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Oolah finished her work, and turned to go.

"Hold on, girl!" called Buck; "the tupek's no place for you tonight. There's no telling but what West and his gang might stumble over it."

"You mean for me to watch here with you?"

"No, girl. I mean for you to tumble into my bunk there and go to sleep."

Buck drew hard at his pipe. "Ordinarily"—the constable shifted uneasily in his seat—"it wouldn't be right to ask a young woman to bunk in with two constables. Tonight's a different affair. You go to sleep. I'll do the watching and listening."

For an instant Oolah paused at the head of Napier's bunk. He breathed deeply and regularly. He was fast asleep. Then the girl walked toward the bunk of the senior constable, and stood beside it, hesitating.

"You—yourself—" she began.

"I'll be all right," Buck assured her. "I'll lie here on the floor near the door. You go to bed. You can watch to-morrow."

Obediently the girl turned to retire, while the constable threw a roll of skins on the floor. He turned the light low, lit the last of his three pipes, and, with a glance at the carbines leaning near by, flung himself down to rest.

Dimly he saw Oolah loosen her braids of glossy brown. Then she sat on the side of the bunk and unlaced the drawstrings of her boots. She drew off her sealskin footgear, paused to arrange the bedding, and then knelt on the floor of the barrack.

For several minutes the girl prayed as she had been taught to by the Mission fathers below What Cheer. Twice she made the sign of the cross, while the constable stared. Something hot and heavy arose in his throat.

Memories of early days—vague and shadowy as the light within the barrack—carried the wanderer far away and stirred him strangely.

And then the praying girl arose and slipped off her fawn skin garment. Naked and unashamed she stood, as innocent and fair as the wild flowers of her northland. Buck closed his eyes.

When he again opened them the barrack was silent; but from without came the faint sound of moisture dripping from the eaves and the gentle lapping of water on the rocky beach.

Once during the night the tinkle of a bell brought Walsh to his feet. He turned the wick of the lamp so low that but a point of blue flame showed within the chimney. Moving rapidly and almost noiselessly, he slipped outside the hut, a weapon in either hand.

A five-minute watch in the deep shadows of the barrack, followed by a stealthy patrol along the alarm-line, told Buck that some prowling dog or beast must have tripped over the rawhide thong.

Assured that for the time being no danger threatened, the constable returned to his rest. An hour passed by.

Smoking incessantly—not so much for pleasure, but in order that the tobacco fumes might drive away the gnats and mosquitoes that had found their way into the barrack—Buck had but little difficulty in keeping awake.

He was wondering for possibly the fiftieth time whether West would risk a night attack, when one of the wolf-dogs howled. Another dog snarled protest, then set up its own direful wail.

Buck again lowered the light. As he did so an unmistakable tinkle sounded while the dogs paused for breath. Buck looked for his weapons and slipped quietly out of the barrack.

Again the dogs set up their melancholy howling, drowning all other sounds.

But as the voices of the brutes died away, Buck heard again the tinkle of an alarm bell. A rattle, as of rock chattering against rock, told the constable that danger was imminent.

And if these sounds were not enough to make him certain of the enemy's presence, a muttered curse which came from out the fog made him doubly so.

Buck shifted the service revolver to his left hand, that he might work the right-handed thumb-latch, of the automatic; then, with ready forefingers pressing slightly each trigger, he awaited the first visible target.

(To be continued next week)