

Oriental Pulp Fiction
in

More
ORIENTAL
SALT

BYRON BALES

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More Oriental Salt

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Note:

The Oriental Salt Series features novellas at the beginning of each volume, and are followed by short stories unrelated with the exception that they are tales spun by the Old Salt. The novellas are a compilation of elements-backstories mostly-for the three volume trilogy of Some Called It Paradise. Only the middle story, covering the years of 1937 to 1942 has been published. The novellas, to date, are: Private Turner and his Woman; Pittsburgh Go, and Smith.

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Thanks to Nathan Wardle, my webmaster

Dedication

To Allied Veterans Everywhere

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The Reluctant Tycoon

China Eyes

The Asia-Pacific Collection

Some Called It Paradise

Oriental Salt–Tales of the Inscrutable

More Oriental Salt-Oriental Pulp Fiction

About the Author

Byron Bales was born in St. Louis, in 1942. At 15, he began working a number of jobs, one of which was as a surveillant for a detective agency until serving in the US Marine Corps. He traveled throughout Asia with the Fleet Marine Force (FMF) during the pre-Vietnam era and later with the 1st Division elements into the Caribbean Missile Crisis.

Returning to civilian life in 1963, he continued to work as an investigator, eventually licensed in New York State and California, also registering his entity in the Kingdom of Thailand. He has handled investigations in over 170 countries and territories on all continents, establishing a worldwide network of offices and agents.

He writes novels and stories of Asia, and created the Mike Roth P.I. Series, factually-based detective thrillers with global settings. He is retired in Southern Thailand. He can be reached at Author@ByronBales.com or through www.ByronBales.com

More Oriental Salt

Tales of the Inscrutable

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Prologue

San Francisco

I'm in Frisco at the moment. Visited friends. At the Airport, actually, awaiting a flight. I return to the States every few years. Mostly, my old buddies visit me in Thailand. But they're getting fewer every year, either dying or just less able to get around than I can. Old farts. Maybe I hop around to show them I can still hop, while they can't. Occasionally, I take a cutie or two with me. I have a stable back on Phuket. If a small handful constitutes a stable. And while I'm on it; why the hell do we call a collection of young beauties a stable?

Anyhow, I regard these little honeys traveling with me as nurses. I even dress them up in uniforms. Seems more dignified, I suppose, but the truth is that I've always loved women in uniform; police officers, air stewardesses, nuns, what have you. Their nurse uniforms fool most people, those who aren't old Salts like myself. Maybe Old Salt meaning

reprobate, spelled vulture. ‘Course the girls can’t administer first aid, can’t wrap a Band Aid around their own finger; can’t do anything for a guy other than reduce occasional swelling in the groin area.

They’re no problem with immigration. Between you and me; it rarely is if you’ve got money. A few years ago, I acquired immigration bonds on my nurses. I don’t need them, but it makes immigration officials a bit more comfortable.

Somehow, when I’m reminiscing like I’m about to, Smith always comes to mind. Smith was a plowboy from somewhere in the Midwest. Killed a deputy who had likewise killed a young woman to whom Smith had become partial. That was back around 1917, around the time World War One cranked up. It was called the Great War back then, no designation of the ‘First World War’ until the ‘Second’ came along. Had to put numbers on the war to sort ‘em out, just like I do on my volumes of recollections.

Anyhow, Smith started life as Johann Schmidt. German American. Changed his name to John Smith after the killing and ran away to join the military. He was just sixteen and thought that was right clever until, in Marine Corps boot camp, he became just another of a whole shitload of John Smith’s. Every som’bitch running from something called himself John Smith.

Wanted for murder and ducked the law, he thought the army was another smart choice. Only he’d unintentionally chosen the Marine Corps and ended up with mud packed up his crack in France while his German cousins across no man’s land seriously wanting to kill him.

He came through it, though. Won a Silver Star and took a wound to his face he carried throughout his life. After the war, he returned to the States, danced with the wrong kind of people, people like himself, actually, and finally decided to settle in Asia, of all places. There was good reason; the Orient was opening up and opportunities were endless. He built an empire, and had a daughter that he later lost to the Japanese. That was Sarita. She married an enlisted Marine who was slain during Bataan’s Death March. Having embarked on a murderous rampage to avenge his death, she was herself killed by a decoy undercover Jap soldier. She was 18 years old.

Smith had evaded the Japanese, helping a hundred or more souls escape their net tightening across Asia. After the war, he returned to Asia, and back up in Japan saw to it that the sonofabitch who killed Sarita paid with his life.

I should know. I’m the guy who pulled the trigger.

Anyhow, some years before, as Smith was building his empire across Asia, he recruited many people to work for him. One such was a young man named Go. Pittsburgh Go.

Smith is long gone but Pittsburgh is still with the quick. Owns Asia, he does. Most of it, anyhow. He was Smith's protégé, and subsequently became Smith's adopted son. This noise about blood being thicker than water doesn't always hold water, because Pittsburgh inherited Smith's empire, as Smith intended. Almost from the beginning.

Maybe because Smith and Pittsburgh were two of a kind. Both coming from nothing, so to speak. Smith hailed from rural America; Pittsburgh from the slums of Manila.

And neither minded putting a fellow's lights out. Not one bit.

This story is excerpted, with revisions, from a developing trilogy **Some Called It Paradise.**

1

PITTSBURGH GO

Manila, 1933

Pittsburgh would have to kill Chiba someday. The guy just didn't understand that people need respect. Need a fair cut of swag, too. Instead, he threw Pittsburgh out of the gang.

At seventeen, Chiba was two years older than Pittsburgh. They sprang from the same Manila slum. You might say from the same Manila sewer, except little of Manila actually had sewers back then, just small rivulets of slime and swill seeping down dusty roads, pools forming in backyards and empty fields.

While Pittsburgh knew little about Chiba, the older boy knew everything about him. Wasn't fair, the advantage a guy had just from coming into this world a few years earlier.

Chiba knew who and what Pittsburgh's mother was. Who his father was. Like the legions of slum kids in Manila, Pittsburgh never met his father, who

was either from a place in America called Pittsburgh, or served aboard the USS Pittsburgh. It was probably all that his mother could remember about the man in her life at the moment. But Pittsburgh doesn't look the least bit American. Even looks more Chinese than Filipino.

It mattered little; Manila was awash in abandoned street children. Filipinos, and Manileños in particular, have no regard for such waifs, and adoption runs from rare to never. Too many Filipinos insist that no child of another's blood shall live under their roof. As if their blood was sacrosanct. That arrogance came from serving the Spaniards. Pittsburgh came to realize how Filipinos deceived themselves into believing that they had traces of Spanish blood coursing through their veins. As if Spanish blood was special. No, most Filipinos with Spanish names had been given them by their conquerors for security reasons. The Filipino had long been trying to loosen the chains that bound him to near slavery, and revolution had been in the air since the mid 1800s. So the Spanish masters simply coded the Filipino Spanish names only they understood. If a Filipino hailed from Luzon, the largest northern island of the archipelago, he might be given the name Abello. If he came from the south, from places around the eternally troublesome Mindanao islands, his given name might be Adello. When Spanish soldiers stopped an Adello where an Abello should be, he was tagged as an insurgent and his immediate introduction to a bullet-riddled, blood-splattered wall followed. No trial; for a condemned Filipino wouldn't be allowed to take up important Spanish time. God forbid it disturbed a siesta.

Too many Filipinos inherited the indifference and arrogance of their masters before America kicked the Spanish and their rich land-gobbling friars out of the archipelago. Denying even life for infants of someone else's blood became a sterling social medallion to boast upon. Filipinos can be cruel with their indifference to waifs.

Of course, Pittsburgh couldn't express himself thusly back then, but his resentment ran high. For just about everything and everyone. Abandoned kids concerned themselves with where the next scrap of food came from, but not Pittsburgh. He was out to make the world pay for his misfortune. Maybe one day he'd even run across his real father and kill the son of a bitch for bringing his miserable soul into existence.

He milled around for three days trying to rejoin Chiba's gang, but every time they saw him, he was run off with clubs and bricks. Chiba clearly didn't want Pittsburgh hanging with the gang any longer. Gave the other guys ideas, he did. Ideas like maybe Chiba wasn't smart enough to run the crew. Pittsburgh had laid the plans, made most of the scores. Like last week when

they stung the old Chinese laundryman out of three dozen freshly laundered *barong* shirts to be delivered to a fancy hotel. Waylaid the delivery kid by having Juanita brace herself up against the fence in an alley and drop her panties. Dumb kid went gaga as he gazed upon her little black patch at the intersection of Pubic and 'Y' Streets. He put the laundry down and the next thing he knew, as he approached sexual bliss, it disappeared from beneath his feet just as Juanita pushed back against a loose board in the fence that flipped over. She vanished behind the fence, and for good measure, the errand boy was whacked on the head with the other end of the whirling board.

And like when Pittsburgh set up a mugging; a few guys on the look-out and two or three more to distract the victim into an alley with loose change strewn all across the pavement, actually only a few centavos that led further up the alley where the gang waited. They beat the mark senseless and took his money and half the clothes off his back. New shoes came off first.

Easy set-ups for Pittsburgh. Idiotic stuff, really. But Chiba couldn't come up with an idea if his life depended on it. He bullied the gang, and was just smart enough to recognize the threat Pittsburgh would eventually pose if his share wasn't bigger.

So now, Pittsburgh was on his own. Maybe there were advantages, maybe not. For one thing, he wasn't as easy for the Manila cops to spot if he worked alone. A gang hanging around always spelled trouble, drew attention, and Chiba's crew was easy to spot. They looked like thugs, and acted like thugs. The more Pittsburgh thought about it, the more he liked the idea of being a maverick.

He began playing queer guys, westerners mostly, who sought out young street boys for pleasure. Easy pickings; money was demanded first so Pittsburgh could see what the guy had in his wallet. He'd negotiate the john into a dark alley and near a place where he kept a club secretly stashed. Then, with the john down on his knees, bingo, Pittsburgh crowned him, but good.

Real easy pickings. As easy as rolling drunks. His specialty. Watch the saloons and those who drank to oblivion. So as not to be caught with a weapon, he stashed clubs around his turf, placing them high on traffic boxes, telephone poles, and window ledges where they wouldn't be seen.

It was particularly good when drunks started thinking with their groin. Enter Juanita, who was fifteen or sixteen, and every bit a woman. Bumps and curves everywhere; a body that turned men into witless laundry boys; *estúpido*.

Pittsburgh restricted himself to the better areas of Manila; Goiti Plaza, Escolta and environs, and the Makati and Mabini areas. People had money in these neighborhoods, and Chiba's gang wasn't known to the police in these precincts. Most of the cops were *mestizos* and the detectives were Americans, so they were more alert in these areas, and pay-offs were non-existent, at least at Pittsburgh's level. In fact, a local flatfoot might roust him just to show the station house that he was on the ball. Yeah, here Pittsburgh was expendable as well.

Which told him that as the stakes climbed, so did the challenges. But Pittsburgh could use his head.

So, he dressed better for starters. He kept a tiny, shabby room over in Tondo. The mattress on the floor may have smelled of urine, but he always wore decent clothes—those without patches—and washed himself and combed his hair before he went out. His hair was too long and he'd once had Juanita cut it. A bad job, but it looked better than before if it was combed. She liked the idea that he wanted to look better.

He never hid what little money he accumulated in his room, because he was certain it was searched whenever he was out by the old man who ran the deathtrap. Pittsburgh tucked money in jars and left them in a number of hiding places. His caches were often discovered and, of course, they vanished and more than a few times he went without eating for days.

He soon learned that when on the prowl, to never skulk, or just mill about watching for opportunities, because loitering was often a precursor to a crime of opportunity. He moved about confidently, always carrying a throw-away package that made him look busy, like he was delivering something. It also gave him access to areas. His second self-taught lesson: don't try too hard. Don't act desperate, even though he often was.

Occasionally, he caught sight of one of Chiba's gang in Ermita, and he hoped that Chiba wasn't pushing into this territory.

With Juanita helping him a little, he learned to read. But while he cared little for feminine charms at this age, he nevertheless found that she never gave him any of those charms. He couldn't understand why, particularly since she had an abundance of what she could have given him. Nope. While she helped him with other things, he'd have to pay money for that sort of business with her. She called him skinny, saying that she was certain he was 'skinny' everywhere, and that a woman knew these things. He didn't understand what she meant.

He began noticing how, after only a few months, she'd become, well, fancy-like. She dressed better, was always in a dress, always clean, and smelled like flowers. Once, Pittsburgh had a laughing fit when a man

strolling along the street gawked at her and walked into a lamppost that nearly knocked him cold.

Juanita sure could turn heads. After a few more months, she was around less frequently, and when he ran across her, she expressed no interest in scams or stings, no shenanigans of any kind. She always had money now, and Pittsburgh was certain that she was selling her charms, or had a ‘poppy’ taking care of her.

Soon, it seemed like she just evaporated.

The first thing Pittsburgh read with his new, feeble reading skill was the Manila telephone directory. Boy, here was a tool! Names of people and businesses listed at any address worth visiting. Now, for his delivery packages, he had names. And an unanswered telephone call told when a party was out. Perfect to try for a delivery. If there was a doorman, the package had to be signed for by the recipient; was far too valuable to be left with a mere building employee. And, curiously, small packages made better props than large packages, particularly if they had a jeweler’s name on them. He lifted a few dozen paper bags from a jeweler’s shop that advertised its name. No, such deliveries could never be left with a doorman, but Pittsburgh never acted arrogant, as he became a familiar face, even a friendly face in those areas where he openly prowled.

But lately, he’d felt suffocated somehow. Like things were closing in on him. Like he was being spotted. Was Chiba’s gang watching him? Stalking him? It was a feeling he couldn’t shake.

Then, on a slow night, he was watching a bar across from a food stall on Mabini Street. He hadn’t had a successful score in days and hadn’t eaten, thus he returned to the more base side of his trade; mugging.

His eyes rested on a man who exited from the bar’s side door. He was probably an American—one got to tell these things—who was somewhat under the influence. Enough to drop his guard. The man turned down a dark street walking towards the bay, which was two blocks away and across Dewey Boulevard. The man’s white drill suit glowed like a ghost in the night. Like an advertisement, Pittsburgh thought.

Pittsburgh smiled: deserted street, tipsy mark clearly outlined in the pitch black, a club conveniently stashed in a small garden patch along this street. What could be easier?

From a trailing distance that grew ever closer as he gauged the mark’s sobriety, the American passed the bush where Pittsburgh kept a club, a thick chunk of wood with a pink ribbon tied around it to hold up a budding rose bush. No one suspected that it made a handy weapon. He extracted the club

from the dirt, and crept up behind the man, preparing to strike, the club over his head, held tightly with both hands.

But from out of nowhere, the man spun around, his foot shooting out to catch Pittsburgh's gut with a sidekick that took the wind out of him. He dropped butt-first to the sidewalk, holding his midsection with both arms. The last thing he saw was a huge fist welcoming his face in exchange for his thoughtful visit.

Pittsburgh was out cold.

Had he been more alert, he'd have seen a bodyguard damn near the size of a giant trailing the American. He was obviously an unnecessary precaution, but once Pittsburgh was knocked senseless by the not-so-drunk American, the giant scooped him up and tossed him over his shoulder like a sack of rice, and trailed along after his employer.

Pittsburgh regained brief consciousness several times. Or thought he did. Four, five times, he stirred and was able to focus on the space where he was chained. But he couldn't move, only lift his head slightly. He thought that a man with a stethoscope hovered over him at one point, and many times he either dreamt or imagined that the man he'd intended to mug was sitting in a chair over where he lay on the floor. Watching him. There was no expression on the man's face. Just watching him. Studying him. Pittsburgh fell in and out of awareness, but most times it seemed the man was sitting there, watching. This dreamy state lasted forever, until, finally he was aware that it was daylight.

He woke to rattling chains. His. Slits of light shown around the door frame in front of him. He was on the floor, and manacled to a bunk bed in what looked like a boat cabin, and when the small room rose and settled with a graceful swell, Pittsburgh realized he was definitely aboard a ship. The chains on his wrists were long enough for him to feel his face. He did, but wished he hadn't. His swollen face hurt like hell and felt large, like a watermelon. He could barely see out of one eye, it was so puffed out. His skull throbbed from the man's fist. If that's what had hit him.

A prison ship was Pittsburgh's first thought. The coppers had him now, but good. During the night, in his few painful moments of cognizance, he thought he'd heard women screaming. Other prisoners?

But wait. Wasn't a person supposed to be taken to court first? Wasn't he entitled to that?

So, no, these people must be criminals. That's what they are. "Pirates and common criminals," he called out in Filipino. They were no better than, than—than himself. Pittsburgh shut up at that realization and determined to

take what was coming to him, fearing that the police would have been a better choice than whoever these people were.

He was hungry. He hadn't eaten since yesterday morning. Or maybe it was the day before. No way of knowing. But he didn't call out. Didn't want to draw attention to himself. He examined his shackles. Saw that they were wrapped around heavy wooden timbers supporting a double bunk platform of rope and mattresses. If he had a knife, he could hack his way through the wood. It would take a few hours. But why even think about it; he had no knife. He investigated the shackles minutely, each and every link, and the wristlets that the chain was welded to. Not a weak or suspicious link. And the wristlets were clamped tightly to his hands. No way off getting free from this thing.

He felt tired and suddenly aware that his ribs were also tender as hell. The mark's booted foot had penetrated his thin body so deeply he wouldn't be surprised if the pattern of the shoe heel was stenciled on his backbone.

And upon whose back had he been carried? Some giant. Not the white suit.

Nothing to do here in the dark but sleep.

He jerked awake to the suddenness of the hatch being slid open. It was now dark outside except for a kerosene lamp on the outer bulkhead. In its glow, Pittsburgh made out a giant entering the cabin. His massive bulk nearly blotted out what little light there was. The colossus carried a bowl of rice and jar of water. He sat these down next to Pittsburgh who didn't flinch, didn't move, afraid of being stepped on by this beast who was the size of an elephant.

"Waste of food," Tulapaga grunted in English. "But tomorrow we feed you to the fishes, and boss tell me that first, we fatten you up for them. Yea, fishes like fat boys." He left, slamming and locking the door.

Pittsburgh hungrily grabbed into the rice bowl with his hand, scooped out a small fish. He tore its head off with his bite and swallowing with a gulp of water. He stopped and momentarily realized that he was eating a fish, a relative of the fish that would be eating him tomorrow. He continued to munch down the skimpy meal, but swallowing wasn't easy.

His head was badly swollen and his gut hurt. But neither injury hurt as badly as yesterday. His tight shackles were rubbing his flesh raw and he'd soon have cuts and then sores.

He wondered why these people wanted to feed him to the fish. Only pirates did that. Then it struck him; these people must be pirates. He moaned at his misfortune. To be shanghaied off of a street. A normal, safe street.

What was the world coming to when pirates roamed the shores, freely shanghaiing people, when citizens were unsafe from criminal elements, when they—what the fuck was he thinking? He once again told himself to shut up; he was also a criminal.

With food in his belly after two days, he slept. Now he noticed the hard floor that served as his bed. Before, he'd been too badly beaten to care where he slept. He dozed off and again, thought that he'd heard women screaming.

Sometime later, near dawn, his cabin door was flung open again, and Pittsburgh sensed rather than saw that the ship was still at sea. The giant stepped inside with two buckets. "You stink. Boss not want his ship to smell." He tossed an empty bucket at Pittsburgh, who caught it before it struck him in the face. "You shit in this." The other bucket held water. Tulapaga stepped forward and Pittsburgh scooted back, up against the wall. "You too ripe, like stinky durian. You not stink up cabin." He hurled the bucket of water on Pittsburgh, turned and went out laughing. Through the closed door, he said, "Waste of water. Shark like food to smell ripe."

The weather was hot, the cabin stifling, and shortly, Pittsburgh was either wet from the water, or drenched in sweat. He couldn't tell which. Once or twice, Tulapaga passed his cabin and banged on the door. "Sharks coming soon. You betcha." He walked away laughing.

Pittsburgh reckoned it was midday when the cabin door was flung open and three men stood outside, smiling ghoulishly down at him. Tulapaga and one man, probably Chinese-Filipino like Pittsburgh, stepped in and unshackled him. They dragged him out onto the gangway directly opposite his cabin door, the boy holding him tightly around the neck. Another crewman, an older boy, had him in an arm lock.

"Leave door open," Tulapaga ordered. "Cabin stink from this fellow." He turned his head aft, called out, "Ching! Bring 'em chum."

A middle age Chinese *amah* hurried out of the galley at the back of the ship. She carried a large pail heavy with chopped-up fish parts, guts, and blood.

Tulapaga took the pail and turned to look out across the sea. Pittsburgh struggled, but the boys on either side of him held him fast.

"There is a beauty," Tulapaga shouted out, pointing seaward. "Thresher shark." Pittsburgh's head was turned away and he couldn't see the water.

"Thresher shark stay deep, but this time come up for look-see at bad boy." Tulapaga poured the contents of the pail into the water as the boys inched Pittsburgh close to the railing. He struggled, but it was hopeless.

These guys were too strong. Pittsburgh saw other crewmen, young men mostly, coming down the gangway to witness this, with fiendish, gleeful smiles on their murderous faces. Shortly, a dozen men and boys gathered round. Such executions were apparently popular events with this mob.

“Bad boy no like swimming, huh?” Pittsburgh said. “Okay, we throw him over. Jack-John, grab his feet.” Tulapaga stepped in and grabbed Pittsburgh’s waist, his thick arms practically paralyzing him.

“Oh ho,” the huge Samoan cried. “More sharks coming for dinner. Lookit over there, boys. Maybe ten, twelve hungry eating machines. That means many more under the surface. They gonna have some fun, huh, fellas?”

A chorus of shouts went up, laughing and jeering at Pittsburgh. One crewman had Pittsburgh by his ankles and he tried to kick, but the other boy grabbed his legs at the knees and he was lifted off the deck with Tulapaga’s pythons death grip around his torso. Pittsburgh couldn’t move. The big Samoan screamed, “that big fellow is coming along side. He not bothering with the chum because he sees his meal that I hold in my arms. Get ready!” Galapagos released Pittsburgh’s midsection and stood back as the boys held Pittsburgh over the side,.

Pittsburgh squirmed and cursed. “One.” They swung him out over the water. “Two,” another swing out over the side of the ship. “Three.”

Pittsburgh closed his right eye, tried closing his swollen left eye, and screamed as his body sailed into the air. But on the count of three, they’d thrown him back into his cabin, bouncing him off the back wall.

The crewmen yelled at this sport, and returned back to their duties, laughing and jabbering, clapping their hands and whistling, leaving Pittsburgh trembling in a heap on the cabin floor.

It took him long moments before he realized that he was neither chained up nor locked in and his cabin door stood open. He stood and looked out at the sea rushing by. If there were sharks in the water, he saw no fins. He anxiously stepped out onto the gangway, looking forward and then aft. They’d all gone off. But at the very forward deck, past a closed, shoulder-high gate, the man he wanted to mug stood looking out over the waters, smoking a cheroot. He was dressed in black slacks and a billowing white silk shirt. The man looked back at him, but his face betrayed nothing.

With the ship underway, there was no place Pittsburgh could run. To begin with, he couldn’t swim. And there were the sharks. He scanned the horizon. But what sharks?

From behind, someone jabbed him in the back. He jumped nervously and whipped around to face the old woman named Ching. She held out a

bucket of water and a bar of brown soap. “Heya. Wash down cabin. It stink. You stink. You shit your pants, huh, stupid boy? Or maybe Mister Smith knock shit out of you.” Ching cackled and shoved the bucket at him. “Stupid boy,” she repeated, shuffling off. But she returned shortly with bed linens and a pillow, blanket, towel, and perfumed soap.

“Heya,” she said to Pittsburgh who was on his knees scrubbing the deck in his cabin. “Wash self when you finish. And make bed. CR is there.” She pointed to the door of a comfort room. “Shower inside. No wash in toilet bowl.” She laughed at her humor, and then her face went hard again as she walked off. “Stupid boy.”

Pittsburgh finished scrubbing down his cabin and showered. He tried to make his bed, wondering what to do with the second sheet and second blanket. Shortly, Ching returned with a young girl behind her carrying linens. Ching shoved a wooden spoon she’d been cooking with into her apron, pushed Pittsburgh back against a bulkhead, and tore up the bed. “Heya, watch my girl, stupid boy. She show you one time how make bed. After that, you sleep on floor if you can’t make right.” The girl, a young Filipina about Pittsburgh’s age, pushed him out of the way and set to work. She unfolded and tied the ends of a mattress cover on. “This is case you shit yourself, again,” she laughed. “And too bad, my girl don’t wash sheets with shit in them.” Over that went the bottom sheet with hospital folds, followed with the second sheet and a thin, woolen blanket, also tucked in with hospital folds. The girl slipped on a pillow cover and then the pillow case, and over that folded the second blanket in half, and tucked it in all around the top of the bed.

The girl finished with a huff, and Ching, watching Pittsburgh study the girl, warned him to stay away from her. “She my helper. Nobody touch.” When they turned to leave, Pittsburgh sat on the bed. Ching whirled around and whipped out her cooking spoon like a saber and swung it at him, breaking it over his shoulder. He flew up at her, and she held the end of the sharpened broken spoon and pointed it at his face and set herself against him.

“You strike me and I put your other eye out, stupid boy.”

Pittsburgh thought better of it. The vision in his left eyes was weak, impaired by the swelling.

“You sit in chair, or on floor during daytime. You never sit or lay on bed. Unnerstan? I have Mister Tulapaga find chair for you.” She went to the hatchway. “Come here, Stupid Boy.”

“Stop calling me stupid.”

“I stop when stupid stop.” She pulled him onto the gangway and pointed forward. “See gate? You neva’ go beyond. You see bleezyway?”

“You mean breezeway?”

“That’s what I say; bleezyway. You never go in there. Neva’ go into salon unless someone tell you. Same ting fo’ sundeck.” She pointed to the roof. Then she pointed forward. “Gate up there, half way to front. Neva’ go pass. Unnerstan?”

“I won’t be on this boat very long, old woman.”

“I thank Buddha,” Ching returned, praying her hands heavenward. “But while you are, you do like told. Now, hang towel over bed railing to make dry.” She started to leave, but turned back. “I curious, did you have favorite sidewalk to live on, stupid boy?” She went off, laughing.

Two deckhands came down the gangway, and Pittsburgh braced for trouble. But they passed him in single file without a glance, as though he was invisible.

Later, he heard a bell. That was followed in a half hour by two bells. Shortly, Ching came to his cabin. He was sitting on the floor, his back against the lower bunk bed.

“Ah,” she explained. “You not so stupid, now. Two bells mean is your turn to come and eat.”

He followed her towards the galley, but she stopped at a CR, opened the door and pushed Pittsburgh in. “You wash hands before eat.”

The crew’s mess was beyond the galley. Like the galley, it too opened out to both port and starboard decks. The mess served also as the crew’s lounge. A dozen men and boys were seated around a long table. Some had just sat down and others from the first serving were leaving. An older Chinese man named Lee was the cook.

Ching pointed to a stack of metal plates, cups and bowls on a side table. Chopsticks and silverware were wrapped in cloth napkins. Pittsburgh found a place on the bench. She announced, “Everybody meet ‘Not so stupid boy.’ Tell your names.”

The crew did as Ching ordered, grunting out monosyllables with mouthfuls of food, some just grunting with a raised fork. Most had witnessed Tulapaga’s maltreatment and the shark business, but it was already a forgotten event.

Ching shrugged and turned to go back into the galley. Hands on hips, she spoke her disappointment with the crew. “Everybody on ship stupid. Forget own name.”

Pittsburgh was famished. He had three plates of chow; rice and fish, rice and pork, rice and beef, wolfing down a banana between the second and

third plate. There was even fresh, cold milk in large metal pitchers, condensation trickling down its sides. Pittsburgh drank four cups, couldn't remember when he'd last drank milk.

That evening, he saw some of the others aboard ship. There was an Indian woman and two officer types, dressed in khaki. One was a foreigner, an Australian; the other a Chinese. He learned that they were the captain and his first mate.

Well after dark, he heard girls screaming. He thought that he'd only imagined those cries. But they were real. And their voices were raised in frivolity, not in pain or anger. Five or six girls. The sounds were coming from somewhere forward. From that place he wasn't allowed to enter. The saloon, or something like that as Ching called it. Salon? No, it must be saloon, because people were always laughing and screaming in those places.

He was in a small cabin for two, having the top of a bunk bed. It had a firm mattress supported on thick ropes that ran in a pattern similar to a fishing net. It was much more comfortable than his ratty mattress on the floor in his room in Manila. But what felt particularly good was the clean linen on which he slept. He'd never realized that sheets could have such a pleasant smell. He thought it was a stupid sensation, but didn't care. He'd never slept so well.

Just before dawn, the ship pulled into a port. Pittsburgh woke as the crew threw lines to stevedores on a pier. With all the activity, Pittsburgh realized he could probably slip off the ship unnoticed. Problem was: he had no idea where he was, and had not a cent to his name. Too, his clothes were now practically rags. His shirt had been ripped open by the American, and his pants were torn at the knees. All of that was bad enough, but his shoes were missing. He decided to bide his time. After all, he was free of the shackles and free to roam the ship. Well, parts of it, anyhow. Ever observant, he'd noticed that none of the crew ventured past the gates on the starboard gangway or up on the sundeck. Another problem; while he heard men on the dock speaking what sounded like Filipino, their accents were strange and he didn't understand everything they said. They were speaking Cebuano, another dialect.

A sign under lights on the pier read:

CEBU SEAPORT

There were names and titles beneath this sign, and another one directing visiting ships to warehouses and companies whose offices were at the port.

Cebu? Yes, he'd heard of this place. This was still the Philippines. Somewhere in the middle of the country, the region called the Visayas. That was a relief; he's been afraid that maybe they'd taken him to some place like China, or Europe. Maybe to that other place with a name he'd once heard; Wyoming.

He watched from his door, and noticed that a man working on the pier stopped and stared at him as the sky lightened. The man was only thirty feet away but Pittsburgh realized that his face still looked like he'd had a head-on with a garbage truck.

With daylight, the lights over the sign on the pier were turned off. The ship projected two gangplanks, one forward and another aft, that were winched up by deckhands and guided over to rest on the pier.

Two other ships were being drawn into piers where they were met by teams of stevedores.

No cargo was deposited on the dock from Pittsburgh's ship, but some supplies were taken aboard. Shortly, a bell rang and some of the crewmen—Tulapaga always in the lead—headed into the crew's mess. This was followed a half-hour later by two bells, when the remainder of the crew ate breakfast. Again, Pittsburgh went in with this group of seven. As before, fresh milk and cold water was on the table and huge platters of fried eggs and sausages and bread occupied either end of the table. Within minutes, the platters were swept clean and the crew ate hungrily. A kitchen helper—ordinarily a deck hand was recruited on a rotating basis—replaced these platters with large bowls of fruit. There were oranges and tangerines, bananas, and mangoes, pineapples and grapes. This bowl was also emptied fast as crewmen started leaving the table.

Near the hatchway leading to the port gangway, a large basket stuffed with fruit hung from the ceiling. Deckhands popped into the mess at intervals and grabbed whatever they wanted, and a large canister of ice cold water rested on the mess table between meals.

Pittsburgh returned to his cabin and nearly sat on the bed before recalling the sting of Chin's spoon across his shoulder. But he noticed a chair a few doors away on the gangway and he moved that inside and sat facing the pier.

Suddenly, the American appeared in his doorway. The man looked bigger than the other night. He was dressed as before, trousers and a white shirt of some silky material.

This was the first time Pittsburgh had seen him up close. And if he had, he wouldn't have thought of mugging him. The man bore an ugly scar that ran down his face from just beneath his right eye to his chin. He stared at Pittsburgh, who looked away, and just sat there.

"Stand up when you're before me," he was told.

Pittsburgh stood and the man's blazing eyes made him avert his again after a few seconds.

"Pittsburgh Go, is it?"

Pittsburgh looked up, incredulous. How did this man know his name? "Uh, yeah."

Smith stepped forward, his mere size threatening. Pittsburgh backed off, bumped into his chair and scooted around it, up against the wall. "First word out of your mouth is 'sir.' You got that?"

"Yeah. Yeah, sir." Pittsburgh looked down at his shoeless feet.

The man studied him further, for what seemed like an hour although it was only a few seconds. Then, he turned and went out.

No sooner had Smith left when the door was blackened with Tulapaga's profile; the guy cut out most of the light. He scowled at Pittsburgh and moved aside for an Indian woman who entered the cabin. Maya had a red dot in the center of her forehead the size of a peso coin.

She waied with praying hands. "The boy will please take a shower. And wash hair." She handed him a small bottle of shampoo. "With this. Make certain you use this and clean your hair very well or you will have to repeat the shampoo. Only I'll have to do it for you, and no boy likes that. When you've finished, see me in my cabin." She said in a lilting voice. "On the port side of ship, second door behind the breezeway. Thanking you, young sir." She left.

Tulapaga poked his head back in, gave him a hard look. Pittsburgh didn't move.

"Do as you're told, boy," he ordered.

Showered and shampooed, and smelling fresh although looking poor in his rags, he went to Maya's cabin. He wasn't certain he cared for the way his hair smelled. Like a woman's smell. Her door was open and she was speaking with a middle-aged man in shirtsleeves who carried a tape measure around his neck.

As Pittsburgh entered, Maya stepped outside and away from the hatchway. The man took Pittsburgh's measurements without a word, scribbled notes on a slip of paper. He had Pittsburgh remove his pants and

put on underwear he provided before measuring his height, waist, and inseam. His torso was also measured; his shoulders, chest, and arm length.

Before leaving, the man gave Pittsburgh two pairs of pajamas and six pairs of underwear and T-shirts. They fit well enough, but were a little baggy. The man also took measurement for shoes. He carried Pittsburgh's old clothes away with him in a paper sack. Pittsburgh watched him as he went across the gangplank to the pier and there tossed the bag in a trash can.

Pittsburgh was fortunate that he hadn't sewn some pesos in the pants cuffs. If having nothing to hide was fortunate.

When he stepped from Maya's cabin, she smiled at him but on this side of the ship, the port side, he was facing the pier and some of the ship's crew and stevedores saw him. They gave him cat calls and he hurried along the gangway back to and through the galley to his cabin on the starboard side.

Maya followed him. She carried a kit and beckoned him to follow her. Behind the crew's mess, there was a utility room. She had him take off his pajama top and sat him down on a chair, and threw a barber's cape over his shoulders.

Twenty minutes later, Pittsburgh had had his hair cut. Maya handed him a mirror. The boy didn't recognize his own face. She'd parted his hair in the fashionable slightly off-center cut and trimmed about his ears and back of his neck.

"You will be a very handsome boy, that is, when your face no longer looks like a steak, medium rare." She laughed as she appraised her work, and then set forth giving him a manicure. "A boy with dirty fingernails is not taken for a man, and man with dirty fingernails is seen as poor, and uneducated. A man who works with his back. You must keep your fingernails clean at all times." She reached into her kit and gave him a small brush to scrub his fingers and hands and a file and nail clippers.

She stood and told him to stand up. "You can do your own toenails. And yes, a man must clip and cut his toenails just the same. Mustn't be taken for some wild animal." She held his jaw in one hand, pinched his nose. "Open mouth," she ordered.

Pittsburgh did and she turned his head this way and that, jerking her face away from his with a grimace. "You smell awful. Ching tells me you messed in your pants, but nothing about also messing in your mouth."

Pittsburgh angrily pulled away from her hand, but said nothing.

Maya reached back into her kit and gave him a toothbrush, toothpaste and bottle of antiseptic wash. "We're finished except for this. Go into the CR and brush your teeth. Brush them until your gums bleed. Then wash your mouth with this liquid. Don't swallow it. Just rinse you mouth several times,

and spit out. It will burn, but do as I tell you. If you face someone with a mouth that smells bad, it is the same as an insult. Do you understand?"

Pittsburgh said nothing upon being dismissed. He put the pajama top back on, wondering what the hell these people wanted with him. He went to the CR closest to his cabin and brushed his teeth. A tooth hurt. A molar. Actually two molars ached. They'd been caked with days-old food and smelled terrible. The brushing aggravated these teeth, but the antiseptic, tasting foul and burning, nevertheless soothed the pain.

He still couldn't run away. No shoes. Funny looking pants and shirt. Pajamas, they're called. Plus, he had no money.

He sat on the chair in his cabin, waiting for whatever came next, once again realizing that on this ship and with these crazy people, anything could follow.

Ching passed the cabin, glanced in. Her eyes scanned the cabin and then she screwed up her face at Pittsburgh, and demanded, "Who are you? What have you done to 'Not-too-stupid boy'?"

Pittsburgh stood up automatically. "It's me," he protested.

"You? No, you han'some boy. Where is stupid boy in dirty clothes? Boy who smell like dog, look like pig. Lee want to chop him up. Make bacon. Maybe pork chop."

"It's me," he insisted. "It's me!"

"You!" Ching's eyes widened. "Yes, it is you! You look like even-less-stupid boy, now. Smell good, too." She looked him up and down, and left with a "humph!" She started to walk on, but stopped again. "Bootiful suit," she nodded to his pajamas, and laughed.

That evening, the tailor returned. He took Pittsburgh into the salon where the light was better, and fitted his clothes, pinching here and folding there, a pin here, another pin there.

Pittsburgh looked around the salon, beautifully furnished and decorated. He stood near a circular bar for the fitting. Beyond that were small cocktail tables, and then large Chesterfield sofas squared off around a large coffee table. Sofas, chairs, tables and bookcases were all bolted to the deck in the event of round seas. Beyond the sofas, there was a large banquet table with a lazy Susan resting on it.

It was only then that he noticed the American sitting back against a cushioned banquet seat. He was sipping a drink, and watching Pittsburgh; his piercing eyes again cutting a swath through the salon directly at the boy.

Pittsburgh looked away and inexplicably shuddered involuntarily. The tailor stopped so as not to stick him with a straight pin. He frowned and then

continued. As he was finishing his work, a sliding door on the starboard side of the ship opened and four scantily dressed young women entered the salon.

One was Juanita!

They swarmed around the banquette and surrounded the American. One lit his cheroot, another poured him a fresh drink and the other two began massaging his thick shoulders.

Now, like that man on the street who'd walked into a lamppost, it was Pittsburgh's turn to gawk at the girls, and at Juanita, as the tailor pulled him behind the screen leading into the galley so he could finish the fitting. Pittsburgh got back into his pajamas and returned to his cabin, was only told that his clothes would be ready by next afternoon.

What was Juanita doing aboard? Aside from the obvious, that is. Her recent absence was explained, but with both of them being aboard, it seemed a coincidence that Pittsburgh couldn't fathom.

Maya came to Pittsburgh's cabin early the next morning. She carried a letter that she asked Pittsburgh to read. He tried, but the words were many and long. Not like a telephone book which was clearly organized and easy to grasp; there were people's names in alphabetical order and street addresses. Maya asked if he knew his alphabet and he claimed that he did. She asked him to recite it and he did, albeit slowly, stumbling at places, starting over a few times.

She gave him a book. A thick book, and explained that it was a dictionary and that he could look up those words he didn't understand. He had all morning to read the letter of two paragraphs.

He grew bored with looking up words, the meaning of which he either forgot as soon as he read them, or didn't understand in the first place. But he persevered until enough of the letter made sense to grab his attention. But good! The heading showed an emblem which he knew as the Manila Police Department, Ermita Precinct. It was a WANTED bulletin, and read:

Hold for Questioning

A youth answering to the name of Pittsburgh Go, working Ermita, Goiti Plaza and environs is Wanted for Questioning on Suspicion of multiple assaults to rob and plunder.

Suspect may be dangerous. Go is described as approximately 15 years old, 5'4" tall, 125 pounds. Chinese-Filipino. Light complexion. Long

black hair. No visible scars. If seen, Apprehend for Questioning, and Contact Detective Neal Silver at the Ermita Station House.

**By Order of MPD Commander,
Columbus Piatt, Acting Chief of Police
MPD Headquarters
Isaac Peral Street cr. San Marcelino**

Damn! Police Headquarters was right in the middle of where Pittsburgh had been operating. He'd been dumb. The only way he could have proven himself dumber would be trying to rob police headquarters.

So, he was wanted. At least for questioning. But Pittsburgh knew where that would lead. The police often took photographs of injured victims' faces. And how many victims would be able to identify Pittsburgh? Hopefully few.

Who turned him in? Who knew anything about him? Even his name? His description?

He felt certain that it wasn't Juanita. And it didn't make sense that it was the American. It had to be Chiba or one of the gang.

The next day at three in the afternoon, the tailor returned. Back in the salon, Maya and the American, whose arms stretched casually over the back of a sofa, watched as the tailor dressed Pittsburgh, changing from one outfit to another. There were two suits, both black, and six pairs of slacks, also black. Plus there were white shirts and black shirts. Six of each. There were two pairs of Levi Strauss jeans, a lightweight jumper and two lightweight raincoats, one black and one tan. There were three colorful Hawaiian tropical shirts, and two barong shirts, traditional Filipino wear. Hats; there were four, a black woolen Fedora, a Panama Fedora, a casual Kangol cap and an American baseball cap. There were also two pairs of dress shoes and a dozen pairs of socks, house slippers and canvass shoes for casual wear.

There were four neckties, belts and handkerchiefs. The tailor demonstrated what a money belt was; a small compartment in an otherwise normal belt where currency could be folded. Well, damn; Pittsburgh wondered how many times he'd overlooked that little detail on his victims.

He changed in a succession of trousers and shirts, shoes and underclothes under the watchful eye of the American who said nothing unless he or Maya didn't like an item. Smith directed the tailor to change a few garments, to let out or take in material here and there, or to change a color.

When the American and Maya were satisfied after a two hour session, Maya instructed Pittsburgh to carry his belonging back to his cabin. Pittsburgh could hardly lift all these clothes in three suitcases that the tailor provided. During his absence from his room, someone had placed an upright hanging closet, a dresser, and a foot locker in his cabin. On top of the dresser was a small valuables locker over which hung a small mirror. On the wall opposite the bunk bed was a full length mirror. His cabin was now crowded.

Maya appeared again, and showed him how to hang up and fold his clothes, and gave him tips on maintenance and the effects of some liquids, soil, and foods on his clothes, and how to clean woolen clothes. In port or at sea, Pittsburgh was always to hang his suits in cloth bags, and keep his shirts in paper laundry bags. Dirty clothes were to be thrown in a laundry bag at the foot of his bunk, and they would be taken care of. His things were to be kept neatly at all times. If socks were ever thrown on the floor, Maya warned that Mister Smith would have Pittsburgh eat them before the entire crew.

When casing the ship as was his habit, Pittsburgh noted personal items for the crew were kept in foot lockers stored beneath the bottom bunk bed. There were no dressers or closets. The crew maintained blue denim uniforms, with matching blue denim baseball caps. Depending on the job at hand, the crew wore either tennis shoes or calf-high work boots. At sea, they often went about barefooted.

So, why was Pittsburgh getting all these fancy things?

Maya left, but later, just before the evening dinner bells sounded, she returned to Pittsburgh's cabin. "Tomorrow morning, you will dress as I indicate and you will see Mister Smith in his office."

"Who's Mister Smith?" Pittsburgh asked, certain that he was the big American.

"The man who rearranged your face," Maya replied sweetly. She looked askance at Pittsburgh. "Remember him, now?" She raised an eyebrow and left.

Pittsburgh studied his face in the mirror over the new dresser. His flesh was still reddish-blue beneath his eye, but the swelling had subsided considerably, and should be mostly gone by tomorrow. His ribs still ached a bit, and he bitterly replayed the pain received at the hands of Mister Smith until, again, he rationalized that that's what he'd intended for the American.

Still, all he needed now was a few bucks and he'd get off this ship lickety-split. With some of his new duds, of course. He tried on a suit jacket. Removed that and took a white shirt off a hanger, put that on.

Damn if he didn't look good in these clothes. Like a swell. A gentleman. Looked important. Not many folks looked this good.

Staring at his reflection, Pittsburgh Go experienced vanity for the first time in his life. He didn't understand the feeling, but whatever it was, it felt good. And, curiously, he suddenly knew fear. Another first. Fear of what? Whatever it was, it was connected with the first feeling. Then, even if he couldn't express it, he realized what it all meant: somehow he had something to lose. He wasn't sure what it was, but now there was something, and it would be a profound letdown if he lost what he couldn't even identify, what he wasn't sure he even had. It was confusing. He'd never had anything to lose. Just a few pesos. But strangely, money was easy come, easy go.

The second dinner bell rang. He dressed hurriedly into his stiff new jeans and what the tailor had called a T-shirt, and canvass shoes. He started to run out until he remembered to wear underclothes and socks. He doffed his jeans, pulled on shorts, and dressed again, hurrying so as not to miss chow. The new clothes smelled good. A strange smell. Like walking into a fancy clothing store.

In the mess, the crewman studied his clothes with interest as soon as he entered. While jeans and a T-shirt were nothing special, his were new, and more importantly, they were different. Maybe it was envy he saw in their faces. But Pittsburgh knew it wouldn't be good to flaunt his new clothes or even acknowledge the difference from their work clothes

That feeling returned, the one about feeling important. Different. Special. But he mustn't show what he felt. He smiled in passing at those who looked his way. He could feel their eyes on him, and suddenly, something else happened, for in the air there seemed to be an acknowledgement that he was special. It wasn't fear; these were a tough, capable breed working for even tougher employers.

Pittsburgh had seen and heard little from the ship's captain and first officer. Probably because they didn't need to exercise authority. They never struck a crewman or yelled at one. Instructions were clear and delivered quietly. Aside from Tulapaga, who seemed in charge, there was no rank. But the older crewmen taught the younger ones without being told to.

This ship was a different world.

Morning came and with it, Maya returned once again. "You are to wear a black suit, with a black shirt and a black tie. I will tie the necktie for you. Once. After your breakfast, see Mister Smith in his office. That door is located on the port side of the salon".

Pittsburgh's face made a question mark.

"Face forward," she said. "Towards the front of the ship."

He turned as instructed.

“Now, hold up your hands. Your left hand is Port. Your right hand is Starboard. The port side of the ship always rests against the pier. Facing the port. Look outside.”

Pittsburgh did and saw that his left hand was on the port side of the ship.

“Now, if you cannot remember that, try this: Port is left, and is only a four letter word, while Starboard is a longer word and has more letters. It is right.”

Pittsburgh thought about that, and smiled. He understood.

Maya continued. “The reason there is a port and starboard is because ships, like automobiles, have lanes they travel in. So, when one ship passes another, the helmsman—that’s the driver—knows which side to pass on.”

Pittsburgh nodded his understanding.

Maya smiled her satisfaction and left. Pittsburgh dressed as she had instructed, and when he entered the mess in his suit, one of the younger boys almost stood up for him. He was pulled back down, but everyone stared at Pittsburgh. Tulapaga was seated in his usual place, at the head of the table and being late for the first shift this morning, sat in now. He nodded to Pittsburgh, but said nothing and his face betrayed nothing. He didn’t stare at Pittsburgh’s new clothes.

Pittsburgh ate heartily, and soon the crew gave their attention back to their meals.

After breakfast—again a full, heavy meal the likes of which Pittsburgh never knew before being dragged aboard this ship—he reported to Mister Smith.

“Enter” was all that Mister Smith said when Pittsburgh rapped lightly on his door. He opened the door and squeezed in although there was plenty of room for the door to swing wide. The American nodded towards a chair before his desk. Pittsburgh sat. The room smelled sweet, perfumed.

Mister Smith looked up at him. “I understand, Mister Go, that you can read.”

Mister Go? Mister Smith called him mister?

“Is that correct?” Smith glanced up behind Pittsburgh.

“A little,” Pittsburgh shrugged.

“What did I tell you about the first word out of your mouth?”

Pittsburgh remembered. “Sir.”

Smith picked up the police bulletin on his desk. “You’ve read this?” Again, Smith looked over Pittsburgh’s shoulder.

“Sir, not entirely. I can’t make out some of the words.”

“But you understand what it says?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Have you ever killed anyone?”

“No, sir. At least I don’t know,” he shrugged again. “It’s not always easy to know. But I don’t think so.”

Smith looked over Pittsburgh’s shoulder again, and this time, he turned in his chair to see what Mister Smith was looking at.

It was Juanita. It was her scent that permeated the office. Juanita smiled, wiggled her fingers at him. “Hi, Skinny.”

Pittsburgh smiled wanly, uncertain if he should acknowledge Juanita, even though she addressed him by the nickname she’d given him. What was she doing here?

“Face me, Mister Go. Never mind Miss Juanita.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Have you ever used a pistol. Or a knife?”

“No, sir. I beat up a man once with my fists.”

“Ever strangle anyone?”

Pittsburgh shook his head.

“Burn anyone? Drown anyone? Hang anyone? Push anyone off of a building, or out of a window?”

Pittsburgh shook his head, added “No, sir.”

Smith looked at Juanita again, didn’t seem happy with Pittsburgh’s answers. Well, there was nothing Pittsburgh could do about it; to his knowledge, he hadn’t killed anyone. He’d knocked a few guys into next week, but none had died that he knew about. He wasn’t sure if Mister Smith didn’t believe him, or was disappointed with him.

Smith drew a file from his desk, and nodded to Juanita, who turned to leave the office.

“Bye, Skinny,” she said. She closed the door behind her and Pittsburgh’s attention went from her swaying skirt and wafting trail of sweetness back to Mister Smith.

“How long have you known Juanita?”

Pittsburgh was never conscious of time. Or dates. He shrugged. “I don’t know. A while.”

“A year? Longer?”

“Longer, I think, sir. Yeah, longer. Maybe two years.”

“She ever help you mug anyone?”

“No, sir.”

“Lie to me again, Mister Go, and your head comes off.” Smith half turned in his chair, reached up on the wall behind his head, took a sheathed

wakizashi off of a hook. He withdrew the short sword from its sheath and placed the weapon blade first pointing at Pittsburgh. "If you ever-*ever*-lie to me again, I will kill you on the spot. Same question."

"Yes sir," Pittsburgh snapped. "She helped me a few times. She'd act as a, uh, how do you call it: a diversity?"

"A diversion. You ever fuck her?"

"No, sir.

"Ever want to?"

"Yes, sir."

"What do you think of her?"

Pittsburgh didn't know how to answer. He's never thought about what he thought about her. So, that's what he said.

"Smart girl?"

Pittsburgh smiled. "Oh, yes sir."

Smith opened the file before him. "Cops say you rolled a lot of people. Over a hundred. Killed a few, too."

"No, sir. Maybe I knocked over twenty, thirty guys. Not a hundred and I don't think any died."

"Cops have your activity increasing as of six months ago. You've knocked over most of the guys since then. Damn near one every night."

That was about the time that Chiba and the gang ran him off. He shook his head slowly, thinking. "No. No, sir."

"Well, how do you account for the police statistics. What they say as compared to what you say?"

Pittsburgh shrugged. "I don't know, sir." But he did. Chiba was behind this. So, whatever Chiba had done, he'd blamed on Pittsburgh. Maybe the cops caught up with him and he started pointing fingers.

Smith's eyes scanned the file. "Who's Chiba Sanchez?"

Pittsburgh hedged. He peeked up, saw that Smith was getting impatient. "Guy I knew."

"So, what happened?"

"He and his gang ran me off."

"Why was that?"

"Because he didn't want me around. Some of the guys thought maybe I should run things."

"You kill him?"

Pittsburgh stared at Smith. "He's dead?"

"That's what it's called when a guy isn't breathing. Seems his brains were knocked out."

Pittsburgh eyes dropped to the carpeted floor. That was his way of dealing with victims. What the police called an M.O. But, hell, a lot of people used clubs. He looked up at Smith, shook his head.

“Tell me about your mother?”

That took Pittsburgh by surprise. “I don’t think she ever mugged anyone.”

Smith almost smiled. “I wasn’t looking for a perpetrator, Mister Go. Just tell me about your mother.”

He shrugged. “I don’t remember very much. She left when I was young.”

“Your father?”

Pittsburgh shrugged. A blank on that one, too.

“Who raised you?”

“An aunt. I think she was an aunt. Used me to beg for her. Fed me some.”

“What happened to her?”

Pittsburgh shrugged. “She went away one day.”

“How long had you known Chiba Sanchez?”

“Always. He was always in the *bukid*. Our neighborhood. I used to think maybe he was my big brother. Until he said he wasn’t, and started bossing me around. Showed me how to grab things and run. I was always fast. Had ways of getting away from anyone chasing me. Could fit in here or there. Skinny, you know.”

Smith nodded and stared at Pittsburgh. Stared at him a long time, making the boy very uneasy. Finally, he put away the file he’d been reading and withdrew a package. “Alright, Mister Go. When we return to Manila, collect whatever valuables you might have over in Tondo and bring them to the ship. Now, I want you to deliver something for me. Do you know where we are?”

“Cebu, sir. I read it on the sign out there on the dock.”

“Do you know where this is?”

“I know we’re in the Philippines, sir.”

“Correct. A few days south from Manila. Here’s an address in town.” He had written the location on a piece of paper, and the name of a company:

Anton & Co. Inc.

“Give this package to Mister Winters. He’s an American. An older gentleman. White hair. He’s about 55 years old. He is associated with Anton

and Company, and he's always there. He'll give you a receipt." He handed the package to Pittsburgh, who started to rise. Smith waved him down.

"There's more. When you leave Anton and Company, walk directly across the street. There is a small business there named Jolly Jewelry. Squeezed between that shop and a pharmacy next door, there is a narrow stairwell. Go upstairs to the second floor. No one will question you. There is an unmarked room on the second floor front. Facing the street. Inside there will be a man. When you enter, he may have a few details for you. Listen to him carefully, and then he will leave. There are binoculars in the room. There is also a bathroom. Stay back from the front windows and don't turn on any light when it gets dark. You don't smoke cigarettes. That's good. No lights of any sort."

Smith withdrew an 8X10 grainy photograph that he held up for Pittsburgh to see. It was a photograph of an Asian male.

"You will watch for this man across the street. Next to Anton and Company, there is the Cebu Branch of the Nippon Bazaar. It's a commercial store. Commercial just means business. It's a Jap business. Do you Understand?"

Pittsburgh studied the face in the photograph, nodded.

"If you see this man leave the Nippon Bazaar, follow him. I want to know where he goes. Got it?"

Pittsburgh nodded again.

"If you don't see him, stay until midnight and then return to the ship." He opened his side desk drawer and withdrew a small package. In it was a wristwatch that he gave to Pittsburgh. "Note time and activities in your mind. Don't write anything down. Understand?"

Again, Pittsburgh nodded, his mind racing. This was his ticket off the ship. A pity he couldn't take at least some of his clothes with him.

"You'll need expenses money. Fifty pesos should do—"

And fifty pesos to boot, Pittsburgh marveled. Was this man a fool, or what? He strapped the watch on his wrist and pocketed the pesos. As he turned to leave, Smith held him with his eyes and said, slowly and distinctly, "Mister Go. I don't like being disappointed."

He held Smith's eyes, afraid his face would reveal his deceit. When he got off this boat, that would be the last anyone here would ever see of him.

As he left the ship, he noticed the name on the bow. *Missouri*. On the pier, he engaged a waiting bicycle rickshaw. The driver, or peddler, was an elderly man. Fifty or more. He jumped out and took off his raggedy straw hat for the elegantly dressed young man. His actions had been so swift and gratuitous it surprised Pittsburgh.

Outside the port gate, Pittsburgh alighted and walked a few blocks, checking over his shoulder. When he was certain no one was following him, he sat down on a park bench practically hidden by bushes. He ripped open the paper package intended for Mister Winters at Anton and Company. His eyes widened as he nervously held one thousand pesos in his hands. Why had Mister Smith trusted him with such a large amount of money? Didn't he realize that Pittsburgh would run? This was a fortune, equivalent to \$500 U.S. dollars. Pittsburgh could live for years on this money.

Just then, a well dressed young couple strolled. The man, holding an umbrella over the girl's head against the sun tipped his hat to Pittsburgh and the girl halted slightly and curtsied, surprising Pittsburgh with their civility. He returned a blustery 'good morning' as they passed.

Damn nice people in Cebu, Pittsburgh thought. Habit forced his eyes to take measure of the man, certain he carried his wallet in his inside coat pocket. Or was the couple simply nice, or was it something else? Of course, it was Pittsburgh's fine suit, his shiny shoes and Panama Fedora that earned their reaction. He'd bet if he ran into these people last week, they wouldn't have looked at him twice. Worse, they probably would have snubbed him.

He quickly forgot the couple's civility as he was beyond ecstatic with the thousand pesos. He looked down at the stack of bills in his hands and noticed that his trousers were dusted with cement powder by a recent rain. He stood quickly and dusted his trousers off.

He stuffed the currency into his pocket and kept his hand on it lest the money jump out of his clothes. He walked, dusting the seat of his pants, thinking what to do. He could catch another ship back to Manila. But not before Mister Smith's ship left. His ship would be easy to spot from a mile away, owing to its unusual preying mantis configuration. But wait; Smith knew that his room was in Tondo. Well, no loss that; maybe there were few pesos still tucked in the floorboards and a few rags of clothes. Nothing like what he wore now. He stopped and felt the lapels of his suit jacket. Fine material. A beautiful suit. Stupid thought! As if material could be elegant. Cloth was cloth.

Well, he didn't have to return to Manila. Cebu seemed a fine place. No, wait a minute; Mister Smith knew people here, too. In fact, Smith could probably find him anywhere.

Strange it was that Juanita was aboard Smith's ship. And why had she been there in his office an hour ago? Of course, Smith was checking his story based on what she'd obviously told him. Damn! Had Smith set him up? Did that make sense? No one led him to watch that bar where Smith had

been drinking the other night. But he recalled the feeling of being watched. Stalked even. Was that connected to Juanita? To Mister Smith? Or, Chiba?

But now Chiba was dead and the police were looking for him. Well, for starters, they'd never find him dressed as he was now. His own mother wouldn't recognize him. He laughed; he certainly wouldn't recognize her, either. A thought passed his mind; somehow he knew that his mother was dead. He hadn't thought of her in a long time. A sadness fell over him. It was a strange sensation. He'd never felt sad. Another new emotion. Strange things were going through his mind these past few days. He'd had no one, and no one ever cared a thing for him. Maybe Juanita. A little. Now, maybe old Ching cared a little. Actually Maya was very considerate also. He looked at his fingernails. They were a little dirty and he wished he had his file with him. Somehow, he was here because of Juanita. He was certain of that. And Mister Smith had paid a small fortune for all his fine clothes. They must have cost as much as the pesos he now had in his pocket. Certainly Mister Smith had no intention of throwing his investment away.

The Manila Police? Pittsburgh somehow knew they weren't going to be a problem. Someone wasn't going to allow it to be a problem. He wasn't sure how he knew this, but Smith's ugly scar-face came to mind. He laughed, because he now understood things. He knew what Smith wanted from him.

He proceeded with all possible haste to the neighborhood of Anton and Company. On the street, Pittsburgh saw that with few exceptions, the businessmen in this district wore suits. In his suit and wearing a straw Fedora, he fit right in. That is, if one didn't look too closely at his youthful face.

After delivering the money to Mister Winters with a "sorry the package fell on the sidewalk and broke open," he collected a receipt, and went across the street to Jolly Jewelers and in the room upstairs on the second floor front, found a man sitting on a chair, but back away from the window. He was watching the Nippon Bazaar. The man was a well-dressed Cano. An Americano in his thirties.

He glanced up at Pittsburgh, checked his watch, stood and went to the door. "He's inside the store. Five feet five. Slender built. Dark blue suit. Gray tie, gray hat. Pencil thin moustache, sunglasses," was all he said before going out.

Shortly, Pittsburgh looked down and saw the man he'd just relieved appear on the sidewalk beneath his window. He crossed the street and disappeared around the corner.

It was nearly noon. The room was dusty and bare except for one chair and a cot shoved up against a wall. There was a toilet, and a large tin can that Pittsburgh knew was for peeing into so he wouldn't miss watching for even an instant. A few seconds was all it would take for someone to step out of the Nippon Bazaar and vanish around the corner.

There were two light bulbs that had been removed from the sockets for the ceiling fixture in the room, and in the toilet over the mirror. Pittsburgh sat and began his vigil, staying well back from the window in the shadows of the room. By late afternoon, he needed to take a crap, but he feared that he'd miss the man if he had to sit on the crapper, away from the window.

By six o'clock, he knew he'd burst if he didn't go into the toilet. Suddenly, the door swung open and Juanita entered. She was carrying a paper bag that was spotted with food stains. It smelled wonderful.

"I'll watch. You take a break," she said.

Pittsburgh grabbed the bag and rushed into the toilet, closed the door.

"No sign of the man?" Juanita called from the room.

Pittsburgh, mid-chomp on a bacon sandwich, screwed up his face. Should he speak to someone when he was doing the business? Well, there were no rules against sitting and shitting and eating at the same time. He issued a simple, full mouthed "No."

Greatly relieved, he joined her in the room and she stood, allowed him to sit down. There was also a tangerine and Coca-Cola in the bag. He ate the fruit, washed everything down with the soda.

Juanita stood behind him, both watching the store across the street. "Now you are very handsome, Pittsburgh," she said absently, running her fingers through his hair. "Maya is most helpful, Skinny. Listen to her. And to Old Ching. They are wise."

She leaned over and what he saw lingering before him was her full-breasted cleavage. But she bent over further and kissed him on the mouth. "Hmmm. Bacon," she said, standing erect.

Before he could respond, she mussed his hair, and was gone, the door closing behind her.

He frowned and ran his hand through his hair, didn't care for it being tossed. Soon as it was dark outside. He moved his chair a little closer to the window. Thinking about Juanita. She'd actually kissed him.

Pittsburgh's subject, a Japanese named Kagashu, left the Nippon Bazaar just before closing time of ten o'clock. Pittsburgh hurried down the stairs and was on the street just as the Japanese turned the corner and hailed a motorcycle with sidecar. He was negotiating the fare with the driver as Pittsburgh rounded the corner, and also hailed a motorcycle. There were a

few busy restaurants along the boulevard and fortunately, a sidecar motorcycle wheeled over and braked hard directly in front of Pittsburgh, ignoring a couple a short distance away. It was simple economics, a man who dressed this well must be good for a tip.

Pittsburgh made as though he was negotiating a fare until Kagashu's cycle sped off into the night. Pittsburgh casually asked if his driver knew the man in the sidecar up ahead. He didn't know either, the passenger or the driver.

"Let's go," Pittsburgh ordered. "Follow that motorcycle. But keep your distance. If you are successful, you will earn ten pesos. If you lose him, you'll get nothing more than a beating." The driver looked over at Pittsburgh, didn't know what to think. Ten pesos was his usual daily fee for 12 hours work. Or else this young man would beat him. Must be a Spaniard.

It was easy money; ten minutes later, they pulled into Cebu Pier, near where Pittsburgh had started from this morning. Kagashu directed his taxi to a ship, the *Kyoto Maru*. Pittsburgh told his driver to pull over two hundred yards away as the Japanese walked up the ship's gangplank. Pittsburgh and his driver waited. Waited for four hours, until after two a.m. when it became obvious the Jap wasn't going to leave the ship. He paid his driver the fare and generously added five more pesos for waiting time, a fare of fifteen pesos. It wasn't necessary, and the driver was a happy man, indeed.

It was a strange sensation for Pittsburgh, actually giving a generous fare and tip to a total stranger rather than bashing him over the head for usually a much smaller amount.

He got out and walked around to the pier where the *Missouri* rested quietly in the dark water.

2:30 a.m. He sat in the crew's mess drinking a coffee that Ching made for him, not a little surprised at his preference. Coffee was a western habit he'd picked up the past few months. She addressed him alternately between 'handsome' and 'Even-less-stupid boy.'

A small man Pittsburgh had only glimpsed once when he went into Mister Smith's office came in and informed him that the American wanted to see him in the salon. This man's name was Manuel, and he wore a maroon colored waistcoat over a white shirt with a black bow tie. His trousers were black as were his shoes. He was meticulously groomed, and very polite, addressed Pittsburgh as 'Mister Go'.

Pittsburgh drained his cup and followed Manuel into the salon. Smith sat up front, at the table surrounded by circular banquette seating. None of the girls were present. Smith was dressed only in a loin cloth. Pittsburgh now saw just how powerfully built his potential victim was. On that dark

street right before he had attacked Smith, he thought the man was just heavy. Maybe even fat.

Smith smoked a cigarillo and sipped brandy. He motioned Pittsburgh forward. Manuel remained at the back of the salon, looking on.

Pittsburgh approached the table, stood there, waiting for Smith to speak.

“Report,” Smith said briefly.

“He left the Nippon Bazaar just before ten o’clock. He was alone. He took a motorcycle taxi right here to the port, and went aboard the Kyoto Maru. I waited until a few minutes ago when only a watchman aboard the ship was moving about.”

Pittsburgh detected a near smile on the American's face. He slapped the table, shook his head. “Had we known, we could just have watched the ship.” He sipped his brandy. “But that’s the way these things go. Did he see you?”

Pittsburgh shrugged. “No, sir. I don’t think so. I took the cycle right behind him, but gave him distance before I followed. No choice unless I let him go. But the street corner where we caught cycles was very busy.”

“No way he followed you here?”

Pittsburgh shook his head. “I walked over from there. The pier was quiet, and I checked that no one followed me.”

“Unlike when Mister Tulapaga followed you?”

Pittsburgh smiled, and rubbed his cheek bone. It was still tender. “That will never happen again, sir.”

Smith went quiet for long minutes, staring at Pittsburgh. Finally, he waved the boy down in a seat opposite him.

“Okay, Mister Go. Think about this. The man you followed must return to Manila soon. But, I want him. I want information from him. He’s a Jap. Ever met a Jap?”

“Only once, sir.”

“What did you think of him?”

“That he was cheap to carry so little money on him.”

Smith exploded with laughter. He laughed so hard that he nearly slid off his banquette seat. He caught himself and pulled his thick body up with powerful arms thicker than Pittsburgh’s legs. His face turned red from laughter and he slapped the table, trying to catch his breath. He did, and wound down his laughter. He held up his brandy snifter, motioned for Manuel to bring him another drink. “Yes, Mr. Go. I would imagine that in your previous occupation, that little fact would form your first impression.”

Pittsburgh didn’t see the humor in what he said; couldn’t understand what was so funny.

“Alright,” Smith said, trying to be serious, but still chuckling. “In the morning, I want you on the pier. Dress casually. That means; don’t look like a businessman. Nothing fancy—”

Pittsburgh cut him off. “So that I fit in, sir.”

Smith nodded. “Exactly.”

“Only follow him if it looks like he’s leaving for good. Has a suitcase, something like that. If not, just wait until he returns. He wasn’t carrying a suitcase and he’s on that ship for the night, we make the assumption that that’s where he’s staying. Assumptions are not always safe, but there will be times when circumstances dictate that we make them. If he is moving out of the ship, he may fly up to Manila. He has to reach Manila within the week and may not want to travel by ship. But we know there’s no flight until Friday, so perhaps he’ll be moving into a hotel. Do you need more money?”

Pittsburgh shook his head.

After Pittsburgh retired, Smith wrote a letter to the harbormaster, and then called Juanita into the salon. She came out from his stateroom, another girl keeping her company. They were scantily dressed and sleep was in their eyes. He instructed her to personally hand-deliver the letter first thing in the morning, not later than eight o’clock. The girls started back to his stateroom, the other turning back to ask Smith if he was coming in soon, practicing the refreshing openness of Filipinas by adding that she’d been randy all night.

Kagashu remained on the *Kyoto Maru* all morning, and by ten o’clock the ship’s master was advised that the ship could not leave port before a detailed inspection and search. Captain Miro, the *Kyoto Maru*’s master, was furious; he’d presented his manifest when he docked yesterday, had arranged to depart this evening and offered to accompany the harbormaster on an impromptu tour of the ship.

Miro insisted that the *Kyoto Maru* held no contraband, and that it was essential that a passenger reach Manila within two days.

The harbormaster shrugged, and mentioned as an afterthought that he knew of a ship leaving in two hours, sailing—under power—directly to Manila, and that he would personally intervene, and implore its skipper to carry any essential passengers or cargo to Manila.

An hour later, Kagashu climbed up the forward gangplank of the *Missouri* wrestling with two suitcases and an attaché case on which the Japanese Imperial Chrysanthemum was embossed.

From the sundeck, Smith watched the man struggling with his belongings while the *Missouri*’s crew, several of whom loitered near the port

gangway, made no effort to assist. This should have told Kagashu something.

The *Missouri's* Australian captain, a man named McDowell, met the Jap and showed him to a cabin. Running up the gangplank after Kagashu was a smallish Jap seaman with a folder of documents. He handed them to Kagashu who rewarded him a slap to his face for not being available to carry his luggage over from the *Kyoto Maru*. As the seaman hurried back down onto the pier, he passed Pittsburgh approaching the ship.

The *Missouri's* gangplanks were drawn up as Pittsburgh jumped on board. McDowell stood next to Smith on the sundeck, called to single up all lines.

The harbormaster, a Filipino of Korean birth, stood at the window of his second floor office and watched as the *Missouri* cruised slowly out of the harbor. The ship was a frequent visitor to Cebu and Smith was a most gracious and generous man, rarely arriving in port without a few bottles of bourbon as gifts. On his desk, he divided up Smith's bribery money between his assistant and the Harbor Security Officer whose men would search the *Kyoto Maru* tomorrow afternoon for appearances sake. Plausibility for a search of non-existent contraband was necessary. The anonymous 'tip' of course, had been delivered by the lovely Miss Juanita.

He didn't know what Smith wanted, but the *Missouri* departed as soon as one Mr. Kagashu, a Japanese passenger from the *Kyoto Maru*, boarded. He'd been asked not to check Kagashu's passport or itinerary and travel papers.

There was growing unpopularity of the Japanese throughout Asia. It started with their excursions into Siberia twenty years earlier, and then the annexation of Korea as a dependency of the Empire of Japan. Then came their invasion of Manchuria two years ago. The latest stink out of Japan was the aftermath of the Sakuradamon Incident last year. A Korean, Lee Bong-Chang, attempted to assassinate Emperor Hirohito. He failed and his bomb only managed to kill two horses drawing the emperor's carriage. But Lee, a member of the Korean Patriotic Legion, was executed.

Kagashu, xenophobic like most Japanese, had kept to himself all day and evening, had been very quiet, taking meals in his cabin. He'd only once asked Captain McDowell to come to his cabin, speaking rather good English. He asked when the ship would arrive in Manila. McDowell advised that the ship would reach the capital approximately thirty six hours after leaving Cebu, for a ten p.m. docking tomorrow night. Kagashu arrogantly dismissed him with a wave of the hand.

At midnight, Tulapaga woke Pittsburgh, told him to get dressed. The boy hurriedly threw on pants and found his employer on the starboard gangway, drinking a cup of coffee, and smoking a cigarillo. He had a pistol stuck in his waistband.

“The Jap’s getting off here,” Smith said.

Pittsburgh looked into the black night, could see nothing and only heard rushing of water at the ship cut through the Visayas sea. There was no port, only black outlines of islands off in a distance. The ship was silent, and the fire watch had just changed. Pittsburgh didn’t ask any questions, knew that Smith would tell him what he wanted done. But he was sure he already knew.

Smith pointed to a stack of heavy chains. “Lash those shackles you wore to an old Kedge anchor Tuly’s bringing up from the hold.”

Shortly, the Samoan joined them, grunting under the weight of ninety awkward pounds of anchor and chains. He set them down as gingerly as possible on the gangway, and the three moved quietly along to Kagashu’s cabin. They stood outside. Suspecting that the Jap had a pistol, they weren’t going to politely knock on his door in the middle of the night. Smith handed Pittsburgh a nightstick and drew his automatic, quietly racked a round by easing the slide back and then forward. Tulapaga leaned back against the railing and in a massive charge he and Smith crashed into the cabin, tearing the door away from its posts, pushing it into the pitch black space. Tulapaga fell awkwardly, slamming down onto Kagashu under the door as a shot rang out from Kagashu's pistol. It missed him, but hit the nightstick in Pittsburgh’s hand, tearing it from his grasp. Smith flew over Tulapaga’s massive back and caved in on the Nip, cracked him across the head with a few whacks of his .45.

Everyone was alright, except for Kagashu, who’d sensed something was wrong shortly after the ship sailed out of Cebu, a certain tension in the air; the way crewmen didn't look at him, the manner of the ship's captain, who held no interest in checking his passport.

Japanese merchants often carried contraband, mostly unlicensed equipment, even on unregistered ships. Their black markets were especially strong in Mindanao and the Moslem south of the archipelago. But Kagashu had begun doubting Captain Miro’s explanation for the delayed departure of the Kyoto Maru, particularly since his passport wasn’t checked. Yet, he’d reasoned that for all the harbormaster’s office knew, he’d arrived in Cebu by land, and was therefore either a resident of the Philippines or already registered as arriving into the country at another immigration point.

He'd taken a chance, but kept his door locked, determined to sleep by day and remain alert at night

He regained consciousness an hour later. The cabin was lit by three kerosene lamps, shadows of Smith, Pittsburgh and Tulapaga dancing on the wall as they busied themselves at the task of tearing through every possession the Jap had; shoe heels, suit jacket linings, inside rim of his Fedoras, trouser waistbands.

Kagashu sat on the bunk with his back shoved into the corner, rubbing his head and watching his luggage being torn apart, each suitcase and bag ripped open to reveal any hidden pockets. His code book had been found, as had a contact list, written in Japanese. He'd been dropped off by submarine near Mactan Island a week ago and came to the navy's attention in an awkwardly coded routine telegram intercepted at the Western Union office in Manila.

And the navy's attention drew Smith's attention, sharing as they did certain sources with telegraphy expertise. The American government relied on loyalty from their sources while Smith used the accredited and proven method of bribery. As he would be visiting Cebu on business anyhow, he'd use information that his government and the Navy didn't know; that the Nippon Bazaar was the focal point for Japanese espionage in Cebu. Smith called this particular Japanese espionage apparatus the CNC; Cebu Nip Clubhouse, and as with many other Nip operations, had it watched regularly by a group comprised mostly of Filipinos and Americans, with a Korean or two thrown in. From the Nippon Bazaar, espionage activities were conducted also on the neighboring Mactan, Bohol, Negros, and Panay Islands. This particular chamber covered a large territory.

Smith doubted that he could break the code, so he'd drop that in the navy's lap. But the contact list would stay with him, and maybe he'd feed it to the American government piecemeal.

He slapped Kagashu's face with the list. "Let's start at the beginning; why would you be so fucking dumb as to write your contacts down. What are there, some hundred, hundred fifty contacts? You too fucking simple to commit their details to memory?"

"Those are business contacts--"

This time Smith smashed his pistol across the Jap's nose, breaking it.

Pittsburgh flinched at the sudden violence, stared at Smith, then at Tulapaga whose face was as cold as stone.

Smith eyed shifted over to Pittsburgh. He tilted his head in a question. "Don't go simple on me, Mister Go."

Blood splattered across Kagashu's shirt and he winced, but said nothing, wouldn't give his captors the satisfaction of showing pain.

"Damn, that sounds like your beak is splintered," Smith observed. He examined the Jap's face. "Yep, you'd have two noses when you woke up. Except you aren't going to wake up, and you won't need a pretty map where you're going." Smith pulled a stogy from a hip pocket, lit it, turning the cigar as he puffed, his eyes on Pittsburgh as if to say, "you know what comes next, yes?" He puffed quietly on it, blowing the smoke in Kagashu's face. When the ash was a half inch long, he looked up at Pittsburgh again. The kid had no idea what Smith was going to do. Kid needed a lot of lessons.

"Okay, slant-eyes," he addressed Kagashu. "Same answers or more hurt. I know some of those names. Quite a few, in fact. But they're not only businessmen. Four are barbers. Simple barbers. And one is a gardener for an American military contractor. How many haircuts and roses were you gonna need in Manila?"

Kagashi tried to speak, but he sounded like a foghorn, what was left of his nose already swelling up like a balloon. "Why are you doing this? We're not at war," he managed, sounding like he was under water. He could easily choke on his own blood, so he hung his head over

"Sure we are. Only no one's shooting yet. In the meanwhile, you slimeballs keeps sneaking-seeping, I should say-into the islands. Same for Malaya, Timor, Guam, even over in Panama, and Hawaii, and in the States, Even down in Australia, although those guys keep a pretty sharp eye on your kind of garbage. We're open societies. Anyone can visit. You're gangsters. No respect for law. None for human rights."

Smith shook his head. "You yellow bastard, you don't even know what I'm talking about. Doesn't matter; we got some gangsters of our own, a small collection of which are here assembled before you."

He suddenly mashed his burning cigar on Kagashu's cheek as Tulapaga held his head, choking him. The man screamed.

Pittsburgh eyes widened, looked like hard boiled eggs in the flickering light of the kerosene lamps.

Smith shouted over the man's screams. "It's late, people are trying to sleep. So, we'll have to gag you. And if we gag you, you won't be able to talk. We will reach the point when you will gladly want to write down the answers. Except you'll need fingers for that." Smith shook his head sadly. "But like your toes, eyeballs and teeth, they'll be in this basket." He pointed to a small basket hanging from a hook overhead. "Yep, teeth, eyeballs, ears, fingers and toes. Then a young lady will come in here with a razor and separate you from your scrotum. Hang those on her wall with the others, she

will. You should see her collection, but now they're just black globs of Nippon nuts. So, last time, before we start with an eye. Just one. What are your orders, Mister Kagashu?"

Kagashu jerked his head back and forth.

"Die clean, idiot," Smith prompted. "And go to your ancestors with a face they'll recognize. In the end, after the kind of pain even a piece of shit like you never inflicted on anyone, you'll talk. You know you're Kempeitai. We know you're Kempeitai. You know you'll talk. We know you'll talk. In the meantime, we're missing cocktails, which is making me very angry. Hm-mm?" Smith considered the Jap momentarily, waiting for him to start singing. But Kagashu said nothing. Smith shrugged as Tulapaga's thumb went for the Jap's face.

But Smith stopped him, pulled his hand back. "Right eye only, for a start. Then pull it across for our guest to see it with his left eye. Maybe it'll wink goodbye before it goes into the basket."

Tulapaga's thick thumb started at his right eye and Kagashu spoke up immediately. "I am to merely coordinate business activities in these islands for the benefit of Japanese commerce. Strengthen associations, form business groups, and missions. In fact, I have a letter to Governor-General Dwight Davis outlining my agenda."

Smith smiled evilly, waved his hand across Kagashu's scattered belongings on the floor. "We've found no such letter."

"I am to receive the letter at our legation in Manila."

"You know Governor-General Davis, do you?"

"We've met."

"When?"

"A month ago."

"Where?"

"In Manila, of course."

"You don't do your homework, do you fella?"

Kagashu looked at Smith, trying to maintain an arrogant expression. Association with such well-known American figures as Governor General Davis should guarantee his safety. No one would dare harm him, and these men would pay for this outlaw action.

Smith nodded to Tulapaga. The beefy Samoan's arm went around Kagashu neck, and pulled him up, carried him out onto the gangway. There was little scuffling as Tulapaga held the Jap off the deck, his arm so tight around his neck that he couldn't utter a sound.

"Package him up, Mister Go."

Pittsburgh dragged the chains over and clapped them on Kagashu's ankles. He nervously followed Smith's motions that the shackles be connected to the longer chain and then to the anchor.

That done, without a further word, Tulapaga lifted Kagashu off the deck, over the railing, and dropped him into the sea. He quickly grabbed up the heavy chain and anchor trailing with bouncy, rattling sound across the deck and heaved those over as well.

Kagashu, chains, and anchor were on the way straight to the bottom of the ocean, estimated at approximately three hundred feet at this position in the Visayas Sea.

They watched the few air bubbles that gargled to the surface.

"Damn, gentlemen," Smith shook his head. "We forgot to say goodbye. Okay, Tuly, the cash in his effects; Pesos, American dollars, and Yen—not a trifling amount either—will be shared and share alike. Divvy it up amongst the crew. Mister Pittsburgh here gets an equal share. You can divide my share amongst everyone."

Pittsburgh looked at Smith, his face asking why the Nip was murdered.

Smith smiled, slapped the Samoan on his back. "Mister Tulapaga; tell our boy who the current Governor-General is."

Pittsburgh turned to the giant who was searching his memory.

"Uh-mm, Honor-able Theodore Roosevelt. The little one. Uh-mm, Junior one. T.R. Junior. He replace Honor-able De-white Davis las' year and Misser Frank Murphy will replace him nex' May." De-white Davis is back home in America now.

"Dwight Davis," Smith corrected. "Several lessons here, Mister Go. First, when something in your plans changes by persons other than yourself or events not of your making, question why. Don't be steered into arrangements by other's movements, actions or decisions. Second, learn your work. Backdrop your story. That means you should have a story behind your story. In detail. A story that can be supported. Every time. Mister Kagashu was an amateur. Surprising, actually. The Nips aren't generally that stupid. My guess, judging from his arrogance and his bearing, he was some kind of royal. A royal is a special dog turd, like a prince or some such nonsense. Being important, he foolishly thought he didn't require training, or advice, or direction from subordinates of inferior breeding, and his instructors fearfully allowed him get away with it.

"But I'm a curious kind of person, Mr. Go. For the hell of it, I'll learn just who and what he was." Smith turned and went into his stateroom.

Tulapaga turned to Pittsburgh and whispered. "The Nip disappointed the boss. So we gave him a bath." They looked towards the stateroom where

they heard music starting up. The big Samoan shrugged, turned back to the galley. “Maybe someone should have told the Nip that Mister Smith gets kinda nasty when someone disappoints him.”

San Francisco

As I understand it, when the *Missouri* returned to Manila, Smith had Pittsburgh Go and Juanita installed in separate apartments in Ermita. Modest units. Nothing fancy, but respectable. Pittsburgh thought the place was classy, coming as he did from the gutter.

Immediate management sources never knew the relationship between Juanita and Pittsburgh, or with Smith, who visited occasionally, first seeing Pittsburgh, and then Juanita. He never stayed overnight, but Juanita occasionally visited the *Missouri* some evenings, and wasn't seen until the next morning.

More curiously was that Smith enrolled both Pittsburgh and Juanita in schools. Of sorts. Juanita in High School after some extensive testing, while Pittsburgh had a private tutor and attended night classes at the University of Santo Tomas school of general studies, even though he never finished grade school. Neither education led to a degree, nothing aside from a few certificates. But accolades weren't the priority.

Their courses were accelerated, and in addition, both attended instructions in the home of a genteel lady nearby in Goiti Plaza. Mrs. Walker was the widow of an U.S. Army colonel who died a few years ago of complications stemming from malaria. These instructions were aimed at refined manners. Manners in conversation, in correspondence, even at dinner tables. They joined her weekly for dinners in the finer Manila restaurants. But this was just more schooling.

The matter of the Manila Police Department 'want' bulletin to question Pittsburgh was settled by Mister Smith who, armed with a smile, and a list of acquaintances with many Manileños on high, offered affidavits that Pittsburgh Go had been on an extended cruise throughout the archipelago as a member of his crew for the past six months.

Anyhow, here's a story I picked up in Shanghai, a product of a Chinese name Wong, who was a street storyteller. He had quite a reputation and extensive repertoire. He was eventually engaged to

present his tales and humorous musings at formal dinner parties and more than a few state functions, including our embassy parties.