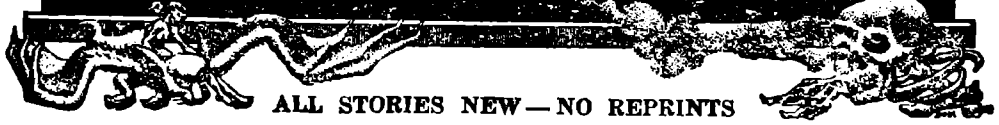


Weird Tales



ALL STORIES NEW—NO REPRINTS

July, 1945

Cover by Lee Brown Coye

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Except for personal experiences the contents of this magazine is fiction. Any use of the name of any living person or reference to actual events is purely coincidental.

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Vol. 38, No. 6

D. McILWRAITH, Editor.

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Devil Dog

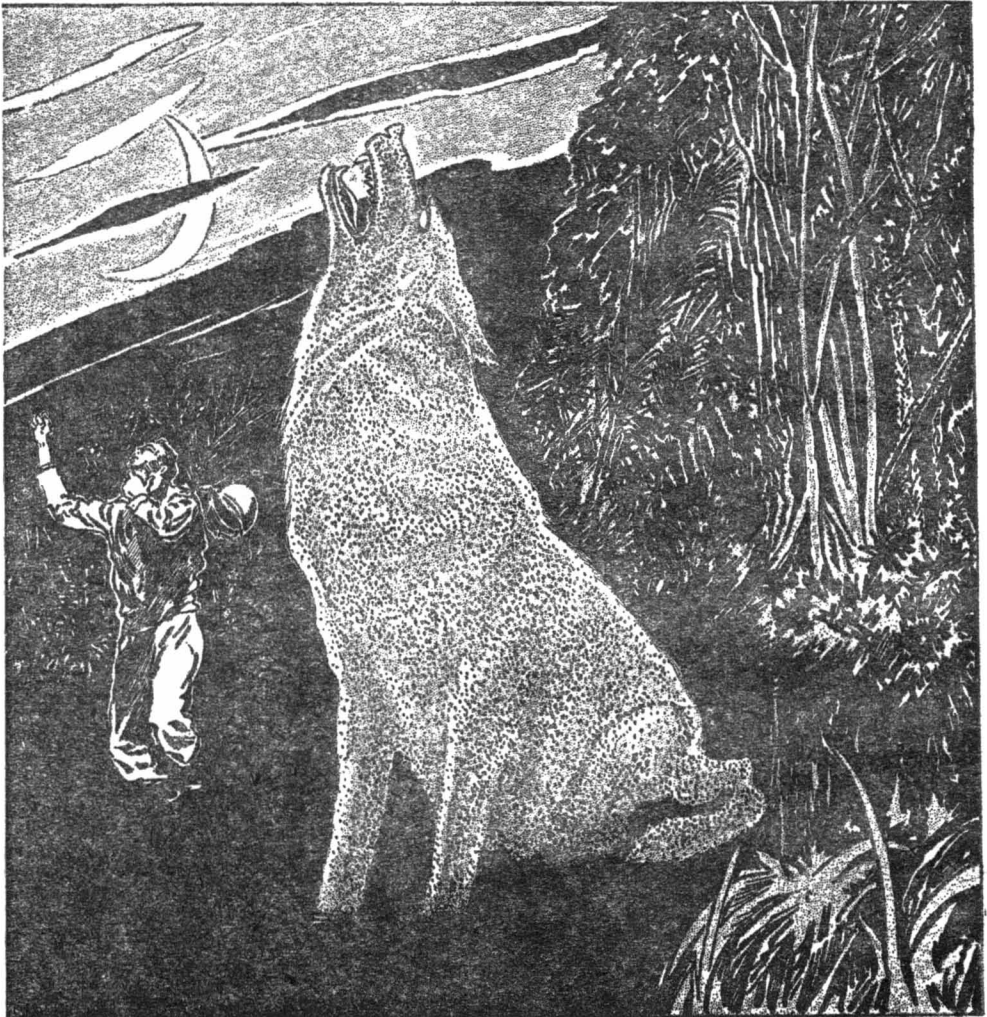
THE Marines had established a beachhead on Watinau. For three days they had driven inland against an enemy who crept from palm to palm, dodged from foxhole to foxhole. He was seldom seen alive, plentifully so dead. The advance was grimly cheerful, though slow.

The condition were anomolous, elsewhere than at war. Lieutenant Barkis, in charge of the War Dog Detachment, felt cheerful, too. The entire three days had cost him no more than one dog and one handler.

The dog, a Doberman Pinscher scout, had been caught in a crossfire of Nipponese machine-guns and slashed to ribbons. The same storm of lead had lodged a couple of bullets in the handler's thigh.

The jungle was bad on Watinau. It was thick and treacherous. Signalman struggled through rancid growth and clouds of mosquitoes, splashing sometimes chest-deep through swamp, to lay the wire. And the Nips sneaked through the lines and nipped it. Or their artillery and mortars blew it

By **MANLY BANISTER**



They were trained to be silent, in killing or in being killed!

to shredded ends, and the weary signalmen struggled some more to keep the communication lines open.

The dogs were a Godsend. All the Marines agreed that they were. Bluff, red-faced Colonel Marty congratulated Lieutenant Barkis, whenever they met, on the work his dogs were doing. He dictated a paragraph of praise to the combat correspondents, and the Colonel's words were reprinted in the daily papers of every state in the Union. Lieutenant Barkis was justifiably proud of his dogs.

The dogs crept through the thickest jungle, bellies on the ground, faster than a man could travel in the open. They carried mes-

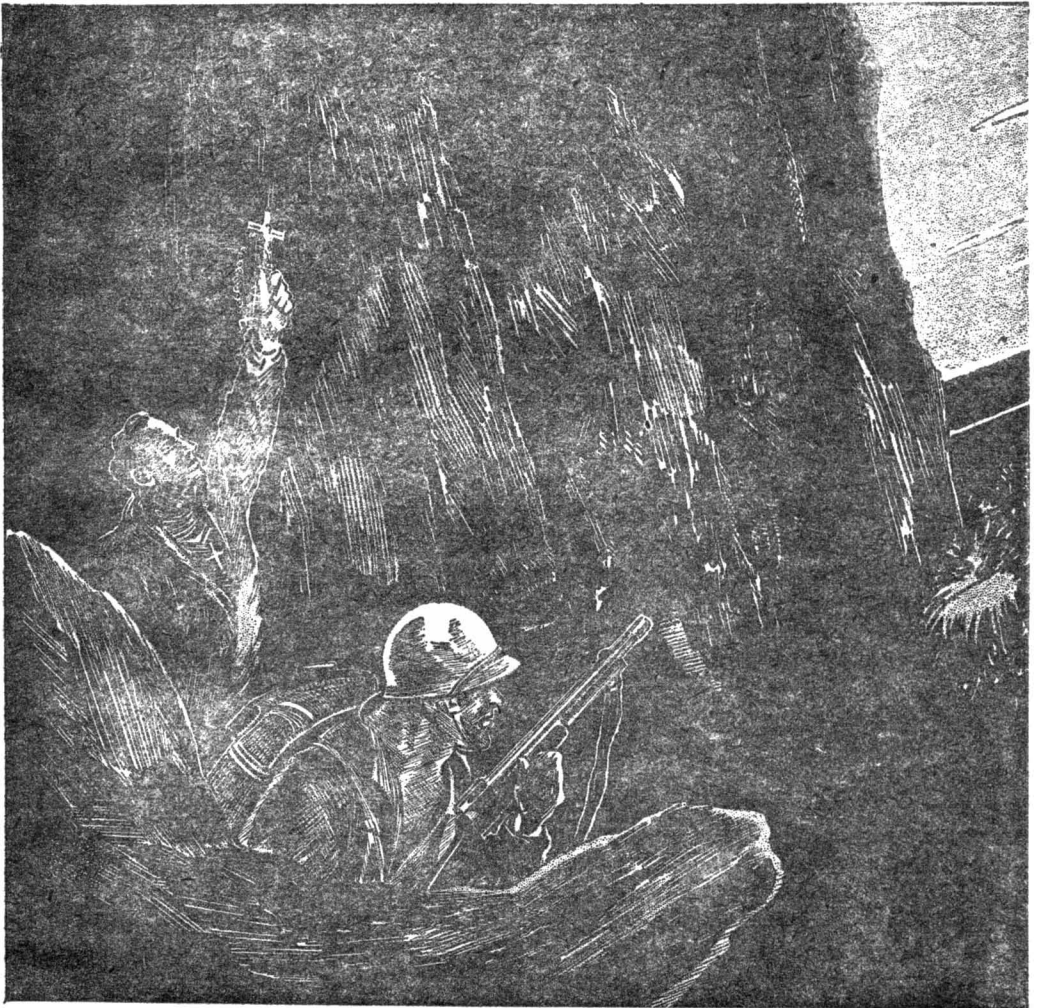
sages, requesting reinforcements and supplies. They scouted for the advancing troops, alerting enemy machine-gun nests, snipers, and sundry ambushades. They saved lives, Colonel Marty said, and they saved time—two of the most priceless commodities in the store of an attacking force.

Then . . .

“ALEX—poor old Alex!” babbled the corporal. “Stretched out like a sack, he is, and blood all over.”

Lieutenant Barkis erupted from the shallow slit-trench in which he had slept, rolled in his poncho. It was barely light. A mist hovered at the edge of the jungle.

Heading by A. R. TILBURNE



"Alex? Where?"

The corporal gestured vaguely into the dirty gray mist. His stubbled cheeks looked wan in the death-light.

"Thirty yards from my foxhole. I woke up, and Alex was gone. I got up and looked around—"

Barkis pulled on his steel helmet and spoke curtly.

"Show me."

"He must have heard something and went to investigate," the corporal added nervously. "A Jap knifed the life out of him."

Barkis shrugged irritably. Mist-dampened folds of his camouflaged poncho rustled against his legs.

"The fighting is five miles from here," he objected.

The earth glistened blackly about the rigid, splayed figure. The foggy illumination glinted dully on reddish highlights. The surf throbbled a muffled tempo. Mist coiled and drifted among the palms, holding itself aloof from the two men and the dead thing at their feet.

Alex had not died easily. His feet were stretched out from his body as if still clawing an illusive enemy. The eyes were wide and glaring, lips curled back upon a welter of bloody foam and glistening teeth, snarling dead, futile hatred—futile, for hate nor courage had prevailed, and Alex had died with the wind whistling from the gory rent in his throat.

Lieutenant Barkis dropped to one knee beside the dead dog, lifted the sleek head of the Doberman, and let it drop gently.

"No Jap knife did that," he observed shakily. "His throat was ripped out by teeth. He must have fought with another dog."

"We'd a heard that, Lieutenant, wouldn't we?"

"Not necessarily. They're trained to be silent. Have you checked the other dogs?"

"No, sir. I found Alex like that and came straight to get you."

"Get me Sergeant Stranger. I'll wait here."

The corporal drifted into the mist. Barkis pondered a moment more, then got close to the ground, combed the territory for sign.

He straightened at a sound. The corporal returned in the company of a lean, saturnine

looking man. Sergeant Stranger wiped his hands on his dungarees, rubbed a stubbled jaw.

"Corporal Hanocek says you think Alex was in a fight with a dog."

Barkis got to his feet, slapped detritus from his knees, adjusted the folds of his poncho.

"I know he was. There are dog tracks all around. Some are Alex's. Some are bigger. We'll check the other dogs at once, Sergeant." He turned to the corporal. "Hanocek—that's your name?—run along and find out if the watch heard anything. When you come back, look for me. I'll be with the handlers."

"I got six scouts and four messengers at the front," Stranger volunteered. "The rest of them are here. I could check my records—"

"The dogs at the front don't concern us," Barkis told him. "It was a dog here at hand who did that to Alex."

"The handlers keep their dogs pretty close," Stranger put in dubiously.

"Alex got away from Hanocek."

The sergeant was silent.

A check of the dogs proved fruitless.

"Alex couldn't have got what he did without giving a little in return," Stranger observed. "And the dogs are all where they belong, and clean."

"Not a scratch, not a drop of blood," agreed Barkis. He was puzzled.

Hanocek came out of the soupy mist.

"The guards didn't hear a thing, sir."

Barkis nodded. "I didn't suppose they had. We'd have known." He frowned. "Another team out of action. Yours, Hanocek? The corporal nodded. "Of course," Barkis went on. "Well, give your men the word, Sergeant. Keep the dogs on leash at all times. We can't afford to have this."

"Yes, sir," agreed the sergeant. He scowled at Hanocek. Barkis went away.

THEY buried Alex and piled lumps of coral upon his grave. On top, they stuck a crude cross made by tying broken boughs together. They hung Alex's bloody collar on the cross, and below it a board with the scrawled inscription: "ALEX, a U. S. Marine. Killed in the line of duty." It was terse, a fitting epitaph for a Marine.

The swift flow of battle progressed throughout the day. The enemy ebbed to the crest of Watinau's hills and hid out in caves and among boulders. The advance rested, waiting for the artillery to catch up. The sun drifted through clouds of red and gold to its setting behind the hills of Watinau. A shadow rose up from out of the ground, embraced the flaming sky, and came down upon the Marines lying in the fetid jungle.

Lieutenant Barkis had established a station at a village in the jungle. It was necessary now to run the dogs in relays to the beach.

The enemy mortars raised hob with the telephone lines all day. The dogs were surer than radio. They got through without being intercepted. And the artillery went up, and the half-tracks distributed ammunition, and food and water to the hungry, battle-worn Marines. A company of tanks was sent to the proper position, where they deployed in a line of steel. The enemy had made it hard for himself. The only argument he knew was being brought to bear.

The natives had long since departed from the ruined village. Most of the flimsy huts had been knocked down, some had burned. Others had been cleaned up and made fit for the dogs, and their handlers dug holes for themselves in the open.

Lieutenant Barkis toiled at a packing crate desk inside one of the huts. He had stopped up the chinks in the walls, hung a couple of blankets in the doorway, and dared to light his work with a shaded lantern turned low.

All night long the half-tracks clanked through the village, the tanks and the amphibious ducks. The jungle was full of their rolling and muttering. Dawn was not far off.

Sergeant Stranger, leaner and more saturnine looking than ever in the weird lamp-light, slipped through the curtained doorway.

"Sir, Vance just came in from up front. You better talk to him."

Barkis frowned, glanced at the papers on his crude desk.

"Send him in."

Vance came in. He was thin—the kind

of thinness popular among jungle fighters—and sallow. He took off his helmet and held it under his arm. His dark eyes burned in hollows above jutting cheekbones.

"My dog, Lieutenant. I sent him in over an hour and a half ago. He didn't come back, so I checked."

"Yes?"

"Vance's dog never got here," interpolated Sergeant Stranger.

BARKIS sat back from the packing case. He was tired. He hadn't realized how tired he was.

He said, "Maybe he got lost," and knew by their expressions they thought he was cracking up. "No," he corrected himself. "They don't get lost, do they?" He looked up sharply, forcing the weariness from his mind and body. "Let's have it."

Vance said, "My dog is dead, sir. Dead—like Alex was."

Barkis knitted his brows. "Killed—by another dog?"

"Yes, sir. I found him a quarter of a mile back along the trail. Bloody. Throat ripped out. Dead as hell, sir."

"The dog's message?"

"I delivered that myself, sir. Sorry about the delay—"

Barkis relaxed. "Very good. You'd better get some rest now. You'll need all you can get for tomorrow. Stranger . . ."

Vance, dismissed, left the hut. The saturnine sergeant hovered expectantly.

"Can you take one of the dogs forward?"

"Yes, sir. Grim is my dog."

"Grim, eh? Splendid name. Get Grim and stand by. We'll shove off in about ten minutes."

The sergeant looked a question, thought better of it, and went out. Barkis made a few aimless notations on the sheet before him, then turned the lantern even lower and blew out the flame. The wick smoldered acridly in the dark.

Grim was a massive German Shepherd. Stranger held him firmly on leash as they moved along beside the line of muttering vehicles going up to the front. The ground was soggy underfoot, the road itself had been churned to soupy mud. Barkis was silent, holding back his tiredness. Stranger moved at his side with the rhythmic preci-

sion of one of the machines that rolled slowly past them.

Stranger touched the lieutenant's arm.

"We turn off here, sir," he shouted above the thunder of many exhausts. "It's tricky, but it's a short cut. Up this way, Vance's dog—"

He bit off his words. Barkis knew the man loved his dogs. What had happened to Alex, and now to Vance's dog, had hurt him deeply.

Barkis risked a flicker of blue from his pocket torch, picked his way along a rotting log. The dog and man were lumpish shadows ahead. Away from the stench of burned gasoline, the smell of the jungle, raw, purulent, assailed his nostrils.

Low-voiced comments on the nature of their way came back from the man ahead. Barkis ducked vines, by-passed trees, clambered over logs, waded through mucky swamp and waist high grass. They broke into a small clearing.

"Right here," Stranger said, "is where Vance's dog got it."

They proceeded carefully. Barkis flashed his light at intervals. Stranger halted, and Grim commenced to whine.

"Here," said the sergeant.

BARKIS directed the wan beam of his torch upon the ground. The dog, a once powerful Doberman Pinscher, was horribly mangled, lay in a pool of its own blood.

"Is there a hound running wild on this island?" Stranger wanted to know.

Barkis shrugged. "He's bigger than ours. Look at those tracks."

The tracks covered the area of a man's palm. A giant dog. A dog that roamed ghostlike through the night, and mangled for the sheer joy of mangling.

"A dog like that," said Stranger, "would attack a man."

"A dog like that—could," agreed Barkis. He loosened his pistol in its holster. "Grim knows he's a murderer, too."

The dog crouched close against its lean master, trembled and whined. The dim blue of the flash showed Grim's eyes wild and rolling.

"He's scared to death," said the sergeant. "D'you suppose he—no, I guess it's Death

that scares him. His buddy is dead, and he don't know how nor why."

Barkis thought there was something else in the dog's attitude—a deeper fear than the dread of the visible evidence of Death before them. He said nothing of his thoughts.

"Take him on, Stranger. I'm going to look around here. I'll be up before it gets light."

Stranger hesitated. "Do you think it's—safe, Lieutenant?"

Barkis' irritation was a direct product of his own uneasiness.

He said, "Grim may be needed up front, Sergeant."

"Very well, sir."

The saturnine man tugged at the shepherd's leash, spoke softly to the animal. Barkis stood alone, contemplating the cerie shadows. He regretted having sent the man and dog on their way, but he would not admit that he was more than a little nervous. He got down and inspected the alien tracks in the light of his torch.

The sound of desultory firing drifted down from the hills of Watinau. Occasionally, a star-shell winked into brilliance in the sky, too far away to cast even faint illumination into the clearing. A high rack of clouds concealed the moon. Barkis set off in the direction taken by the giant dog tracks, and somehow he felt cold, as if the night had turned abruptly chill.

A hundred yards from the dead dog, the tracks vanished into the trickle of a stream. Flash his light here and there as he might, Barkis discovered no further trace of them. He nodded in recognition of this evidence.

"Smart," he told himself. "Smart as a man to lose his tracks like that."

He pocketed the flash and picked his way back to the murdered dog. Orienting himself, he continued in the trail of Sergeant Stranger and Grim.

Whether it was a slight sound that warned him, or some sixth sense that functioned without his conscious volition, Barkis was not sure. He brought himself to an abrupt halt, stood listening, pistol in hand. The gloom was impenetrable. An army of Japs might lie hidden a dozen steps away.

A shadow reared at his feet, and Barkis' breath jammed in his throat. He thrust himself backward, fending off with his left arm the massive, shaggy bulk that hurtled upon him. The collision knocked the breath from him, and his perceptions registered nothing but hair, hot breath, and glittering eyes.

Barkis struck the stony ground on his side, felt the crushing penetration of fangs upon the muscles of his arm. Something set up a deafening of concussions. He realized it was the pistol in his other hand. The weapon was thrust into the beast's shaggy midriff.

Barkis felt claws rake his body, and the animal vaulted over him, crashed into the jungle. Far away, a thin crackle of rifle fire rippled on the night. Barkis got painfully to his feet, nursing his injured arm.

He felt light-headed and hazy. He thought dreamily of the nearby stream, and desire for running water obsessed him.

"Wash the wound," he told himself. "Wash first, then bind it."

His way crossed the stream. Running water tinkled at his feet. He plunged forward.

"TAKE it easy, Lieutenant. Everything's okay."

Barkis was soaked. He had passed out and fallen in the water. His wounded arm was bandaged and Sergeant Stranger knelt beside him. The sky was streaked with a gutty grayness. Grim cowered beside a log, whimpering. The dog's thin flanks heaved desperately.

Barkis touched his throbbing head. "Lucky for me you came back," he said.

Stranger said, "I heard the shooting and guessed what was up. You were lying half in and half out of the water."

Barkis lifted his head, remembering.

"The dog," he said breathlessly, "jumped at me out of the dark. Fastened on my arm. I shot it four, five times, the muzzle pressed into its belly."

"I'd like to see that dog," Stranger offered, "I sure would. Must be a monster."

Barkis got shakily to his feet and led the way.

"It was about here. See where the ground is dug up? I landed there." He stooped and

picked up a brass cartridge. "You'll find a couple more of these around here. He jumped over me and—"

Barkis looked around for a sprawled shape. The dawn light was clear and gray, but it showed no sign of the alien dog. Nor, due to the stony nature of the ground, were there tracks. A haunted expression came into Barkis' eyes. He cast about in widening circles.

"I'm sure I got him," he muttered. "Point blank, four, five shots."

Abruptly, he came back to the scene of the skirmish.

"No blood. My sleeve soaked up mine, but that beast should have showered blood like a lawn sprinkler."

He grew aware of a poignant throbbing in his arm. Sickness and dizziness assailed him.

"Let's get on back to the sick bay, Lieutenant," Stranger put in anxiously. "That arm is in a bad way."

A mellow thundering commenced on their left. The noise crescendoed, swept around to the right.

"It's started," Barkis said bleakly.

"That will pound 'em out of their holes," agreed Stranger.

Barkis swayed. The sergeant supported him. Grim suddenly howled, broke away, and bolted down the path. Stranger slitted his eyes.

"Now I wonder—"

The roar of the barrage struck a pitch of angry thunder and continued without remitting.

"PLASMA, this guy says," Barkis told Stranger after a brief session with medical corpsmen. "They got plasma on the brain. I told them to save it for the guys who will really need it."

Stranger's saturnine features tightened.

"It might not have been a bad idea, Lieutenant. There's shock with a wound like that. How y'feel?"

"I'm all right," gruffly. Barkis pondered. "Burns, though. Like fire. Maybe infection. But the sulfa will take care of that. The M. O. said I'll have to go when they take out the wounded. Right now, I'm supposed to sleep."

He held the bandaged arm in his good

hand. His eyes were red-rimmed and a flush suffused the stubbled flesh of his cheeks.

The wounded arm burned, and he couldn't sleep. He stumbled out of his quarters in midafternoon and went to the dog compound. The guns still rumbled among the hills of Watinau. Trucks grumbled in a ceaseless line from the front, bringing in wounded, returning with ammunition for the hungry, tireless guns.

The dogs sounded an uproar as he approached. He frowned. The chorus of yelps and howls was distinctly contrary to their training. Handlers scurried. Barkis sought out Sergeant Stranger. The sergeant was consulting with Hanocek about the care of a wounded dog.

"I can't figure what's got into the dogs," Stranger told Barkis. "They've been skittish and uneasy all day. Now this." He waved his hand.

Barkis frowned toward the dog hut.

"Maybe I'd better look in—"

Stranger's hand on his good arm restrained him.

"No, sir. Don't do that!" The sergeant's tone was imperative. A curious commingling of expression struggled across his lean features. "The boys will square 'em away. The lieutenant better go back and rest that arm some more."

Barkis looked down at the bandage. A little red had seeped through, staining the white gauze. The wound burned with an excruciating fire that swirled the length of his arm, ignited his brain, made him faint and dizzy.

"Maybe I better. But don't hesitate to call on me if I'm needed."

He lurched in the direction of his quarters. The yelping and howling of the dogs subsided, whimpered into silence.

Barkis halted outside the blanket-hung doorway of his hut. Corporal fear shook his body as with an ague. He sweated. The very hut was a hulk of leering menace, and he was afraid to enter.

He struggled with the unknown sensation, reflecting feverishly on the curious reaction of sulfa drugs. Only the drug could have hurled him to this nadir of terror. It was like a claustrophobia, forcing him to stay in the open. He resolved he would not be bested by the physical reaction of the

drug, pushed reluctant limbs forward, into the hut.

A man sat in Barkis' folding chair at the crude desk. His dungarees were torn and muddy. He had laid aside his steel helmet, and his sparse, blond hair stood up atop a narrow, ascetically moulded skull.

"Father Murphy!" The name caught like a dried crust in Barkis' throat.

The chaplain smiled tiredly.

"Hello, Barkis. I just got back this morning from the front. Your sergeant told me you had been hurt. Is there anything I can do?"

Barkis found it impossible to control his impulses. The hot throbbing in his arm sent waves of delectable giddiness dashing over his brain. He was angry, resentful, and afraid.

"There's nothing you can do for me. I'm not dead yet."

The older man did not alter his serene expression.

"That wasn't quite what I meant, lad. You will be leaving Watinau as soon as a ship comes to evacuate the wounded. I might—"

Barkis cut him off bitterly. "There is something you can do. You can get out of here and let me sleep."

Father Murphy's eyelids drooped. Stern pity possessed his gaunt, gentle features. He got up, fingering his helmet, and moved toward the door.

Barkis did not realize that he was glaring. He backed across the room, avoiding physical contact with the chaplain. After the man had gone, Barkis stared morosely at the curtained doorway, fighting an inward battle of revulsion and shame.

THE guns still thundered on the following day, and a trickle of wounded came down from the hills of Watinau.

"Like blasting rattlesnakes out of their dens," Stranger remarked to Barkis. "It takes time and energy."

He stared bleakly into the officer's swollen, feverish face.

Barkis croaked, "How are the dogs standing up?"

"Lost two more last night," Stranger said laconically. His glance sharpened with a predatory look. "The big . . . dog got 'em."

Got a man, too. At least, that's what I heard."

Barkis wrenched his head around. His brain felt puffed within his skull. The sergeant's saturnine features were void of expression. His eyes looked like peeled onions.

"A man?" Barkis parroted.

"We had a good moon last night," Stranger went on flatly. "I saw the beast, sneaking along the edge of the dog compound. It was after I found my two murdered dogs. The animals were kicking up a fuss, y'see. The thing looked more like a timber wolf than a dog. It was monstrous, had heavy, black fur."

Barkis could not look at him. "Are you sure? This isn't the place for wolves."

"You can never be sure of what you see by moonlight," Stranger told him. "I just had a glimpse. He skulked off into the shadows."

Barkis' breath seemed on the verge of exploding in his lungs.

"Black, you say? Maybe twice the size of—of Grim?"

"Or bigger," the sergeant agreed without emphasis. "Only—I'm not sure. I think I saw him after that. I looked around, y'see."

Barkis' eyes swiveled toward the sergeant, slipped restlessly aside.

"Not again?"

"I said I just think I saw him. Or maybe it was a different one. I've seen wolves in my time, and I can recognize the breed. This one was smaller, lighter colored—sort of gray—and he limped."

"I think I'd better lie down," Barkis faltered. "My arm's giving me the devil."

"He limped," Stranger persisted, "and I'm sure he was lighter colored. I saw him plain in the moonlight, maybe for five or ten seconds. He wasn't so wary as the other one." The sergeant's eyes were chips of bright steel. "The second one sniffed around where the other had been. Then he took off, like he was following tracks, nose to the ground."

He went away then, and Barkis cowered in his blankets, sweating with the fever in his blood.

Sergeant Stranger had a long talk with Father Murphy. The chaplain looked wor-

ried and puzzled. Stranger's thin jaws worked. The tone of his voice, husky, whispered, carried urgency and conviction.

"I'm a dog man, Father. I've worked with the creatures all my life. I know dogs maybe better than I know men. Sometimes I reckon I respect 'em more. I was five years in the Yukon country, training dogs. With my own eyes I saw a case of what I've just told you about. The Canadians called it *loup-garou*."

Father Murphy looked harassed.

"It's — it's unthinkable, Sergeant. It's blasphemous!"

Stranger looked bleak. "It was an accident, anyway. The fiend didn't intend it that way. But there may be more accidents of the same kind. Think of it then. What I'm suggesting is only a last resort, you might say. D'you think I want to do it? God knows I'll try everything else first. Me, I know dogs. You know men. Between us, we might figger something."

The chaplain nodded somberly. "There are ways. I have never been called upon to use them. One wouldn't be—not in this supposedly enlightened era. I'll have to study somewhat. We can't afford—"

"To make a mistake," Stranger finished for him. "But in the Yukon, about that *loup-garou*, we didn't make a mistake. We finished him."

BEHIND the saturnine man's opaque eyes glimmered a vision of graphic drama witnessed in the snowy woods of the North. He saw again the group of rough miners, mackinawed, toqued, stamping on ungainly snowshoes about a thing that lay dead in the snow, an evil thing that had lived beyond life, and now its blood was frozen to ruddy cake in the brittle cold.

Stranger fumbled in his dungaree jacket, withdrew a photographic contact print and tendered it to the chaplain.

"I had my suspicions yesterday. I heard him shoot, and it was patently impossible for him to miss. And there was no blood. Not anywhere, except his sleeve was soaked with it. That was his own blood. Then Grim, my dog, bolted, and none of the other dogs could stand it when he came around. They sensed him, y'see—what he is. So I had a photographer take his pic-

ture at the dressing station. He didn't know anything about it."

Father Murphy frowned at the bit of glossy paper.

"It seems to be a picture of the dressing station, all right. Rather blurred and out of focus."

Stranger grinned tightly. "You think that is the photographer's fault? It was focussed on *him*, y' see. All you see there is background, and naturally it's out of focus."

Father Murphy looked up, puzzled. "I don't understand."

"Neither do I," shrugged the sergeant. "The photographer is still biting his nails over it. He wanted to throw the negative away. I persuaded him to make a print, anyway. It's the only proof I've got—so far."

"Proof? Man, I don't see how this proves anything!"

Stranger retrieved the print, tucked it into his pocket.

"That photographer is an expert in his line. He wouldn't miss a picture not six feet away. But he did miss. You can see that for yourself. Now, there's silver in the photographic emulsion—I dunno. Anyway, you've got to take my word for it, Father. About what I came for—"

Father Murphy sighed with trouble. "I have what you want," he said slowly. "Just a minute. I'll get it from my locker."

"You'll be ready to go with me tonight, Father—and bring the water?"

The chaplain nodded wearily. His eyes were bright with a new comprehension, an understanding of vileness that had not been his before.

"I would never have believed," he breathed.

Stranger went away from the chaplain's hut, concealing something under his jacket. He picked his way past clots of wounded about the medical station, directed his steps toward a repair depot where a group of greasy Marines were working on a disabled amtrac. One set down a glowing, gasoline blow-torch and rummaged in the amtrac's vitals. He reached back for the torch, and it was gone. He cursed without visible effect, regarded his mates with suspicion. An hour later, the blow-torch returned as mysteriously as it had disappeared.

Father Murphy went out to solace the wounded and to inquire into the situation in the hills. When he returned, he found the heavy base of a solid silver candlestick lying on his bunk. The upper half had been quite melted away. He wrapped the relic in a piece of chamois and put it soberly away in his locker.

LIEUTENANT BARKIS slept fitfully. Near midnight, he awoke in the darkness of his hut, racked with a scalding thirst. He got up and fumbled for his canteen. It was dry. There was water in the village, if he could just think where. It was brought up in tank-trailers from the distillery at the beach. He lurched out the blanketed door.

A full moon lighted the trodden earth of the village. Crisp shadows cut across areas of moonglow, breaking the landscape into a weird phantasmagoria of brilliance and blackness, like an infra-red photograph.

The night was breathless and still. The sounds of war were muted among the hills of Watinau. The jungle brooded under the moon, as if it had body and brain, and the moon-shadows were Circean convolutions of the latter, spawning vileness and evil in tangible thought.

Barkis did not hesitate in the open, though he seemed to have forgotten about the tank-trailers. His thirst did not call to drink. It was a sensation of his whole body, a singing flame that rippled ecstatically from nerve end to nerve end. The air held for him the promise of a new and keener quality of living. He savored it, cocked his ears to the infinitesimal sounds of the jungle. He heard the purl of running water, and the melody of it was a lure. He thrust his way into the jungle, almost running in his hurry.

A hundred feet from the edge of the village, the little creek that came down from the hills of Watinau broadened into a pool. The shadows hid riffles above and below the pool, but here the moonlight was bright and barred with the shadow of vines and creepers.

At this pool the villagers had got their water for cooking and drinking; here they had washed their lava-lavas and splashed the silvery drops upon their supple,

brown hides, had dived and swum in their eternal playtime.

The surface of the pool turned sluggishly in the moonlight; in the shadows, the ripples chuckled rhythmic melody as old as the earth is old, a hymn of living and laughter unwritten in the books of eld, and always fresh to the listening ear.

The place was elemental in the sight and the sound and the smell of it. Barkis breathed the air in delighted gulps, plunged suddenly into the pool, unaware of the helmeted pair who crouched among the vines on the far bank, their drab-dappled combat suits blending with the camouflage of night.

It was something Barkis did not fully understand, this ecstasy that transformed him. Last night it had happened, while the moon was riding high. Then he had answered the call through the prompting of instinct. Tonight was the repetition of experience, and the cool waters washed the fever from his blood, sharpened his senses to supernatural keenness, and brought about . . . that other change.

Fierce strength throbbed in Barkis' limbs, suddenly lean and steel-thewed. His chest labored and deepened; his flanks grew thinner. He felt the tingling growth of his ears, the fullness of feeling as the bony structure of his skull lengthened and metamorphosed into a lupine muzzle. He paddled to shore, drew his wolfish body upon the land, and squatted on his haunches. He lifted his gray-furred muzzle to the moon, the wolf that was Barkis did this, and he sobbed the anguished joy of his being to that cold luminary.

Full-throated, piercing, the call of the pack lifted and quavered, a sound of pleasure and of pain, of savage joy and sorrowing evil. In the village, men awakened and felt afraid. Some who knew of such things listened and shook their heads.

"Wolves on Watinau? What a dream!" And they went back to sleep.

The two across the pool shivered where they knelt. Father Murphy made the sign of the cross and murmured in Latin. Saturnine Sergeant Stranger clutched grimly the stock of his carbine and peered with burning eyes through a shield of vines at the thing that had once been a man.

Far into the hills of Watinau knifed that

throbbing call, and one there in a den of rocks pricked up his ears and listened. The hair rose upon the listener's shaggy back. Black lips writhed hatefully away from wolfish fangs. The devil dog of Watinau padded swiftly into the junge.

The thing that had been Barkis harkened a moment upon the vanishing echo of his own cry. The jungle held its breath and quaked silently in fear of the unknown. And the wolf licked its chops with a pink slab of tongue, skulked into an alleyway of shadow.

SERGEANT STRANGER relaxed. "Now are you convinced, Father?"

"Irrevocably!" The chaplain repressed further shuddering. He spoke in a breathless whisper. "Poor devil!"

"He enjoys his hellish existence," Sergeant Stranger vouchsafed. "It's still new to him. It was only night before last that he was bitten by the werewolf. The infection must have been immediate. It is said that it is." He pondered darkly. "He hates all things human, now. Some night, unless we interfere, he will run away into the jungle and never come back. Right now he's held by ties of habit and discipline. These won't dissolve easily."

"It explains his actions when I stopped by his hut," the chaplain mused. "Are you sure he will come back here for the change at dawn?"

"This was where I first saw him. When he changed from a wolf into a man. He went directly back to his hut then. When I talked to him that morning, I hinted pretty strong, but I didn't tell him all I had seen.

"This pool has associations. If I'm not mistaken, he identifies this spot with the change, and we can almost count on his coming back. Any running water will do, of course. He could change any place between the beach and the hills. But maybe he doesn't know that. The chances are he will come right here."

Father Murphy nodded. "Your reasoning is sound. Perhaps if I keep watch, you can get a little sleep while we wait."

Stranger argued before giving in reluctantly. He recognized that there were certain things troubling the soul of the priest, and these things required contemplation

for a readjustment of values. Several hours later, Stranger came awake at the chaplain's touch on his shoulder.

"He's here," breathed Father Murphy.

Stranger peered through the screen of vines. The moonlight had angled sharply while he slept. Now it lighted the opposite bank in detail. It seemed deserted to the casual glance, but sharp scrutiny discerned the deeper blot among the shadows, the glint of ferocious eyes watching the pool with an intentness that matched their own. Stranger's grip crushed upon the chaplain's arm.

BARKIS had slaked his thirst. A soldier's blood is hot, strong, and vital. The wolf loped easily, reveling in that strength and vitality which had become his. Whether the soldier had been friend or foe had not concerned him. He had not noticed; for both were Man to the wolf-kind, and hated. He had drenched his muzzle in blood, and dawn now crept across the sea. A dim instinct warned him of the fatal sun, urged speed into the lean, gray flanks. And true to Stranger's prediction, he was bent upon return to the place his mind associated with the change.

So the wolf came again to the village, and circling, approached the pool.

He stopped, one paw upraised. Suspicion flamed in the narrowed eyes, Barkis' own, human eyes in the head of the wolf. He tested the gentle dawn wind with his nostrils, but it came off the village and brought him the scent only of oil, sleeping men, and gasoline. He hunkered down in the path and stared hypnotically at the pallid surface of the pool a few yards ahead. Belly-wise, he crept forward, tense and alert.

Out of the shadows lunged the devil dog of Watinau, muzzle frozen in a hideous grimace. Barkis' own fangs bared and snapped. He rolled, sprang to his feet, tumbled with the shock of the beast's assault. In and out of the shadows they writhed, horribly silent save for the scuffing of clawed feet, the clashing of fangs.

They were two things out of nightmare, invincible to Nature, each vulnerable only to the other, their hatreds steeped in the brew of Hell. The fires of the Pit flamed in their savage eyes; their satanic souls were

curdled with the acids of evil. The black beast's strength and cunning was matched by the liteness and man-courage of the gray one, his spirit not yet polluted in the full, revolting vileness of his condition.

They fought while the stars paled in the sky, while the moon grew dim and effaced itself, while streamers of dawn-light stole forth and laced a web to trap the eastern stars. Rigid, spellbound, the two across the pool observed the unfolding of the drama, watched the grim race of mortal combat against the deadly rising of the sun.

Then the gray wolf's fangs found the favored spot, tore with bloody exultation. And the black wolf died, and dwindled, and changed. The hair of its body melted, the form of its bones shifted. The body became as that of a man, and the gray wolf worried it, growled, and tore it some more.

The unknown was not to be identified by age or race. Perhaps the corpse was all that remained of a hell-pacted acolyte of some obscure Shinto temple. He might even have been Polynesian, or a white man—the cursed product of some ancient shipwreck. Knowledge of the European origin of the werewolf later inclined Stranger's opinion to this latter view. Who could tell for sure, now that he had died? Who knew how long he had suffered thus, or from whence he came? Death levelleth all things, even the accursed and the unholy.

Sergeant Stranger stood erect across the pool. A full canteen, unstoppered, hurtled from his hand, splashed into the water. The sound was shockingly loud in the dawn-quiet. The gray wolf whirled, snarling.

"Barkis!" shouted the sergeant. "I have just thrown holy water into the pool! The water is spoiled for you." He lifted his carbine and aimed. "Don't move from where you are. There's a silver bullet in this gun. It will split your head wide open if you so much as stir! Do you understand?" He hurled exhortation to the priest. "Now, Father!"

He could not take his eyes from the wolf to see what the chaplain was doing, but he heard the cadenced murmur of Latin invocation. Stranger's brain was in turmoil. Would the exorcism prevail? Time was pitifully short. The day brightened from

moment to moment. At the first touch of the sun, the wolf would die horribly. More horrible still, a virtuous soul would be hurled to eternal damnation. Dared he act, if the exorcism failed?

The gray wolf rumbled a dirge of hatred and fear. Its tongue lolled. Sweat came out on Stranger's forehead. The palm of his hand was slippery on the carbine stock. Father Murphy faltered in his droning ritual.

"Useless!" he whispered. "And there is the sun."

INDEED, the east had flushed, and a roseate glow tipped the tallest trees of the jungle. The gray wolf whimpered, shifted its glance from the dawn-hued treetops to the pool that had become as a bath of acid for him.

Across the pool, Sergeant Stranger saw the human eyes of the beast, saw the pain and the suffering and the tears in them. He squeezed gently upon the trigger. The world of the gray wolf obliterated itself in sound and flame.

"I didn't want to do it," Stranger repeated numbly, as they stood over the bodies. "God knows I didn't want to do it!"

Mingled expressions of shock and horror struggled across his saturnine features. He and the priest looked down upon the prostrate dead, the one grimacing still with hideous hate, the other calmly reposed, smiling almost, with a small, blue hole in the middle of his forehead. Barkis had scarcely bled where the silver bullet entered his brain.

Father Murphy dropped to one knee, performed his offices. The dead man was at rest.

"Silver once doomed a Life," the priest said, rising. "Thirty pieces of silver. In compensation of this taint, it was given the power in this wise to save from damnation. He knows now what he escaped."

Stranger's glance was bleak. "I had to do it, didn't I, Father? I gave him back the soul that had been stolen from him, didn't I? Do you think they will take that into consideration?"

Father Murphy's face was transfigured by understanding and compassion.

"It was not murder, lad, and *they* need never know." He drew the sergeant's heavy jungle knife, like thousands more issued to jungle fighters, from its sheath on Stranger's hip and dipped its blade in the blood of the unknown. He pressed the cold fingers of Lieutenant Barkis around the leathern haft and came erect. For the first time since Sergeant Stranger had sought his aid, the chaplain's eyes were calm and untroubled.

Father Murphy spoke gently. "Perhaps a Japanese patrol sneaked through our lines. Who can say this dead fellow is not a Jap, that his rags are not the remains of a uniform? Barkis died a hero when he attacked single-handed, with only a knife. Unfortunately, his killer escaped."

The slope went out of Stranger's thin shoulders. He lifted his stubbled jaw and met the chaplain's unfaltering glance.

The tableau was set. Already he heard the sound of men approaching cautiously from the village to investigate. The shot had been loud in the morning stillness. Naturally, there would be questions. And answers, too, just as naturally. Adequate answers. Little suspicion attends violent death, where there is a war going on.

