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# The River That Stood Still

By CAPTAIN ED SMITH

*'Alone and unaided, Kim Chang pursued a murderous outlaw datu in  
the Sultanate of Pahang*

"IT'S like this, d' ye see, Sergeant-Major? Let us once lay hands on the *Orang Kaya Palawan* and our troubles are over. He's the fountain-head, the mainspring of this uprising against the Sultan of Pahang. Without him to lead the other *datu*s, to stiffen their backbones, the entire uprising will collapse like a pricked rubber balloon." Lieutenant-Colonel Ian Naylor leaned back in his camp chair, his eyes fixed unwaveringly upon his subordinate.

Sergeant-Major Mackenzie smiled dubiously.

"Very good, sir," he assented. "But finding him——"

"Is like looking for the proverbial needle in the strawstack, I'll admit," his superior finished his remark for him. "That's why I sent word to you and why I am here today. With the native force under you, you have already done some very valuable work. You can find this *Orang Kaya Palawan* and bring him in if anyone can."

Mackenzie's heart warmed at that bit of praise from the chief; then a frown crossed his face as he thought of the job ahead of him.

"I'll have a go at it, of course," he went on slowly.

Kim Chang's heart sank suddenly at these words of his *Tuan*. Assuredly it meant more work still for the busy native constabulary under the Sergeant-Major—it meant more work for him as well—and just when he was hoping to ask for

a leave of absence to visit his relatives in S'pore. For five days now, Chang had been awaiting the most propitious moment to proffer his request for two weeks' leave. Two or three days' absence could be managed easily enough, but a trip to Singapore—that was different; decidedly so!

Noiselessly he withdrew from the latticed *attap* wall beside the dim doorway where he had been shamelessly eavesdropping and retreated to the rear of *Tuan* Mackenzie's house to bring forth the siphons of soda water, the whisky, the lime juice and the tall tinkling glasses. The conference between the Great One and his *Tuan* was over; soon that other one would depart and his master would plunge back into the jungle once more. But his slant-eyed, Oriental face was impassive as he set the tray on the teak-wood table between the two white men.

"I'd say, look for him along 'The River That Stops'," Mackenzie was saying as Chang came within earshot once more. "The Malays say it is *bantu*—devil-ridden—and they all avoid it like the plague. But *Orang Kaya Palawan* is the kind that wouldn't mind a thing like that. In fact, it would just fit in with his schemes. A capital place, that, to disappear—and its being so avoided by the other Malays would make it ideal for his purposes."

"The River That Stops!" the Lieutenant-Colonel broke in. "Just where and what is that?"

"I can't tell you, sir, for I've never seen it, though I have heard of it often enough. Chang, here, knows all about it though, and I'll wager he can guide us to it. Can't you, Chang?"

Chang's spirits dropped still lower as he saw his last plans for a vacation go a-glimmering. He merely bowed impassively, however, as he answered.

"Yes, *Tuan*. I know. I can show you."

It befell exactly as Kim Chang had foreseen. No sooner had the Great One left than *Tuan* Mackenzie had gathered together his scant dozen native policemen and had plunged into the jungle. Like Chang, the elephant, he had plowed northward toward the Pahang River, near which lay the course of "The River That Stood Still."

From the few of his countrymen that he met Chang knew that dissension and trouble lay ahead. Many such a one he had met and spoken to, finding them all hurrying to more peaceful spots where profits from trade might be smaller but more secure. Malay rumors might often be misleading, for the Malays were an impulsive and a superstitious race. But the Chinese, a calm, impassive people, content with small but certain profits, industrious, honest—their reports were like themselves: they took everything into account. Which was exactly the reason his *Tuan* sent him out into the roads to interview them while with the rest of his force he lay hidden in the jungle lest word of his coming precede him and warn those he sought.

In one of his inimitable disguises Chang would wander into a village and sit and chat with his compatriots, learning all the latest gossip, the village *chit-chat*, which he brought back and retailed, word for word, to the *Tuan*.

The *Tuan* Mackenzie had told Chang of their quest, though he had kept that news carefully away from the rest of the

natives under him. Faithful fellows, these, who would obey the *Tuan* to the letter, follow him to the death, but who always needed a keener mind than theirs to do their thinking for them.

Ahead, another clearing opened in the thick jungle growth; *attap* roofs peeped above the smaller growths in the clearing.

"That'll be Klang," the Sergeant-Major remarked sententiously. "There's a tin mine there. A capital place for you to pick up information, Chang; for a lot of your people are working in the mine. I understand there's even a *kongsi* house, too. But be careful you don't mix up in any *kongsi* [tong] trouble, Chang," he added jokingly.

Imperturbably Kim Chang opened the black pack he was never without, and chose his costume with meticulous care, while the Malays slipped into a denser thicket, where they crouched like immovable shadows. There, presently, Mackenzie joined them.

CHANG was done at last. He presented himself before his *Tuan* in the guise of an old Chinese hawker, a costume complete to the smallest detail, even to the little pack of trade goods slung to the end of a bamboo pole.

"That's capital, Chang!" Mackenzie smiled when he surveyed his houseboy for some moments in astonished silence. "Nobody would ever mistake you for a policeman in that rig! . . . Now, mind, Chang! Don't get into any trouble! Bring me back all the news you can pick up; don't come back until you have something to report. We can't be more than a few miles from the Penang river and so must be well within the territory that the *Orang Kaya Pelawan* harries. I wish you could get him, but that's asking a bit too much. But bring me some news of him if you can and we'll do the rest. I'll be waiting for you right here until you get

back. But whatever you do, don't come back without news of some sort. Cheerio!"

"Good-bye, *Tuan*!" Chang turned away.

"Wait a bit, Chang. You have no weapon." Mackenzie extended his own service revolver.

Chang shook his head in negation.

"I have this." He lifted his little folding paper and wood fan, without which he never went abroad.

Mackenzie looked in the direction Chang seemed to point. Nothing there save the shifting shadows of the jungle. Once more he glanced swiftly over Chang's dark blue costume, from the great horn-rimmed spectacles upon his thin hawk-like nose, down to his embroidered heel-less slippers, but caught no glint of steel, no suspicious bulge. He shrugged slightly, reflecting that Kim Chang was too shrewd to venture into danger without ready protection. He watched his Chinese houseboy glide stealthily through the dense bush with scarce a rustle to mark his passage, saw him enter the tortuous path that led to the village beyond, and as Chang did so the lithe erectness of his figure became at once bowed and bent and feeble, as befitted the character he had assumed.

"Clever—deucedly so!" Mackenzie muttered. "What a find he would be for the cinema! Yet, if he only brings me back word of the present whereabouts of the *Orang Kaya Palawan* I'll be more than satisfied."

His Malay policemen were already settling themselves the more comfortably for the long wait, since Kim Chang could not hope to return until long after night-fall. Those Chinese coolies who worked in the tin mine would not return above ground before evening; they would not gather in the *kongsi* house or at the tiny Chinese shops until the shadows of evening had fallen. Until then, Chang had little hopes of learning anything at all.

Perhaps his venture would be fruitless after all, as had many another such been; there was no telling.

With the slow feeble steps of old age and with many a pause for rest, Chang followed the narrow, devious path that led into Klang. He knew not how many unseen eyes might be regarding him. To stride rapidly along as he could so easily have done would have been a fatal defect in his careful disguise.

True to his assumed pose, he devoted his efforts at first, when he entered the village, to futile attempts to sell his pitiful stock of trade goods to the Malay loungers about their huts, gradually working his way toward the mine and the *kongsi* house beyond it. The jungle, he saw, swept down almost to its rear.

Only when he had visited every hut did he condescend to sit wearily down in the dust before the shop of Lim Wong, where the fervent rays of the sun beat down full upon him. The Chinese shopkeeper also conducted more or less desultorily an eating-house for the stray wanderers who might chance to visit the village, and an opium den for the Malay villagers that was filled night after night. Here, if anywhere within that sprawling village, was the best source of news, Chang decided, as he deposited himself humbly in the glowing heat.

From the *datu pengalu*, the Malay headman of the village, he had readily obtained permission to spend the night at Klang; remained now merely the little matter of what news he might chance to gather—valuable news for his *Tuan*, he hoped with all his heart.

LIM WONG looking out of his shop at the sleeping village between brief periods of somnolence, saw the aged wanderer in the dusty heat without the little shop.

"*Hoo la ma*!" he cried out in his sur-

prized Cantonese. "Hello, there! Come in, venerable one, and rest yourself in my disreputable home!"

"*Hoo la ma!*" Kim Chang returned; "you are very good."

Wearily he seated himself upon the low stool Lim Wong drew out for him and rested while he watched his host brew a pot of fresh tea, then bring forth two bowls of cold rice. Slowly they sipped and ate. For as long as it might take to make nine bows before the household gods they sat in silence.

"You have come far, venerable one?" Lim Wong asked.

"*Aih*, a weary way and one of small profit, for there are evil men abroad."

His host nodded solemn agreement.

"The honorable one was robbed?" he ventured at last.

Kim Chang nodded slowly.

"The police——" the shopkeeper began.

Chang threw open his little paper fan with a gesture of supreme contempt.

"The police are far away," he said disdainfully. "What to them are the troubles and misfortunes of one so insignificant as I?"

"*Aih*, that is true talk, father. We be but grains of dust beneath the heels of the foreign devils."

"Were I a mandarin, or a *dasu pengalu*, or such a one as the *Orang Kaya*——"

The shopkeeper halted him precipitately, his face a mask of servile fear.

"That one robbed you?" Lim Wong's claw-like hand clutched Chang's shoulder in a painful grip.

Again Chang nodded slowly.

The shopkeeper spat venomously.

"The son of a turtle!" His scowl was malignant. "He levies tribute upon us all, nor dare we refuse to pay. He smokes of my best opium. Even now, he sleeps there behind us with one of his trusted

men on guard while he hides from his enemies!" With a long yellow forefinger Lim Wong indicated another little structure behind his shop, almost hidden by the encroaching jungle.

Chang barely repressed his start of amazement while the shopkeeper's eye was upon him. Here was news with a vengeance! With all his heart he wished the *Tuan Mackenzie* were there with his dozen fighting men. So favorable an opportunity might not occur again. In his wildest dreams he had not dared think of anything like this! He and his *Tuan* had pictured the outlaw *datu* as at the head of a large body of fighting men, whom it would take several hundred of *Narrain Singh's* Sikh troops to subdue. Indeed, that doughty warrior was somewhere in that very region with all the Sultan's forces, following fruitlessly a dozen false clues. They had thought that by clever stratagem they might perhaps separate the *datu* from his friends and supporters, if only for a brief period, and in that short time they hoped to overcome him with the few men under the *Tuan Mackenzie*. And now, Fortune smiling, had placed him wholly within their hands——could Chang but pass the word to his *Tuan* in time. Chang's heart beat rapidly.

Yet almost at once he realized that he could not hurry away to summon the Sergeant-Major and those others. He dared not awaken Lim Wong's suspicions by a hasty departure lest the shopkeeper warn the *Orang* he so hated and feared. Too well Lim Wong knew the fate in store for one who angered the *Orang Kaya Palawan*. Though nothing would please the shopkeeper like the outlaw *datu's* death, yet for the sake of his own safety he dared not inform against him, and he must warn the Malay at the least suspicious thing lest that dreaded one pass his steel through the shopkeeper's heart.

The two sat and exchanged grave civilities, flowery compliments, all the harmless gossip of the countryside, while the evening shadows lengthened and Chang cudgelled his brains for a pretext to depart.

The coolies straggled downward from the mine and Chang rose stiffly to his feet.

"I thank you, my good friend, for your most excellent entertainment," he said gravely. "The bowl of rice was very good."

"*Aih*, it shames me to have to offer you such mean fare, venerable father."

"And the tea was most fragrant."

"Ts, ts; it was only the cheapest of Black Dragon."

Slowly the two moved to the door.

"*Ho bang la*," said Chang shuffling into the blinding humid heat without. "Good-bye."

"*Ho bang la*," returned Lim Wong. "May the gods smile upon you and give you much good luck."

Behind him Chang heard a surprized exclamation, he turned to face an enraged Malay.

"Who is this one?" the *datu* thundered at the shopkeeper who shrank back fearfully.

"An ancient countryman——"

The Malay's *kris* flashed wickedly in the evening sunlight.

"Liar!" he exploded. "He is a spy! Ancient! Can you not tell a young man's swelling muscles when you see them?"

The *kris* buried itself to the hilt in Lim Wong's breast, the Chinese shopkeeper sank to the ground, a gout of blood streaming from his lips as he strove to speak.

In one great magnificent leap Chang sprang for that broad squat figure that he recognized instantly as that of the *Orang Kaya Palawan*. A burning pain like fire entered his arm as the other's *kris* slid

into the flesh. Sparks darted before his eyes to go out in one great blaze of light as a heavy object crashed down upon his head. Chang's body sagged limply over the dead body of Lim Wong.

The Malay who had slipped swiftly up behind Kim Chang and felled him just as his leader stabbed, now followed that outlaw *datu* as the two glided swiftly about the shopkeeper's tiny shelter, and they disappeared like brown shadows into the thick jungle growths.

VELVETY night had come before Chang opened his eyes and stared stupidly about him. By the bright moonlight that came in through the open window and door he saw that he was lying within the shop of the luckless Lim Wong. Recollection welled up within him. Slowly he raised his arm to feel of his aching throbbing head where a great lump had raised under his neatly coiled queue, now matted with dust and blood. He groaned.

His eyes took in the dim interior of the shop, made out the stark form whose legs protruded stiffly into a bright patch of moonlight. Lim Wong was dead!

Chang lifted his head with an effort. Not a soul in sight; the Chinese coolies from the mine had dared do no more than drag the two bodies within that shelter. Chang realized that but for the thick cushion made by his neatly coiled queue there would now be two dead bodies instead of but one. His hair had saved his life, protecting his hard skull from a blow that otherwise must have shattered it.

After a long period he summoned enough strength to crawl back to where he remembered seeing a calabash of water sitting upon the floor; after another period he managed to regain his feet. He bathed his aching head with the tepid water yet remaining in the gourd, and as the brilliant morning burst upon the village he stole silently into the jungle, fol-

lowing the trail the two outlaws had left.

He had thought briefly of hurrying back to the *Tuan Mackenzie* and his little police force, of telling them what had happened and speeding them like bloodhounds on the track. But at once he realized that he might not do that, for his own honor had been outraged: before his very eyes the two Malays had killed his fellow tongaman, the shopkeeper who had befriended him, had given him rest and refreshment when he was weary. By *kongsi* law, by all the standards that ruled his life, he must take that friend's wrongs as his own, must exact a personal revenge for that foul deed, even as he must for the blow Chang had himself suffered. To go for help, therefore, would be delegating his accounting into the hands of others—it would be a blot on his honor which he must always remember with shame.

He stopped before the little shop only long enough to pick up his folding fan, still lying where it had fallen from his belt when he was struck down from behind and left for dead.

Implacable anger welled within him as he followed these faint marks through the jungle, but his face remained as expressionless as ever. The two before him were gradually swinging to the northward; they were making directly for "The River That Stood Still."

Chang was able to reconstruct the events of the past few days with a fair accuracy. The forces of the *Orang Kaya Palawan* had fallen in with the Sultan's troops under Narrain Singh; in a pitched battle they had been defeated and forced to scatter. The outlaw *datu* was now making his way to his usual hiding-place under such circumstances, from which he would suddenly reappear after gathering his men once more about him to strike a swift blow at the Sultan's forces when the opportune moment might dawn.

Chang gritted his teeth. From this hurried flight the *datu* should never reappear to harass the country or levy unwilling tribute from his countrymen if Chang could prevent it. The trail he was following came out abruptly upon the densely clothed banks of a somber stream. Above Chang's head lianas looped across its course in such masses that they shut out every vestige of sunlight, while the trees themselves rose from out the black water.

That the two Malays must have taken a boat here, Chang was sure, but whether only to cross that crocodile-infested stretch, or whether they had proceeded up or down the stream, he could not tell. Carefully he searched among the entwined roots until he had found another dugout carefully concealed by the *datu's* men. With no little trouble he got it clear and, seated in its stern, a dilapidated paddle in his sound hand, he debated which way to turn. That was decided for him, however, for the current was surprizingly strong; it hurried him downstream rapidly.

For a few miles the stream maintained its hundred-foot width before it narrowed abruptly to less than half of that and shot through a narrow rocky rift, boiling whitely about numerous jagged upthrust fangs before entering another quiet reach.

Chang breathed easily again only when the rapids had been passed in safety. It had been sheer luck that had kept him from overturning in that turbulent stream or from striking upon one of the cruel stone teeth that would have ripped the bottom out of his unwieldy craft. His arm, too, was paining him excruciatingly.

Two more such rapids he passed and abruptly entered a wide sunny space where the trees drew back from the banks in grassy openings. Great black-and-white kingfishers darted above the stream; tinier ones flashed into its depths like living opals; orioles, gorgeous in orange and

black, flitted overhead, and magnificent crowned pigeons, their breasts like burnished silver. Perched in the trees, solemn old toucans stared at him curiously, their odd beaks almost as large as their bodies.

But Chang had no eyes for them. He had scant admiration for the myriad orchids of a thousand varied hues, hanging from every bough overhead, the only earth flower that had come from Paradise at the Fall of Man, according to Malay belief. It pleased him that the birds showed no sign of any recent fright as he drove his dugout to the nearer bank and disembarked. Yet he was disappointed as well: such conduct meant that perhaps after all his intended prey had not come so far. Almost at once he was reassured. His enemies must yet be several hours ahead of him.

Less than a mile away this stream ended abruptly against a great perpendicular rock wall after forming a pool several hundred feet wide at the base of that massive barrier. Perhaps the stream flowed on through an underground channel until it joined the Penang river, as the *Tuan Mackenzie* had asserted—he did not know. To the Malays its sudden and inexplicable ending merely proved that the stream was *hantu*—in the grip of unknown and terrible spirits—therefore, they gave the place a wide berth. That very fact made it a capital hiding-place for those he sought.

Carefully Chang obliterated all traces of his landing and crept silently from one tree trunk to another, searching before him for his quarry. Some inward premonition, some sixth sense, acquired, perhaps, from the wild animals among which he dwelt constantly, caused him to leap aside suddenly even as he whirled about.

Perhaps it was the intent, maniacal glare of the running Malay, *amok*, fixed steadily upon his back that had given him

vague warning. The other was almost upon him, his *kris* extended hungrily. Chang's sudden movement caught the other unawares; the weapon missed its mark in Chang's unprotected back.

Chang's outthrust foot tripped the flying figure neatly, sending him rolling heavily upon the ground, and the Chinese was upon his back in an instant, his hands about the other's throat to prevent the threatened outcry. Their bodies flashed over and over as they strove silently for mastery with a tigerish ferocity.

Almost instantly Chang realized that he was no match for the other, weakened as he was by the blow on his head no less than by that *kris*-thrust through his left arm. Sweat dripped from him and he panted for breath. Black specks floated before his eyes as his hands closed despairingly about the thick neck, striving to keep the gloating face with its blackened, sharpened teeth away from his own. Slowly Chang was forced backward. The Malay's face was demoniac in its exultation.

And now the other was reaching out again for his deadly *kris* that glistened wickedly just a few inches beyond his utmost reach. Chang realized that he was powerless to prevent him ultimately from accomplishing his purpose; that his own strength was fast ebbing.

Lightning-like he changed the direction of his own efforts. Surprized by the sudden move the straining Malay overshot his objective, rolling clear over and bringing Chang uppermost once more. As their bodies flashed over the weapon, Chang snatched at it, caught it by the blade, cutting his fingers on the razor-keen edges. He dropped it hurriedly, only to catch its jeweled silver handle as it fell, and almost with the same motion he drove it to the hilt into the brown body beneath him.

Again and again the reddened blade rose and fell. The Malay shuddered and



sank back, his strong hands suddenly impotent, the shout of triumph in his throat dying to a choked gurgle.

CHANG rose slowly erect and wiped the dripping blade callously on the dead man's *sarong*, hoping the while that the blade was not poisoned. Were that the case, his own plight would be desperate enough: the venom would speedily work through his system from the cuts on his fingers. He let the blood flow as much as it would, so that the venom, were it there, would be washed harmlessly away.

For a few moments he watched the squat form of his late enemy. This must assuredly be the one who had stolen up and struck him from behind the night before. Why that one had not *krissed* him at the time, he could not understand, unless he had seen his chief do so and had assumed that the Chinese boy was already dying. The other's action had left him alive to avenge his honor now for the cowardly attack.

For one blow Chang had retaliated, the one to himself. Remained yet to redeem the honor of his friend, the shopkeeper, Lim Wong, who had fed him when he hungered. Chang took up the task of retracing the trail of the dead Malay after first making sure that he still retained his precious little fan.

His blue robe was bedraggled and torn. After some hesitation he doffed it and stowed it carefully under a clump of thorny bushes. The Malay's *kris*, now once more within its elaborate sheath, he thrust behind him in his belt where it would be handy to his uninjured arm.

Stealthily he retraced the dead man's trail that led, as he had suspected, up from the great pool where the river vanished. Noiseless as a snake, deadly as a king cobra whose eggs lie hatching in the

warm sunlight, his eyes darted everywhere.

They discovered the thread-like film of smoke, almost invisible against the jungle growths, long before they discovered the recalcitrant *datu* who had caused it. Chang crept from bush to bush without one telltale rustle to mark his approach. Almost within arm's length of the *Orang Kaya Palawan* he dropped flat upon his stomach, keeping a dense thorny bush between him and his quarry. Its blossoms gleamed blood-like in the hot sunlight.

A sharp hiss broke the noontime stillness. The somnolent Malay's head snapped erect. He looked about him in startled wakefulness. Another sibilant hiss, vague, threatening. Anxious eyes scanned the thick verdure about the *datu*, the ground beneath his feet.

From Chang's lips came the hunting call of the deadly leopard and once more the other looked about him fearfully, striving ineffectually to locate that sound that seemed to come from all about him.

A fleeting smile crossed Chang's face. The *Tuan Mackenzie* had once said that this *datu*, at least, was absolutely fearless of the *bantu* of the river. Chang had not contradicted that remark. But he knew the Malay mind as a white man could not possibly know it.

Again that venomous hiss, seeming to rise from under the *datu's* very feet. He jumped with startled suddenness, gazing apprehensively up and down the shores of the great pool.

Chang essayed a hollow groan ending in a weird choked gurgle. Again that ghost of a smile as the Malay moved quickly away from the shrubs that sheltered him, fingering his *kris* uncertainly. Almost under his feet sounded that enraged hissing and once more the *Orang Kaya Palawan* jumped. The last vestige of his composure was gone, his fingers

trembled as they twined about his weapon and half drew it from its sheath.

Slowly Chang parted the bushes before him with cautious hands until his head was clearly visible, his bloody scalp gruesome in the brilliant noonday light. Chang's half-closed eyes, his slack jaw, made him seem more corpse-like than ever. Again that choked, gurgling groan seeming to come from nowhere — from everywhere.

The *datu* spun around, saw that awful apparition and turned to flee as the hiss of myriad serpents sounded once more beneath his feet. It was too much. The *Orang Kaya Palawan* took refuge in head-long, ignominious flight, crashing heedlessly through vines and brush that raked his careless skin with their sharp hooked thorns. The vines entangled his flying feet, he shot head foremost into the embrace of a bush that even the lordly elephant avoids in his jungle journeyings. He screamed shrilly, calling upon all his gods for succor, beside himself with terror.

Within Chang's breast contempt mounted swiftly as he watched. Shadow-like, he glided to the side of the raving, struggling wretch. Calmly he drew forth his little fan and pressed its closed end lightly against the Malay's straining back just below the knotted shoulderblade.

"For the wrong you did to Lim Wong," he hissed into the *datu's* unheeding ear.

Chang's cut and bleeding fingers pressed lightly against a hidden spring. Rapier-like, a narrow steel blade shot its six-inch length through those contorted muscles into the palpitating heart beneath. The brown body arched spasmodically, then sank slowly into the immobility of death.

Chang's pressure upon the spring slackened and the steel disappeared once more within its sandalwood hiding-place.

The Chinese houseboy rose wearily upright, feeling strangely old and weak in the tremendous reaction from his efforts. His knees were water-weak; they refused to support his body. Desperately he strove to control them to force them to carry him away from that place of death. In vain. Despite his most determined efforts he sagged down almost within those bushes that held the dead Malay in a tenacious grip from which there was no escape. As oblivion descended upon him Chang thought of the *keris*-wounds, inflicted in the previous struggle. The keen blade must have been poisoned after all; when he had cut his flesh upon its keen edges he had signed his own death warrant!

EVENING had fallen when he roused. About his head were clean white bandages, his arm and his fingers were neatly bound up in a manner that caused his heart to leap with joy. But one man he knew of who could so bandage a cut — his *Tuan!* The Sergeant-Major had found him; with his great white magic he had brought him back to life!

Not far away a fire crackled cheerfully in the blackness, to drive away the night marauders of the jungle rather than for the warmth it might afford. Shadows moved blackly against its ruddy glow, one of which now approached and stood gazing intently down upon him. Chang stirred.

"Well!" It was the *Tuan Mackenzie* speaking. "Beginning to feel fit once more, Chang? I guess we found you just in time; you were bowled over, what with loss of blood and all. When you didn't appear at daylight we went out to look for you. At Klang they told us two Chinese had been killed the evening before by two strange Malays who had fled at once into the jungle. One of the dead Chinese was a stranger, the coolies told

us, and when we went to view the bodies that they had dragged within the shop of a merchant there, we could find only one. The villagers said that the ghost of the dead man was following the two miscreants; we couldn't get one of them to follow the pair with us. They were sure that the ghost of the missing body would assuredly slay any and all who entered the jungle on the track of the two men."

The Sergeant-Major chuckled.

"From the description those Malays of Klang gave me I knew that the missing corpse was yours; knew, too, that you weren't dead but merely stunned a bit. I knew you would follow those two until you dropped; so we hurried on as fast as we could pelt. We were all at sea when we came to the river."

Again he paused for some moments.

"I decided at last that you and the Malays that you followed had gone downstream; for you were all too lazy to go up against such a strong current." Mackenzie's smile robbed that last of its sting.

"So we followed the river banks until we came to this clearing, and here we found you and two dead men."

Chang struggled to one elbow.

"Great is my *Tuan*," he began weakly. "Not even Chang, the elephant, has such a mind. He can follow on a track like the *cheta*. I slew them both, for they had soiled my honor. One of them is the *datu* the *Tuan* is seeking."

"What!" Mackenzie was incredulous.

Chang nodded emphatically.

"That one lies but a little space away."

"So that dead beggar's the *Orang Kaya Palawan*, eh?" Mackenzie began. "We couldn't tell by the time we got here who he was. In this damp heat he was soon unrecognizable. So that was the *Orang Kaya Palawan!*"

Again he paused. "I told you not to get into any *kongsi* trouble," he grinned.

"*Tuan*, the dead shopkeeper was of my own tong," Chang began. "He fed me when I was hungry. I rested in his house when I was weary."

Mackenzie nodded slowly.

"I see, Chang," he said softly. "And so you took up his quarrel as your own. If you hadn't done that you would have lost 'face'."

Chang nodded mutely.

"I was only ragging you when I told you not to try to get our man," the Sergeant-Major went on. "But just the same, I'm damned glad you got him, even if he is dead."

Chang looked up at him with sudden interest.

"*Tuan*," he began, "concerning a certain matter. My brother writes me from Singapore that there are business matters that require my attention. I ask the *Tuan's* permission to go to attend to them. I shall return within one moon."

Mackenzie eyed him quizzically.

"Does the matter by any chance concern the new slave-girl that Ning Wo has acquired?" he asked with a dry smile.

Chang had the grace to look surprized.

"Great is my *Tuan*," he answered. "Nothing escapes his memory. For that reason is he the terror of all evil-doers in the broad lands of the Sultan." He stopped abruptly.

"Considering what you have done, Chang, I guess I'll have to let you go," Mackenzie began abruptly. "But, mind you, for just a month; not a day longer. I think you have earned the rest. The Lord Harry knows what I will do without you, though; you're the only cook I know that can make a meal fit for a white man to eat in this God-forsaken country."

