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CALL HIM SAVAGE

BY JOHN POLLARD

Illustrator: Sanford Kossin

Around the 15th of March each year, folks start saying, "Give the country back to the Indians!" Well, that's what we want to talk to you about.

I didn't even hear her come in. What with the Sioux rising against the white settlement at the fork of the Platte, the attack being set for dawn, and Chief Spotted Horse's impassioned speech to his braves, I wouldn't have heard anything under a ninety-seven-decibel war whoop.

Soft lips brushed the back of my neck and she said something.

"That's fine," I said.

"*Sam!*"

I heard *that*, all right. I looked up from the typewriter. "Hey, that's a *nice* nightgown!"

"I said I think I'm getting a cold."

"Well—with a nightgown like that...."

"Silly!" Her smile would have corrupted a bishop. "You coming to bed? It's almost midnight."

"Soon's I finish writing this chapter. Best thing I've ever done."

"More Indians?"

I reached for a cigarette. "Sure, more Indians. What else would one of the country's leading authorities on the original Americans be writing about? I hate to keep harping on the same subject, my sweet, but the dough from my last book bought you that mink stole you keep dangling in front of your girl friends."

"If you make so much money at it, why are you still a reporter?"

"I *like* being a reporter."

"What about *me*? Between reporting and Indians my love life is beginning to wither on the vine. You should have married a squaw."

"Who says I didn't?" I gave her my best leer and reached out an exploring hand. She blushed and backed away, laughing. "Nothing doing, Sam Quinlan! You want me I'll be in bed."

"Hey-hey!"

She gave me a quick kiss, evaded my grasp and disappeared into the bedroom. I finished lighting the cigarette, typed a few more lines. But my working mood was gone, a casualty of a black lace nightgown. Finally I got up from the desk and snapped on the radio and, while it warmed up, strolled over to the living room window.

At this hour Washington was largely in bed. Away over to the east I could see the dim glow of lights marking the Mall, with the Capitol dome beyond that. Now that communism was dead, buried and unmourned in Russia and her satellites, with peace and prosperity booming from Iowa to Iran, even the President would be sleeping like a baby. Any day now I would be down to covering PTA meetings for the *Herald-Telegram*. That was okay with me; my big interest was "Saga of the Sioux"—the third in the series of books I was writing on the history of the American Indian.

An early autumn breeze crawled in at the open window and moved the line of smoke from my cigarette. A quiet serene night, with the faint smell of burned leaves in the air and the promise of a cool, sunny, peaceful tomorrow. A lovely night, made far lovelier by the thought of the beautiful blonde waiting for me in the next room. After twelve years of marriage I still found her to be the most exciting and rewarding woman I had ever known.

"... most of eastern Colorado," the radio said suddenly, "as well as the western fringes of Nebraska and Kansas."

I turned the volume down. Weather report, probably, except that the announcer was making it sound like a declaration of war or a "sincere" commercial.

"We repeat," the voice continued, "since 8:10 this evening, Eastern Standard Time, literally nothing has come out of that section of the country. All communication has ceased, outbound trains and planes are long overdue, highway traffic out of the area has stalled."

"Sam?"

"Yeah?"

"You coming to bed?"

"... tuned to this station for further bulletins con—"

I clicked the set off. "Could I have three minutes for a fast shower?"

"Umm ... I guess so."

"I," I told her, "am coming to bed."

Lois rattled the handle of the stall-shower door, and I shut off the water. "Yeah?"

"Telephone, darling."

"At *this* hour? Who is it?"

"Sounds like Purcell."

"For Crisake!" I came out and grabbed a towel. "This is worse than one of those Hollywood farces about honeymooners. What's he want?"

"I didn't dare ask him, he sounded so grumpy."

I kissed her. "About that nightgown...."

"You're getting me all wet!"

Purcell was night Editor at the *Herald-Telegram*, a small, intense, middle-aged, highly literate man. Years before, his wife had run off with a reporter, leaving Purcell with an undying hatred for all members of the profession.

His voice, over the wire, cracked like a whip. "Sam?"

"Listen, I'm off duty. You got any idea what time—"

"You're wanted at the White House. Now."

"The *White* House? You mean—?"

"The White House. The President wants to see you."

"The *President*! Cut out the gags, will you? I'm in no—"

"I don't kid with reporters, Sam. On your way."

The phone went dead. I stood there staring stupidly at the receiver. Lois had to shake my arm to get my attention. "What did he want?"

"The President wants to see me."

"You're joking!"

"Hunh-uh. Anybody but Pete Purcell, I'd agree." I put back the receiver and went over to the dresser for clean underwear. "Get back to bed, honey. I'll be home as soon as I get through running the Government. Can you imagine! The President wants to see *me*!"

She yawned and stretched, looking like the June page on an *Esquire* calendar. "Well, so much for my sheerest nightgown."

"Believe me, darling, if it wasn't the President—"

"I know. It would be an Indian."

I finished dressing while she sat on the bed with her knees drawn up to her chin, watching me. I kissed her thoroughly and patted her here and there and went downstairs. The night man in the garage under the building put down his *Racing Form* and dug my Plymouth out of a welter of chrome and glass.

I drove much too fast all the way.

A guard at the gate looked at my press pass and used a hidden telephone. Within not much more than seconds I was ushered into the Press Secretary's office. The Secretary, a badly shaken man if ever I'd seen one, had evidently been pacing the floor. He looked at me sharply out of pale, bloodshot eyes. "Your name Quinlan?"

"Yes, sir."

"May I see your identification?"

I handed him my wallet. He flipped through the panels holding my press pass, social security card, driver's license and a picture of Lois in a bathing suit. When he failed to do more than give the latter a casual glance I knew this was a man with a troubled mind.

I said, "Maybe you could give me kind of a hint on what's going on."

"Going on?" he repeated absently.

"You know—going on." I got off a nonchalant-type laugh that would have fooled anybody who was deaf. "I even heard that the President wanted to see me!"

He gave me back the wallet. "Ah—yes. Come with me, please."

We left the office and went down a hall, around some corners and down more halls, past a lot of doors, all of them closed. Finally he stopped in front of a pair of doors with shiny brass doorknobs, knocked twice, then turned the knob, said, "Mr. Quinlan, gentlemen," shoved me through with a jerk of his chin, and closed the door behind me.

I never saw him again.

There was a long table down the center of a long narrow room. The woodwork was white and the walls papered a dark green, with walnut-framed pictures here and there of the kind of men you see in albums of Civil War vintage.

But the men around the table were as modern as a jet bomber. There were five of them, three of whom I recognized on sight: Army Chief of Staff General Lucius Ohlmsted, Secretary of War Franklin McClave, and, seated at the far end of the table and looking even younger than his forty-nine years, the President of the United States.

The remaining two were just a couple of men to me: dark business suits, clean collars, manicured fingernails and the type of faces you see twenty of on any city block.

I walked on down the room, feeling as conspicuous as a cheer leader at a wake, while five pairs of eyes sorted me over molecule by molecule. When I reached the near end of the table, I stopped, resisted an impulse to salute, and stood there at attention.

The President managed to keep from smiling, although you could see he wasn't far from it. "Thanks for coming here so promptly, Mr. Quinlan. I'd like you to meet my associates."

He reeled off names and titles. The two strangers were a Mr. Proudfit and a Mr. Kramer, occupations not disclosed. Kramer was small and ageless, with a weather-beaten face and a mouth like a steel trap; while Mr. Proudfit had the look of a benign monk, until you saw the tempered steel glint in his piercing eyes.

When introductions were completed, I said, "How do you do?" once, including them all, and went on waiting. Nobody suggested I sit down, probably because there were only five chairs around the table to begin with and the room's two couches were too far away to keep me in the group. The President gave me the same winning smile that had pulled a couple million extra votes his way in the last election, and said, "Let me start off, Mr. Quinlan, by telling you that we've got a problem on our hands—one that may very well involve the peace and well-being of the entire country. The details are going to strain your credulity beyond human limits, I'm afraid—just as they have ours. But there is enough supporting evidence to what we've heard for us to do something about it. And that's where you come in."

He paused, evidently waiting for a response from me. There was only one response I could make—even though I hadn't the slightest idea what he was talking about. "I'm at your service, Mr. President."

His smile was a medal for my chest. "Thank you. At this point I'd better let Mr. Kramer take over."

Kramer leaned back in his chair, placed the tips of his fingers together and stared searchingly at me over them. His voice, when he spoke, was as dry as his skin. "Mr.—ah—Quinlan, I understand you were born thirty-one years ago on a Potawatomi Indian reservation in the state of Michigan."

I blinked. "That's right. Not many people know it."

"You are part Indian, I believe?"

"One quarter Potawatomi."

"Also, I'm told that you are something of an authority on the history of the American Indian."

"I've written books on the subject and expect to write a good many more."

"You speak the language?"

"What language?"

He floundered a little. "Why—ah—the—ah—Indian language."

"Look, Mr. Kramer," I said, "there are scores of Indian languages. Nobody in history, red man or white, could ever speak all of them. Fortunately most Indians belonged to one of several great families, and the language of each family was close enough for the tribes in that family to understand each other. I can handle the language of the Algonquin like a native, being part Potawatomi myself. I can get by in the tongue of the Iroquois, the Caddoan, the Siouan, and the Muskogean. The Déné and Uto-Aztecan would give me considerable trouble, while the Penutian would be just about a blank."

I stopped there, and shrugged. "Sorry. I didn't mean to turn this into a lecture."

Kramer's weathered face stayed expressionless. "Are you familiar with the customs of Indians of, say, two hundred years ago?"

"With their customs, clothing, religions, food, taboos, cultures, weapons, or anything else you can think of."

Franklin McClave, the Secretary of War, cut in on us at this point. "I think, Bob," he said to Kramer, "that Mr. Quinlan qualifies for the job." His glance turned to me. "I'd like for you to meet a man waiting in the next room, Quinlan. I want you to hear his story, talk to him, ask him questions, then give us your opinion of the results. Do you mind?"

I spread my hands. "Whatever you say."

Kramer got to his feet and went over to a side door. He pushed it open, said something I didn't hear, then stepped rather quickly out of the way.

A moment later young Daniel Boone came out!

Of course, it wasn't really Daniel Boone at all. Leaving out the fact that the "dark and bloody ground" frontiersman had been dead nearly a hundred and fifty years, this man was a lot handsomer, with entirely different features. But he was wearing the fringed buckskin trousers and shirt, the beaded moccasins, the coonskin cap, and his coarse black hair hung almost to his shoulders. A powderhorn swung from his neck by a greasy cord, and he was holding on to a six-foot muzzle-loader as though it were his only contact with reality.

I stood there with my chin two inches from the rug and gawked at him. He was scared to death. His deep-set brown eyes rolled fearfully from side to side, with too much white showing around the irises. His clutch on the gun grew even tighter, whitening the knuckles of his hand.

Muscles crawled on my scalp. A strange tension seemed to fill the room. Kramer cleared his throat. "This man's name is Enoch Wetzel, Mr. Quinlan. I want him to tell you exactly what he told us earlier tonight."

I felt the tendons in my legs tighten, pulling me into a slight crouch. I was back a hundred and seventy years in the past, with a dull anger starting to move around in me. "Wetzel," I said, making it sound like a dirty word. "Any relation to Lewis Wetzel?"

The young man's eyes widened with astonishment and obvious relief. "Well, now, I reckon so! Lew's my uncle."

"Lew Wetzel," I said between my teeth, "is a low, stinking, murdering skunk!"

I ducked just in time to keep from being brained by the swinging stock of the long gun. I came up under it quicker than I'd ever moved before in my life and nailed him on the jaw with a solid right, getting my shoulder behind it. It was like hitting the Hall of Justice. He grunted and up came the rifle butt for another try.

Suddenly the room was bulging with strangers. A dozen arms folded around the young man, the gun was ripped from his fingers and he hit the rug with a thump that shook the room. The buckskin-covered legs threshed briefly, then were still.

I moistened my lips and backed away as sanity returned. I looked at the frozen faces around the table. "My fault, Mr. President. I can't blame you for thinking I'm as crazy as he is. But, as Mr. Kramer mentioned, I'm part Indian. Back in the seventeen hundreds a frontiersman named Lewis Wetzel murdered a lot of Indians—men, women and children. I suppose you might say I went atavistic, or something, at hearing this fellow claim he was Wetzel's nephew. He's a screwball, of course, and I owe you a good solid apology for starting a ruckus."

The President wasn't smiling now. "Perhaps I should have told you before, Mr. Quinlan, we may desperately need this young man's assistance in the near future."

I almost blurted out the wrong thing, but bit my lip instead and remained silent. The President's eyes swung to the heap of humanity on the floor. "Let him up, boys. I'll call you if I need you again."

The six Secret Service men rose and stood Enoch Wetzel on his feet, then returned to the adjoining office, not looking too happy about leaving a madman with the Chief Executive. Wetzel pushed the long hair off his forehead and stood there glowering at me, spots of angry color in his dark cheeks.

I said, "Forget it, Mac. I made a small mistake."

His thin lips peeled back in a snarl. "Halfbreed!"

I took it, although nothing was ever harder for me to do. Kramer hurriedly stepped into the breach. "Mr.—ah—Wetzel, we're waiting for you to repeat what you told us before."

The tall, broad-shouldered young man turned from me to face the long table. There was a graceful dignity about him, in his posture, in the way he held his head, that you don't see often. Again I felt the hair move along my scalp. For a guy who was as nutty as peanut brittle, he was certainly convincing in his role of frontiersman. Turn back the clock far enough and this could have been one of General Anthony Wayne's scouts at the battle of Fallen Timbers. He even *smelled* the part.

"My father got hisself put on by General Harmer as a scout a fortnight back. The General, on orders from President Washington, was to lead his sojers to the north after the Injuns up there. Pop allowed as I was ready to try my luck agin the abbegynes, so he took me along.

"Three-four nights after we set out ahead the rest, Pop an' me come onto fresh Injun signs. We move powerful careful through the woods an' right soon we catch sight of camp fires. There's a whole grist of them red devils prancin' around, all fixed out in war paint—more of 'em as I ever see'd afore. Even Pop allows as how it bugs out *his* eyes—and Pop's a man to do an amount of travelin'."

It was a page torn out of technicolor nightmare: three of the world's most important men hanging onto the words of a madman who claimed to be an Eighteenth Century Indian scout in the employ of one of George Washington's generals. Yet the man's every word, every gesture, everything he wore, was as authentic to that period as the powder horn around his neck.

"We draw back in the woods aways an' wait. It's gettin' along to'ard sun-up, an' Pop says he aims to get a better idea how many Injuns they is, an' what tribes. Most of the braves got nice new British guns an' General Harmer'll want to know about that."

Wetzel's voice began to shake a little, remembering. "Pop an' me are hidin' in a clump of sumac when this here sudden racket starts up, equal to a hundred waterfalls goin' all at oncet. We look up in the air where it's comin' from, and holy hokey if fallin' right out of the sky ain't this round iron thing! Flat as a hoe-cake an' big around as an acre of land, with the fires of Hell breathin' at its edges!

"Well sir, them Injuns lit a shuck out of there like the spirits was after them. My legs were tryin' to run, too. But Pop takes a holt on my arm an' says, 'By Janey, I aim to see this if'en I swing for it!'"

"It drops down," Wetzel continued, demonstrating with a slow graceful movement of his hand, "lookin' no less than a big shiny stove-lid, an' settles in the clearin' as light an' easy as the feather off'en a duck's back. It stands high as a Pennsylvania school house an' twicet the size around, an' no sound from it at all."

He stood slim and straight as a Shawnee arrow, smooth-faced and solemn, obviously not much past his twentieth birthday, yet by his own account born before the Declaration of Independence was on paper. He went on talking, sounding like a character out of James Fenimore Cooper. His story, boiled down and translated, came out something like this:

The sudden arrival of the strange object had literally paralyzed the Indian encampment. The warriors dropped their weapons and called on the spirits to protect them, while a hole opened in the side of what couldn't be anything else but a spaceship. Then out of the opening came huge steel caricatures of men. There were over a dozen of these robots, each the height of two men, and their eyes were strange round circles of faceted glass. In single file they moved down the ramp and stalked through the ranks of fear-frozen Indians, disappearing into the forest.

Enoch's father ordered his son to crawl up into a tree out of sight, then shouldered his rifle and slipped away through the bushes to get a better look at what was going on. Enoch "allowed" that his Pop was a "moughty" brave man, and none of his audience gave him an argument on that score.

From his place among the leaves, Enoch watched his father melt into the trees. The sun was above the horizon by this time and the young frontiersman discovered that his present position was the equivalent of a box seat on the fifty-yard line.

The next figure to emerge from the spaceship brought an amazed murmur from hundreds of throats. No twelve-foot robot this time, no alien monster beyond description. Very simply, this was an Indian.

Yet what an Indian! He stood on the ramp, wearing only leather breeches and unadorned moccasins, muscles rippling across a powerful sun-tanned chest, his head thrown back in a posture of arrogant dignity. He wore a single crimson feather in his black topknot, and at his belt was a tomahawk only slightly less deadly looking than a howitzer.

Arms folded across his chest, he swept his stunned audience with an eye like an eagle's, then began to speak. His voice, deep and ringing, carried beyond the edges of the crowd, so that Enoch was able to catch a portion of what he was saying.

Wetzel admitted he understood very little of any of the Indian tongues. He thought the one he was hearing had its roots in the Delaware tribe, but admitted this was no more than a guess. However, it appeared that the visitor was summoning the chiefs of the assembled tribes to a meeting within the spaceship.

Evidently it took some doing. Faced with a familiar danger, there is no human more courageous than an Indian. But the thought of entering the yawning maw of that steel cavern would have shaken the nerves of Manabus himself.

Finally the visiting Indian's oratory paid off, and nine or ten of the tribal leaders reluctantly entered the spaceship. Two robots took up positions on the ramp to discourage kibitzers, and after an hour or so in which nothing more happened, the rest of the camp returned pretty much to normal.

Mid-afternoon came and passed, and still the meeting inside the ship went on. Enoch was finding the tree branch not the most comfortable place to spend a weekend, and he was growing steadily

more uneasy by his father's continued absence.

More hours passed. The sun was gone now and campfires began to dot the night. Orders or no orders, Enoch decided, he was going to find his Pop. With a stealth equal to that of any Indian, he dropped to the ground and began a cautious advance in the direction his father had taken hours before.

Suddenly the bushes crashed apart directly in front of him, and his father came bounding through. Only a few yards back, its giant strides rapidly closing the gap, came one of the huge steel men.

Enoch's gun flashed up and he fired without aiming. The bullet struck one of the robot's huge eyes, shattering the glass and sending the towering figure crashing headlong into a tree. At the same instant, an ear-shattering wail came from the fallen robot, and powerful rays of light flashed from the rim of the spaceship to bathe the spot where the two Wetzels stood.

Mixed with the siren wail from the fallen man of steel came a chorus of blood-curdling warhoops as the Indians made out the figures of the two men, and a hundred braves came pouring across the clearing toward them. Instantly the two scouts took to their heels, darting through the inky blackness of the forest with the sure-footed celerity of long practice.

They would have escaped easily under ordinary circumstances. But suddenly the blast of another siren sounded directly ahead and a lance of light impaled them. Blinded, they stumbled aside, only to be caught by still another beam.

The two men split apart and dived for cover. Enoch, finding himself shielded from the rays by the thick bole of a tree, scrambled into its branches. A moment later the first wave of Indians passed below him.

For fully ten minutes he crouched there among the leaves. The barrage of light, he discovered, had come from the towering robots, and he recalled the dozen or so steel monsters that had left the camp soon after the spaceship landed. Evidently they had been sent out to encircle the camp so that no one might leave or enter until the visitors permitted it.

Finally Enoch heard the Indians returning toward camp. He knew they would search every tree hunting for him. Reloading his rifle, he dropped to the ground and adopting the only maneuver they would not expect, made his way cautiously back toward the camp.

He had hoped to skirt the camp itself and find an avenue to freedom in the opposite direction. But his hopes were almost immediately dashed, for he soon made out the darting rays of light marking more of the robots.

Enoch was trapped. Taking advantage of every possible means of cover, he inched ahead, changing his direction a dozen times, until he suddenly stopped short, his path barred by the towering spaceship itself. Staying within the dense shadows at its base, he began to skirt the ship, hoping to find a place where he could hide out until the enemy gave up the search.

But again his luck failed to hold. This time he was stopped by a wall of metal fully ten feet high, which turned out to be one side of the entrance ramp to the spaceship. Circling it would bring him right into the camp, to climb over it was impossible; to turn back, useless. This was the end of the line!

As he stood there trying to figure out his next move, he caught the sound of a guarded movement some distance behind him. Instantly he dropped to the grass, his long rifle ready to take at least one of his enemies with him. And that was when he learned that the bottom of the ramp was nearly two feet above the ground.

Even Macy's shopping service couldn't have furnished him with a better hiding place. Enoch wriggled himself under the edge and lay there breathing quietly, while, a moment later, three pairs of moccasined feet moved over the spot where he had been hiding.

Some time passed. He could hear voices very near and the rustle of feet moving through the grass. Then came the dull thud of metal against metal over his head in a rhythmic tempo like the tread of marching soldiers. Hardly had this ceased before he heard another sound which he could not identify, and the ramp itself began to move!

It was drawing in toward the ship, very slowly. To stay where he was would mean the loss of his hiding place; to try to run away would almost certainly be fatal. And so Enoch acted in the only way left to him.

By hooking his arms and legs around the girders forming the underside of the ramp, he was able to lift himself clear of the ground. It meant being carried into the ship, but even that, he decided, was better than falling into the hands of Indians.

He clung there like a sloth to a branch. Fortunately the beams were recessed enough to prevent

his being scraped off when he reached the opening into the hull. When the ramp finally ground to a halt he found himself in darkness beyond anything in his experience. There was cold metal under him now and he lowered himself gingerly onto it. When he tried to crawl into the open, he discovered that the edges of the ramp were now flush with the floor.

Suddenly a deep humming note tore at his ears, became a shrill whine, then passed into silence. The floor seemed to press harder and harder into his back, his lungs fought for air, a sharp burst of light seemed to explode soundlessly before his bulging eyes and consciousness left him....

The rasp of metal against metal aroused him. The ramp was moving again. Once more he attached himself to its girders and was slowly carried from the spaceship. Sunlight on the grass told him the night had passed, and the moment the ramp came to a halt, he dropped to the ground and squirmed into the open. He was close enough to the ship to keep from being seen by those aboard, and he slipped quickly around one side before making a break for the shelter of a clump of trees bordering the clearing.

"And that, Mr. Quinlan," Kramer said, "just about brings you up to date. At 4:07 this afternoon Mr. Wetzel was found by the crew of an Army tank twelve miles west of Burdette, Colorado. He told his story to the colonel in charge of that perimeter of operations, and was then flown directly to Washington." He paused and allowed himself a humorless smile. "I assume you have some questions?"

I said, "I'm not going to ask if you take this man's story seriously. Considering the positions of the men in this room you obviously do. What I'd like to know is why?"

Kramer hesitated. "Let me ask you this, Quinlan," he said, choosing his words carefully. "Based solely on this man's costume and speech, would you say he is an impostor?"

"No," I told him promptly. "Frontiersmen dressed exactly that way, the long gun is authentic and his pronunciation, phrases and idiom comes straight out of pre-Revolutionary times. But I still fail to see why you give a second thought to his story."

"You don't think it true?"

"My God, man, how can it be? Unless you're trying to tell me that this character was brought here by a time machine!"

"One moment, Mr. Quinlan." Secretary of War McClave was back in the picture. "Let me tell you why we do not regard Mr. Wetzel as a mental case. Shortly after one o'clock this afternoon, Rocky Mountain Time, a section of Washington County, Colorado, roughly thirty miles in circumference was suddenly cut off from the rest of the country—cut off as completely as though it never existed. Telephone lines ceased to function, a radio station in the same area went off the air in the middle of a soap commercial. All traffic, vehicular and foot, ceased to come out of it. The Governor of Colorado sent in a detachment of the National Guard; nothing has been heard from it since. Air observers report all cars and trains appear to have stalled. Two planes trying a bit of hedge-hopping apparently conked out and were forced to land. No radio contact with them."

I said, "I heard some of this on a news broadcast shortly before midnight tonight. According to the announcer the area involved was larger than thirty miles."

McClave nodded soberly. "The affected area is expanding steadily. It now reaches as far west as Strasburg, Colorado, and as far east as the Nebraska state line. The north and south limits seem to be somewhat narrower."

I looked at him and at the other men around the table. Their faces held a quiet tautness, and General Ohlmsted's hand, holding a cigar, was shaking a little. "And," I said, "you feel that this spaceship holds the answer. Is that it?"

"It's all we have to go on," the President said softly.

"One more question," I said. "Where do I fit into this?"

There was a moment's awkward silence, broken by the creak of the chair holding the man who had been introduced to me as a Mr. Proudfit. His round face smiled at me almost jovially.

"I expect I'm the one to explain that, Mr. Quinlan. Wetzel tells us the man in charge of the spaceship appeared to be an Indian. It seems our best move is to send an emissary into the blacked-out section to learn the reason for this—well—this attack. Such a representative should be qualified to deal intelligently with this—this Indian. Somebody able to understand the Indian temperament. In short, Mr. Quinlan, you!"

I rubbed a hand along the back of my neck and smiled. "You know, this whole thing is utterly mad! Indians, time machines, robots, spaceships! But then these days the most fertile imaginations can't seem to keep up with reality. If you gentlemen want me to try to get to this

Indian and ask him what's the big idea, I'll do my best. Not because I want to, but because I wouldn't know how to go about refusing the President of my country."

Some of the tension seemed to go out of the room. The President said, "You won't find me or your country ungrateful, Mr. Quinlan," and the Secretary of War nodded approvingly, and General Ohlmsted's cigar stopped shaking. Proudfit took out a sheaf of papers from an inner pocket of his coat, leafed through them quickly and handed one to me. "This authorizes you as a representative of the United States Government, answerable only to the President, and with full authority to act accordingly."

"Fine," I said, putting it away. "Maybe I can use it on these robots Wetzel mentioned!"

Proudfit looked at his strap-watch. "An Army jet bomber will take you and Mr. Wetzel to a point as close to Burdette, Colorado, as can be managed. Wetzel tells us he can locate the spaceship from that point. We don't know, of course, how closely guarded the ship is—or even if it's guarded at all. But Wetzel is confident his training and background as a frontiersman and Indian fighter can get you there under cover of darkness. Once you reach the spaceship, the rest is up to you."

"And if I don't make it?"

Proudfit spread his hands. "Two companies of Army regulars entered that area at 6:30 tonight. They were fully armed, with orders to use those arms if necessary. Nothing has been heard from them since. We're sending you on the theory that where many can't get through perhaps one or two can. You have until noon—slightly more than eleven hours from now—to get word to us. If we don't hear from you by then or if the 'dead' area continues to expand after that time, then we throw our Sunday punch!"

Enoch Wetzel was still standing exactly as he had while telling his story. I walked over to him. "Let's get one thing straight, mister. If you and I are going to work together, we leave personal feelings out of it. A few minutes ago I passed a remark or two about one of your relatives and you tried to knock my head off. I'm willing to forget it if you are. But I don't want any more cracks out of you about my being a half-breed. Is that clear?"

He eyed me stonily, then without change of expression spat on the rug within a quarter-inch of my left shoe. I felt the muscles in my arms twang like plucked wires as I resisted the impulse to swing on him. "Is that your answer, Wetzel?"

"I'll git you thar," he said tonelessly. "I promised these yere gennelmen I'd do thet much. But it don't hold I gotta cotton to you."

We stood there staring into each other's eyes. There was a wall of hatred between us that could never be destroyed, a wall not fashioned by us but by our forefathers generations before. Yet a chain of incredible events had made us allies against an alien foe. In spite of our mutual dislike we must work together.

I turned back to Proudfit. "I'll need a pair of heavy black basketball shoes, dark coveralls, a good heavy sweater, a .38 Colt automatic with plenty of ammunition, and a compass."

The bomber pilot was a fresh-faced youngster who chewed gum and claimed to have been the second-ranking tennis player in Des Moines, Iowa. He shook hands gravely with me, eyed Wetzel and his strange garb and out-size rifle with blank-faced wonder, and mentioned that it was a nice night for flying.

The plane took off at 1:27. We were due over our target by 4:00 o'clock Eastern Standard Time, or 2:00 Mountain Time. The plans called for the bomber to fly at a high altitude, then come in on Burdette with jets off and drop us by 'chute. Wetzel had balked for a while at the idea of stepping off into space, but a brief but patient explanation of how a parachute worked finally brought him grudgingly around.

The trip seemed to take forever. I was torn by a thousand doubts, saddened by not being allowed to say goodbye to Lois, not a little afraid of what I would likely run into in Colorado. And all the while, my companion, out of his normal world and time, surrounded by wonders beyond his wildest nightmares, slept sound as an infant....

A hand shook me awake. In the faint glow of a flashlight I made out the face of the co-pilot. "Twenty minutes, Mr. Quinlan."

Wetzel was already on his feet. The co-pilot helped us don the 'chutes, and five minutes before arrival opened the heavy side door. A rush of wind tore in, but there was no other sound. The jets had already cut off and the plane was gradually losing altitude in a shallow dive. As this was not a plane used for parachute troops there was no wire to hook the 'chute cord to. It meant we would have to pull our own, but both of us had been thoroughly versed in what to do.

"Get ready," shouted the co-pilot.

I grasped the door frame and waited, my heart pounding in my ears. Wetzel stood directly behind me, the muzzle-loader in his hand, the tail of his coonskin cap bouncing in the wind, his eyes narrowed.

"Five," the co-pilot said suddenly. "And a four, and a three, and a two, and a one—*target!*"

I dived headfirst into blackness. I spun madly earthward, but in the back of my mind a calm voice counted off the seconds. Then I yanked at the ring-cord, black folds of nylon rustled above me, I heard a sharp report like the crack of a giant whip, the straps at my shoulders yanked painfully, and I was floating gently down toward the night-shrouded surface of Colorado.

I landed in a meadow, if that was what they called it this far west. I came down hard but in the way they had told me would prevent injury. There was no wind to yank me about before I could unship the parachute, and within seconds I was on my feet and searching for some sign of Enoch Wetzel.

Unexpectedly a hand struck me lightly on the back. I was jumping aside and reaching for my gun when the frontiersman's quiet voice reached me. "You scare mighty easy for an Injun."

I said, "We should be about a mile, two at the most, south of the road where that Army tank picked you up yesterday afternoon. Let's find it."

"Aye."

The land was by no means as flat as I had expected. Fortunately most of it was relatively open, with only scattered clumps of trees and bushes. There were too many small unexplained night sounds, but none of these appeared to alarm Wetzel in the slightest, so I managed to ignore them. Once we flushed a long-eared rabbit, and it was five minutes before I could get my heart out of my throat.

A barbed-wire fence, the first we had encountered, told me we had reached a road. It wasn't paved or even graveled—just a ribbon of dirt pointing east and west as straight as an Apache lance. Nothing moved along it in either direction as far as I could see. A line of telephone poles bordered one side.

"Recognize any landmarks?" I asked.

Wetzel shook his head.

"We're probably east of where you were found," I said. "We might as well start walking."

He grunted in agreement and we started out. It was a lovely starlit night, no moon at this hour, and a lot warmer than I had expected for October in Colorado. Now and then the road dipped and climbed, and as we reached the crest of the third hill, I saw a good-sized farmhouse set well back from the road among a group of out-buildings.

I pointed to the house. "Maybe they can tell us what's been happening around here."

Wetzel nodded and we turned in at a fieldstone path leading across the large yard to the front door. There were no lights visible from within, no dog barked, no rustle of livestock in the barns or pens.

I saw him just before I stepped on his head. He was lying across the path in the shadow cast by a gnarled tree, a stocky man in overalls and a blue work shirt. A double-barrelled twelve-gauge shotgun lay on the ground near his right hand. One side of his chest was black with a sticky substance that could have been only one thing, and the top of his head was black in the same way, except that no hair was there anymore....

"*Scalped!*" I whispered hoarsely.

Enoch Wetzel stooped suddenly and picked up the shotgun and wordlessly held it out to me. My jaw fell in astonishment. The twin barrels were bent into a rude V.

I licked my lips and backed away. "Let's get out of here, Wetzel."

He tossed the gun aside and we turned back to the road. Neither of us said anything for fully a mile. "No human hands could have done that to a gun," I said. "I'm beginning to believe what you said about robots. Robots that take scalps!"

Another hill, another valley ... and Wetzel caught hold of my arm. "I come across them sojers about here," he said.

"Okay. From now on you act as guide."

We went on. Several times Wetzel's long, swinging, tireless stride left me behind and he was forced to wait until I caught up with him again. I had the feeling that I was holding him back, and there was something faintly contemptuous in his obvious patience. But the life of a book-writing

newspaper man hadn't prepared me for cross-country marathons, and there was nothing to be done about it now.

The fairly level, open ground was giving place to a heavily wooded countryside. After another mile of winding roadway, Wetzel suddenly turned aside and plunged into the forest. It was as dark as the inside of an undertaker's hat, and after I had banged into a few dozen trees and tripped over a few dead branches, making enough racket to alert half the state, Wetzel slowed his pace to a crawl.

Finally I grabbed one of the fringed sleeves of his buckskin shirt to stop him and sank down on a fallen log. "How much farther?"

He leaned his folded arms on the muzzle of his long gun and I could feel his deep-set eyes studying me without approval. "'Nother hour; p'rhaps more. Dependin' on you."

"Sure," I said with understandable bitterness. "I'm not the man my granddaddy was. Nobody is. When I take a walk it's down to the corner for a pack of cigarettes. Anything farther than that I use a horseless carriage. We don't need steel muscles and superior woodcraft these days, brother. Just enough eyesight to read the directions on the can, ears sharp enough to hear the boss bawling you out, enough nose to smell the whiskey on your neighboring straphanger's breath, reflexes quick enough to avoid being run down by some politician's Cadillac. If I'd have known I was going to be called on to go batting around a jungle, I'd have been down to the Y five days a we—"

He moved like a striking snake. A hand was clapped over my mouth and a knee forced me to the ground. Before I could make an effort to fight back, he placed his mouth close to my ear. "Danger! 'Tis death for so much as a broken twig!"

He removed his hand and I could breathe again. We lay there side by side close to a huge tree, deep in the shadows. And then faintly as from far off I heard the crackle of disturbed undergrowth and, slowly louder and louder, an evenly spaced thumping sound that seemed to shake the earth.

Through the trees it came, directly toward the spot where Wetzel and I hugged the ground. It loomed against the night, a tower of steel on jointed legs, a horrible travesty of the human figure, a head like King Arthur's helmet. Starlight picked out two round faceted eyes of glass.

My suddenly dry mouth puckered with the taste of terror. I did not breathe; even my heart seemed to beat no more. I wanted to close my eyes, but even the lids seemed paralyzed.

For almost a full minute the giant robot remained standing less than ten feet from where Wetzel and I were lying. It seemed to sense the presence of something of flesh and blood nearby. Its head turned slowly from side to side in little uneven jerks that put ice cubes in my veins. Finally the mammoth feet began their rhythmic thumping and a moment later it disappeared among the trees.

After what seemed a long time Wetzel rose to his feet. I got up slowly and leaned against the tree. "In a little while," I said softly, "I'll wake up. I'll be in bed with my wife, under the nice clean white sheets, and I'll know all this was a nightmare brought on by that canned salmon we had for dinner."

This, I told myself sharply, wasn't getting me anywhere except next door to hysteria. I ground my teeth together, shuddered uncontrollably for a second or two, then was all right again. Or nearly so.

"Let's go," I said.

An hour or so later, after taking a twisting route through what seemed to be the Belgian Congo, Wetzel halted under the spreading branches of a towering cottonwood. With his lips close to my ear, he whispered, "It's a-settin' out thar midst open ground." He gestured at the wall of blackness hemming us in—blackness you could have cut into hunks with an ax. "I'm thinkin' thar's plenty 'o them iron critters roamin' 'round twixt us an' it. You aimin' to await the dawn?"

"You," I said, "said it!"

The dawn came up nice and quiet. Blackness turned gray and then a pearl pink—and there she was: a hundred yards from us, of some gleaming metal resembling aluminum, twenty feet high and covering about as much ground as a caretaker's cottage. It resembled nothing more than a soup plate turned bottom up to dry.

A tall, semi-circular opening showed black in one side, with a sloping metallic ramp reaching from it to the ground. Two robots guarded the entrance, stiff and towering and without movement, the early light glistening along their jointed bodies.

In sharp contrast to this scene from the distant future was the anachronistic spectacle of six

Indians, in war paint, fringed buckskin and stripped to the waist, squatting around a small cooking fire near the ship. Within easy reach of each was a long bow and a quiver of arrows.

Nothing about them gave me a certain clue as to which Indian family they belonged to. The single feather in each scalp lock was pure white with a vivid red tip. Two of them wore the black paint of untried warriors, and all were gnawing on strips of meat grilled over the fire.

Wetzel, placid and silent, leaned on his rifle and calmly stuffed a cheek with a twist of black tobacco. "Reckon they be a little hard to talk to?" he asked in a soft voice.

I shrugged. "Only one way I know of to find out."

"Thet fancy pistol you got could kill 'em all afore they get them bows unlimbered."

"Are you suggesting I shoot them down without warning?"

It was his turn to shrug. "They be Indians."

The complete lack of feeling in his tone infuriated me. "You cold-blooded bastard! I happen to be a good part Indian myself."

He eyed me without expression but with a chill glitter to his eyes. "Aye. I ain't forgettin' thet," he said, and spat.

I took a slow breath and waited until I could trust my voice. "I'm going out there," I said quietly. "Cover me with your gun. But don't use it *unless* it's the only thing left to do. I don't want that trigger pulled until the last possible second. They may grab me, they may even knock me around a little. That I can take. But don't try to interfere until there's no other way out. Is that clear?"

"Aye."

I turned away from him. All I had to do now was step out from behind that tree and walk across the open ground. Each of my feet suddenly weighed a ton. Two steps into that clearing and the funeral could be Monday. Instinctively my hand crawled toward the .38 automatic hidden in my coveralls. It never got that far. Suicide was so final.

Wetzel's firm young mouth held an almost invisible sneer. Deliberately I took out a cigarette, lighted it with an airy gesture and a match, dragged deeply on it twice and threw it away. I said, "Lay off that gun like I told you," and walked slowly out into the clearing.

It got a rise out of them, all right. They were on their feet, arrows notched, before I had traveled three feet. I never even hesitated. Once I had gone this far, the bluff had to be carried all the way out. I kept my spine stiff, my head erect, my hands conspicuously empty at my sides. If my nerves were jumping I was the only one who knew about it.

It caught them just a shade off-balance, which was all I had hoped for. The one-sidedness of six drawn bows against one unimpressive and unarmed man eventually registered and the flint tips wavered, then turned aside.

The tallest of the braves—a lean number the color of an old penny—tossed his bow aside and deliberately stepped squarely in my path. There was an insolent arrogance in every line of his body—a body that topped my six feet a full three inches.

I said, "Hi-yo, Silver," and put my hip into his naked belly and grabbed his arm and threw him over my shoulder. He hit face first two yards away and plowed up a furrow of grass, flopped around a little, then lay still.

Nobody else moved, except me. I started for the spaceship again, not hurrying and not crawling, head still up, spine still stiff, eyes straight ahead. Feet slithered in the grass behind me and the sound made the skin between my shoulder blades twitch like an aching tooth. Every instinct that had anything to do with self-preservation was fighting to make me turn around.

That was when the robots moved. They seemed to come alive at the same instant, metal clanged on metal as they strode stiffly down the ramp to meet me. Violence hung over them as it hangs over a Patton tank.

Every step toward them was like pulling my foot out of quicksand. Only twelve kinds of a cretin would have gone on when faced with anything like this. I went on. I couldn't do anything else. Once you show an Indian a molecule of cowardice, you're twelve lines on the obituary page.

The space between us was down to a narrow ribbon of grass by this time. Four—three more steps and I would *have* to stop. Nobody could push aside a couple of tons of animated steel. Metal arms were lifting slowly, preparing to close on me. Inside me a silent voice screamed a prayer for Wetzel to pull that trigger and pump a bullet into one of those round, staring, faceted eyes....

The robots seemed to go dead. They hung there motionless, arms lifted, each with a massive foot caught in midstride.

What had stopped them at the last possible second I had no way of telling. All I did know was a sudden release of tension that left me with just enough strength to keep my feet moving.

I went on.

The edge of the ramp was getting uncomfortably close. I was here to see the head man, but I would prefer to see him out in the open. The thought of walking into that black hole left me as cold as a barefoot Eskimo.

The ramp. It was a good six feet wide, made of what seemed to be some form of an aluminum alloy, and was waiting to be walked on. I started up its shallow slope, the rubber soles of my basketball shoes soundless on the smooth surface.

He appeared suddenly, without warning, in the doorway. He was quite tall, slim in the hips, and his naked shoulders seemed almost as wide as the opening. Elaborate beadwork designs had been worked into the buckskin breeches, and his headdress resembled a Sioux warbonnet, its twin rows of red-tipped feathers hanging almost to his moccasins. A hunting knife hung in a snake-skin sheath at his right hip. He was as gauntly handsome as a Blackfoot—and they don't come any better-looking than that.

He stood there, arms folded across his chest, looking as immovable as Pike's Peak. This time I stopped. My back was as stiff as his, my head as erect, my shoulders as square if not as wide. For a long time we stood that way staring straight into each other's eyes, our expressions blank, our tongues locked.

When enough time had passed for me to open the conversation without being accused of impetuosity, I said, "I am Long Rock, of the Potawatomi. I have come in peace, to hold counsel with you."

My words, in the language of the Delaware because of Wetzel's earlier remark, had no immediate effect, which was par for the course with any Indian. Not even his eyelids moved. The silence went on, building into tension. Anyone unfamiliar with the ways of the Indian would have taken another stab at it. I knew better. I had made my pitch; now it was strictly up to him.

Finally his strong lips came unstuck. "I am Lo-as-ro, War Chief of the Kornesh." It was the Delaware tongue, all right, but with inflexions and nuances strange to me. "How is it that your skin is white but you speak in the way of the Orbiwah?"

That last word, I judged, was what the Indian in general was called wherever this specimen had come from. I said, "In my blood is the blood of the Orbiwah. That is why I am here, sent by the Great Chief of all white men."

We squatted down facing each other on the ramp. At once a young brave brought out a long, elaborately carved peace-pipe. Lo-as-ro put the bit to his mouth and puffed smoke toward the four cardinal points of the compass, then passed the pipe to me. The tobacco was far more aromatic than any I had come across before.

With the amenities out of the way, the Chief said, "Why has the White Chief sent you to me?"

"To welcome you to the land of the white man."

"I come not to the land of the white man in peace."

My eyes were as cold as his own. "This we do not understand. The white man has no quarrel with the tribe of Kornesh."

"The white man," Lo-as-ro said sonorously, "has taken from the Orbiwah his land and his home. He has driven the Orbiwah into small areas. He has killed buffalo and the bison and the deer, leaving the Orbiwah to eat the meat of the horse or to starve. The Orbiwah has been made foul with the diseases of the white man."

"All this," I said, "was long, long ago. Perhaps it was not right, but it is the way of life that the strong prevail and the weak perish."

His expression darkened. "You say this—you with the blood of the Orbiwah in your veins?"

"I speak only true words, noble Lo-as-ro. The white men are in number as the leaves of the forest, the Orbiwah few and helpless."

One of his hands made a graceful motion. "I have come to return the land to the Orbiwah, to restore him to the greatness of his fathers. Once more the land shall be alive with game, the rivers filled with fish. Once more shall the Orbiwah hunt with the weapons of his fathers. I have spoken."

"From whence do you come?" I asked.

He pointed dramatically toward the sky. "From a great distance. Up there are many worlds."

"Tell me of your world," I said.

The telling took a long time but not a word of it was dull. According to Lo-as-ro, his world was a planet revolving about one of the stars in the Big Dipper. It was slightly smaller than Earth, with about the same climates and development of life. It was peopled with only one race, the Orbiwah,

who lived much as the Indians in America did before the arrival of the white man. Recently spaceships from another planet in the same solar system had landed on the Orbiwah world. These newcomers were friendly, had no thought of conquest, and possessed a science and culture of amazing proportions.

From them the Orbiwah learned of a planet on which were men of their own kind. Lo-as-ro, fired by the thought of establishing contact with people like himself, had borrowed spaceships manned by robots and crossed the void to Earth. For weeks they had hovered in our atmosphere, at first saddened, then angered, by the fate meted out to the Indians.

Since the spaceships were able to move through Time into the past, Lo-as-ro hit on the idea of going back to the days when the Indian was still in control of most of America. With the power at his control he could force the white man from the continent and restore the land to those who owned it.

Arriving near the close of the Eighteenth Century, he found a sizeable encampment of Indians, brought the ship down among them, and summoned the chiefs to a Council of War, where he outlined to them his plan. To his astonishment he found the chiefs suspicious of outside help and confident that they could defeat the white man alone. In vain did Lo-as-ro explain that they were doomed; they could not, or would not, believe that he had visited the future. He offered to take them ahead and let them see for themselves—an offer that was quickly refused.

Whereupon Lo-as-ro decided to return to the Present and wrest the land from the white man and hand it over to the downtrodden remnants of a once-powerful race. It was on that return trip that Wetzel had arrived in the present century.

When Lo-as-ro finished, I leaned back against the side of the ship and lit a cigarette, bringing a startled grunt from the chief. I said, "You cannot defeat the white man, Lo-as-ro. He has weapons such as you have never dreamed: machines that can throw things that explode and kill hundreds of braves at one time, machines that travel through the air as does the one you came in, things that can wipe out all life within a circle as wide as a brave can ride around in one day on a fast horse.

"No, noble Lo-as-ro. Return to your world and leave this one to the white man. He took it long ago and he will never give it up. I have spoken."

The chief of the Orbiwah smiled grimly. "In the ship in which I arrived on your world is a small machine. It is working for me now. Within its reach no weapon is useful, no explosion can take place, no signal can be sent. Only Man is not touched by this machine, but when it works he has no weapons with which to fight. Each hour the influence of this machine widens. Soon all this land will be helpless. Then the robots will take charge and those who oppose them will be slain."

I thought of the "dead spot" I had first heard about on the newscast the night before, and how it was steadily growing. I remembered the slain farmer with the missing scalp, the two companies of soldiers helpless without radio, guns and transportation. I thought of a mechanized America helpless before a few score of these spaceships ... and I knew that counter-violence would be useless.

"Give the country back to the Indians!" The cry of the over-burdened citizen. It seemed it was about to come to that!

For a long time I sat there, thinking, trying to hit on an answer that would save my country. And when the answer finally stirred at the back of my mind, it was so completely bizarre that I almost missed it entirely....

"Noble Lo-as-ro," I said, "I must return to the Great White Father and tell him what I have learned. I will tell him that there is nothing to be done to oppose the Chief of the Kornesh. Within a few hours I will return with his reply."

Lo-as-ro inclined his fine head in assent. "Let it be so."

"Until my return," I said, "let the influence of the machine draw back until it holds helpless only a small section of land about your ship. Only in this way will I be able to return quickly to the White Chief."

Again Lo-as-ro agreed. I took my leave of him ceremoniously, and a few minutes later Wetzel and I were hurrying back toward the highway.

Four hours later I was on my way back, this time with four companions. The plane landed us at the edge of the newly set "dead spot" and the five of us forced our way through the forest until we reached the clearing where the spaceship still crouched.

A silent group of Indians watched us as we crossed the open ground. This time the two robots flanking the doorway did not leave their posts. As I came up the ramp with my companions, Lo-as-ro appeared in the doorway of the ship.

He eyed me and the others without expression. I said, "Noble Lo-as-ro, I have brought with me four of my world's Orbiwah. They have come to hear your plan for them and their people. I have told them nothing of what you said to me, only that you have come from another world and are of their blood."

One by one I presented my companions. Yellow Arm was Johnny Armin, an old school friend of mine; Iron Eagle, with whom I had spent a year in Korea, had his telephone listed under the name of Luke Riegel; Strong Wind was Sidney Storm, whom I had met while spending a year in Southern California; and Lone Pine, known as Lionel Patterson, lived a few doors down the street from me in Washington and shot eighteen holes any day in the low seventies.

The color of their skins, the unmistakable cast of their features, made up the only passport they needed. At the chief's invitation we squatted in a rude circle at the top of the ramp, and the peace-pipe was brought out and passed around.

Presently Lo-as-ro began to speak. The magnificent voice rolled out in tones like a cathedral organ, explaining how the American Indian was to assume his rightful place in a world of his own. It was a vivid picture, painted by an orator equal to any of the almost legendary Indian speakers, and they don't come any better.

Unfortunately I was the only one present who could understand him.

When it was over and Lo-as-ro was smiling in confident expectation of their gratified excitement, Johnny Armin gave me a baffled glance. "What the hell was *that* all about, Sam?"

I said, "You guys don't know how lucky you are. The chief, here, is going to fix it up for you to go back to the good old days. Be noble red men. No more taxes, no more taxis. Live out in the fresh air, sleep under the star-studded sky, drink the unchlorinated spring water."

"*What!*"

"You heard me. And he can do it, too. He's got the tools to flatten the country."

They stared at me and at each other, horror and anger hardening their faces. Lo-as-ro had stopped smiling and was glancing about the circle in obvious bewilderment.

"You mean he's doing all that for *us*?" Storm demanded.

"For all Indians," I said. "Free them from the iron heel of the oppressor, and all that."

"Nuts, brother!" Iron Eagle snapped. "Tell him I'm a graduate of Carnegie Tech, make twenty-five grand a year with Standard Oil, and vote the Republican ticket. If he thinks for a goddam minute I'm going to chasing around on a pinto pony hunting buffalo, he's got rocks in his head!"

"And that goes for me—double!" Lone Pine growled. "I never heard anything so screwy!"

I repeated what they had said, putting it into words Lo-as-ro could understand. He had the look of a man who couldn't believe his ears. "They speak with stupid tongues," he cried. "Do they deny the blood of their fathers?"

"They live as they want to live, noble chief," I said. "They are grateful for your wish to help but they ask me to decline the offer."

He came to his feet with a bound, his lean face hardening into a copper mask of anger. "These are not true Orbiwah!" he thundered. "These are as women, soft with idleness and pleasure, weakened by their white conquerors. The land is not for them; it is for those forced to live in degradation and squalor, dying of hunger and disease, ignored by the white chiefs. It is they who shall be given back the ways of their fathers, that they may become a great Orbiwah nation once more. I have spoken!"

"Look at these braves," I said. All of us were standing now. "Of all the Orbiwah in this world it is such as these who could hope to survive under the conditions you wish to establish. The Orbiwah *you* describe would starve amid a thousand buffalo, they would fall from their horses, they would flee in battle. Take away the protection of the white chiefs and they would die."

The chief of the tribe of Kornesh curled his lips in a sneer. "The protection given by the white chiefs is the protection of death. They do not care what happens to the Orbiwah. I have seen it with my own eyes."

"You're right," I said promptly. "The Orbiwah has been badly treated too long. I shall return to the Great White Chief and tell him this: unless the life of the Orbiwah is made good, unless he has fine shelter, plenty of food, warm clothes for his back and the right to be as other men, you

will return and force the white man from this land. It will take much time, but it shall come to pass. *I* have spoken."

Doubt flickered in his eyes. "Perhaps your words are empty. How do I know they are true?"

"When twenty summers have passed," I said, "come back again. Look upon the Orbiwah and learn if they still suffer want and privation. If their life is not better for what has happened today, then you need never trust the white man again."

For a long moment he stood stiff as steel, staring into my eyes. Then his hand shot up, palm out, in a gesture of farewell, and he turned and disappeared into the spaceship.

I got a barrage of questions then. I held up a hand to quiet my friends. "Some other time, gentlemen. I've got to get to Washington just as fast as a jet plane can get me there."

"If it's that urgent," Luke said, "call him on the phone and reverse the charges."

I scowled at him. "Call who?"

"The President. Isn't he the reason you're in such a hurry?"

"No! I've got to get to bed."

"Bed? If you're that tired—"

"Who said anything about being tired?" I demanded. "Being tired has nothing to do with it."

"Then what—"

"It seems," I said, "there's a black lace nightgown...."

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK CALL HIM SAVAGE ***

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