEC

Adrift.

*

HELEN

Yes.

You were in army ... they told me you won a lot of medals ...

KARDEC

Sort of. If you're lucky, you survive. Then maybe they give you one. Whether you deserve it or not.

On the other hand, I've never been so alive.

HELEN

Is that why you came out here?

KARDEC

Maybe.

NARRATOR: He looked out toward the wide river; the whole of Borneo.

HELEN
Adrift?

KARDEC
Guilty as charged.

HELEN
I envy *you*. You made the choice ... to be your own man.

NARRATOR: Mike shook his head, thinking of how coming here had seemed like an answer ... an answer that had him trapped between one world and another, a half life that seemed like adventure.

HELEN
The last few years I've felt more and more like a piece in someone else's puzzle.

NARRATOR: They stood side by side, looking off over the dark jungle, two strangers bound together by the challenges they had left behind.

Through the door behind them and unnoticed by either, John Lacklan watched ... then after a moment he turned and walked away.

25 KARDEC LOOKS THROUGH HELEN'S BOOK, CONSIDERS HER LIFE

25

NARRATOR: Mike Kardec walked home along the river road in the dark. The rotting steps to his porch creaked and, taking a rag from inside the door, he sat for a moment, watching the fireflies winking on and off in the shadow of the trees, before carefully cleaning the dirt from his good shoes.

Once he'd undressed, he lit a lamp and, picking up Helen's book, he pushed aside the mosquito netting and lay back against the headboard of the bed.

SFX: Kardec turns the pages.

KARDEC

The Moon and Sixpence by W. Somerset
Maugham.

NARRATOR: He he opened the cover, turned to an inner page, chosen at random ...

KARDEC

"I do not know how he had come upon the notion of going to the South Seas, though I remember that his imagination had long been haunted by an island, all green and sunny, encircled by a sea more blue than is found in Northern latitudes."

SFX: Kardec turns the page ...

NARRATOR: ... a photograph slid from between the pages; Helen, young and smiling even though her leg was in a cast. In her arms was a German Shepard puppy. He turned it over.

KARDEC

Here you are with Max, the consolation prize. We will write from St. Moritz. Wish us gold, silver, or bronze. Gretchen.

NARRATOR: St. Moritz. That would have been the winter Olympics back in '48.

Kardec looked at the photo again. The room in which it had been taken was big and spare, a mid-western room it seemed. In the background something caught the light from the flashbulb ... Trophies. A mantle lined with golden skiers. A mother and father's pride.

26 KEBIR MAKES JOHN AN OFFER

26

SFX: Marudi marketplace. Same as previous marketplace Malay conversations.

NARRATOR: John Lacklan thought the Marudi market looked less exotic by day. The kid was waiting just inside archway, leaning against the wall of a building in a slouch that looked copied from a movie magazine. He wore the same Hawaiian shirt, a tourist's cast off shorts and the pilot's sunglasses. His hair was slicked back in a ragged Duck's Ass.

JOHN
There you are.

KEBIR
Yes, Tuan. Very good to see you. You smart man, right? Smart ... ahh ...

JOHN
A scientist, yes.

KEBIR
I must be respect, yeah? You know everything.

Come ... come. I have what you want.

JOHN
Say, what's your name ... what do I call you?

KEBIR
Kebir. You call me Kebir. You from 'merica, yeah? That number one.

NARRATOR: He turned away into the crowd and John Lacklan started after him.

KEBIR
You like movie?

JOHN
No, no, I don't see many movies.

KEBIR
I see both of them. Cat People, The House of Wax ... both.

NARRATOR: They walked past a man unloading fruit from a bullock cart and a tobacco vendor.

As Kebir turned into a narrow alley that ran between two of the buildings John hesitated ...

KEBIR
Come ... Come ...

NARRATOR: John approached cautiously, shaking his head.

JOHN
No ... I don't think so, Ace. If you've got something to show me, do it here.

NARRATOR: Kebir motioned John forward and dug around in the pocket of his shorts.

JOHN
Ahhhh ...

NARRATOR: In the dim light of the alley, stars danced in John Lacklan's dark lenses.

27 JOHN SEES HELEN'S PICTURES

27

SFX: Feet on stairs, clock.

CLERK

Dr. Lacklan?

NARRATOR: The desk clerk caught John halfway up the first flight of stairs.

CLERK

Your photos came back, Sir.

JOHN

My wife's ... but thank you.

NARRATOR: He started up the stairs again, opening the envelope and flipping through the photographs idly until one, and then another, brought him to a stop. He swayed momentarily on his feet, taking a deep breath and a firm hold on the bannister. In a moment he would go up ... In a moment he'd have control of himself.

28 JOHN CONFRONTS HELEN

28

HELEN

You're wrong, John. It's just a picture.
Part of our trip, like everything else.

JOHN

And last night, on the veranda? What was
that?

HELEN

... please don't do this. Don't do this
again.

SFX: Door slams.

NARRATOR: The photos lay strewn across the coffee table.
The Marudi marketplace. The old fort. The pier. And Mike
Kardec with the river in the background. Mike Kardec, in a
carefully exposed, movie star close up.

29 THE LACKLANS TELL KARDEC THEY ARE NOT GOING WITH HIM

29

SFX: Same as prior scene in this location. Street voices in Malay and Chinese and traffic.

NARRATOR: The Lacklans were two hours late when Kardec and Raj heard the Land Rover pull up outside the warehouse. As he climbed up from the float, Kardec could see that neither John nor Helen were dressed in traveling clothes.

KARDEC
Something's wrong.

JOHN
(distant)
Helen, stay in the car ...

HELEN
(distant)
I will not!

NARRATOR: They both came into the warehouse, neither looked as if they had slept very well.

JOHN
Mr. Kardec, we've come to tell you that your services will no longer be needed.

KARDEC
I don't understand.

JOHN
We've made other arrangements.

KARDEC
You're still going? Mind telling me how?

JOHN
Yes, we are. But that doesn't really matter, now does it?

KARDEC
It damn well does matter! If you go back in there with somebody you don't know you're a fool!

JOHN
You'd be well advised to keep a civil tongue in your head!

HELEN

Mr. Kardec, I apologize for all the trouble we've put you through ... it's not ...

NARRATOR: She glanced at John and stopped.

HELEN

(to Kardec)

I'm sorry.

NARRATOR: She turned and walked back to the car.

KARDEC

Look, is it a native? Did he show you a diamond? About twenty carats?

JOHN

And what if he did?

KARDEC

This could be the same one who's taken people up the Baram before. None of them ever came back.

JOHN

You're implying they were killed? For *what*? The diamonds they found?

KARDEC

No. They just use this one stone to lure foreigners into the bush where they can murder them for their possessions.

To a native, an outboard motor is worth a year's work on the coast, a shotgun shell buys a day's labor in the interior. Where you're going what you have is worth a fortune.

JOHN

This is pitiful. You're just trying to scare us to keep our business.

KARDEC

He was an old man, wasn't he? With a scar on one cheek?

JOHN

No. A boy.

NARRATOR: Lacklan pointed to Raj.

JOHN

No older than that one there.

KARDEC

Then they've switched, that's all. The stone is the same, that's how you can tell.

JOHN

Nonsense!

KARDEC

Have it your own way, Lacklan. But if I were you, I'd do a lot of thinking before I risked my wife's life too!

JOHN

Mr. Kardec, I believe my wife is none of your affair.

NARRATOR: In the end, several Dyak's showed up for the canoes. They sorted through the supplies, taking most of it, discarding the rest. Kardec and Raj watched as the boats headed up river under a towering wall of cloud that occasionally shimmered with distant lightning.

30 KARDEC TELLS VANDOVER ABOUT THE LACKLANS CHANGE OF PLANS 30

SFX: A muttering of distant thunder. Saloon ambiance up. British, Dutch, Chinese, Malay voices, some talking about the oncoming weather.

VANDOVER

The man's a fool ... taking off with a complete stranger. Unbelievable.

NARRATOR: Kardec sat with Clifton Vandover and Bill Fairchild at a table in the Claudetown Saloon. The weather that had been looming on the horizon had closed in as night fell and it was now raining steadily.

KARDEC

You heard about that tourist from Hong Kong, right?

FAIRCHILD

What's this?

VANDOVER

You mean, Carter? The disappearance?

KARDEC

He met some native on the coast who had a big diamond and was going to show him where there were others like it ... nobody ever heard from him again.

VANDOVER

You're right. Same thing happened years ago at Kuching (#83) and Sibü (#84).

*

FAIRCHILD

Good Lord, that certainly puts it all in a different light, doesn't it?

VANDOVER

That was Jeru. Word has it, he's dead.

*

KARDEC

What do you know about him?

VANDOVER

If you believe the stories ... Jeru's an old pirate who escaped from the Brooke militia and went up country. He is, or was, the leader of a band of renegades. Fought the Japanese but a nasty piece of work nonetheless.

FAIRCHILD

It's true. He did lure diamond hunters with a stone that he had. Fabulous thing. Huge, high quality, all that.

KARDEC

Could he be using this kid?

FAIRCHILD

The blighter would be ancient. There were stories, years ago, that he was cursed or some rubbish.

KARDEC

If it's not Jeru, it could be someone else playing the same game.

VANDOVER

Whatever it is, it's not good. Christ, Hell, I wish you'd locked the warehouse.

*

KARDEC

They were Lacklan's supplies ... He paid for them.

VANDOVER

Right, right ... not your fault. Damn mess though, isn't it?

SFX: Vandover gets up.

VANDOVER

Well, this has become a matter for Major Wallace. I'd best radio Kuching.

KARDEC

Good.

SFX: Kardec gets up. Thunder rumbles in the distance.

FAIRCHILD

Just our luck, you know. The Yanks send out their top bomb man and now he's gone up river to get his head chopped off.

KARDEC

Let's hope not. Get on the radio, Cliff, before this weather closes in.

I'll be out at my place.

NARRATOR: A cold fist of guilt settled in Mike Kardec's gut, A fear he had contributed to the mistakes Lacklan was making though he didn't understand exactly how. She didn't seem the type to have affairs and if she'd been single he probably would never have had the courage even to speak to her. Was that what John was worrying about? Vandover was right ... the man was a fool.

31 KARDEC AGONIZES ABOUT WHAT MAY HAPPEN TO THE LACKLANS

31

SFX: Thunder crashes and rolls. In the background a radio tunes up, a whiff of music, static, then ...

LOCAL RADIO (**WILD LINE 6**)

(coming up)

... Winds are at force 7 and all stations south report decreasing pressure. Aircraft are grounded at Kuching (#83), Singapore, Saigon, and Kuala Lumpur and an advisory has been released for all coastal vessels.

*

SFX: Tuning noise again ...

FRENCH RADIO (**WILD LINE 7**)

(in French)

Severe flooding along the lower Mekong. Parts of Saigon are blocked to vehicle traffic ...

SFX: beep, beep, beep, beep, beep ... beeping.

BBC RADIO (**WILD LINE 8**)

It's eight hours GMT. Next in the news: Restoration is being completed at Westminster Abby and reopening celebrations ...

SFX: Faint music that keeps turning to static ...

NARRATOR: Mike Kardec stripped off his sweat soaked shirt. Opening the door he sat on the porch and watched the storm. Lighting stabbed into the ground beyond the dark line of trees and flashed deep in the clouds like the memory of a distant battle.

He went back inside but the thunder wouldn't leave him alone. His back, where they had removed the shrapnel, ached. He paced, tried to think of something else, shoved his hands down inside his pockets ... His fist clenched around a piece of paper.

KARDEC

"J. Freers, 40 Moresby Rd. -- Contact for job."

NARRATOR: Bill Fairchild had given him another chance. A job that would get him back on his feet. Get him out, if that's what he wanted. He could start tomorrow.

He tossed it onto the bedside table. It came to rest beside Helen's book. Somewhere, in the dark recesses between the pages, was her picture ...

He turned, looking across the room at his reflection in the mirror above the wash stand. His eyes fixed on the older of his tattoos; a faded blue smear of anchor and globe on his bare shoulder.

KARDEC

Semper *Fi*-delis, buddy.

Crap!

SFX: It might be thunder, but in the distance we hear the pounding of artillery, the scream of shells, and ...

32 VANDOVER COMES TO SEE KARDEC AND RAJ OFF

32

SFX: Thunder crashes. Rain pours from the sky. A car pulls up and stops, the door opens, closes, Vandover rushes down the pier.

NARRATOR: At the far end of the fueling pier a single caged bulb still burned. Vandover ran for the tin awning over the pumps, a long case held under his arm. By the time he reached the shed he was soaked to the skin.

Kardec and Raj were just loading the last of a pile of cobbled together supplies into a outboard mounted dugout. Mike Kardec handed a jerry can of petrol down to Raj and turned to look at Vandover.

KARDEC

With luck I can catch them in a couple of days.

VANDOVER

You don't have to do this, Mike.

KARDEC

You called the post at Kuching? What did they say?

VANDOVER

This is only the edge of the storm ...
Three days, at the earliest.

KARDEC

It wouldn't be fast enough, even if there was a plane.

I'll find them, talk them into coming back ... somehow.

NARRATOR: A moment went by, the two men locked eye to eye.

VANDOVER

Here.

NARRATOR: Vandover extended the case. Kardec took it, unbuckled the cover and removed a beautiful Mauser carbine, a rifle that he knew had belonged to Vandover's father.

VANDOVER

Take care of it, and it will take care of you.

NARRATOR: Vandover handed over a box of ammunition.

KARDEC

I don't want any more *medals*, Cliff. I just want to go home.

VANDOVER

God's Speed, old man.

KARDEC

Selamat (#48).

*

SFX: Kardec climbs down into the boat. The motor fires ...
And pulls away.

VANDOVER

(softly)

Selamat jalan (#50).

*

NARRATOR: The canoe moved away, out onto the dark river.

NARRATOR: It rained for three days straight, but Borneo was not a place you stayed if moisture was a problem. At first Kardec ran the engine full out, pushing on through the night and well into the next day. They burned through gallons of fuel and refilled their supply twice at the trading stations along the river.

At Long Kiput (#61) they were lucky enough to learn that Lacklan's boats had taken the Sungai Tutoh (#61), the eastern branch of the river that led into the mountains beneath Batu Pelantau (#61) and eventually to Inghai's village.

*
*
*

KARDEC

Give me that I'll bail for a while.

NARRATOR: Eventually, Kardec paid the price for his determination and was forced to spend all of one overcast afternoon repairing the little Seagull outboard. From then on he took it easier, knowing that neither the aging engine nor their fuel supply would go the distance if he continued to push.

The dugout motored past fields and rice paddies; the water turning from muddy brown to green. On the banks, monitor lizards eyed them and overhead flights of brightly colored birds wheeled and turned.

The giant trees of the primary forest, often two hundred feet tall, grew closer to the water's edge, their trunks covered with cascades of flowering vines. The further they went the fewer boats they saw and soon the river narrowed to the point where it was just over thirty yards wide and the current was more and more apparent. Time and again Kardec and Raj hauled their canoe around rapids or pushed it, water blasting in their faces, through rocky shallows.

The villages they passed were traditional Borneo long houses; enormous buildings built up on ten foot pilings and covered in palm thatch. Many were over one hundred yards long; surrounded by rice paddies, an entire town under one roof.

RAJ

Look, we get to home soon. My home.

KARDEC

Yeah ... if we don't catch them first.

NARRATOR: But they did not spy Lacklan's boats and they began to resign themselves to the fact that, due to their more powerful engines and the increased flow of the river since the rains, the three longboats had more of a lead than Kardec would have liked.

More than anything they needed information. There would be time lost getting it but that was looking like a gamble they would have to take.

34 LACKLANS LOOK AT A CAVE, JOHN WANTS TO MOVE ON

34

SFX: Water pours over rocks and down into pool.

NARRATOR: Sunlight tinted with the color of leaves drifted through holes in the ceiling of the cave. In it's depths, glow worms hung from their cocoons, a constellations of dim stars. Swiftlets flashed through the dark air coming and going from the arching mouth to their nests high against the walls.

HELEN

It says their saliva is what gives
Chinese Bird's Nest soup it's flavor.

JOHN

Yàn wo(#75); it mean's 'swallow's nest.'

*

HELEN

Here ... "Swiftlets are known to share
caves with bats, the mammals sleeping in
the caves by day and the birds at night.
They are one of a very few species of
bird to use echolocation and can navigate
in total darkness."

JOHN

Don't you have your camera?

HELEN

I thought it would be safer in
Marudi(#81).

*

JOHN

You left it?

HELEN

I just felt like I was trying to hold on
to things without really seeing them
first.

JOHN

Well, we need to be moving on. We
haven't made half the miles today that I
planned.

NARRATOR: She slid her arm around his waist, forcing him to stand there and take it all in.

JOHN

Helen ...

HELEN

Relax, please? This is why we came.

NARRATOR: Outside the cave entrance their crew of Dyaks gathered. Kebir, their guide, waited impassively, carefully blowing smoke rings as he finished his cigarette.

35 INGHAI'S VILLAGE THROWS A PARTY

35

SFX: Drums, pipes, and a hardwood xylophone, play. A crowd of people gathers for the feast.

NARRATOR: The festivities began within an hour of the travelers arrival. Pots of rice were placed on the fires and pigs and chickens were slaughtered. On the outer verandah of the longhouse more and more villagers gathered.

Mike Kardec had returned to the longhouse where his life had been saved. Raj was home in the village where his grandfather, Inghai, was a highly regarded bomoh(#67), or shaman, and hunter. *

KARDEC

Inghai ... greetings.

INGHAI

Mike. Mike and our Raj ... come, sit, we must *celebrate!*

NARRATOR: Inside, in the hall that fronted dozens of private rooms, large porcelain jars decorated with dragons were brought forth and soon became the source of a nearly constant flow of tuak(#69), the rice wine of the Borneo interior and Langkau(#68) or arak(#52), it's formidably distilled cousin. * *

KARDEC

This is going to take *all* night.

RAJ

Eat Mike, we can do nothing else.

NARRATOR: An offering of food was made in a sanctuary at one end of the longhouse and the pengulu(#64), the village's headman, cavorted along the split bamboo floor waving a fluttering chicken overhead. Then the dancing started, the women singing a song welcoming Kardec and Raj to the village. In time to the music, Inghai stood and perfectly mimed the story of Kardec being found in the river and the long fight to bring him back to health. *

36 INGHAI TELLS KARDEC ABOUT LUCK AND JERU

36

NARRATOR: Soon others took over and Inghai joined Kardec at the rail of the verandah, looking out across the darkening fields toward the river.

Inghai offered Kardec a bottle but Kardec shook his head.

INGHAI
You don't drink?

KARDEC
Inghai, Arak just about the wickedest booze on earth. It will make you do things you do *not* remember ... I have to be headed up river in the morning.

NARRATOR: Behind them the young Kelabit women began a dance. More bottles of *arak* were passed around.

INGHAI
Something has changed in you.

Balaik untung (#60) ... your soul is returning. I can see it in your eyes.

NARRATOR: Inghai tapped Kardec on the chest.

INGHAI
Let me see it.

NARRATOR: Kardec unbuttoned his shirt pulling it down past his shoulder ... Inghai examined the tattoo in the flickering light.

INGHAI
You know, I make magic for you.

When I found you, you were very sick. Sick enough to die. I try everything, finally *obat*.

This is for *luck*. I think it works very well.

KARDEC
Inghai, you're my friend. But I'm afraid all of *my* luck has been bad. I have no money, I've lost two jobs ...

INGHAI
No, no. Magic doesn't work that way, Mike. *Luck* doesn't work that way.

INGHAI

You will not have the luck you *want* --
you will have the luck you *need*. There
is no choice in the matter.

KARDEC

Well, I can use whatever I can get,
that's for sure.

INGHAI

Ahh, I know you will doubt. But these
forces *do* surround us, like the wind ...
though less easily seen.

KARDEC

Your hospitality is appreciated more than
you can know. If that is luck, I accept
it with gratitude.

NARRATOR: Farther down the verandah a young girl sat down
beside Raj, for a long moment they looked at each other then
she delivered a steaming pile of rice to the palm leaf that
served him for a plate and moved on.

INGHAI

So why do you come?

KARDEC

There's two Americans I think are headed
into trouble.

NARRATOR: Kardec turned to look Inghai in the eye.

KARDEC

Have you seen anyone on the river? A
white man and a woman with native guides?

INGHAI

No, but I can ask. How are they in
trouble?

KARDEC

The pirate Jeru, is he still alive?

NARRATOR: Inghai's eyes retreated into shadow.

KARDEC

Do you know?

INGHAI

It was said that *Tuan Jeru* is *bali*
saleng(#70), a black ghost, that all men
he has with him are *sakit hati*;

*

INGHAI

Sakit hati (#71), they are killers and rapists and no village would have them.

*

This is not a good thing to speak of, Mike. In the days when I knew him, Jeru still took heads to make his magic.

KARDEC

Well, I may have to take my chances with the magic.

NARRATOR: Kardec indicated Inghai's tattooed hands.

KARDEC

And even you may've taken a few heads in your time.

INGHAI

Well, maybe someone I *really* didn't like

...

(sighs)

I will find out what I can.

Mike I am happy ... you no longer fight who you are. But Jeru? Be careful, my friend.

NARRATOR: Kardec turned and watched Inghai go. Over where Raj sat the girl was back, this time she had brought cups of wine ... One for him, and one for her.

37 KEBIR TELLS THE LACKLANS THE STORY OF THE DIAMOND

37

SFX: Night time jungle ambiance.

NARRATOR: Deep in the jungle, John and Helen Lacklan sat beside a small fire. The light thrown by the flames enacted a dim and dancing wayang (#85) among the surrounding trees. *

SFX: drops of moisture from the canopy fall occasionally, some sizzling in the fire.

NARRATOR: Kebir, their guide, squatted before them and his eyes, no longer hidden by the sunglasses, shown with an odd light. Behind him, almost in the shadows, sat the rest of the dyak crew.

KEBIR

In old time, all Sarawak given to England
man by old Rajah.

HELEN

To James Brooke?

KEBIR

Yes. Yes. You know. Very smart.

My father's, brother. He is a fighter,
yeah? Warrior. Take many head. Fight
with Ason against Rajah Brook, Japan man,
everyone.

HELEN

Ason was a rebel in the thirties ... not
very popular.

NARRATOR: Helen gave John a wink and pointed to her copy of "The Pocket Guide to Borneo" which protruded slightly from her bag.

KEBIR

My uncle, no one ever catch him. He make
obat, no one see him.

One day he hiding in river. Army mans
look ...

NARRATOR: Kebir stood, miming the action.

KEBIR

... all 'round. But they don't find.

NARRATOR: Kebir reached into his shirt and brought out something that was attached to his neck by a thong of leather, he slipped it over his head but the shadows were such that Helen could not see what it was.

KEBIR

When they gone, he find diamonds in water, lots diamond, but he only take ... this one.

NARRATOR: The diamond dropped from his hand, to swing from a woven thong of leather. As big as a small bird's egg, it was an eight sided crystal that caught the light from the fire, seemed to catch the light from the stars.

KEBIR

He show me one time, I take more diamond to Marudi(#81), yeah? Buy motorcycle, outboard motor. Very good!

*

NARRATOR: John reached out and touched it, tilting the big stone toward the firelight ... in the dark it glowed like a coal.

JOHN

And now you take us.

KEBIR

Yes. Yes. You have big diamond. Lots diamond. Everyone say, look at you ...

Tomorrow we climb. Go to other river. Sleep now, okay?

NARRATOR: Then he stood and walked back into the shadows where the Dyaks slept.

JOHN

Huge thing, isn't it?

MZK:

38 INGHAI HAS INFORMATION ON LACKLANS, DECIDES TO GO ALONG

38

NARRATOR: By first light Kardec was down at the river loading the canoe. As he secured the last of his supplies Raj appeared with Inghai and an even older man, on the shingle above the water. Raj looked exhausted, hung over, and dragging ... like it had been quite a night and he was not ready to face the dawn.

INGHAI

Mike ... I have learned things. This man, he see the Americans near falling water. There is trail ... they would not go up before morning.

KARDEC

Where is that? Where are they going?

INGHAI

Another river. This river start in high mountains. Goes to sea east of the Baram.

I am also told that Kebir, the nephew of Jeru, may be is with them.

KARDEC

So, where do I find this trail?

INGHAI

I will come with you.

NARRATOR: Inghai stooped to pick up a backpack of woven reeds and a long blowpipe with a spear blade lashed to it. Protruding from the pack was the barrel of one of the homemade shotguns so common in the interior ... Kardec suddenly realized the old man had come to the river intending to join them.

KARDEC

No ... No. I'm going alone. Raj should stay here. You stay here.

NARRATOR: Mike imagined the ghost of Inghai. Dead, face up, snowflakes drifting out of a leaden sky. Raj was there too, in a blackened and bloody uniform, waiting for orders ...

INGHAI

Mike, we make this choice.

KARDEC

Inghai ...

INGHAI

This, it is not for you to say.

I think what happen time ago. I think what should I do. If Jeru lives, I must see him. If I go, Raj will go ... there will be things for him to learn.

NARRATOR: Inghai sat in the canoe, an expression of infinite patience on his face.

INGHAI

Let us go.

NARRATOR: The decision was made.

39 THE LACKLANS PORTAGE UP MOUNTAIN

39

SFX: Pounding stakes.

KEBIR
(off Malay)
#12- Dua, tiga! Empat!...
semua bersama. Gerak!

KEBIR
#12- Two, three! Four!... all
together. Move!

NARRATOR: John and Helen paused for breath on the steep slope. To their right loomed the heavy shoulders of the high mountains and the moss shrouded cascades of a waterfall. In the canyons and valleys wisps of cloud rose from the highest boughs of the trees in thin strips of frothy white.

SFX: The boat slides upward along the hillside. Everyone spits.

KEBIR
(off Malay)
#13- Jom! Ke Atas!

KEBIR
#13- Let's go! To top!

NARRATOR: Above, their guides labored to drag the canoes up the steep path. Heavy stakes held each boat in place as ropes were rigged from trees and around more wooden stakes which were driven into holes in the rock.

Then the craft was dragged to the upper limit of the ropes and the stakes were again driven into place behind it.

SFX: The boat slides and the men spit.

40 RAJ SEES A SIGN THEY SHOULDN'T PURSUE LACKLANS

40

SFX: Lower jungle sounds.

NARRATOR: Kardec lashed the little outboard to his pack, for once happy that he did not have one of the heavier Johnsons, Raj slipped the makeshift straps for their remaining can of gas over his shoulders and Inghai gathered their weapons. They would carry these to the top and then come back for the boat.

All around was the evidence that the Lacklan party had preceded them by not too many hours; Fresh chips and twisted strips of wood where they had trimmed their stakes, and long muddy streaks where the boats had torn the earth as the Dyaks dragged them uphill.

SFX: Birds fly past.

NARRATOR: Two brightly colored birds exploded from the foliage ahead of them. The birds flew up along the sloping trail then turned back, soaring over their heads and down along the river. Raj stopped, following them with his eyes, turning his body to watch them go.

KARDEC

What?

RAJ

This way not ... is not good for us. It is a sign.

KARDEC

I don't think we have much of a choice.

NARRATOR: Raj gazed up the hill and then back, unsure. Then he sat and looked to Inghai.

RAJ

Maybe Atoh, they say not to go.

KARDEC

(to himself)
Oh nuts ...

NARRATOR: Kardec started to speak but Inghai raised a hand.

INGHAI

You are right. The birds can give us signs, just as the bat tells of the magic of darkness. Atoh(#56) everywhere but they are not a threat: it is only men who carry darkness in us.

*

INGHAI

I must make this journey. See my own
darkness one more time.

RAJ

What do you mean?

INGHAI

In time I will tell you. For now, know
this, birds do not say 'we can not go,'
only 'be careful.'

NARRATOR: Inghai took Raj by the hand and helped him to his
feet.

SFX: They move off ...

NARRATOR: Mike might have asked Inghai a number of questions
himself but was unwilling to risk any thing that slowed them
down further.

INGHAI

(going off)

You remember when I gave Mike the luck?

Well, *he* does not believe either but you
will see.

MZK:

41 JOHN CATCHES THE DYAKS GOING THROUGH HIS STUFF

41

SFX: Dyaks going through the Lacklan's stuff. Mumbling about it in Malay.

NARRATOR: Over the top of the ridge and down the other side, John and Helen finally made it to the trees. At the bank above a creek they came upon several of their boatmen bending over one of the large cases where the Lacklans had packed many of their personal belongings.

HELEN
What are they ...

JOHN
(distant)
Hey! What's going on here?

NARRATOR: The top of the trunk was open and Kebir was watching as the men rooted inside.

JOHN
Get out of our things! Put that down!

NARRATOR: Helen put a hand on his arm to restrain him but John shook her off.

KEBIR
Your basket falls open.

JOHN
Oh it *does*, does it? Not very likely.

KEBIR
We very sorry, Tuan. Most apologies.

NARRATOR: One man, his ears a frightful mess of bone plugs and torn piercings, carefully put Helen's hairbrush and mirror back into the box.

John slammed the lid down. It was a well built case and showed no indications of being dropped. John snapped the latches firmly. Pilfering was to be expected from these people and he'd have to keep a sharp lookout.

KEBIR
You Pukka Sahib, you know? Very much number one.

JOHN
Yeah, well ... alright. Let's go.

42 KARDEC'S GROUP CONTINUES PORTAGE

42

SFX: Stake pounding.

NARRATOR: By late afternoon Kardec's canoe was more than half way up the path to the top of the ridge. It was clear that this route had been used many times, several alternate ways had become so eroded that they could no longer be scaled, occasionally logs had been set into the hillside to be used for winching the boats but many were so rotten and termite hollowed that they were useless, and the best places to drive stakes for bracing a boat were often just sloppy mud holes incapable of carrying any weight at all.

Kardec had known that this portage would slow them down. But now he could almost feel the Lacklan's drawing away, disappearing into the vast wilderness along the slopes of Mount Marud(#62).

*

MZK:

43 JOHN TRIES TO MAKE KEBIR STICK TO THE PLAN

43

SFX: Chopping wood with a parang. Paper rustles as John shakes off his map. Making camp conversation in Malay.

JOHN
Aaagh! Get off!

NARRATOR: John Lacklan had spread his map on the trunk of a downed tree.

He had brushed away a line of ants that made it's way down the trunk but soon they were back, marching across the paper representations of the upper Baram and the central highlands. Borneo was full of explosive, frightening life. Already the stitches were rotting out of his shirt and at night John's boots glowed in a disturbing manner, covered in some kind of phosphorescent fungus.

JOHN
Now, show me where we're headed ...

KEBIR
Go down river more day, then up, pass
rock and fast water ...

NARRATOR: Thanks to the careful preparations of Mike Kardec the Lacklan's had a large and comfortable tent with both a canvas floor and mosquito netting inside it's side curtains. They also had Bi-Aladdin pressure lamps, and folding chairs and cots.

JOHN
You mean this set of rapids here ...

NARRATOR: At first Helen had thought that some of these items were extravagant but the ground was often wet and crawling with ants or leaches ... more and more they even placed the legs of their cots in tins of lamp fuel to discourage anything from joining them in bed.

KEBIR
Yea...no. Don't know. There big tree,
many. River not so deep. Soon you have
what you want, Tuan. Very good,
understand? Very good.

NARRATOR: Helen poked at the fire, whenever she and John made camp in the afternoon they immediately changed out of their wet clothes and hung them on a rack to dry, the smoke stung her eyes but it also kept the mosquitos and sand flies away.

JOHN

No. I *don't* understand. Where did your Uncle find the diamond?

KEBIR

In river, yeah? He find in river.

JOHN

Obviously. But this river? Look, here we are.

NARRATOR: Every day John had made notes and redrawn portions of the map that were less than precisely accurate.

JOHN

Up river from here? How many miles? How many days travel?

KEBIR

This just *paper!*

JOHN

So, where did he find them? Was it up a tributary, in a gravel bank?

KEBIR

Yes. Gravel bank. Gravel Bank.

JOHN

All right. Now which side? This side or that side? This side or ...

(winces)

Christ, he's got me doing it.

KEBIR

That side. Okay?

NARRATOR: Kebir turned and stalked away.

44 JOHN TRIES TO MAKE HELEN STICK TO THE PLAN

44

SFX: John approaches and drops into a camp chair. Malay cooking and camp making conversations.

HELEN

What's wrong with our stalwart guide?

JOHN

I don't think he knows where we're going. Sometimes he seems able to read the map, sometimes not.

I don't know if he's an idiot or he's pulling our leg.

NARRATOR: They both turned look over at Kebir. He was now relaxing against a tree trunk while his men, many of them older and much tougher looking than their master made the preparations for dinner.

HELEN

Is it possible he's both?

JOHN

(snorts)

HELEN

Well, we're getting to see Borneo and we might find diamonds in another place. We always knew it was a chance.

JOHN

I'm just trying to stick to the plan.

HELEN

Actually, I don't like them.

They're not like the natives around Marudi. Everyone was so nice.

JOHN

To tell the truth, I'm not crazy about them either but we've made it this far.

SFX: John slaps at a flying insect.

JOHN

This place has more insects than anywhere on earth. I could start a collection.

HELEN

I'd like to just let them go and see what we can do on our own. We don't even know they can find the place again.

JOHN

Do you want to try to get back on our own? Do you think we could find this diamond without help?

HELEN

No. No, of course not. I just hoped we'd have more time to ourselves.

JOHN

You pushed for this, Helen ... don't forget we came here for a reason.

NARRATOR: John got up and disappeared into the tent.

Helen fought the airless, disoriented feeling that came all too often in recent years. John's world was the mirror of hers, every meaning reversed.

Across the camp Kebir sat on a case watching her through the smoke of the fire. His eyes, like John's so often these days, were hidden behind the dark lenses of his sunglasses.

44A INGHAI TELLS KARDEC ABOUT MAGIC

44A

NARRATOR: Exhausted and sore from the climb, Kardec, Raj and Inghai rigged their hammocks along a rocky creek barely deep enough to float their canoe. They went to bed without eating but Kardec soon discovered he couldn't sleep, he lay beneath the mosquito netting listening to the sounds of the night.

INGHAI

Are you awake, Mike.

KARDEC

Yeah.

INGHAI

Do you hear it? Atoh. There is a spirit in the trees.

KARDEC

I hear branches rubbing together ...

INGHAI

Yes, that too.

This is a good place. It is good we are awake to enjoy it.

KARDEC

Inghai? When you say magic, what do you mean?

INGHAI

Magic, it is not a miracle, not sudden, not big. It is always difficult and balance, for when it gives you, something take away. This is real obat(#53) and very rare.

*

Magic can be many things. And many things can seem to be magic.

KARDEC

'Seem to be magic' ... but you believe in it?

INGHAI

Some magic it *is* belief. If you believe a thing real, then it is, for time or forever. If some one, they think they are sick, get sick. If they think they are afraid, they afraid. If you make someone believe; they will find away to make it real ...

KARDEC

So, you just *inspire* belief? That's all it is?

INGHAI

Not all. But sometimes, yes. I think so.

I say you are lucky; you don't believe ... But you will.

45 LACKLAN VS. THE ANTS

45

SFX: A dying campfire. Then there is a shifting noise, then a struggling sound of cloth and wood. Helen comes awake, she sits up in her cot ...

HELEN
(coming awake)
John . . ?

JOHN
(growls)

HELEN
John, are you alright?

JOHN
No!
Get off ... Aargh!

SFX: More floundering, Something tears and a body falls to the ground.

JOHN
Damn It!

SFX: Flashlight clicking on.

NARRATOR: In the beam of her flashlight Helen saw John doing a strange dance beside the torn remains of his cot.

JOHN
Turn that *off!*

HELEN
What's happening?

JOHN
My bed is full of ants!

SFX: The switch clicks.

HELEN
(stifled laughter)

JOHN
What?
What's so funny?

HELEN

Oh come on dear ...

(she struggles to hold back
laughter)

... it wouldn't be a picnic without ants.

(Then she can hold it no
longer...)

46 RAJ SPOTS THE LACKLANS

46

SFX: Jungle morning up. Kardec tinkers with the motor.

NARRATOR: Dawn, what little of it there was on the equator, found Mike Kardec, Inghai, and Raj mounting and refilling their outboard. They were on a sand bar where the mouth of their creek joined a much larger river.

KARDEC

I can't see Lacklan lugging boats up that damn mountain. How many do you figure they've got with them?

RAJ

Nine.

KARDEC

What?

RAJ

Three boats. Three mans for boat, like us.

One man he fish, one cook rice. Two, three put up, take down, tent.

KARDEC

Now how the hell do you know that?

RAJ

(laughing)

I can see them!

NARRATOR: He pointed. Far off there were three big canoes pulled up on a low exposed beach. Figures were milling about, loading up last night's camp.

47 KARDEC SPIES ON THE LACKLAN CAMP, CAN'T APPROACH HELEN

47

SFX: Kardec moves through the brush. Distant Malay breaking camp conversations.

NARRATOR: Kardec eased into a hiding place behind a log covered in bracket fungus. He raised his binoculars, carefully adjusting their focus.

Across the river, only forty or fifty yards away, John Lacklan sat in a patch of sunlight, leaning against one of his cases and writing in his journal. Beyond him, Helen was helping two of the Dyaks disassemble their tent.

Kardec examined the men traveling with the Lacklans. All were tattooed and wore fragments of western clothing. Besides the typical home-made shotguns, there was an old but high quality European double barrel and two Enfield pattern service rifles. Considering that weapons nearly always were left in the home village when men went down to the coast, this group was very heavily armed. Reclining on a boulder was a young Dyak that Kardec remembered from the warehouse in Marudi. Was this Kebir, Jeru's nephew?

HELEN

(distant)

I'm going to clean up and take a swim before we leave.

JOHN

(distant)

Don't be long, they're nearly ready.

HELEN

(distant)

Don't worry ...

NARRATOR: Helen had left the collapsed tent and gone to speak to John. After a moment she picked up a small pack and headed up river. Soon she was out of sight, walking along the bank and around a rocky point.

Kardec pulled back farther into the trees and, with one glance back at the camp, headed up stream. When he got back to where he could look across the water Helen had disappeared. He scanned the other bank. There was nothing.

Then, a fluttering of cloth ... Helen's khaki blouse hanging from a branch. Beyond, water cascaded through moss covered rocks and giant ferns into a pool of astonishing clarity.

SFX: Helen comes to the surface and swims.

NARRATOR: There was a burst of spray as Helen broke the surface of the pool and shook out her hair. She remained there, treading water and gazing at the sun-dappled beauty around her. The spray from the waterfall made miniature rainbows and a squadron of butterflies maneuvered in the dappled sunlight.

Kardec realized this was the best chance he was going to get. He could run back to the canoe ... in five minutes he could get over there and warn her; tell her that they were heading into a trap. Helen could call John out of camp and this time, Kardec had Inghai, someone to back up his fears with facts.

That's what he ought to do. Hell, he could just step to the bank and wave his arms to attract her attention. He could even jump in and swim.

But all he was able to do was stand there. Her nakedness made him powerless, made him question everything about what he was doing. What would John think, what would *Helen* think if he confronted her naked and vulnerable in the one moment she was separate from her husband.

Kardec lowered his glasses, closed his eyes and took a deep breath ... and then his moment was over.

SFX: Distant outboard starting ...

NARRATOR: He glanced down stream but the camp was beyond a stand of trees protruding into the river. When he raised the glasses again, Helen was already into her slacks and buttoning the blouse.

KARDEC (**WILD LINE 9**)

(to himself)

You just lost your chance to make this easy.

That was it.

NARRATOR: Then he saw something that made him glad he hadn't moved but disturbed him even more ... a moment after Helen disappeared toward the camp a shadow shifted against the rocks near the waterfall. One of the Dyak guides, stout and scarred, emerged from the brush. He paused in the sunlight and Kardec realized that he was waiting for Helen to get far enough ahead of him so that it wouldn't be obvious that he was following her.

Mike Kardec stood, staring at the now empty pool. Could that Dyak have been following her because they considered John and Helen to be captives? Were they already the unwitting prisoners of Jeru?

48 INGHAI EXPLAINS JERU AND HEADHUNTING

48

SFX: Poling the boat.

KARDEC

Inghai? Does anyone know where Jeru's hideout -- his camp, is?

INGHAI

I have heard that it is high in the mountains. A longhouse abandoned to sickness.

NARRATOR: Inghai glanced at Kardec over his shoulder. They were poling the canoe through water too shallow and rocky for the motor.

INGHAI

I will tell you of Jeru: In the Japanese war he and I fought together. English men they came from the air, they brought many guns and supplies ... wealth. At least wealth for us ...

Jeru, he is Iban(#72). A brave warrior but something was bad in him. Since before the time of my father, the Rajah Brooke has taught us head hunting is bad. In old days you take the head of an enemy in war and that is magic ... but then we need more and more obat(#53). We think we need obat for everything.

*

*

Soon we *make* enemy; just to take his head. Soon, maybe we don't care if he is enemy, we take head anyway ... now everything need magic, we never have enough. There is a word for this ...

KARDEC

Sounds like inflation.

INGHAI

I think it is greed. Maybe stupidity. All our young men are dying, but then Rajah Brooke says no more head hunting and after many years it stops. He is right, our lives are better.

But when the war comes, English men they now say, 'take heads' like the old days. Many do this. I am one of them.

NARRATOR: Inghai showed Kardec the back of his right hand, covered with tattoos, each one signifying a head taken.

INGHAI

But I know it is just a thing for war, like it was for my grandfather. It *is* magic ... I know all magic both good and bad. Magic also can be like a man who cannot stop drinking or smoking opium.

One day Jeru killed our English officer and many of the Kelabit(#66) tribe. He did this ...

*

NARRATOR: A deep ridge of scar tissue stretched across Inghai's back.

INGHAI

His men took many heads and everything of value in the camp.

He escaped east ... this direction.

SFX: The engine moves away, disappearing into the distance, leaving only the sounds of the jungle behind it.

48A KARDEC FINDS DESERTED VILLAGE

48A

SFX: Cicadas up, dry grass environment.

NARRATOR: The long house was surrounded by dried out rice paddies. Mike, Raj and Inghai, lay in the grass covering a small hill and carefully examined the site. They had seen the roof in the distance and, fearing they might have arrived at their destination, had beached their canoe to scout ahead.

Kardec chewed a salt tablet and carefully glassed the area with his binoculars. But peering through the dim lenses, long since damaged by the humidity and heat, he could see nothing ... nothing living at all. Inghai handed Raj his old brass-bound shotgun and cautiously, they moved in ...

INGHAI

No one lives here. When alang-alang(#59) comes ...

*

NARRATOR: He indicated the tall, sharp edged grass around them.

INGHAI

... no rice will grow.

SFX: They approach through grass.

RAJ

(whispering)
Mike. Come look ...

NARRATOR: The rib cage of a man and a pelvis still wrapped in brittle cloth lay at the foot of the ladder to the verandah.

KARDEC

(whispering)
Cover me.

NARRATOR: He motioned Raj back to cover the building with the shotgun.

SFX: Kardec goes up rotten ladder.

NARRATOR: Kardec motioned Raj and Inghai up, while holding his rifle on the doors to the deserted verandah. He pointed Raj to the corner of the building.

KARDEC

Take cover. Watch our backs until I signal.

NARRATOR: The inside was blisteringly hot and scattered debris, pieces of the thatch roof, pages from catalogues and old military manuals tacked up on the walls like pieces of art. There were also bones, bones everywhere.

SFX: Kardec whistles for Raj. The building creaks unsettlingly around them as he enters.

RAJ
(whisper)
What has happened here?

KARDEC
I don't know but it's not good.

INGHAI
This was a raid. There are no heads.
The dragon jars are gone.

NARRATOR: The big ceramic jars were one of the main indications of the wealth of a long house community.

KARDEC
Do you think it was Jeru?

NARRATOR: Sticking from a post was the remains of a blow gun dart, in other places buckshot had scarred the walls.

INGHAI
Never in one hundred years has there been
a raid like this ...

KARDEC
Well, this didn't happen that long ago.
I'd say four or five years at the most.

INGHAI
(makes a strange sound,
somewhere between a wheeze and
a moan)

KARDEC
Inghai? You, okay?

INGHAI
Raj?

RAJ
(in Malay)
#15- Datuk?

RAJ
#15- Grandfather?

INGHAI
You remember. This is why I want you to
come.

RAJ
I don't understand ...

INGHAI
You just *remember!*

NARRATOR: Inghai looked sick, and suddenly more frail than the hearty old man who had recently been climbing mountains with a pack on his back.

KARDEC
Let's get out of here. This place is
about to come down around our ears.

NARRATOR: Inghai didn't speak again as they made their way back to the canoe. And several times, Kardec caught him looking back over his shoulder.

JOHN

We're not sure we're staying yet.

Don't go far, Helen.

NARRATOR: Near the water an ancient dugout lay half full of sand and eaten by termites. Beyond it, Helen could see a distinct trail leading into a ravine choked with dead foliage.

HELEN

That's interesting ...

SFX: Helen walks inland.

NARRATOR: The two figs rose on either side of the path, forming a gateway into the dark jungle. Helen could clearly see why they were called stranglers, one of them was hollow, the original tree that it had wrapped itself around, like a network of veins and sinew, having completely rotted away.

JOHN

(distant)

Now hold on, I don't want to waste a whole day if I don't have to ... listen to me.

NARRATOR: A burgundy and green pitcher plant as big as a handbag grew from one of the gaps in it's trunk. A parasite on a parasite, it's fanged hood over-hanging a sack half full of digestive fluid, and swarming with dead and dying insects. A trap for the greedy or unwary.

KEBIR

(distant)

I do listen. Relax. Take picture.

HELEN

Yuk.

NARRATOR: The ravine wasn't as overgrown as it looked, in fact it seemed that some of the area behind the two big trees had been cleared, In the clearing were two longboats, much older than the ones they had come up river in and roughly repaired. They were supported by little piles of rock to keep them away from termites and rot. Beyond them the path continued, a dark tunnel running away into the jungle.

SFX: A foot step or twig breaking.

NARRATOR: Helen turned. Standing there was one of the crew of their supply boat, a stocky, older man,, with torn earlobes and several missing teeth.

DYAK ONE (WILD LINE 10)

No, Missy. Dangerous.

NARRATOR: She noticed for the first time that the backs of his hands were covered with dark designs ...

50 HAS BECOME 48A

50

51 KARDEC LOSES TRACK OF THE LACKLANS

51

SFX: River up ... the current is swift.

NARRATOR: Inghai's mood continued throughout the afternoon. He seemed to be turning inward on himself, barely willing to acknowledge either his companions or surroundings.

Kardec knew they had lost time. In sections where the river was straight and fast he ran the motor full out but Lacklan's boats never appeared.

Another river appeared on their right it's water a dark yellow from mud and decay. He knew from it's color that the tannic acid from millions of tons of leaves had created a toxic brew incapable of supporting life.

Where the two streams joined they remained distinctly yellow and blue for some distance until a rocky patch churned them together.

Kardec cut into the middle of the current to avoid the rocks but within a mile the flow had eased and the river became a wide flat expanse that left him feeling dangerously exposed.

KARDEC

You see them?

NARRATOR: With the possible exception of a tree hidden cove they could see for miles but in all that distance they were the only thing on the water.

Raj stood unsteadily trying to spot any sign of the Lacklan's.

RAJ

I can't see anything.

KARDEC

I didn't think we were that far behind.

RAJ

Sorry, Mike.

KARDEC

We missed them. Somehow ...

SFX: Kardec's canoe turns and heads back.

52 LACKLAN'S LAST CAMP

52

SFX: Setting up camp. Distant thunder. Camp making conversations in Malay.

DYAK ONE (WILD LINE 11)

Dangerous!

HELEN

Okay ... okay. I'll go back.

JOHN

(distant)

It makes no sense. There hasn't been a shortage of camp sites so far. We'll go up river for another hour, if we don't find anything we can come back.

NARRATOR: The Dyak grinned at her, his front two teeth were capped in gold. The smile was not reassuring.

KEBIR

No. Too far. Too far.

NARRATOR: Kebir was pacing, almost circling her husband. John could be picky but this time she agreed with him, she didn't like this place or the attitude of their guides.

JOHN

Damn it, you can do better than that!
How far?

KEBIR

Too far! You wait tomorrow, Mr. Lacklan!

NARRATOR: The two of them stood there, each staring at a reflection of the other in the lenses of their dark glasses. After a moment Kebir reached out and pushed John back, opening some space between them. It wasn't a hard push but for the first time John realized that Kebir was nearly as big a man as he was.

JOHN

Ungh!

HELEN

John? Be careful.

KEBIR

You be happy! Tomorrow you get diamond.

KEBIR

You got nice wife, you get nice diamond.
You just ... be happy.

MZK:

53 KARDEC PLANS HOW TO APPROACH THE LACKLANS

53

SFX: Rain and distant thunder.

NARRATOR: Through the trees a pin prick of light could be seen ... a fire. Kardec handed the binoculars to Raj.

KARDEC

They must have stopped early. The camp's all set up and it looks like some of them are asleep.

NARRATOR: From the lake they had headed back to the polluted river, poling their canoe through the rocks and against the current with agonizing slowness.

KARDEC

We'll go in first thing in the morning. With luck we can keep anything from happening long enough to convince them they're in trouble.

INGHAI

If they are Jeru's men, they will fight.

KARDEC

Well, Lacklan is armed and he'll be on our side if things go bad.

He may be a jerk, but he's not stupid.

NARRATOR: Inghai let the canoe drift back down river to a site they had noticed for their own camp. Because of the rain and the clouds they did not see the light of another fire burning on the ridge well behind the Lacklan camp.

54 THE LACKLANS REALIZE THEY ARE IN TROUBLE

54

SFX: Thunder rumbles.

JOHN
(to himself)
... emotion compresses time. Just focus
...

NARRATOR: Helen gazed out at the mosquitos clutching the gauze-like netting and the camp beyond. One of their guides squatted in a lean-to patiently watching the tent. The others were pulling the canoes out of the water and carrying them off into the trees.

JOHN
Helen, come away from there. Don't watch them.

NARRATOR: John sat, frowning, the map of Borneo laid out on the top of their largest case. Beside it he had his compass and journal.

HELEN
We're in trouble, aren't we?

JOHN
No ... We're going to be all right.

HELEN
Don't do that. We're only going to be all right if we're very careful.

NARRATOR: John turned to look out of the tent flap. The boats were now completely hidden from view.

JOHN
I wonder what they want.
(to himself)
Maybe Kardec was right.

HELEN
What? Right about what?

JOHN
Nothing. We have to deal with *this* now.
It doesn't matter.

HELEN
John, I think we're in a very serious situation.

JOHN

He said some people were lured up river,
by a native with a big diamond. They
never came back.

HELEN

You didn't tell me.

JOHN

If it was true why didn't they just steal
our things days ago.

He said it was an old man, an old man
with a scar.

HELEN

Why didn't you tell me?

JOHN

I thought he was just trying to scare us
because ...

HELEN

Yes?

JOHN

Because we took the job away.

HELEN

God, you're suspicious. Suspicious of
me, of him, of everybody but them.

JOHN

Don't start on me.

SFX: John rummaging in his pack. He opens the bolt of his
rifle.

HELEN

What are you going to do?

NARRATOR: John Lacklan opened the bolt of his Winchester.

JOHN

We can't wait for whatever is going to
happen.

NARRATOR: He pressed five cartridges into the magazine.
Each he had carefully loaded and primed himself. The rest of
the ammunition went into the pockets of his shirt.

SFX: John cocks the gun and sets the safety.

JOHN

I'm going to tell them if they don't put a boat in the water and let us leave, I'll kill them all. I'll show them a god damn thing or two ...

HELEN

A confrontation will just make everything worse.

JOHN

Get it over with. They'll back down. No one wants to die.

HELEN

We don't know anything. Are you ready to kill one of them?

JOHN

If I have to.

HELEN

Well, they're armed too. There's nine of them.

JOHN

Then what? Have you got an idea?

HELEN

What if we slip away? If we're lucky they'll just take our things and go.

We saw a village. In those dry fields, just before we came up this river. The guide book has a Malay dictionary, maybe ...

JOHN

The guide book! That's for tourists! God Helen, if we don't *do* something we're going to be killed!

NARRATOR: John seemed paralysed, he rifle clutched in front of him, hunched over like he was afraid of being whipped. He sat suddenly, collapsing onto the cot. As scared as she was Helen felt a rush of compassion for him, he was as powerless and lost as she was.

HELEN

I'm sorry. Oh god, I'm so sorry. I don't care about the ring. I never did.

SFX: John turns on the cot.

JOHN

What?

HELEN

I thought we needed some time together.
Things to share. The *diamond*? I wanted
to save *us*.

SFX: Thunder rumbles again ... distantly.

JOHN

You'll be all right, Helen ... I'll make
sure of it.

You were right. When they go to sleep
we'll try to get away.

I redrew the map and I have notes in my
journal.

(fading out)

We can go down to where the rivers join
then up the western fork, find the last
camp, there's the ridge made of dolomite,
then we go down to the main river.
Someone will find us. Maybe the rain
will wipe out our tracks.

55 RAJ ASKS IF KARDEC KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING

55

NARRATOR: Raj was sitting under a shelter-half flipping through the pages of Helen's book. When he came to where her photo marked a page he stopped and looked at it for quite some time.

RAJ
This woman. She is not your woman.

KARDEC
No.

RAJ
Does she want to be?

KARDEC
She's probably never thought about it.

RAJ
When they are bad, Kelabit(#66) mother
tell children, 'be good or *Tuan* Jeru will
get you.' Story say he is Bali
Salang(#86),

*

*

You know what this is?

NARRATOR: Inghai turned slowly toward Raj ...

KARDEC
It's a monster, a vampire or something.

RAJ
Yes. He sell your blood to the oil
company. He take your head ...

INGHAI
(Malay)
#18- Diam.

INGHAI
#18- Quiet.

INGHAI
Raj, there is more to this story than you
know!

RAJ
Then tell us, Grandfather.

NARRATOR: But Inghai just shook his head. Raj looked at him narrowly, then turned to Kardec.

RAJ
I am not afraid of any *man* ... I just
want to know why we do what we are doing.

A56 THE LACKLANS TRY TO GET AWAY

A56

JOHN
(whisper)
Helen. Helen ...

SFX: Helen turns on the cot.

HELEN
(whisper)
What?

JOHN
(whisper)
Quiet. The guard just walked down to the river.

NARRATOR: Helen sat up rubbing her eyes. The camp seemed asleep except for the vague form of one of their guides now outlined against the distant water.

JOHN
Come on.

She took the small pack that John handed her. He slipped the sling of his rifle over his shoulder then turning to the back of the tent, opened his clasp knife ...

SFX: Cutting through canvass.

NARRATOR: They stepped through into darkness.

JOHN
(whisper)
Put your feet down slowly, try not to make any noise.

NARRATOR: They moved a few yards along the sand to where the dim shadow of the figs towered in the darkness, then between the trees and into the depths of the jungle.

SFX: sounds move through the night on either side of them, whispers of movement. Lots of sounds.

HELEN
(whisper)
What is it?

JOHN
(whisper)
Shh. I don't know ...

B56 KEBIR TELLS DYAK TWO KEEP QUIET THE LACKLANS HAVE ESCAPED **B56**

DYAK TWO
(in Malay)
#19- Itu pun kamu! Kami
telah duduk di pinggir bukit..

DYAK TWO
#19- There you are! We've
been sitting up on that
hillside ...

*

KEBIR
#20- Shh! Tahanan sudah
lari. Selerak. Semua orang!

KEBIR
(in Malay)
#20- Shh! The prisoners have
escaped. Spread out, all of
you ...

SFX: There are more footsteps, the creak of a basket-pack,
something moving through the brush ...

56 LACKLANS AMBUSHED AS THEY TRY TO GET AWAY

56

NARRATOR: John pulled Helen closer to the spreading roots of a tree and they crouched, hiding.

Suddenly, they were pinned in the beam of a flashlight. Surrounding them were at least a dozen tribesman, men they had never seen before, carrying rattan baskets on their backs and bared parangs. For a moment Helen thought they might be rescued ...

KEBIR

Oh look. Mr., Miss, Lacklan.

*

NARRATOR: Kebir stepped out from behind the glare of the light.

KEBIR

Now where do you go? You go walk at night?

NARRATOR: John took a step backward and raised his Winchester.

JOHN

Take our things. Take what you want and leave us alone.

KEBIR

Okay. Sure. 'betcha.

SFX: No one does anything ...

HELEN

So ... go. Get what you want ...

KEBIR

We take all, okay? Take you too.

JOHN

Ransom? Is that what you mean?

KEBIR

Ransom? No, no, I don't care ransom. I care head.

JOHN

Oh Christ ... Helen, run.

(to Kebir)

Get back! I'll shoot ...

KEBIR
(Malay)
#21- Selerak. Ke belakang
dia.

KEBIR
#21- Spread-out. To behind
him.

SFX: Dyaks flank them.

HELEN
John ...?

JOHN
Go Helen! *Go Now!*

NARRATOR: She couldn't leave ... wouldn't. Then she thought she'd be better off in the darkness, split their attention, harass them 'til John was free. Helen stepped back. Powerful hands grabbed her from behind.

HELEN
(screams into Dyak's hand)

JOHN
No! No, Damn You!

SFX: Gun goes off. Thunder crashes. As the thunder dies bring up small arms fire ... for a moment we are in Kardec's dream.

SOLDIER TWO

Incoming!

NARRATOR: Through a hail of red hot metal and geysers of freezing mud Kardec ran. Falling, wounded, he searched for something: a Korean family, the diamonds luck had given then taken away, a girl who reminded him of who he once had been
...

57 KARDEC WAKES FROM DREAM, WAKES OTHERS

57

SFX: Thunder ringing out and the sounds of a clear morning and the jungle waking up.

KARDEC
Unh.

SFX: Kardec sits up in his hammock.

KARDEC
Damn.

NARRATOR: Inghai stood watching him, a spirit in the wood.

INGHAI
Your soul still wanders ...

KARDEC
A dream.

INGHAI
Perhaps I have not yet healed you.

KARDEC
A bad dream.

Raj. Get up.

RAJ
What? What is it?

KARDEC
We're going. Now.

SFX: The outboard fires up.

NARRATOR: Kardec rubbed the tattoo over his heart.

KARDEC
Alright Inghai ... let's see if this thing works.

58 KARDEC INGHAI AND RAJ GO INTO LACKLAN CAMP

58

SFX: The motor accelerates into the stream

NARRATOR: They hit the beach at Lacklan's camp site and spread out ...

SFX: The canoe grounds itself on the sand. Sounds of searching.

NARRATOR: The fire was cold and there were only the bare remains of a camp.

KARDEC
We missed them.

Raj, gas up the motor.

NARRATOR: Kardec snapped on his flashlight ...

SFX: Kardec walks up the sand and then onto leaves. He cocks his gun.

NARRATOR: Low shadows squatted like crocodiles under a mass of vines. Lacklan's canoes. Stripped of everything including the outboards.

KARDEC
Forget it.
(Raj stops pouring, looks over)
No, forget it. They're going over land.

NARRATOR: A flash of gold caught his eye. A rifle shell. A 270 from John's Winchester. The smell of powder burned his nose.

SFX: A distant crack of thunder.

KARDEC
I think our friends are in a lot of trouble.

MZK:

59 LACKLANS ARE MARCHED TOWARD JERU'S VILLAGE

59

SFX: Many feet marching along.

NARRATOR: John and Helen were pushed along the trail. Both had their hands tied. Out of the wind along the river mosquitos surrounded them like a fog and tiny sweat bees tickled their exposed skin.

KEBIR

You think you smart man? I call you Too-an. Act like idiot, say everything two time. "*Gravel bank, gravel bank.*"

NARRATOR: Though one of the tribesmen nursed a bullet burn across his left shoulder Kebir now proudly carried John's Winchester. He had tackled Lacklan an instant before John had shot at the man with the flashlight.

KEBIR

You pay money for diamond? There no diamond ... just this one, yeah?

What do I get? I get longboat, food, shotgun shell, outboard motor ... I think you *stupid!*

'Okay. Okay. Sure. 'betcha.' I sound 'merica?

There is tree. There is other tree. Snake. I be tour guide 'merica.

NARRATOR: Each of the new group of Dyaks had a large basket that was carried by shoulder straps. Under Kebir's direction they quickly loaded up the contents of the boats and started out along a trail that led deeper and deeper into the dim space between the giant trees.

KEBIR

Yeah. Maybe I go 'merica, see televisia. You don't like, eh? I go 'merica but not you?

JOHN

A-merica. You'd be right at home some places I can think of. Miserable punk.

SFX: Kebir pushes John.

NARRATOR: A blow sent John staggering to the top of a bank entwined with roots.

HELEN
Stop that!

SFX: John is pushed again.

JOHN
(cries out as he falls)

NARRATOR: John's glasses flew and he staggered forward. His foot caught, twisted, and he fell ...

HELEN
Wait. John, let me help you.

JOHN
Arrgh! Oh, no ...

NARRATOR: His ankle was horribly twisted. He could move it, Helen could see him trying, so possibly it wasn't broken.

KEBIR
Get up!

JOHN
(growls)

HELEN
Yes ... we'll get up. Just give him a minute.

Come on, John.

JOHN
I'm *trying!*

KEBIR
Go!

SFX: He kicks her.

HELEN
Aagh!

JOHN
You bastard!

KEBIR
You like fight, husband, wife? I see you, you fight too much!

So ... I take one head, keep one slave. You decide which, which. Fight 'bout that, yeah?

NARRATOR: John Lacklan felt sudden dread, stunned by a question as familiar from studies he'd worked on as it had just become crudely personal.

HELEN
(whispering)
Oh no, oh no ...

KEBIR
Now go!

NARRATOR: Slowly, his arm over Helen's shoulders, John rose and limped down the muddy trail.

SFX: Sounds fade to just the whine of insects.

60 KARDEC'S GROUP FOLLOWS

60

NARRATOR: They pushed through the low heavy growth along the river and made their way into the more open ground beneath the ancient trees of the primary forest. Open was only a matter of degree, however, giant trunks interrupted any view of more than fifty yards and as moisture condensed on the leaves it fell like light rain. They walked through a continual dripping twilight.

KARDEC

Damn! How many of them are there?

NARRATOR: The wet ground showed distinct sets of prints. They were not following the path of nine men and two captives who were simply making a mess off the trail, now it was obvious that the group had grown considerably. It was a fact that preyed on their minds, nine had been bad enough.

Inghai stopped, bending over a mess of roots on the top of a small rise. The area was marshy and a giant ficus spread it's branches and network of descending trunks creating a maze that they had to carefully pick their way through.

INGHAI

The man has fallen.

NARRATOR: The roots were scuffed and a muddy pocket held a clear boot track.

KARDEC

Lacklan's limping pretty badly.

RAJ

Maybe we catch up.

KARDEC

Sure. Catch up, get ahead, set up an ambush ... nothing to it.

NARRATOR: Raj looked at the ground. Inghai scowled at Kardec.

KARDEC

Hey. You're right ... you're right. I'm just trying to make it work.

SFX: They move off

NARRATOR: They were gaining ground but whether they'd be able to do anything to help the Lacklans before they reached their destination was an open question.

61 KARDEC LOSES THE TRAIL IN SWAMP

61

SFX: The trail gets wetter and wetter ... Then, suddenly they are walking in water.

KARDEC

Oh Hell ...

NARRATOR: Late in the afternoon the trail suddenly disappeared into a endless bog of shallow water and sucking, stinking, mud. Kardec checked his compass.

KARDEC

We'll never find them if we don't get out of this before dark. Spread out but don't get out of sight.

SFX: The three head off.

NARRATOR: Two hours later the land rose up and they left the swamp behind. Kardec searched the bank for any sign of a trail. There was nothing, and there was no way of hiding prints in the muddy ground.

They started south because the land was higher in that direction and it made as much sense as anything. Out of the jungle there appeared an immense wall of sheer rock rising like the backbone of an ancient reptile above the swamp.

RAJ

Here!

SFX: Raj sloshes nearer ...

RAJ

Come look!

NARRATOR: The tracks emerged from the waters of the swamp, a rut of slush that disappeared into a crack in the wall ahead of them.

RAJ

Mike ...

NARRATOR: On one side of the gap, was an otherworldly construction. A central pole, stripped of bark, held twisting, serpent-like crosspieces. Once brightly colored, they were hung with vine nets holding jawless human skulls ...

KARDEC

What is it?

INGHAI

This is symbol of Kenyah people ... but not. Wrong, not Kenyah.

Jeru is cursed, you must know that.

KARDEC

Cursed?

INGHAI

Yes. This ... he thinks to protect himself, his people ...

NARRATOR: Kardec put a hand on his friend's shoulder but the old man would not be comforted.

INGHAI

(whisper)

I was never brave enough. Never.

SFX: They move forward. Distant music ...

RAJ

Listen ...

NARRATOR: They stopped. The cleft was narrow enough that Kardec thought he could touch both sides ... about fifty yards in the passage disappeared into a slowly roiling mist.

KARDEC

Stay here, when I signal ...
(Kardec hoots like an owl)
... you two come on. Alright?

SFX: Kardec starts forward.

NARRATOR: Huge roots clutched at the granite walls, tentacles grasping for sustenance. The ground was covered with generations of fallen leaves.

Kardec moved up, crouched behind a boulder and peered into the fog. From among the wet and loosely piled leaves, from the roots and scales of rock appeared a phalanx of leeches, some almost thin as a hair to good sized worms. They were inching toward him, some blindly rearing up on their hind ends like searching question marks.

KARDEC

(to himself)

Yuck ...

SFX: Kardec sneaks on ...

NARRATOR: The walls of the slot widened out and, as a hole in the clouds appeared, he looked into a small valley. Ahead of him the trail dipped steeply downward and in the distance he could see a longhouse tucked back into the jungle beside a shallow stream. Up the valley the slopes became steeper and steeper until, miles away, they ended in a long, bare ridge surmounted by a tall thumb-like pillar that was mostly hidden in the drifting clouds.

SFX: Kardec does the owl call ...

NARRATOR: A moment later Inghai and Raj joined him.

RAJ
(whisper)
Look!

NARRATOR: Coming out of the brush and into the nearest field there emerged a straggling line of slowly moving figures ... the Lacklans and their captors.

KARDEC
(whisper)
Raj ... Over here. We don't want to be seen.

62 KARDEC AND OTHERS OBSERVE JERU'S LONGHOUSE

62

NARRATOR: Inghai lead them through the trees and along the edge of the lower slope. When they reached the stream they found a place where a small landslide had carried away the tree cover and they could easily see the village and surrounding area.

Even in the gathering darkness they could tell the place was in bad shape. The fields were poorly kept and several of the farm huts had fallen in and were being reclaimed by secondary growth.

This longhouse was smaller than Inghai's and obviously very old. One corner was drooping dangerously on rotting pilings and in places the verandah had given way. A ring of garbage surrounded the place, churned into the muddy ground. There didn't seem to be any guards but people were still milling around, making preparations outside of the building.

SFX: The sounds of animal slaughtering and rough voices drift up toward them. Some celebration preparation in Malay.

KARDEC

How many do you think are down there?

INGHAI

If stories are true, twenty, maybe thirty men. Some women ...

NARRATOR: Mike gave in to a moment of fantasy; Parris Island, 1945. The blunt weight of a Thompson Submachine Gun punching at his shoulder in controlled three round bursts. He looked sadly at Vandover's pretty, but aging, Mauser. Raj had Inghai's old single barrel shotgun, but it was a rusted relic that looked like it had come to Sarawak with the first White Rajah ... to make matters worse, it only had two crudely reloaded shells.

KARDEC

Do you know what's going to happen?

NARRATOR: Inghai closed his eyes, didn't respond.

RAJ

I think they have big *arak* party. Everyone get very drunk. They have new thing for trade; shotgun shell, fancy rifle.

KARDEC

Yeah? What about the Lacklans?

*

NARRATOR: Raj shot a glance at Inghai ...

RAJ

I don't know, Mike.

I think maybe they cut off man's head.
Woman, I don't know ... these people,
they not Iban, not Kenyah, not
Kelabit(#66). They something different
... outlaws, you know? *

I bet they get drunk like Iban though.

INGHAI

They will cut off their heads. Sooner,
later, they cut both.

I have caused this.

KARDEC

You caused it? How?

RAJ

(in Malay)
#22- Datuk, tak benar!

RAJ

#22- Grandfather, not true!

INGHAI

(in Malay)
#23- Kamu salah! Aku di sana,
aku bersalah.

INGHAI

#23- You're wrong! I was
there, I at-fault.

INGHAI

(in English)
I am the one. I make elmu hitam(#57);
black magic. I cursed Jeru and all his
people. *

Time ago I saw him. In marketplace at
Miri(#77). The war, it was over,
soldiers going home. *

For what he had done, I cursed him. I
cursed them all. Balio(#55), it turns
all to stone, the longhouse, everyone. *

KARDEC

I may not appreciate the situation, but
that place down there doesn't look like
stone to me. *

RAJ

Balio. (#55) It is bad. Big rocks along Baram, once each a longhouse. They cursed or offended Atoh. They turned to rock.

*
*

KARDEC

You believe that?

(neither comments)

Look, in the end everything may become stone but that's just not how it happens.

*

INGHAI

It does not matter! Jeru believes. You remember what I tell you? He *believes*.

Now he takes head, many head, to save himself, for obat to stay alive.

SFX: Kardec turns back to look at the longhouse.

*

KARDEC

An arms race with heads ... Lacklan might appreciate that.

INGHAI

Balio(#55) for gods to decide, not man.

*

I say, to you, 'do not fight who you are.' I must remember who I am, what I have done. I must end it.

KARDEC

Well, we're not gonna to do *anything* unless we can get in there.

*

We'll give it an hour, let the *arak* do some work for us.

NARRATOR: He didn't know if the Lacklans really counted as his friends but every moment he left John and Helen down there increased their peril ...

63A JOHN TRIES TO GIVE HELEN HIS MAP

63A

NARRATOR: Helen edged herself over to where her husband lay. His lower leg was swollen badly and there was also a large and darkening lump on his forehead.

HELEN
(whispering)
How are you? Are you okay?

NARRATOR: John slid close to her, his hands covering something.

HELEN
What is that?

JOHN
Put these in your pockets.

HELEN
What ..?

JOHN
It's my compass and my journal. I noted every time we changed our heading. You can backtrack our route.

HELEN
Me? What are you talking about?

JOHN
You can get away, they won't always be watching.

HELEN
John, we'll both get away ...

JOHN
You heard them, we have to choose.

HELEN
Don't say that! We don't know what's going to happen.

JOHN
It's ... triage.

HELEN
This is not some exercise of yours! We don't have to choose anything! We'll make a run for it ... right now

JOHN

I *can't* run.

HELEN

Then we'll *limp* and if they shoot us in the back so be it. Get up, John. Come on, they don't get to tell us what to do!

NARRATOR: John looked at her, some strange fury in his eyes, then he turned away.

Then their guard came back, a bottle in his hand, his heavily callused feet scraping planks of the floor.

64 KARDEC INGHAI AND RAJ MOVE CLOSER TO LONGHOUSE

64

SFX: The wilder sounds of the party reach up the hillside, breaking glass, raucous laughter. A woman screams ... but the sound devolves into laughter.

KARDEC

We've got to get a look. Let's go.

NARRATOR: It hadn't been an hour but they circled farther down the hillside. Though they were still under the cover of the smaller trees and brush that edged the jungle, the dark form of the longhouse, resting high on it's ironwood pilings, loomed above them.

SFX: Malay carousing.

NARRATOR: As Mike and his two companions picked their way under the longhouse, cracks in the floor glowed with lamp light. Then they were climbing up through the broken boards onto the verandah.

KARDEC

(under his breath)

Uk. Damn! Watch out.

SFX: Hollow bones click together

NARRATOR: Hanging from the eaves were nets and baskets of human skulls.

65a KARDEC INGHAI AND RAJ LOOK THROUGH WALL OF LONGHOUSE

65a

SFX: The music stops ... people mill around getting quieter and quieter ... Malay conversations dying down.

NARRATOR: They shed their packs and made their way across the rotting planks, finding an ill fitting door that spilled light out along the wooden deck. Inghai took the shotgun and turned away to watch their backs, eyes searching the night.

By pressing his head against the door frame Kardec could see at enough of an angle to pick out the Lacklans ... but people were moving, drawing back toward the walls, forming a pathway of sorts.

RAJ
(whisper)
Look ...

SFX: Bells rattle as Jeru walks.

NARRATOR: Out of the smoky gloom far down the communal gallery an old man appeared. He walked alone and, though he was not large, his pace was solid and his bearing that of a king. He wore a cape of hornbill feathers and round his waist was a belt of silver coins and ancient bronze tiger bells. One cheek was disfigured with a darkly twisted scar and his hands were covered with complex tattoos.

KARDEC
Is that him?

NARRATOR: Inghai looked through the gap ...

INGHAI
(in Malay) #25- Jantan sial!
INGHAI #25- Bastard!

NARRATOR: For a moment Kardec thought that Inghai was going to come up with the shotgun. He gripped the older man's arm and they locked eyes.

KARDEC
(whisper)
Wait. Just Wait.

65b KEBIR, JERU AND DYAKS PARTY INSIDE LONGHOUSE

65b

NARRATOR: Inghai pulled away and Raj stepped into his place.

Inside, Kebir stepped away from his group of followers and knelt briefly in front of the old man, an action that seemed more Hollywood than Sarawak.

KEBIR

(under Malay)

#26- Terima kasih, Pakcik. Kami telah membawa banyak barang berharga, dan **tahanan**.

*

*

KEBIR

#26- Thank you, Uncle. We have brought many valuables, and prisoners.

NARRATOR: Standing he took something from around his neck and ceremonially handed it to his Uncle.

JERU

(in Malay)

#27- Saya berterima kasih.

JERU

#27- I thankful.

NARRATOR: The old man held it up to the light. It was the diamond, milky and uncut.

65a KARDEC SEES DIAMOND FOR FIRST TIME

65a

KARDEC
(to himself)
Well, look at that. No wonder people go
for it.

65c JOHN OFFERS HIMSELF TO JERU AND KEBIR, HELEN OBJECTS

65c

NARRATOR: A child scurried forward with a roll of cloth and laid it on the split bamboo floor in front of Jeru and Kebir. At first it appeared to be a filthy rug, matted with mud and fraying at the edges ... but then, in the flickering light, Mike Kardec realized that the stains were those of dried blood.

In the dull glow of the lamps, all eyes turn toward John and Helen ...

MZK: The music stops ...

NARRATOR: John Lacklan drew his legs under him ...

HELEN
(whisper)
John? What are you *doing*?

NARRATOR: He stood, trembling.

JOHN
We decided.

HELEN
(to Dyaks)
No, we haven't.
(to John)
Stop it, John. Stop!

NARRATOR: Two burly Dyaks stepped up behind them.

JOHN
It's logical. ... all I can do ...

HELEN
It's not over, don't *help* them do this.

JOHN
I won't be powerless, Helen!
Take ... take me. Leave her alone.

65c JOHN LACKLAN IS DRAGGED IN FRONT OF JERU

65c

KEBIR

Good, Mr. Lacklan. Maybe you smart after
all.

NARRATOR: Kebir pulled John Lacklan forward, one of John's legs looked like it was ready to give out and when they stopped in front of the old man, Kebir kicked the back of John's other knee.

SFX: John falls to the floor.

65a KARDEC IS READY TO GO IN

65a

NARRATOR: Kardec stepped back and raising the Mauser, laid the sights on the back of Jeru's skull.

KARDEC

If we go in, Raj you cover our left from right here. Stay in the doorway and stay low.

65c HELEN TRIES TO STOP JOHN

65c

NARRATOR: Jeru whirled his parang around his head like a batter warming up. He tested it's edge with his thumb.

HELEN

Are you crazy? It won't even work ...
you'll die and they'll kill me anyway!

NARRATOR: Kebir stepped forward and thrust the muzzle of John's rifle toward her throat.

KEBIR

Sit, missy! You sit or *yes*, I *will* kill
you!

NARRATOR: Kebir jabbed at her with the rifle barrel.

KEBIR

Everybody die, you don't sit down!

NARRATOR: Kardec shifted his sights from Jeru to Kebir, squinting in the dim light. With a gun on Helen, John would have to take his chances with the knife.

But she looked right past Kebir, fixing her eyes on Jeru.

HELEN

You can't kill him. We're Americans!
They'll come looking for us.

KEBIR

We kill England, Dutch ... America? Who
cares.

(repeats - in Malay)

#28- Kami bunuh Orang Inggeris, Belanda,
Amerika, siapa peduli.

DYAK CROWD (**WILD LINE 13**)

(laughs)

NARRATOR: One of the Dyaks stepped forward and grabbed Helen's arm but she was nearly as big as he was and, in that moment, just as strong.

HELEN

He's a scholar. What are you going to
say? There are the heads of Japanese
soldiers, we fought their machine-guns
with knives but we won. Here is the head
of the man who reads books, aren't we
brave!

JOHN

Be quiet, Helen! Let me do what I can!

You take me ... just leave her! Leave her!

HELEN

I heard Dyak tribes men only took the heads of honorable enemies; of *warriors*. Did John walk here? You nearly had to carry him. The head of a strong man is magic. But a weak man? A weak man is nothing.

JOHN

I've harnessed the powers of the atom -- the power of the sun -- I control the power of the gods! I *destroyed* the Japanese ...

KEBIR

Stop!

We cut off head; see what happen. No magic, we throw out!

NARRATOR: John turned to Jeru ...

JOHN

... ready. I'm ready, just leave her alone.

DYAK CROWD (**WILD LINE 14**)
(in Malay)
#29- *Potong! Potong!*

DYAK CROWD
#29- Cut! Cut!

NARRATOR: But Helen brushed the gun aside and pushed in front of him.

HELEN

God Damn it, John.

NARRATOR: The Dyak roughly grabbed her again, twisting an arm behind her back.

HELEN

I am *not* going to let you die for me!

NARRATOR: John tried to turn toward her, tried to stand again on trembling legs.

HELEN

... I don't *love* you enough for that!

NARRATOR: John gaped at her, his eyes full of futility and pain. Helen was pulled back, away ... and as John lurched toward her ...

SFX: Jeru knocks John unconscious. Conversations spring up in Malay.

NARRATOR: ... Jeru smashed the butt of his parang across the back of John's head. Ending it for the moment ... releasing them all.

JERU	JERU
(in Malay)	#30- Crazy! Insane!
#30- Gila! Tak siuman!	

NARRATOR: John Lacklan hit the floor, out cold.

65a KARDEC REACTS TO HELEN AND JOHN'S SCENE IN LONGHOUSE

65a

NARRATOR: Jeru took up a bottle of arak and turned away.

KARDEC
(breaths out, a sigh, Jeeze,
sheesh ...)

INGHAI
What happens?

KARDEC
She a ... I have *no* idea.

We've got a minute, come on.

He motioned Raj to climb down through the broken slats to the ground.

KARDEC

You help them get to the ground and go straight up the hill whether we're here or not, understand?

NARRATOR: Kardec closed the backpack and handed it to Raj.

KARDEC

Keep this with you. Anyone comes around
...

NARRATOR: Raj gripped the hilt of his parang.

RAJ

I know.

KARDEC

Okay.

SFX: Kardec and Inghai creep down the verandah.

67 KARDEC AND INGHAI SET FIRE TO LONGHOUSE

67

NARRATOR: At the far end of the verandah Kardec stopped, pumping the plunger on the Handi Works stove ...

INGHAI
What are you going to do?

SFX: The gas stove fires.

KARDEC
Get their attention.

NARRATOR: He wedged the stove in a corner of the thatch wall.

SFX: The fire burns the thatch. Kardec and Inghai run away.

KARDEC
Come on ...

NARRATOR: At the door they paused, waiting ...

KARDEC
You give me covering fire from here.

I don't want to be at cross purposes. I need to get the Lacklan's out.

NARRATOR: Inghai stepped up beside Kardec, his eyes unreadable in the dark.

INGHAI
Yes. Then I will find Jeru. Do not wait for me ... Understand, Mike? Do not.

NARRATOR: Kardec nodded. Inghai cocked the shotgun and set it just outside the door then carefully took a poisoned dart from the bamboo canister at his waist.

SFX: The fire grows, running feet, something collapses ...

INGHAI
Let's go!

68 KARDEC AND INGHAI ATTACK LONGHOUSE

68

SFX: The door crashes open and Kardec and Inghai head inside.

NARRATOR: Kardec went in with the Mauser up, ready to fire. The long room was filling with smoke and fire was spreading up the south wall. Men and women raced toward the blaze, some tried to smother the flames with blankets, others to cut the burning thatch and poles free with parangs.

A young woman ran from the spreading fire, right past Kardec, without ever recognizing him as a stranger. Across the gallery the Lacklans were huddled against a wall and Kardec made for them ...

SFX: man hit by rifle butt.

NARRATOR: ... flooring a man who got in the way with a butt stroke from his rifle. Kardec knelt and pulled his knife.

John stared at him, uncomprehending, frozen.

HELEN

John, come on! It's help.

NARRATOR: Kardec turned to Helen, cutting her wrists free and then pressing the knife into her hand. He pushed her toward John.

HELEN

Look out!

SFX: Footsteps run up and stop ...

NARRATOR: A heavily tattooed Dyak peered at them, then suddenly raised a homemade shotgun ...

SFX: Inghai fires his blowgun.

NARRATOR: Inghai fired his blowpipe the Dyak bent over clawing at a dart in his neck. But another man grabbed his gun ...

SFX: Shotgun goes off.

NARRATOR: Shot ripped into the floor and drove hot nails into Kardec's left foot. Kardec threw the carbine to his shoulder and fired ...

SFX: Body fall.

NARRATOR: Men and women turned from fighting the fire, gaping at the newcomers ...

KARDEC

Go! To that man there!

NARRATOR: He pointed Helen toward Inghai and dragged John to his feet.

SFX: A shotgun fires, shot hits glass and metal pots.

NARRATOR: White smoke and burning wadding blinded Kardec but he wasn't hurt. From the door Inghai fired the shotgun at someone Kardec couldn't see. The Lacklans were out, through the door ...

JERU

(in Malay)

#34- Bunuh mereka!

JERU

#34- Kill them!

NARRATOR: Men rushed with bared parangs (#87). Kardec fired into the crowd, barely having time to work the bolt before they were on him. Inghai fired and, tossing the empty gun away, leaped forward stabbing with the spear blade on his blow pipe. *

Kardec dodged a cut from a parang and lashed out with the butt of the Mauser. He back pedaled toward the door and fired again. Inghai was down then back up, drawing his parang, blood welling from his shoulder.

Kardec caught a sudden image of Hawaiian flowers. Kebir fired John Lacklan's rifle and the shock wave stung Kardec's eyes. Kebir ran for cover as Kardec shot back, missing. Flames tore at the walls and took the ceiling. Kardec kicked the door behind him open, fired from the hip and dragged Inghai backwards.

On the verandah John was on the boards grappling with a Dyak who had grabbed Helen. Kardec pushed John out of the way, hauled off and kicked the Dyak as hard as he could in the side of the head.

KARDEC

That way! Find Raj!

SFX: They run off

NARRATOR: It was time to go but Kardec turned back. One Dyak, then more, appeared out of the blowing smoke. Flames licked along the wall toward them. Kardec fired, worked the bolt. Damascus steel struck sparks as Inghai blocked a cut with his parang.

Far down the verandah Kardec saw Jeru calmly striding forward, silhouetted against the light. Kardec threw up the Mauser and pulled the trigger.

SFX: The gun clicks on an empty chamber.

INGHAI (**WILD LINE 15**)
(screams)

NARRATOR: Inghai charged. The first Dyak went down and Inghai ran on toward Jeru. Behind Kardec the Lacklan's scrambled down through the hole in the verandah. It was time to go but several men rushed toward Inghai; he wasn't going to make it. Kardec ran in that direction.

Inghai's parang rose, covered with blood. Kardec slammed into the man flanking him, they hit the bamboo planks sliding. He struck downwards, sideways, scrambling to his feet just in time to see the carbine tip off the edge of the verandah and disappear.

SFX: The native tackles Kardec again.

NARRATOR: Another tribesman rammed him backwards him backward through the flaming wall.

SFX: They crash through.

NARRATOR: Scorched and stunned Kardec hit the floor inside the longhouse on top of the man. The Dyak struck out, a blow that made Kardec's head ring. Kardec threw the man off and tried to stand.

The room was spinning, his clothes smouldered. A woman ran past him carrying belongings free of the fire. The roof was coming down in flaming chunks and up in the rafters a cloud of wasps swarmed in panic from the eye sockets of hanging skulls.

The Dyak was not getting up. Yanking the parang from the man's belt Kardec covered his face with his arms and dove back through the hole, to find himself at Inghai's side ... surrounded by a circle of men with spears. And just beyond, Kebir peering over the sights of Lacklan's rifle.

69 KARDEC AND INGHAİ ARE TRAPPED ON VERANDAH

69

INGHAİ
(breathing hard)
Mike. You not too good following orders

NARRATOR: The spearmen pushed forward, herding them to the edge of the verandah.

KARDEC
(coughs/laughs)
Yeah? And no good deed goes unpunished.

NARRATOR: Heat poured from the building. Jeru stepped past his nephew, his eyes glowing in the punishing light of the fire.

JERU
See, the magician, he has become fat and old.

INGHAİ
And you, traitor. You take heads to protect from my curse.

I have come to end it.

JERU
End it? End it how?

INGHAİ
One of us dies. Fight me. It will end when one of us dies.

JERU
Fight? Why?

JERU
(in Malay)
#35- Kebir. Datang sini!

JERU
#35- Kebir. Come here!

JERU
My sister's son will take your heads.
You die, no more curse. He take your obat ...

NARRATOR: Kebir handed off the rifle and drew his parang. Inghai stepped back beside Kardec ...

INGHAİ
It will do him no good. My obat (#53) escapes with the smoke ... look!

*

NARRATOR: He gestured toward the sky and as everyone looked ...

INGHAI
Is this not luck, my friend?

NARRATOR: Inghai turned and shoved Kardec off the verandah.

SFX: Verandah rail breaks.

KARDEC
(grunts as he hits ground)

SFX: Kardec hits the ground.

NARRATOR: Kardec hit, rolled, staggered to his feet. He saw the Mauser laying about five yards away. Without thinking he threw himself forward, snatched it up and dove into the shadows under the longhouse just as Jeru's men rushed to the edge of the porch.

SFX: Gunfire.

NARRATOR: Inghai was dragged forward and thrown to his knees. Kebir grabbed the old man's hair and his parang flashed downward ...

SFX: Inghai's severed head hits the boards. Kardec runs, slams into piling

NARRATOR: Kardec came up against the base of one of the pilings. Sparks whirled in the wind created by the fire.

Something dropped from the verandah ... Inghai's headless body. Even as Kardec looked, Jeru's remaining men were pouring down the ladders.

Just as he stood to run the building began to collapse ...

SFX: A two hundred by fifty foot flaming longhouse falls in on itself ... Still with me Paul?

70 RAJ AND THE LACKLANS ARE FOUND BY KARDEC

70

NARRATOR: High above the valley the rocky ridge emerged from the jungle and lay open to the moonlight. Ahead, still occasionally obscured by cloud was the thumb-like tower of rock.

Raj had lead John and Helen up hill, away from the flames that lit the valley behind them. It made him feel like a coward ... but he did as he was told and pressed them along as fast as they could move in the dark.

By the time they left the cover of the big trees and onto slopes of limestone and rhododendron they were on the verge of collapse.

RAJ
Rest. We rest.

NARRATOR: A boulder loomed against the sky and Raj, who had been supporting John almost all the way from the longhouse, helped him to a concealed place where they could sit yet still watch the trail.

The Lacklan's didn't talk. Raj was glad, talk didn't help either climbing or hiding, and he was uncomfortable just being with them.

SFX: someone climbing the slope toward them.

RAJ
(whispering)
Shh.

NARRATOR: Raj drew his parang.

JOHN
(whispering)
What?

NARRATOR: Raj took up the flashlight and stepping around the boulder raised the parang. He hit the switch ...

KARDEC
Ahhgh! Crap!

NARRATOR: It was Mike Kardec, blackened and bleeding but alive.

JOHN
Kardec ... I thought you were dead.

KARDEC
Damn! Douse the light!

RAJ
Sorry, Mike.

KARDEC
We have to keep going. Can everybody
keep going?

HELEN
I don't know. John hurt his leg before
we got to that village.

KARDEC
Let me see. We have to get out of here.

JOHN
I can make it! I don't need help.
(then, more to himself)
I don't need your help.

KARDEC
Then, let's go.

SFX: Climbing, breathing.

NARRATOR: They pushed on, higher. Beyond the rocky promontory ahead, taller peaks could be seen, the vast chain of mountains that made up the backbone of the island. Wind, shockingly cold after the heat of the jungle, poured over the ridge swirling the mist below them.

John staggered and Helen tried to take his arm but he pushed her away. The two of them walked on in separate worlds of anguish.

71 KARDEC TELLS RAJ THAT INGHAI HAS DIED

71

KARDEC

Inghai ... I didn't get him out.

RAJ

He did what he want. His curse, it is end.

KARDEC

He saved me ... he saved me again.

RAJ

When I pull you out of river, that first time since he curse Jeru, first time that Inghai make magic. He say to me, 'this man sick, hurt, his soul it lost. Only magic may help find it.'

I know, war take your soul. His too. His curse take his soul. So he help you, you help him ... help him know what he needed to do, be brave to do it. Curse he made, it ah -- hentu-hentu(#58). Was ... ghost to Inghai many years.

*

You could not save him, Mike. You already did.

NARRATOR: Raj put his hand on Mike Kardec's shoulder ...

RAJ

He told me, take care of you ... that's what he said.

72 KARDEC'S GROUP FINDS THE CAVE

72

NARRATOR: The moon set and in the purple light of early dawn the ridge rose up again. Kardec skirted the new slope, staying a hundred feet above the forest. He was circling back toward where they had left the canoes, hoping they could descend to the river without retracing their steps along the trail from the longhouse.

HELEN

Give us ... give us a minute.

NARRATOR: Kardec was worried their luck was running out. John's leg was barely able to carry him and he probably had a concussion too. Kardec's own foot throbbed, cold and bitter.

Ahead he saw a dark opening in the limestone ridge.

KARDEC

Up here ... we'll stop for awhile.

NARRATOR: It was a cave set low on the boulder strewn mountainside.

SFX: Helen climbs to the opening.

HELEN

It goes in pretty far ... the flashlight is dying.

NARRATOR: They took refuge among the mossy rocks near the mouth of the cave.

KARDEC

Rest, if you can. We can't stop for long.

NARRATOR: He took the pack Raj had carried and carefully emptied the contents onto the ground, a length of rope, the bottles of gasoline he once intended to use for stove fuel, and the rations. Taking the empty pack he started off into the dim light.

JOHN

Where are you going?

KARDEC

To get some wood. I'll have to go down into the forest a ways.

73 KARDEC GOES FOR WOOD, SEES LOWER CAVES

73

SFX: Kardec goes down the slope toward the trees.

NARRATOR: As he descended the slope mist closed in, muffling everything, condensing on the trees and falling like rain. To the west he could see a section of the hillside that seemed lighter in color and headed in that direction.

A huge lip of limestone had flaked off and come crashing down into the jungle. Underneath the scar were the dark mouths of several caves.

SFX: Kardec picks up wood and puts it in back pack.

NARRATOR: Amongst the broken and uprooted trees Kardec found all the downed wood he would ever need, a good deal of it relatively dry.

SFX: A bat flies by ... then another.

NARRATOR: There was a flicker at the corner of his vision, a shape lost against the trees.

SFX: Many more bats.

NARRATOR: Curling down out of the dawning sky was a dark trail. Like a column of smoke, it was joined by another and another. They shifted and formed into a flickering black cloud, a riot of swooping, dodging, confusion. The sky had darkened with bats. They poured down out of the heavens and up into the cave mouths along the mountainside.

74 RECOVER FROM BATS, EAT, JOHN ACCUSES KARDEC

74

HELEN
(distant scream)

NARRATOR: The effect the sound had on him was electric. Slipping into the pack he snatched up his rifle and ran for the slope.

The Lacklan's and Raj were well out in front of the cave entrance, an entrance nearly obscured by a miniature tornado of bats ... the last stragglers swooping away and heading for the caverns below.

HELEN
Sorry, sorry ...

KARDEC
(trying to catch his breath)
Everybody all right?

HELEN
Yes. Definitely. Smallest scare of the whole day.

NARRATOR: Raj made a fire and Kardec passed around the canteens. He opened two cans of Diamond tuna, a pack of Arnott's biscuits, and a tin of tropical chocolates.

KARDEC
That's it for the food and water ...

We've only got one chance; get back to the river and ride it down to the sea. We can rest for a half hour, then we'd better get going.

NARRATOR: John indicated Kardec's boot. Dark holes had been torn in the wet leather, holes that were again weeping blood.

HELEN
Are you going to be all right?

JOHN
That's going to get infected, it's just a matter of how long.

KARDEC
Maybe. With luck.

NARRATOR: He was afraid to take the boot off ... afraid of what he would find.

HELEN
Are we still in danger?

KARDEC
I expect they'll be after us.

JOHN
(mumbling)
And they'll find us too.

HELEN
I read that many of the tribes feel that there are spirits in the mountains, and never go there.

KARDEC
Atoh(#56). You could be right. *

HELEN
So, maybe this place is safe. At least that's what I read.

JOHN
You and that confounded guidebook! We don't know that will work!

KARDEC
If that guidebook is where she learned about headhunting customs, it might've saved your life. Jeru wasn't even going to sharpen his parang(#87)! *

JOHN
Well, I'm glad you enjoyed that at my expense.

KARDEC
Mr. Lacklan, I don't know if you are suicidal or what your problem is.

Be happy Helen tried. If she hadn't, more of us might have died trying to save your God Damn life!

JOHN
Really? Wouldn't you have waited?

Why did you follow us? Because you are the good Samaritan? Or because you are after my wife?

HELEN
John!

KARDEC

I don't know. But this late in the game
you'd be a fool to ask me to figure it
out.

NARRATOR: Kardec rose, taking up the carbine.

KARDEC

Put out that fire. It's light enough to
see our smoke.

SFX: Kardec walks away.

75 KARDEC WATCHES TRAIL, TALKS TO HELEN

75

NARRATOR: From the edge of the boulders their back trail was intermittently visible all the way down the ridge to the tower of rock several miles away.

They should be moving on. But Kardec felt like something was slowly choking him inside, so he stood guard and waited for the feeling to go away.

SFX: Helen approaches.

HELEN
Anything?

NARRATOR: He shook his head.

HELEN
You lost a friend tonight.

KARDEC
Raj told you?

HELEN
He died ... and I never even met him.

KARDEC
He thought he saved me once. He saved me back there ... that's for sure.

HELEN
(after a moment)
I'm sorry about John.

He thinks I cheated on him ... he's frightened I might cheat on him. I don't know.

He shouldn't have said those things.

KARDEC
We've all been under a lot of pressure ... he'll be better when you get him home.

HELEN
I don't know what we'll do.

Mr. Vandover told me, when you saved those people in Korea. That was what hurt ... your career.

KARDEC

Yeah. Van likes that story.

HELEN

I thought we were going to die.

KARDEC

You know, he never tells the other part
... about the people I couldn't save ...
trapped up there when the shells came in.

NARRATOR: She wanted to touch him, put a hand on his back, on his arm. But that wasn't who they were to each other. They stood there, the earliest rays of the sun warming them, coming up over a ghostly sea of mist that, with the coming warmth, began to rise.

In the distance something moved. Kardec raised his binoculars ...

KARDEC

Go. Get everybody up.

SFX: Helen turns and runs off

NARRATOR: Skirting the pinnacle at the base of the ridge he could make out the oncoming figures of men. Kardec touched the tattoo above his heart and counted ...

KARDEC

Damn it, Inghai ... This thing ain't
workin'.

SFX: Kardec follows Helen.

76 KARDEC WARNS JERU IS COMING

76

HELEN

John ... come on. Get up.

JOHN

Helen?

NARRATOR: Without his glasses John Lacklan's eyes looked curiously naked.

KARDEC

Raj! Get up!

RAJ

What ..?

KARDEC

Jeru.

NARRATOR: Raj scrambled to reload the backpack while John painfully got to his feet. Kardec's own foot felt strangely numb ... running was not going to be much of an option.

HELEN

(she's ready to get started)

What are we going to do?

NARRATOR: It was a good question. He didn't like the answer but it was more and more obvious.

KARDEC

I start a fight and retreat along the ridge. You hide in the cave and wait for them to chase me. I believe there's a way out down below.

JOHN

You believe?

NARRATOR: He took a breath, John Lacklan was beginning to piss him off.

KARDEC

You climb down, get away into the jungle. With any luck they'll be busy with me and they won't know where to pick up your tracks.

HELEN

You'll be killed.

KARDEC

Maybe.

NARRATOR: Vandover's old carbine had taken quite a beating, he'd have to wait until they got close.

KARDEC

Maybe I'll get away and meet you at the boats.

JOHN

How much ammunition have you got?

KARDEC

Nine rounds.

JOHN

She's right, you'll be killed.

KARDEC

You got a better idea?

Let's start by getting out of sight.

77 KARDEC EXPLORES THE CAVE

77

NARRATOR: Kardec ripped off what was left of his shirt sleeves and tied them around a stick from their pile of firewood. He poured a little of the gasoline on the wood ...

SFX: The gas ignites.

NARRATOR: ... and touched it to the coals of their fire.

Inside, the cave floor dropped off abruptly, corkscrewing downward into blackness. The flame flickered, drawn deeper into the mountain. But Kardec didn't need the torch as an indicator, he could feel the breeze on his cheek.

KARDEC

Well, there *is* another opening ...

NARRATOR: He took a step down the incline toward the drop off. Overhead, bats reacted nervously, they didn't like the smoke and flame from the torch.

KARDEC

Raj. Get me the rope.

SFX: There is a moment of silence. Kardec turns.

NARRATOR: The Lacklan's peered in from the mouth of the cave. Raj was nowhere in sight.

KARDEC

Raj? Oh, hell ...

NARRATOR: Kardec tossed the torch into the hole. It fell, revealing eroded strata like a series of giant steps. When the flame went out he could make out daylight leaking in from a lower level ... the caves he'd seen when he went for wood.

SFX: Kardec turns and heads out.

78 KARDEC ARGUES WITH THE LACKLAN'S ABOUT WHAT TO DO

78

NARRATOR: Raj stood outside, the coil of rope hanging in his hands.

KARDEC
Come on!

RAJ
I stay with you, Mike.

KARDEC
Raj, if you stay you'll die and *they'll*
never find the boats.

NARRATOR: Raj threw a nervous glance back down the ridge. None of Jeru's men were in sight but they were coming, sure as taxes.

RAJ
Okay, but you think *Atoh* big joke. I
hope you right.

KARDEC
Is it the *cave*? You don't want to go in
the damn *cave*?

HELEN
Mike, stop. If you want to try and get
to the river, we're with you ... but
we're *not* going to abandon anybody.

JOHN
God Helen, speak for yourself! He's made
his choices and for his own reasons.

HELEN
John shut up! I don't want anyone to
sacrifice themselves for me, can't you
men think of anything else?

NARRATOR: Kardec snatched the flashlight from the pack and threw it to John.

KARDEC
I don't care if you have to tie her up
and drag her, just get out of here!

HELEN
I'm not going.

NARRATOR: John took hold of Helen's arm but she jerked away.

HELEN

I'm *not* going!

KARDEC

Are there any other problems that need airing? Now is *certainly* the right time!
Bloody Hell!

*

NARRATOR: Mike Kardec looked at John Lacklan and he saw himself, keeping the world, risk, and failure at a distance. In Helen Lacklan's eyes and saw fear but no hesitation. She was hurling herself down a slope, ninety miles an hour and leaning into it.

He remembered Russian tanks looming up out of the snow, crying children, his own artillery beginning to fall. How long had he tried to keep himself alone and invulnerable? Useless. All useless in the end.

KARDEC

... blood-y hell ...

NARRATOR: Mike Kardec felt like Inghai was somewhere nearby, smiling at him.

KARDEC

Raj? If *you're* worried about the spirits, what about *them*?

NARRATOR: He pointed in the direction of Jeru and his men. He had one last bad idea and if it didn't work they'd all be empty skulls hanging from the beams of Jeru's longhouse.

KARDEC

Is Jeru afraid of Atoh?

RAJ

Maybe ...

His mans, they afraid, I think. Jeru he say he make obat, but all mans still afraid.

KARDEC

Are you afraid? Inghai told you about not fearing the spirits, only men ... do you believe that?

NARRATOR: After a moment Raj nodded.

KARDEC

If you can't help me, we're gonna die.

RAJ
Okay Mike. You show me.

KARDEC
Good. If we're lucky, we've got half an hour.

JOHN
Lucky? Jesus!

NARRATOR: Kardec picked up his pack and looked at Raj ...

KARDEC
Come with me.

JOHN
What's going on?

NARRATOR: ... he tossed John the rifle.

KARDEC
If they get within five hundred yards shoot once, I'll be back.

SFX: Kardec and Raj walk away.

JOHN
Tell me what you're going to do, damn it!

KARDEC
Inspire some belief.

NARRATOR: Kardec laughed to himself ... if he told John his plan he'd scare him right into a heart attack.

79 KARDEC AND RAJ PREPARE FIRE IN CAVE

79

NARRATOR: Deep in the lower cave Raj piled leaves and wood in a trench that Kardec had excavated in the thick coating of coating of guano that covered the rocks. For yards around he had turned it like the soil of a garden, exposing the oldest, driest layers.

They built a small fire in the center of the leaves and six feet above it one of the bottles of stove fuel was suspended by a forked branch they had cut.

RAJ
Here? Good?

KARDEC
Go more. Okay, there!

SFX: Kardec tosses bottles.

KARDEC
Take the stoppers out.

NARRATOR: Higher still were the other two bottles, loosely tied to a rock that also sat on the forked branch.

KARDEC
Right. Rube Goldberg would be proud of you.

RAJ
You too, Mike.

KARDEC
(laughs)

NARRATOR: Kardec was just tying the remaining thirty yards of rope to a piece of wood supporting the forked branch when ...

SFX: distant gunshot.

KARDEC
Show time.

Raj! You have to be outside the cave when you pull the rope, understand?

RAJ
Okay.

KARDEC
Don't do anything until I signal.

NARRATOR: Lacklan looked confused. Kardec mimed pinching his fingers together in front of his mouth ...

HELEN

I can.

KARDEC

If anything happens to me, you whistle as loud as you can and try to get away. But don't go in the cave. No cave, okay?

HELEN

Okay.

KARDEC

And if there is a patron saint of lost causes ... *pray*.

NARRATOR: Mike Kardec slipped the Mauser carbine across his back and stepped out of the cover of the rocks. Forcing himself to walk carefully, normally, he moved into the open and stood there, alone.

JOHN

He's crazy.

81 KARDEC CONFRONTS JERU

81

NARRATOR: Kardec positioned himself, standing as theatrically as he could, directing his gaze at each patch of cover, looking at it like he could see through it to the man that might be hiding there ...

KARDEC

Tuan Jeru! Come out and face me!

NARRATOR: There was movement among the rocks and men appeared, men who had once been members of the Kelabit, Iban, Kenyah, and Penan. Striding up through the scattering of warriors was Jeru and, behind him Kebir, his Hawaiian shirt torn and blackened, John's rifle carried ready.

JERU

(in Malay)

#41- Awak telah buat silap, datang ke negeri kami, dan memerangi kampung kami.

JERU

#41- You have made a mistake, coming to our country, making war on our village.

KEBIR

(in English)

He says you stupid foreigner come here to ...

KARDEC

Hey, Junior. Diam(#42). I know what he's saying. And he speaks enough English to know what I'm saying.

(Kardec pitches his voice to Jeru's followers)

I speak the language of the *Atoh* as well. Inghai gave you a chance, his curse is gone. I'm giving you a warning. Go now or I will bring another, a curse that is more terrible by far.

My obat is as good as his in this place. As good as the greatest sorcerer in Borneo. Go and leave us to ourselves. Uh ...

NARRATOR: Kardec wanted to sound impressive but he was quickly running out of blather ...

KARDEC

Though it is daylight I can summon the atoh of the night!

NARRATOR: He deliberately brought his hand up to his mouth and took a breath ...

SFX: Kardec whistles.

KARDEC
I call the gods of darkness ... SHOW.
YOUR. *POWER!*

NARRATOR: Jeru blinked and Kebir came up with the Winchester, pointing it at Kardec's head. Kardec looked Jeru right in the eye and made a sign with his hands that he hoped seemed magical or at least mysterious ...

KARDEC
(to himself)
Come on!

NARRATOR: Nothing happened.

KEBIR
Maybe gods at breakfas' ...

KARDEC
Aww, if I ever *needed* luck, now's the
time.

SFX: A explosion deep in the earth, then another.

NARRATOR: Kardec saw the fireball reflected in Kebir's glasses. The whole cave mouth lit up as spilling, vaporizing, gasoline detonated and the fire rushed upward.

Kebir recoiled, stunned ... and Kardec stepped in, smacking the muzzle of the rifle out of line with his head. His right fist snapped out and clipped the Dyak on the side of the jaw and grabbed the action of the rifle.

From the cave mouth a tidal wave of frenzied bats vomited forth. Terrified, blinded, driven by the flames that now consumed the guano in the cave, they poured into the morning sky. The stink of fire and ammonia filled the air.

Dyaks fled, racing back down the hillside like all the demons of hell were on their heels.

Kardec struggled to pull the gun away but Kebir clung to it like a drowning man.

With the lower entrances of the cave blocked by flames, thousands of bats sought the upper opening in numbers terrifying to behold, emerging into the sky as if from a high pressure hose.

SFX: Gunshot.

NARRATOR: Deafened by the blast Kardec saw Jeru draw his parang. He pushed Kebir back and kicked him as hard as he could in the crotch.

SFX: Kebir screams.

NARRATOR: Kebir dropped and Kardec came away with the rifle. Jeru calmly stepped over Kebir's writhing form and swung, the blow knocking the gun out of Kardec's hands.

SFX: Gun clatters to the ground.

NARRATOR: The carbine was slung across Mike's back, no way he could get to it fast enough. He drew his machete.

SFX: The two blades clang together.

NARRATOR: Jeru came in, cut and reversed so fast Kardec could barely move out of the way. The blade cut through the loose fabric of his shirt and the impact on his machete stunned his hand. Kardec swung at him and Jeru dodged then thrust along Kardec's arm, the blunt tip banging his ribs but the edge of the blade leaving a welling line of blood up Kardec's forearm.

Their blades struck low then high and Jeru drove the hilt of his parang downward into Kardec's shoulder. Kardec backed up. Old man or not Jeru was better at this than he was.

Kardec fainted, snapping his blade forward but not following through. Jeru just smiled ... then attacked, his blade cutting, reversing, a flashing blur in the sunlight. Kardec parried and retreated. Then a wide slice from Jeru's parang grazed Kardec's collarbone and snagged on the leather strap of the Mauser. Suddenly the fight was as good as over.

Kardec slid behind the old man and his hand came up under the wrist that held the parang. A twist was all it took because he was young and strong and as well trained in hand to hand as he was lost in a duel with swords. The wrist broke, Kardec planted a foot in front of Jeru and putting a knee into his back slammed him to the ground.

SFX: They hit the ground.

NARRATOR: Flipping Jeru over, Kardec launched a right that back in the states would have had the old man's jaw wired shut for months.

Kardec tried to stand. Gray fog swirled through his vision. His foot didn't hurt any more. The cut on his arm, the cut on his chest ...

Kebir was there, crouched painfully over John's rifle.

 KEBIR
 (in Malay)
 #43- Aku akan bunuh awak. Atoh boleh
 hukumkan aku, aku tidak peduli.

*

*

 KEBIR
 #43- I'll kill you. Atoh can punish me,
 I don't care.

SFX: Winchester cocks ...

NARRATOR: Kebir raised the gun, putting the sights carefully on Kardec's head. The world spun; sky and smoke and circling bats.

RAJ (WILD LINE 17)
 Mike, look out!

SFX: Raj's parang swishes past ...

NARRATOR: Then Raj's parang flashed past, the impact carrying Kebir off his feet.

Just before he blacked out Kardec saw men fleeing downhill. Helen standing over him working the bolt on John Lacklan's long rifle ...

SFX: Gunshots.

NARRATOR: Brass flew, bright against the sky.

SFX: Gunshot then sound out to nothing but a tinnitus like ringing ... then back up.

82 KARDEC TAKES RAJ'S KNIFE GOES BACK TO JERU

82

NARRATOR: Raj was lifting him, a shoulder under his arm.

KARDEC

Raj ya pulled ... pulled me out of the river again, didn't you?

RAJ

We have to go, Mike. Maybe they come back.

KARDEC

Yeah. Okay.

SFX: They start to head off ...

KARDEC

Wait ...
(then stronger)
Wait.

NARRATOR: Kardec took the short knife from Raj's belt. He turned to look at the Lacklans. *

KARDEC

Get them out of here. **There's something I've gotta do ...** *
* *

SFX: Kardec's footsteps.

NARRATOR: He walked unsteadily to where Jeru lay. Behind him, Raj was helping John down the slope toward the jungle but Helen was gazing at him with fear in her eyes.

Kardec knew he might not live to get back to the coast. He could barely walk and his wounds were surely infected. He might die but there was one more thing he needed to do. With bared blade in hand he went down on one knee beside his honorable enemy ...

SFX: The high mountain wind whistles mournfully among the rocks ...

83 KARDEC HAS A FEVER

83

NARRATOR: It took almost two days to get back to the boats. John's ankle was swollen and one eye was oddly dilated but he pushed himself along with a fierce, silent concentration. Kardec limped, with Raj supporting him much of the time.

SFX: Kardec stumbles and stops.

RAJ

Miss?

HELEN

Oh ... no. John, wait.

God. He's burning up.

(to Kardec)

Sit for a moment.

KARDEC

No. If we stop they'll either have to cut my foot off or I'll die. There's sulfa in the boat ... might buy me coup'l'a days.

HELEN

Okay. Come on Raj ... lift!

84 DOWN RIVER TO THE SEA

84

NARRATOR: Kardec never remembered finding the boats. He awoke on the river with his boot cut away and Helen dusting the punctures with antibiotic powder.

HELEN

Don't look at it. You've had the tablets and this is the last of the powder.

RAJ

Hold on!

SFX: The sound of the rapids comes up, water crashing on rocks. It merges with surf on sand.

85 THEY SIGNAL A BOAT

85

NARRATOR: He came to again on a wide beach backed by nipa palms and pandanus. To his right was an estuary, blue water curving through white sand. John Lacklan was beside him, both of them propped against a log like sacks of grain.

Closer to the water Raj tended a smoky fire while Helen scanned the horizon with Kardec's binoculars. For the first time in years, Kardec thought, Borneo looked like an island.

JOHN

Look at her ... She'll go home, clean up, and never even have a bad dream.

NARRATOR: Mike looked over at him. He didn't have the strength to speak and wouldn't have known what to say if he had.

JOHN

I always knew this trip was the last chance to prove what she meant to me.

I ought to thank you ... But I'm not really sure what for.

HELEN

(distant)
Look! Look!

RAJ

(distant)
Yes!

RAJ

(in Malay distant)
#44- Terima kasih Yesus,
#45- Insya Allah,
#46- terima kasih semua Atoh.
#47- terima kasih.

RAJ

#44- Thank you Jesus,
#45- praise to Allah,
#46- thank you all Atoh,
#47- thank you!

JOHN

Will you look at that!

NARRATOR: Low and gray in the distance, a tanker appeared from beyond a point of land ...

HELEN

(distant)
The gun. Raj, get the gun!

SFX: Raj fires the gun.

HELEN
(distant)
Again!

SFX: The gun goes off and far across the water the ship
blasts it's siren.

NARRATOR: Kardec looked skyward and closed his eyes. The
leaves of the palm trees shifted the shadow to light and back
to shadow.

86 HELEN COMES TO SAY GOOD BYE

86

NARRATOR: Kardec awoke in his bungalow on the Baram river. He had vague memories of ships and a hospital, concrete floors and white walls, I.V. bottles and pain. They had pumped him full of penicillin and primaquine, cut the bird shot out of his foot and ankle and left it full of drains.

It was like it had all happened a long time ago but maybe that was the fever, or the drugs, or just the curse of the tropics ...

SFX: A car drives slowly down a gravel road, pulls to a stop. The engine dies. A car door opens, footsteps on gravel, the door closes.

NARRATOR: Through the mosquito netting she was a vague figure, shimmering white, then silhouetted against the sunlight on the road. He struggled to sit up, pull back the netting ...

HELEN

Mr. Kardec? We're leaving. I just wanted to thank you.

You saved our lives.

KARDEC

How's your husband?

HELEN

He has a concussion and a bad sprain. All the walking we did made it worse. He's exhausted ... so am I.

He won't talk to me. It's like I did something unforgivable back there, but I don't see that I really had a choice.

KARDEC

He's alive, you're alive. Whatever he thinks, it's better than the alternative.

HELEN

I guess so.

There's something else ... something I don't really know how to say ...

NARRATOR: He swallowed. She couldn't say more. There was a moment where he might have hidden the way he felt but that moment was now as far away as the mist shrouded mountains, as long ago as Korea.

KARDEC

It's okay.

Not everything needs to be ... acted on.
Right?

SFX: Helen adjusts her seat, uncomfortable.

HELEN

We should pay you.

NARRATOR: She opened her purse ...

HELEN

... at least what we were going to for
guiding us. We owe you that, and more.

NARRATOR: He reached out and stopped her.

KARDEC

I don't want any money.

HELEN

Will you be alright?

KARDEC

Yeah.

NARRATOR: She stood and he looked up at her. She put her
finger tips in his hair, combing it back off his forehead.

SFX: She starts to leave.

KARDEC

I have your book ... I haven't finished
it.

SFX: She turns back.

HELEN

You should.

KARDEC

I'll return it to you

HELEN

I'm sure you will ...

SFX: The door closes behind her. The car starts and
disappears up the dusty road. Distant thunder ...

NARRATOR: Hours passed and he drifted in and out of sleep. In the distance thunder rumbled but in his dreams the guns were silent. And under the spiral tattoo Mike Kardec's heart beat easily.

87 VANDOVER RETURNS KARDEC'S PASSPORT

87

SFX: Street sounds and talk in Malay, Chinese, Dutch and English.

NARRATOR: The fans turned lazily, hanging from the high ceiling of the Claudetown Saloon. Flies switch-backed in the shadows and outside the town lay, stunned by the afternoon heat.

SFX: The door opens and someone enters ...

VANDOVER

Ahh, Mike.

KARDEC

Hello, Cliff.

VANDOVER

How's the leg?

KARDEC

Passing fair and getting better.

SFX: Vandover sits.

VANDOVER

Here's this, old man.

NARRATOR: Vandover withdrew Kardec's passport from his pocket and lay it on the table.

KARDEC

Thanks.

VANDOVER

Not to worry, Mike. We'll find some way of getting you home.

NARRATOR: Mike Kardec had to struggle to keep from smiling. He reached into his pocket and placed a diamond on the table ... a diamond the size of a small bird's egg, held in a setting of woven leather.

VANDOVER

Hello! Is this what I think it is? Good Lord!

NARRATOR: Vandover pulled out his glasses and picked up the stone, looking at it closely.

VANDOVER

You really must tell me how you got it.

NARRATOR: Kardec leaned back in his chair, elaborately casual ...

KARDEC
In the end we came to an agreement.

VANDOVER
With Jeru? You're joking!

SFX: The echoing sound of wind from the high mountains ...

NARRATOR: Bats circled in a sky full of smoke ...

KARDEC
Nope.

NARRATOR: Kardec had taken the short knife from Raj's belt ... there was one more thing left to do ...

KARDEC
Turns out I had something he wanted even more ...

NARRATOR: The old man had been conscious. Sunlight glinted on the blade. Kardec lifted his head by the hair and Jeru closed his eyes, resigned to death.

KARDEC
... his life.

NARRATOR: The knife cut through leather ...

KARDEC (*FLASHBACK/WILDLINE 18*)
This is my curse, Tuan Jeru ... if I ever hear of you again, I'll come back ... and make your skull into an ash tray.

NARRATOR: ... and as Kardec stood, the diamond sparkled in the morning light.

SFX: the high mountain wind whistles and then we're back in the saloon.

VANDOVER
(chuckling)
Old chap ... I don't know how you do it.

KARDEC
I don't know, magic? I never seem to get the luck I want ... but somehow I end up with the luck I need.

NARRATOR: Kardec placed the passport in Helen's book and closed the cover.

Vandover lifted his glass ...

VANDOVER
Cheers!

KARDEC
Selamat!

SFX: After a moment they look at each other and chuckle, then the chuckle turns into a hearty laugh for both of them.