

SNOW LEOPARD

by CHRIS HAWTHORNE

CHAPTER XXXIII

Bannister, who had lashed himself into a white fury at the thought of what Whipple's crowning act of infamy might be, gradually grew grimly cool. "Give me your note book, Toole," he said.

The detective drew a little green volume from his pocket and ruffled it down toward the middle. Here he paused to read. "What do you think my last assignment was before I horned into the Sire case?" he asked.

"Racketeer murder?" Dick replied at a hazard.

"No... no... I had to pinch a guy who stole a rubber doormat from an apartment house."

The little stratagem was successful—Bannister laughed. "Well," he said, "just make a note that we're heading to Whipple's camp. I'll put it in Bully's collar and send him back to the Abbe. That will keep the record to date in case we fail to return."

Toole silently scribbled a few lines in the book, closed it and handed it to his companion. But it took a long time to persuade Bully to start on his mission. A hundred yards up the trail they saw the dog pause with his head in the air, gazing at the plume of smoke that now rose straight and thin above the Abbe's hut. One long, heart-desolating howl escaped the faithful alfredale and he was on his way.

For a half hour Bannister and Toole had been weaving down the boulder-strewn trail leading to the Whipple camp when both paused suddenly and listened.

"Sounds like wolves," said Toole finally.

"Wild dogs?" was Bannister's guess. He had met this breed of vermin in the sheep country of Australia and had heard that they had become a pest in certain parts of northern India.

The yipping, yelping and barking that first assailed their ears grew more distinct. "Hungry pack chasing something—or somebody," he continued, "seem to be headed this way. With empty bellies they're bad actors. Haven't even got the discretion of wolves. Give me a leg up this boulder and I'll see if I can spot them."

Toole helped Dick to reach the top of a snail-like monolith that presented three naked sides about ten feet high and ended with a table having five-tooth angles.

"They're coming this way, hell-bent!" he called down presently. "Take hold and I'll pull you up." Dick extended his gunstock to the detective and dragged him to the top.

"Must be a hundred of 'em," Toole puffed.

"Less than a dozen," Bannister answered, using his glasses. The pack was now a quarter of a mile from their refuge and streaking directly toward them in full cry. For another minute they watched the tumbling, skittering brutes, then Dick gave a whistle of amazement.

"A red chow out in front!" he yelled. "And it's wearing a green collar!"

"You're right!" said Toole excitedly, glaring through his own glasses.

"Karen Sire's dog gone native!" spluttered Bannister. "Either that or the others are trying to make a meal of him. Good heavens, Toole, where can Karen be?"

He stood up at full height on the shaft and roared: "Napoleon! Napoleon!"

The chow, twenty yards in front of the pack, turned and made for the boulder, running as only a fear-mitten creature can that believes its life is forfeit.

"We can't get 'Nap' up here," said Dick swiftly. "Let's jump down and fight 'em."

In their hike down trail Toole's eye had plucked a wicked looking shrub that resembled an Irish blackthorn and with Bannister's hunting knife, he had cut for himself a "fine bit of a stick."

This was between his teeth when Dick had dragged him to the top of the rock. Now, at his friend's warning that the fight would have to be made in the open, he let forth the old battle cry of Holl's Kitchen: "Whoo-oh! Whoo-oh!" and leaped from his perch. The thud of Bannister's feet sounded beside him a moment later, just as Napoleon, with tongue hanging like a red shirt over a window sill, flung himself behind the protecting bodies of the two men.

Bannister shot the leader of the pursuing pack, which turned a sanguinary somersault in death throes. Clutching his gun, Dick

went into action with Toole. The detective seemed to be in his element, rushing into the very center of the pack and flailing out with his thorn-spiked shillalah. One lean brute, denuded of hair from mange, was almost at Bannister's throat when Toole fetched it a lethal lick.

Finding the gun too cumbersome for battle at close quarters, Bannister dropped it and jerked out his big automatic. The wild dogs seemed absolutely fearless. "Back up against the rock, Toole!" Dick shouted, "or they'll pull you down!" At the same moment he fired at a ragged mongrel that was attacking the detective's thick leg.

"Look's like we'll have to kill 'em all!" yelled Toole. "Game ain't they?"

Game, indeed they were, if that could be said of famished brutes carrying their attack with confidence born of numbers and the blind fury of hunger.

Toole had fought his way back to the rock and was standing at one of the three facets, laying about him with undiminished vigor, while Bannister, relieved of the fear of shooting his companion, kept on firing and kicking out with his long right leg to repel the dogs that came nearest him.

Then something totally unexpected happened. The chow, which had been cowering abjectly since the first onslaught, suddenly felt the stir of his own fighting spirit. With a snarl like a wild thing, Napoleon entered the fray, selecting as his special enemy a huge, short haired brute with the ears of a hound and the underfoot jaws of a bulldog. A half dozen of the loathsome creatures were strewn about the boulder, dead; others, maimed by the terrific blows of Toole's stick, had gone out of action and were retreating. The big fellow, however, more cunning than the others, had managed to elude the detective's stick and Bannister's bullets. He was still in good fighting form when "Nap" went to grips with him.

"Let 'em fight it out, Toole!" Bannister called from his side of the rock. "Bully would never forgive me if he knew about this little shindy." Dick was putting a fresh clip in his pistol as he spoke. Soon a more deliberate fire cleared the field for the chow and his antagonist.

"Must be something of the sheep dog in these chows," said Bannister. "Napoleon is trying for a back hold."

"He'll make it, too," the detective answered. Then suddenly: "What has made it?"

What Toole said was true. The chow, leaping into the air a dozen times, had finally come down on the flanks of the wild dog, seizing the brute's back. A crunch, a howl and it was all over for the wild dog.

Toole moved about the grisly scene with a haunting fear that had been suspended by the savagery of the fight and his own wild joy of battle. He knew that Bannister, temporarily numbed to all other than these same emotions, would soon repeat the question that had sprung to his lips at the first sight of Napoleon and the pursuing pack. Terror gripped him. Toole turned and looked into his friend's face, drawn now and pinched with an anguish that

could speak only through his eyes.

"Where is Karen Sire?"

The question did not come from Bannister. It crept out of Toole's chilled heart and entered his brain from within; it came in a dire whisper through the air, it assumed life before his eyes and leered at him. He did not dare to speak—a word would crack his stricken friend as a hammer often shatters a stone.

The detective saw Bannister's gaze wander to the leopard pelt and to the bloody things strewn about; saw him reach down and pat Napoleon's head; saw him suddenly become erect; only to sink slowly to the ground, the dead eyes of that ghastly shambles seeming to watch him—mock him.

Bannister had cracked. The oak frame and the iron nerve that had withstood a thousand shocks were overwhelmed by the same hideous fear that had fallen upon Toole. What had become of Napoleon? Could the wild dogs, if endowed with the power of speech, have told? They were dead now, but the chow was alive, yet equally impotent to yield up the story of what he might have seen.

Toole had taken out his "emergency" flask (there was still some of the cratur) left with the intention of reviving his friend, but paused with the thought that, for the time at least, it would be better to leave Dick sleep off temporal exhaustion. His eyes roved to Napoleon and he clutched at his hope that some message might have been placed on the chow's collar. He had seen the like of that in the movies. The dog was in desperate straits for water and Toole gave him some from his canteen before examining the collar.

One of the larger green medallions proved to be a locket which opened readily at his touch. With his knife Toole pried out an oval picture of a dog's head, hoping to find something beneath. There was nothing. He turned the picture over and read an inscription written in ink: "To my friend Napoleon, from Bully." Mystified, he stared at the little photograph. It was Bully, sure enough. Those alert, keen eyes under wiry, overhanging brows had often fixed themselves upon Toole, "lookin' at me like he more than once remarked, 'like a fox squinting out of the bushes.'"

The detective instantly recognized the handwriting. It was Karen's. Bannister had not given her that picture of Bully, he felt certain. She probably had borrowed it from Hod's desk back in New York and given play to one of those curious little feminine whims which speak so eloquently of things that are not to be uttered. Toole swallowed, then tried to laugh, only to hear a moan come from his lips.

Bannister lay like a log on the rough, sandy ground but his breath was coming in long even sweeps that told of a natural sleep thrust upon him by outraged nature. Toole placed a soft pack under the exhausted man's head, buried the dead dogs over the ledge, and determined to wait a couple of hours before awakening the sleeper. He was desperately tired and would have flung himself to the ground had not Napoleon, relieved by another drink of water, settled placidly down and gone to sleep. Muddled and distracted, Toole saw something cheerful in this act. If Karen had met a horrible fate before Napoleon's eyes, could her pet dog have taken it so lightly?

The sun had risen high in the bleached sky and the detective rigged a shade for his friend's face. After a while he saw shadow

flitting across the space that an hour before had been a battle ground. "Red vultures!" he muttered. "What next?" He picked up Bannister's gun but dropped it again in fear of awakening Dick. It was just as well. The vultures—a dozen of them—had spotted the carrion where Toole had dropped it and already were swooping down deep in the ravine.

Another hour passed. Bannister and the chow slept on. Presently Napoleon stirred, thrust his muzzle upward and instantly took to his feet. His sharp nose oscillated like the needle of a compass but kept a general direction true, pointing toward the Whipple camp. Soon his keen eyes remained fixed; he crouched, still as a stuffed dog.

Toole became alert. Taking a position behind the chow he trained his glasses upon the point indicated. He saw a large, dark, loosely formed object about a mile away, moving toward him. Soon it seemed to separate into six parts, each of which assumed the shape of a man on horseback.

Napoleon growled and trembled. "Whipple and his men on the way to the Abbe's hut," murmured Toole. "I'll have to wake Bannister."

Several times the dog rushed toward the approaching horsemen, only to return, bristling and shaking with uncertainty. Toole was about to arouse Bannister when the chow barked joyfully and darted away again, this time in the long steady leaps that told of a final resolution. Napoleon was on his way to meet the approaching cavalcade, now more clearly visible.

(To be continued)

THREE WHITES SHOT IN HUNT FOR NEGRO

ANNISTON, Ala., Aug. 12.—(AP)—Race feeling ran high today after a gun fight in which three white men were wounded while hunting a negro accused of trying to kidnap a white baby from its crib.

Shotgun fire met a small body of searchers at a negro settlement about five miles from here when the group approached a dwelling last night.

A posse of some 200 men continued the hunt today for the man whose asserted abduction attempt was said to have been frustrated by the mother of the child.

He was said to have dropped the infant when she struck him with a hammer.

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that all warrants of School District No. 4, Douglas County, Oregon, up to and including No. 19,910, protested for non-payment June 1, 1936, are this date called for payment, and all interest thereon ceases this date, August 10, 1936.

CLERK.

"WHILE we were yet sinners Christ died for us."—Adv.

GROWERS OF SPUDS AND BARLEY HAPPY

KLAMATH FALLS, Aug. 12.—(AP)—Happy times loomed ahead for Klamath basin potato and barley growers today as United States department of agriculture estimates showed huge national shortages in the two crops. County Agent C. A. Henderson estimates that the Klamath potato crop will amount to 4,392,000 bushels, the highest in history and believes there will be a repetition of the barley boom of 1934. It has been reported that potato growers willing to contract ahead of time have been offered as high as \$1.50 per 100 pounds.

FIRE RAZES ASYLUM, 15 PATIENTS FLEE

MT. PLEASANT, Ia., Aug. 11.—(AP)—Hospital authorities and highway police today sought 15 patients, believed to have escaped last night when an unexplained fire destroyed the Iowa hospital for the insane here.

None of them was believed to be dangerous.

Dr. Leonard Ristine, director of the hospital, estimated damage to buildings and equipment would total \$200,000, and immediately laid plans for housing the 1,625 inmates, all of whom were safely removed from the building.

"THANKS be unto God for His inexpressible Gift."—Adv.

Nathan Fullerton Drug Store offers FREE Sample of new High Blood Pressure treatment

Every High Blood Pressure sufferer in Roseburg is urged to go to Nathan Fullerton, druggist, and receive a free sample of ALLIMIN Essence of Garlic Parsley tablets for High Blood Pressure as well as a valuable booklet. These tablets are made by a prominent Chicago concern and according to most reliable reports are being used with good results by thousands of sufferers. A special new process by which ALLIMIN tablets are produced makes them both tasteless and odorless. A two weeks' treatment costs only 50c.—Adv.

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