

East of Gorontalo

Ponga Jim

by Louis L'Amour, 1908-1988

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Ponga Jim Mayo leaned against the hogshead of tobacco and stared out at the freighter. His faded khaki suit was rumpled, his heavy jaw unshaven. The white-topped cap carried the label *Captain* in gold lettering, but Ponga Jim looked like anything but a master mariner, and felt even less like one.

Being broke was a problem anywhere. In Gorontalo it became an emergency of the first water. Everything he owned in the world was on him, from the soft, woven-leather shoes on his feet to the white-topped cap to the big Colt automatic in its shoulder holster.

Jim pushed his cap back on his head and glanced at Major Arnold, sitting on a bitt at the edge of the wharf. In his neat white drill and military mustache he could have been nothing but a British officer.

„Tell me, William,“ Jim said, „just what brings a big-shot intelligence officer to Celebes? Something in the wind?“

„You get around a lot, don't you?“ Major William Arnold lighted a cigarette and glanced up at Jim.

„Yeah, when I can.“ Ponga Jim grinned. „Right now I'm on the beach, and it looks like I'm not getting off for a while. But there isn't much in the Indies I don't know.“

Arnold nodded. „I know. You might do me some good, Jim. If you see anything suspicious, give me a tip, will you? There's a rumor around that while England's busy in Europe, there will be a move to pick up some of her colonies in the Far East. This is a Dutch colony, but we're cooperating.“

„Then,“ Mayo said thoughtfully, nodding his head toward the broad-beamed, battered tramp freighter, „you might add her to your list of suspects.“

„That's the NATUNA out of Surabaya, isn't it? Didn't you used to be her skipper?“

„Yeah.“ Ponga Jim shifted his position to let the breeze blow under his coat. He was wearing a gun, and the day was hot. „Then the company sold her to Pete Lucieno, and I quit. I wouldn't work for that dope peddler on a bet. I'm no lily of the valley, and frankly, I'm not making any boasts about being above picking up a slightly illegal dollar—I've made some of your British pearl fisheries out of season before now, and a few other things—but I draw the line at Pete's kind of stuff.“

„No love lost, I guess?“ Arnold squinted up at Jim, smiling.

„Not a bit. He'd consider it a privilege to cut my heart out. So would Dago Frank, that majordomo of his, or Blue Coley. And I don't fancy them.“

Major Arnold soon left, walking back up toward the club. Ponga Jim lighted a cigarette and stared thoughtfully at the NATUNA. Then his eyes shifted to the other ship in port, a big white freighter, the CARLSBERG. Although there were three or four schooners, and a scattering of smaller craft, it was the two freighters that held his attention.

„Now, William,“ he said whimsically, „you should never miss a bet. Being an old seafaring man, it strikes me as being somewhat phony for that native scow to be shoving herself around in circles. Especially, when she goes behind the CARLSBERG riding high and comes out with darn little freeboard. Then she wanders around, gets behind the NATUNA, and comes out riding high in the water again.“

„Now the only CARLSBERG I ever knew sailed out of Bremen, not Copenhagen.“ Mayo's eyes flickered to the sleek white CARLSBERG. „So, putting a possibility of registry changed from Bremerhaven to Copenhagen, some mysterious goings-on connected with the NATUNA, a scow whose owners would frame their mothers for a dollar six-bits, a war, and William's rumors, what do you have?“

Ponga Jim Mayo straightened up and sauntered off down the dock. It was nearly sundown, and the seven guilders that remained in his pocket suggested food. After that—

Jim walked into Chino John's and stopped at the bar.

„Give me a beer,“ he said, glancing around. A man standing nearby turned to face Mayo.

„Well, if it isn't my old friend Ponga Jim!“ he sneered. „On the beach again, no?“

Jim looked at Dago Frank coolly and then past him at Lucieno. The fat little Portuguese glistened with perspiration and ill-concealed hatred.

„Yeah,“ Jim said. „Anytime to keep out of the company of rats.“

„I disdain that remark,“ Lucieno said. „I disdain it.“

„You'd better,“ Jim said cheerfully. „If you took it up, I'd pull your fat nose for you!“

Dago Frank's eyes narrowed. He stepped closer.

„Then maybe you pull mine, eh?“ he challenged.

Ponga Jim's right fist snapped up in a jarring right that knocked every bit of wind from Dago Frank's body.

Then jerking him erect, Mayo jolted another six-inch punch into his midsection and dropped him to the floor. Coolly, he picked up his beer and drank it, and then he turned and looked at Lucieno. The fat Portuguese began to back away, his face white.

Jim grinned. „Okay, pal,“ he said cheerfully. „It was just a little lesson to teach your boyfriend to talk nice to his superiors. Next time—“ He shook his finger warningly and turned away.

Arnold was standing on the boardwalk as Jim strode through the swinging doors. He chuckled, clapping Jim on the shoulder.

„That was great! Everybody in the Dutch East Indies has been hoping to see that pair get called. But you've made an enemy, and a nasty one.“

„That's just the fifth episode,“ Mayo said, shrugging. „I beat them out of a cargo of copra and pearl shell down in the Friendly Islands about three years ago. About six months later they tried to kidnap old Schumann's daughter over in the Moluccas. They were going to sell her to some native prince. I put a stop to that, and a couple of their boys got tough.“

„What happened to them?“

„You know, William,“ Jim said seriously, „I was trying to remember the other day. They had an accident or something.“

He straightened his tie, and gave the automatic a hitch into a better position.

„By the way, William,“ he asked carelessly, „where's the NATUNA bound this trip?“

„To Port Moresby, with general cargo.“

Ponga Jim walked down the street, and when he turned at the corner, glanced back. Major Arnold, his neat, broad-shouldered, compact figure very casual, was standing in front of Chino John's. Jim grinned, and turned the corner carelessly. Then, suddenly alert, he wheeled and darted down an alley, turned into a side street, and cut through the scattering of buildings toward the dock. The British Intelligence was convenient at times, at others, a nuisance.

There was no one in sight when he reached the dock. He let himself down the piling and crawled into a skiff moored there in the dark. Quickly, he shoved off.

Overhead there was a heavy bank of clouds. The night was very still, and the skiff made scarcely a shadow as it slipped through the dark water. Staying a

hundred yards off, Ponga Jim avoided the lighted gangway and cautiously sculled the boat around to the dark side of the NATUNA. There was no one in sight, so with painstaking care he drifted the boat nearer and nearer to the silent ship. When he came alongside he laid his paddle down and stood up, balancing himself.

Fortunately, the sea was still. Picking up the heaving line lying in the stern of the boat, Mayo tossed the monkey's fist around a stanchion of the taffrail, and catching the ball, he pulled it down.

Once aboard that ship he would be practically in the hands of his enemies and with no legal status. Ponga Jim grinned and settled the gun in its holster. Then taking two strands of the heaving line, he climbed swiftly—hand over hand.

There was no one in sight, and pulling himself through the rail, he rolled over twice and was against the bulkhead of the after wheelhouse. There was no movement aft. Forward, the light from a port glinted on the rail and the water, and he could see the watchman standing under the light near the gangway. It was Blue Coley.

Jim crawled into the shadow of the winch and then along the deck to the ladder. The well deck was empty, so he slipped down. Then he hesitated.

The passage was lighted, but it was a chance he had to take. The crew's quarters were forward, the officers' amidships. There was small chance of anyone being aft. He stepped into the passageway and hurried along, passing the paint locker. The rope-locker door was fastened, and he swore as he dug for his keys. Luckily, he still had them. Once inside, he closed the door carefully and locked it again.

There was a vague smell of paint and linseed oil. He felt his way along over coils of line, until he stopped abruptly. Then, cautiously, he struck a match. The paint had been shifted into the rope locker. Carefully, he snuffed the match and then paused in indecision. Then he crawled over the coils of line and found the door into number five hatch. He grinned. Luckily, he knew every inch of the NATUNA. He hadn't commanded her for a year for nothing, and he liked to know a ship. He knew her better now than the man who built her. She'd changed a lot in twenty years, and there had been repairs made and some changes.

The door was stiff, but he opened it and crawled into the hold, carefully closing the door after him. He was on his hands and knees on a wooden case.

He struck a match, shielding it with his hands despite the knowledge that the hold was sealed tight and the hatch battened down and ready for the sea. The case was marked in large black letters, CANNED GOODS. Returning to the rope locker, Jim picked up a marlinespike and returned to the hold. Working carefully, he forced open the wooden case. Striking another match, he leaned over.

Then he sat back on his heels, smiling. The case was filled with automatic rifles.

„Well, well, Señor Lucieno!“ he muttered to himself. „Just as I suspected. If there's dirty work, you'll be in on it.“

Thoughtfully, he considered the open case. The match had gone out, but he could remember those cool barrels, the magazines. He rubbed his jaw.

„Contraband,“ he said. „And I'm broke. What was it Hadji Ali used to say? *Lie to a liar, for lies are his coin; steal from a thief for that is easy; lay a trap for the trickster, and catch him at the first attempt; but beware of an honest man.*“

Taking one of the rifles from the case he began to assemble it in the dark.

„Well, Petey, old darling, you're a liar, a thief, and a trickster, and contraband is fair game for anyone—so here's where I move in.“

Fastening the case shut, he carried the automatic rifle with him. Then he descended into the lower hold, and found a place near the shaft-alley housing where there was a space in the cargo. He had known it was there. Stowing cargo in that spot always necessitated it because of the ship's structure. There was also a small steel door into the shaft alley. So far as he knew it had not been used since he had ordered it cut there while making repairs. Opening another case he got some excelsior and made himself comfortable. Then crawling back into the 'tween decks, he felt his way over the cases until he was immediately under the hatch.

Listening, he heard no feet on the deck, so he opened a case. As he had suspected, this was really canned goods. He tried several cases, and with his coat for a sack, carried an armful back down to his hideout.

„If you're going to stow away, Jim boy,“ he told himself, „by all means pick a ship you know, and one carrying food.“

Opening a can of pineapple he ate, speculating on the future. The NATUNA was bound for Port Moresby. That would mean something like ten or twelve days. It might be more, depending on the weather. The NATUNA was a temperamental old Barnacle Bill of a ship. She might stagger along at twelve knots, and she might limp at eight or nine. It was hot, too damned hot, but during at least part of the day he could stay in the 'tween decks under a ventilator.

Besides, there wasn't a chance of his being here ten days. Pete Lucieno wasn't one to spend a dime or a guilder he could save, and that would mean he wouldn't take this cargo a bit farther than he could help. If he was bound for Port Moresby, that meant he was discharging the contraband somewhere this side of there, and if he was going that far, it meant his point of discharge wouldn't be very much this side. Which meant that he was heading somewhere along the New Guinea coast, and probably the mouth of the Fly. There were islands there and easy access to the interior.

Obviously, whoever planned to use these rifles and the other munitions, intended to distribute them among the natives and then stir up trouble. By raiding Port Moresby, friction could be created and the entire Indies might be set aflame. Then it would require British action to protect her nationals and save her colonies.

During the next two nights, Ponga Jim Mayo searched the paint locker and the lamp locker. As he had suspected, both were stored with ammunition. He picked up some for the automatic rifle, and found some clips for his automatic, stuffing his pockets with them.

For water, he had to go to the gravity tank on the boat deck. Otherwise his only chance was to enter the crew's quarters forward or the galley or mess room amidships. Neither was practical. As for the boat deck, by crawling through the bulkhead door into number four and then into number three hatch, he could climb the ladder to the 'tween decks and from the top of the cargo, could scramble into the ventilator just abaft the cargo winches at number three hatch. From the ventilator cowl he had a good view of the deck without being seen, and it was simple to slip out and up the ladder to the boat deck.

On the fifth night, Mayo slipped out of the ventilator and walked across the deserted deck to the ladder, climbing to the boat deck. He drank, and then filled the can he'd carried with him.

Crouching near the tank, he could see the officer on watch pacing the bridge. By his thick shoulders and queer gait, Jim recognized him as Blue Coley. That would mean, he reflected, that Dago Frank would have the eight-to-twelve watch. Lucieno couldn't navigate and knew nothing of seamanship, so obviously someone else had the eight to four. Ponga Jim wrinkled his brow thoughtfully. Now who the devil?

Long ago he had discovered it was well to know the caliber of one's opponent. Dago Frank was a vindictive, treacherous, blood-hungry rascal who would stop at nothing. Blue Coley was a thick-headed, strong-armed thug without enough on the ball to carry through a job of this kind.

Suddenly Jim flattened out on the deck. Aft, near the ventilator he used for access to the deck, was a slight, square-shouldered figure. Even as he watched, the man came forward soundlessly, and as he moved across the ribbon of light from the starboard passage, he was clearly revealed for an instant. He was a lascar in dark green cotton trousers which flapped about his legs halfway between knee and ankle, and his head was done up in a red turban. There was a puckering scar on the man's face, and he was muscular. In his belt was an ugly-looking kris.

Now what's this? Jim felt himself getting irritated. Had the fellow seen him? And who was he? How did he figure in this deal? If one of the crew, he had no reason to be ducking or dodging around. Unless, that is, he was aft when he had no business to be.

Watching, Jim saw the native come forward stealthily and then suddenly dodge out of sight near the starboard rail. There was a walk forward along the rail outside the amidships house.

But scarcely had he disappeared when a shadow appeared in the lighted passage, and then a man walked out on deck. Jim's eyes narrowed.

It was a heavy, brutal head set down on massive shoulders with scarcely any neck at all. The shoulders were enormously wide and thick, the chest was deep, and when he walked his knees jerked queerly, like those of some wrestlers. When he turned, Jim could see a flattened nose above a mouth like a gash set in a wide, dark face. It was a face marked with brutality and strength, and the whole man radiated a sense of evil power that Ponga Jim had never seen in any other human thing.

When he lifted his hands, Jim could see they were thick and powerful with stubby fingers and backed by huge-boned wrists. A black beard darkened the man's jaw, and there was a mat of hair visible at his open shirt. Despite the brutality in the man's face, there was a shrewd sort of animal cunning, too.

Ponga Jim Mayo felt the hair prickle along the back of his neck, and he wet his lips thoughtfully. Without doubt this was the skipper, and he was something far different from Dago Frank or Blue Coley. When the man went back into the passage, Jim slipped down the ladder and aft to his ventilator, but he was no sooner inside than he heard footsteps approaching.

He hesitated, gun in hand. His jaw set hard. If they found him now, there would be nothing to do but shoot it out.

Two men stopped near the ventilator. Lucieno was speaking.

„We're making good time. The day after tomorrow we will drop the anchor in the mouth of the Fly. Gruber will be there to meet us.“

„What about Borg?“ Dago's voice was cautious.

„We let Borg alone,“ Lucieno said severely, „if we know what is good for us.“ He hesitated. „You know what he thinks? He thinks somebody's aboard—a stowaway.“

Jim felt his heart pounding, and his mouth went dry.

„A stowaway?“ Dago Frank broke in. „That is not possible, unless—“

„Jim Mayo, you think, eh? I think, too. Borg, he think he see somebody on the main deck. Two nights ago. The night we leave Gorontalo, he see an empty boat floating. Now somebody been in the chart room. He say that.“

„What now?“ Dago Frank asked. „I like to get hold of him, of that Ponga Jim.“

The two walked off forward, and Jim slipped down into the 'tween decks and then down the ladder to his hideout. Once there, he checked the automatic and returning it to its holster, checked the automatic rifle. Then he pulled a case over the opening and stretched out.

It could only have been a few minutes when he was awakened suddenly. Every sense alert, he waited, listening. There was silence, then the scratching of a match. In the dim light thrown against the bulkhead he could see a shadow. It looked like a lascar turban, but he couldn't be sure. The gun slid into his hand, and crouching, breathless, he awaited discovery. None came.

There were soft movements and then a metallic sound, a short hard blow, and then another. And silence. He waited a long time, but there was no further movement. Crawling out of his concealment, he felt his way over the cases. In the top tier, a case of canned goods had been pulled aside. He knew every case from crawling over them so much. A faint scent of oil came to his nostrils, and shielding it carefully, he struck a match.

The end of one of the boards in the case had been saturated with oil and then forced open bit by bit, and more oil added, effectively quieting any possible screech from a nail!

But who? Ponga Jim returned to his hideout distinctly uneasy. He had a feeling that matters were getting out of hand: the unknown skipper, obviously a more dangerous and cunning man than either Frank or Lucieno, and now this mysterious searcher. Added to that was the problem of the lascar. Still puzzling over the problem, he fell asleep.

He awakened with a start, instantly conscious of two things. He had overslept, and something was definitely wrong. Crawling to his knees he slipped on his shoulder holster and then his coat. Putting on his cap, he waited, listening.

There was no sound. But suddenly he was conscious of a peculiar odor. He frowned, trying to place it. Then it struck him like a blow!

Formaldehyde! Evidently, while he slept too soundly, they had crept through the hold or at least looked in.

Not seeing him and fearing to stumble across an armed man, they were trying to smoke him out.

Lunging to his feet he hurriedly shifted the case over the entrance to his hideout. By that time the fumes were growing thick. Stumbling over the cargo, he found the door into number four.

His heart sank. The door was locked tight. Wheeling about, gasping and choking, he stumbled across to the rope-locker door. It, too, was locked. For an instant he hesitated, his mind desperately searching for a way out. Then he remembered the plate into the shaft alley. Stumbling back over the cargo, he tumbled into his hole and pulled the case back over the entrance; then he turned and felt for the plate. Finding it, he found the wrench he had thoughtfully stolen from the locker and started on one of the nuts.

It was stiff, rusty. Desperately, he tugged. The wrench came loose, and he skinned his knuckles on the nut below. Choking, eyes red and breath coming in gasps, he got one of the nuts loose and then another. He thought the final nut would never come off. Twice the wrench slipped loose. Then suddenly it was off, and he slid through the hole into the darkness of the shaft alley.

Coughing and spluttering, he struck a match. The great whirling metallic shaft loomed above him. He dropped the match, and taking the plate by a bolt through its center, he slipped it back on the bolts. Turning, he walked forward to the swing door, moving carefully. Beyond it, the shaft alley was lighted. Running now, he slipped the Colt from its holster. Amazingly enough, the shaft-alley door was open, and even as he plunged through and closed it after him, he was conscious of the bad seamanship. Now if he were still in command—

The engineer on watch didn't even look up, and the fireman was arguing with the oiler in the fire room. Crossing the floor plates in two jumps, Ponga Jim ran up the ladder to the orlop deck, then forward to the ladder to the main deck. Just as he reached it, a lascar came down the ladder, and his eyes went wide when he saw Mayo. Jerking up the spanner he carried, the lascar tried to strike, but Jim stiff-armed him with a left and knocked the native sprawling.

It was quiet on deck, and the sun was shining when Mayo stepped out of the passage. He realized then that he had overslept by many hours, for it was already late in the afternoon. Off on the port side was the long blue line of the New Guinea coast, and he stood there, letting his eyes grow accustomed to the sun. Aft, he could hear voices.

Then he started forward and ran up the ladder to the bridge.

As he stepped into the wheelhouse the lascar at the wheel gave a sharp cry. Dago Frank, evidently on watch while the skipper tried to smoke out the stowaway, wheeled. His face turned gray, and he grabbed at a gun. Then Ponga Jim slugged him.

Frank toppled forward, his jaw slack, and Jim slugged him again. Then he turned on the man at the wheel.

„Put her over to port about ten degrees,“ he snapped. „Quick now, or I'll spill your guts on this deck!“

His face white with fear, the lascar put the wheel over. A sudden sound from the chart room startled him, and he whirled to see Pete Lucieno standing in the door, pistol in hand.

„Drop it!“ Mayo snapped.

Lucieno smiled—and dropped the gun. Then he bowed slightly.

„Of course, my friend. With the greatest of pleasure. I see you now where I have long wished to see you.“

„Wha—?“

Then something crashed down on the back of his head, and a sharp arrow of pain stabbed through his consciousness as he felt himself falling.

When Ponga Jim Mayo opened his eyes, his head was throbbing with pain. He tried to move, and surprisingly, he was not bound. He sat up, groaning.

„Comin' out of it?“

He looked up, blinking back the pain. Borg, his powerful legs braced to the roll of the ship, stood looking down at him. The man had a pair of field glasses in his right hand. He shifted them to his left.

„Get up.“

Ponga Jim crawled unsteadily to his feet, facing Borg. The man stared at him.

„Ponga Jim Mayo, eh? Tough guy, are you?“ He swung. His fist smashed against the angle of Jim's jaw, and Mayo went down. He got up, staggering, and Borg hit him again.

Then Borg laughed. „You may be tough around this bunch, but you ain't tough t' me.“

He walked over to Jim and kicked him viciously in the ribs. Jim started to get up, and sneering, Borg swung a vicious kick at his head. Mayo rolled over and swung his ankle up behind Borg's leg, spilling the big man to the deck.

With a snarling oath, Borg scrambled to his feet, his face livid. He swung a terrific right, but Jim ducked and hooked a left to the body. Even as he threw it, he knew he didn't have the stuff. The punch landed, and then Jim hooked his right to Borg's head, but the man grabbed him and hurled him across the room.

Following him, Borg slammed a wicked right to the head that made Ponga Jim roll and grab at the shelf along the wall. Then Borg hooked him in the kidney and dug a wicked right into his body. As Jim started to fall, he felt a terrific blow crash against his jaw.

It seemed hours later when he came to. He kept his eyes shut and lay very still, conscious that he was bound hand and foot now, and conscious that there were two men in the chart room, one at the wheel.

Opening his eyes to a slit, Jim saw the man at the wheel was a lascar, but not the one who had been there when he was fighting Borg. The two men came out of the chart room, and he saw one was Dago Frank, the other Lucieno.

„In about an hour he say,“ Lucieno said. „The submarine he come in about an hour.“

„This one,“ Frank said, motioning toward Mayo, „I like to kill.“

The two went out on the bridge, and Jim lay very still, resting, his desperate thoughts striving through the stabbing pain to find a way out. He stretched a little, but the ropes were tight. Borg was a seaman, and Borg had tied those ropes to stay.

Jim lay still, staring through his half-opened eyes at the helmsman's feet. Suddenly, his eyes lifted—green flapping trousers, a wide leather belt, an ugly kris, and then broad, muscular brown shoulders and a dark red turban. It was the

lascar who had been prowling that night on deck! And the one, he felt sure, who had opened a box of rifles in number five hold.

There was something phony about this somewhere. He lay still, feigning unconsciousness. Another lascar came in, relieving the man at the wheel. Ponga Jim heard the course as they repeated it, and he started.

In the excitement, the lascars had continued to steer his course, ten degrees north and east of the proper one! He stirred a little, to get a better view of the room. Then in a far corner, among some signal flags, he glimpsed his gun! Evidently flying from his hand when he was struck from behind, it had fallen among those flags, unnoticed.

In an hour, Lucieno had said. At least fifteen minutes had passed, possibly more. He lifted his eyes. They stopped, riveted on a bit of red outside the starboard door of the wheelhouse. The lascar was standing on the ladder, concealed unless the man at the wheel noticed him, or unless Dago Frank walked along the bridge. The red turban came into sight and then the scar-puckered face.

The man at the wheel was daydreaming, staring off at the coastline to port. The lascar at the door lifted a knife into view, laid it carefully on the deck, and shot it slithering straight at Jim. Instinctively, he arched his body. The man at the wheel jerked around, staring.

The knife was safely under Jim's body, and the lascar in the doorway was gone. Outside the door an awning string rattled against the stanchion. The lascar peered, started to call to Frank, and then shrugged and was silent. Working carefully, Jim got the knife turned edgewise. It was razor sharp. Holding himself carefully, so as not to slice off a finger, he managed to use his hands enough to cut through a rope and then another. Swiftly, he freed himself and stood up.

The lascar turned, and found himself with a knife pressed against his stomach. His face gray, he stood very still, his mouth looking sick.

„One sound and I'll cut your heart out!“ Jim snapped. „Get back to that wheel, and don't let a yelp out of you!“

Turning, he caught up the automatic and stepped to the door. Dago Frank was standing in the wing of the bridge, staring at the shoreline. It was suddenly very near, too near. He wheeled and started for the wheelhouse, and brought up suddenly.

„All right, Dago,“ Jim said coolly, „this is it. You wanted to kill me, now go for your gun!“

Frank's hand shot down, and Ponga Jim stood very still, canting to the roll of the ship. When Dago Frank's gun came up belching flame, he fired. He heard a bullet smack viciously into the wall of the wheelhouse, but that was all. Frank turned half around and fell headlong.

A white man rushed out on deck with a rifle, and Ponga Jim fired. The man ran three steps and then pitched headlong over the rail, the rifle clattering on the deck. Blue Coley started out of the passageway below, and Jim's gun coughed. The bullet smacked against a steam-pipe housing at his feet, and Blue stumbled back into the passage in a desperate hurry. Another shot chased him down the passage.

Leaping through the door, Jim was just in time to snap a shot at the lascar at the wheel as the man tried to throw a knife. The native dropped, coughing blood.

Jim leaped past him to the engine-room telegraph and jerked it over to SLOW—then to STOP.

A bullet whistled by his head and smashed the chronometer, and he saw an oiler standing in the forecandle door. Jim fired, and the man jumped back inside. Another rifle shot crashed, and then Ponga Jim chanced a shot into the open doorway, and there was nothing further. He turned suddenly, snapping a shot at a gun in a forecandle port.

Borg had come up the other ladder and was standing in the doorway, staring at him. The man was unshaven, and his face was almost black.

Ponga Jim glanced down at the empty automatic, tossed it aside.

„I got something for you, big boy,“ he said. His left jabbed quickly, but Borg ducked and laughed, crashing right into a whipping right uppercut.

„Go ahead, Jim!“ a voice shouted from the door behind him. „I’ll hold this bunch!“

Mayo whirled, stepping back to watch the door and Borg at the same time. The lascar with the red turban stood in the doorway with an automatic rifle. He was grinning.

„William!“ Ponga Jim shouted. „William, by all that’s holy!“

„Righto, old chap!“

The cheery voice sounded in his ears as Borg rushed. Jim lashed out with another left, and this time stabbed Borg over the eye, splitting it to the bone. A ponderous fist crashed against the side of Jim’s head, and a million stars sprang into the sky. Jim laughed suddenly, full of the lust to fight, and fired both hands into the big man’s body furiously.

Borg hooked a hard left to his head and then grabbed him, but Ponga Jim jerked away, crossing a short right to the face, and hooking a left to the body. Borg rushed, clubbing with his right, but missing. Then suddenly Borg launched himself in a vicious flying tackle!

Ponga Jim’s knee jerked up into the man’s face, knocking him sprawling to the deck. But Borg was up, a wild right catching Jim in the body. He gasped, and a left slammed against his head, dropping him to his knees. Borg lunged, kicking, and Ponga Jim hurled himself at the one leg Borg had on the floor.

The big man came down with a crash, and then both men were on their feet. Jim walked in wide open, his eyes blazing with the joy of battle. Left right, left right, punch after punch he ripped into the big man’s head and body, hooks, uppercuts, and swings, a battering volley.

Borg was powerful, but too slow. He started to back up, lifting his arms to get that blinding fury of punches out of his eyes and face only to catch a terrific right in the solar plexus. He gasped and Jim let him have another in the same place and then another. The man fell forward on his face, and turning, Jim heard the hoarse rattle of the automatic rifle.

Suddenly, Arnold’s puckered scar twisted and his eyes widened.

„Jim!“ he yelled. „The sub!“

Mayo sprang to the door. The sub had come up on the port bow, and the officer in the conning tower was staring at the ship in amazement. And it was no wonder. The NATUNA was swinging idly on a flat sea, her deck a rattle of gunfire.

Arnold was yelling something about a sack, and Ponga Jim ran out on the bridge. Behind the corner of the wheelhouse was a canvas sack, and jerking it open, he saw it was full of hand grenades. The sub was closing in for a better view, and a gun crew had swung the gun around to cover the ship. They were launching a boat, and a dozen men were climbing into it.

Ponga Jim jerked the pin and hurled the grenade. It hit the side of the submarine near the gun crew, and there was a terrific blast. But he had already thrown another. It fell short, but even as the gun crashed, he hurled another.

Their shot put a hole through the stack, but it was the only one they got a chance to fire. Arnold had rushed into the wing of the bridge and poured a stream of hot lead down at the conning tower and then clipped a couple of shots at the boat. Ponga Jim Mayo's next grenade lifted the boat out of the water, a blasted bunch of wreckage and struggling men.

The sub started to back off, but Jim hurled another grenade. The officer on the conning tower, apparently uninjured by Arnold's burst of rifle fire, had started down the ladder. In one horror-stricken moment his face showed white. Then there was a terrific concussion! The last grenade had fallen down the conning tower hatch.

William lowered his gun. His face was bleeding from a cut on his head.

„The marines have landed and have the situation well in hand!“ he said.

„It wasn't a limey said that!“ Mayo grunted. „That was an American.“

„Right!“ William Arnold agreed.

Borg was getting to his feet. Mayo walked in and slugged him with the barrel of his automatic, which he'd retrieved and loaded.

„I'll tie this bird. He's wanted somewhere. Or we can kick him ashore in Sydney.“

„Sydney?“ Arnold said. „Why Sydney? This ship—“

„Listen, pal,“ Ponga Jim said patiently. „You're the British Intelligence or something, aren't you? Well, you want this activity stopped down here. You've prevented the landing of a lot of guns, and you've sunk an enemy submarine. Now I am informed that a certain gent high in official military circles at Sydney can buy arms and ammunition. For me, this represents profit, no loss. Now unless you want to stage the War of 1812 all over again, we go to Sydney!“

Major William Arnold grinned. „This is no time to sever diplomatic relations with Ponga Jim Mayo,“ he said cheerfully. „Let me get some pants while you muster the rest of this crew, and we're off!“

He started down the ladder.

„Hey!“ Jim said. „You know any dames down there?“

„Just two,“ Arnold said. „Why?“

„Just two,“ Mayo said regretfully. „That's going to be tough. I'd hoped there would be enough for you, too!“

„Nuts!“ Arnold said grimly, and walked down the ladder with his green pants flapping.



