King Gor

An *Alternatives* Series book

By Robert P. Wills

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I have to thank paleontologist Robert T. Bakker for writing Raptor Red; an outstanding third-person account of dinosaurs during the Cretaceous Period as told from the point of view of a female Utahraptor. It made me feel I could write from the perspective of my giant ape.



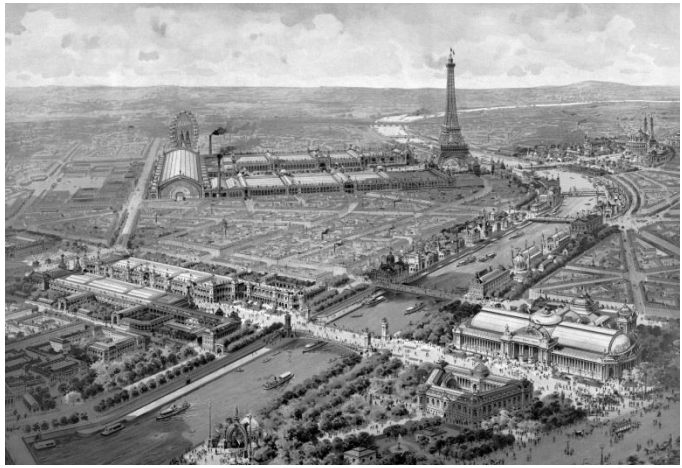
"You do not teach the paths of the forest
to an old gorilla."

~ Congolese proverb

CHAPTERS

-1- Four Months Before The Paris Exposition Of 1900 ...1
-2- Heading To The Big Water.....10
-3- Strolling the Boulevard des Capucines 14
-4- Plans are Laid 24
-5- Landfall.....31
-6- Big Water with Friends 35
-7- The Nile 41
-8- Lake Victoria 49
-9- Nap in the Sun.....55
-10- Dangerous Cargo.....56
-11- Cast Die.....63
-12- Native Encounter 67
-13- Preparing for the Exposition.....72
-14- King Gor.....75
-15- An Extraordinary Tale 80
-16- An Exhibition to Amaze and Enthrall.....83
-17- White Natives Everywhere.....87
-18- The King of the Entire Great Rift Valley 90
-19- The Black Thing 97
-20- Eiffel Tower 99
-21- First Deck.....103
-22- Vantage Point 110
-23- Bois de Boulogne.....114
-24- The La Franc 118
-25- Fixed Dice 127
-26- Napoleon's Corporal.....133
-27- Domesticated Woman 142
-28- Pearl Heart.....146
-29- Change of Odds.....150
-30- Different Big Water 154
-31- Mediterranean Sea.....157
-32- Making Light.....163
-33- Port Massawa.....166
-34- Shore Leave.....171
-35- Jungle!.....175
-36- The King's Procession 177
-37- A Counter Offer 184

-38- Big Water..... 190
-39- Eiffel Tower And Other Facts 192
About the Author..... 196



-1-
FOUR MONTHS BEFORE THE PARIS EXPOSITION UNIVERSELLE OF 1900

Smoke hung near the ceiling of the restaurant. Tall vented windows along the front of the restaurant helped keep the smoke and heat from getting too close to the clientele.

Above the sounds of a hundred conversations, clattering silverware, and glasses, a female's voice rose- "And this is what I think of your opinion!" In one quick motion the woman pivoted her weight to the ball of her left foot and swiveled her hip forward. The motion continued up her torso, her left shoulder snapping back as her right fist shot toward the man directly in front of her. With only time to open his eyes wide, the man presented the perfect -*stationary*- target. The woman's fist closed the distance to the man's nose as he tensed up; the worst possible thing he could have done.

The meaty 'slap' sound of her fist hitting the man's face made several nearby customers who weren't already paying attention look in that direction.

Many of the patrons had seen the same punch thrown in boxing matches around town- usually at an already dazed opponent. Never had they seen the punch executed by a woman. They were surprised to see the man's knees wobble in

and out as he fell backward on his butt. After all; none of them expected a woman to be able to hit hard enough to knock a man down. Perhaps with a cowardly attack from behind in a street fight in front of a brothel, but never in a stand-up boxing match.

The man looked up with now-tearing but still wide eyes. He also had a good bit of blood running down his face and onto his lap thanks to his broken nose.

The woman brought her hands up to her chin, ready to throw another punch. She hopped from foot to foot as she looked down at the man. Her fighting form was definitely familiar to the patrons- just not from a woman. "The weaker sex require subjugation indeed." She snapped.

Laughter and applause brought a red color to the man's face as he scrambled to his feet. "How dare you…" The man brought his fist back, preparing to deliver a return punch.

"That'll be enough of that, Sir." A man said in an American western accent as he stepped beside the woman.

"You stay out of this!" The bleeding man pointed at the interloper. "Or I shall deal with you as well." He said as he stepped toward him.

In a flash the American had a silver plated pistol in his hand. It was pointed directly at the bleeding man's face. "*I said* that'll be enough." He cocked the pistol. "Or you'll deal with me right now."

"I was doing fine on my own." The woman offered. She still had her hands up, ready to deliver another punch.

"You Americans." The bleeding man said disparagingly. "Do you think your pretty gun scares me?"

"If it doesn't, the hole it will make in you should. It'll be big enough you could throw a Paris rat through it."

"I said…" The woman started.

"Yes, of course; I could see that, Ma'am." The American kept his pistol -and eyes- trained on the bleeding man. "I think you should go home, *Sir*. I believe your evening here is done." He cocked his head to the side as he smirked. "Unless of course you're staying here. In that case you may go to your room and get cleaned up there and not return downstairs until the morning."

The bleeding man appraised the American, then his pistol; it didn't waver at all as it pointed at him. "Huh!" Was all he said as he turned and stormed out of the restaurant.

The American returned the pistol to its holster, leaving only the ivory and silver inlaid handle showing. He turned and looked at the woman. "Well, that was a thing, now wasn't it, Ma'am?" He grinned wide. "Most excitement I've had in a good week." He removed his hat as he gave a deep bow. "Much obliged."

"I said I was doing fine on my own." The woman said again. She finally lowered her hands.

"Oh, I surely saw that, Ma'am." He put his hands on his gun belt. "I just wanted to make sure it stayed that way." His grin became a genuine smile. "If you are worried he will accost you later, I would be glad to escort you to your door." He gestured toward the stairs.

"I don't live in that direction." Anna said. "I am not staying here."

"Oh. Well then, I shall escort you to your ride. I just have to get my saddle first."

The woman laughed. "Are you afraid that someone would steal it off your horse out on the street?"

The man shook his head. "Ain't got a horse with me right now; just the saddle. And my lariat of course."

"I see." She looked toward the door.

"I don't think he'll come back in here."

"I was… am expecting someone."

"I can keep you company until they arrive, if you'd like." He gave a friendly smile.

The woman appraised the man. She let out a breath. "Yes. I suppose so." She smiled at him. "And thank you for coming to my aid, Mister…"

"Maguire. Colton Maguire at your service, Ma'am."

"Anna Garnier."

"Miss Garnier." Colton gave a nod then gestured at a table. There was indeed a large leather saddle piled over one of the chairs there.

Anna walked to the table. "Do you always dine with your saddle, Mister Maguire?"

Colton pulled out a chair for her.

"Just being lazy, I hate to admit, Miss Garnier." Colton said as Anna sat. He moved to the other chair.

Anna laughed. "What?"

Colton held up his hand, beckoning one of the staff. "Well you see Miss Garnier, I had some work done on my saddle today and I'm on the sixth floor and I didn't want to walk all the way up there with it, then all the way back down to eat, then all the way back up again." He smiled. "And it gave me someone to talk to. Until now, that is."

"Well, that makes sense." Anna looked at the saddle. It was well kept but had obviously seen years of use. "It does look heavy."

"The heavier the saddle, the less a horse can comfortably carry during the day. To be honest with you it's barely twenty pounds." He leaned forward and whispered conspiratorially. "It's the stairs that'll get you. I'm not used to traipsing up and down stairs, living in the great outdoors you see."

"On the open plains of France?" Anna laughed again.

"France does have them, Miss Garnier. There are plenty of cattle here in France. But I was working in Spain."

A waiter approached the table. "Mister Maguire." He smiled. "Howdy." He said in what was a passable western accent.

"Very well, et vous Monsieur Allard?"

"Bon, merci."

"Miss Garnier, would you care for something while you wait?" Colton said. "Everything here is excellent."

"I suppose a cabernet, please."

"Excellent choice, Madame." He nodded at Colton. "And what would you like this evening, Sir?"

"I think I'll have the fish." Colton winked at the man. "It was excellent yesterday."

"Qui. As it will be once again this evening." With that the man left to put in Colton's order.

"You didn't order a drink?" Anna smiled. "A whisky perhaps?"

"Oh, he knows I want a beer with my fish even though a white wine is appropriate. Just like I had a beer with my steak a couple of days ago even though a red wine would have been

appropriate in that case." He leaned toward her and whispered loudly: "I drink milk with my eggs, in case you're wondering."

"You are quite the enigma, Mister Maguire. You and your saddle."

"No, not really." Colton leaned back in his chair. "It's really the same old tired story; man goes on an adventure into darkest Africa, loses everything, barely makes it back to civilization, herds cattle in Spain for a couple of months to pay for passage back to his home country." He smirked. "Saves Parisian from getting beat up by a woman. Very typical."

"He loses everything?"

"Well, everything except his trusty saddle."

"And lariat, it seems." Anna stared at him. "That is some story, Mister Maguire."

"Well, there are parts I left out here and there, of course. Fighting off packs of wolves on the Andalusian Plain, hippos in Lake Victoria, giant apes in Buganda. You know; the boring parts."

"Are you making fun, Mister Maguire?"

"Of you, Miss Garnier? With the right jab I just witnessed?" He shook his head. "Not on your life, Ma'am."

Anna glanced toward the door.

"If I am going to cause you or your soon-to-arrive companion any consternation, Miss Garnier, I will be glad to move to another table."

"No, no; that's not it. He… Pierre tends to get sidetracked."

"I see. Well, I can see if Mister Allard can get another fish order in if you'd like. It really is excellent."

Anna looked at the door again. "Perhaps that would be wise."

"I can assure you my intentions involve me eating dinner and nothing else." Colton raised his hand and waved it. "This Pierre won't be upset with us eating together, will he?"

"No, not at all." Anna sighed. "Especially if you mention Africa."

Colton puckered his lips and placed his hands on the side of his face, palms inward. He flapped them back and forth then pointed at Anna then himself, then held up two fingers.

"What are you…"

"Two fish, coming up, Ma'am."

Anna laughed again. "I see you and Monsieur Allard have a special kind of relationship."

A different waiter approached the table and placed a glass of wine and a beer on the table. "Por vous."

"Merci, Gaston." Colton said to the man. He turned the beer around and picked it up by the handle. "He's a nice fellow, Allard. Everyone here is, in fact. I'm glad I picked this hotel." He held up his beer to the waiter. "Le meilleur de la ville. N'est-ce pas?" (The best in town. Is it not?)

"Qui." Gaston said with a smile as he left.

"To Paris, right jabs and haymakers." He said, continuing the toast he raised the glass toward Anna.

"What is a haymaker?" Anna picked up her glass of wine.

"It's what the guy was going to throw at you. Most un-neighborly."

"Indeed, Mister Colton." She tapped her glass against his. "Indeed."

Colton took a sip of his beer then put it down. "That's better."

"Seriously, Mister Colton, why are you here?"

"Like I said; I was on an adventure." He smirked. "An especially unsuccessful adventure, and now I'm heading back to America to my ranch. There's a ship leaving for New York from Le Harve on Friday. And if you're going to stay in Paris, the Hotel Scribe is the place to do it."

"It is indeed a fine establishment." Anna said.

"Did you know that this is where they showed the first moving pictures, just four years ago? The Lumiere brothers did. I wish I could have been here. I've been wanting to see one of them since I heard about them."

Anna smiled. "Yes, I was aware of that." She took another sip of her wine. "What sort of adventure were you on? Searching for lost gold? Diamonds even?"

"Well, it started out as a safari. Big game. We were supposed to be going after the Big Five as they're called."

"Big five?"

"Yes. The lion, leopard, rhino, elephant, and the buffalo. The African buffalo that is. I've hunted the American buffalo."

"So hunting those five animals."

"Well, and others as we came across them, of course. The Nile crocodile, hippo, and there were a couple in our group that wanted to shoot one of those big black gorillas. I wasn't keen on it but they were. So at that point, I was just along for the ride."

"Oh?"

"Well, you can't just wander off from the group in the middle of the jungle when you don't want to shoot what the others want to shoot; you just wait at the base camp. Wandering off in the jungle is a good way to end up eaten by something." Colton shook his head. " 'Course, it didn't work out that way."

"No, no; I meant you didn't want to shoot an ape?"

"I've seen monkeys in the zoo. Something about them makes me think shooting one of them wouldn't be right."

"You know we are related to them, don't you?"

"What?"

"Oh yes; it's true. I've studied it in depth as part of my work."

"I did not know that." Colton shook his head. "I'm sorry; your work?"

Anna sat a little straighter in her chair. "I work at the National Museum of Natural History. In the anthropology department."

"I see. Well, that is impressive, Miss Garnier." Colton toasted her with his mug then took a sip. "Very impressive."

"What didn't work out?" Anna asked.

"What?"

"You said if you didn't want to shoot something, you waited at the camp because wandering off could get you eaten. But it didn't work out that way." She gestured at him. "But obviously you weren't eaten, so what didn't work out?"

Colton let out a deep breath. "Well, we were camped down by Lake Victoria when one of the guides mentioned this giant black ape and two of the fellows in our group got it into their heads that they wanted to shoot it. So they set out to do just that."

"And they ended up not shooting one? Is that what didn't work out?"

"To be honest, Miss Garnier I really don't know what didn't work out for them. All I know is that after three days when none of them came back, the two guides that were at camp with me decided they had waited long enough and they wandered off. When I woke up on the fifth day, I was all alone."

"Oh dear."

Colton pointed at her. "Those are the exact words I used when the gravity of the situation came upon me. 'Oh dear', I said. 'Oh dear. I am suddenly in the jungle all alone' was the entire exclamation, if I recall correctly."

"Somehow I doubt that, Mister Colton." She smirked.

Allard approached the table. There was a young man carrying a tray on his shoulder. "Dinner is served." He said as the young man lowered the tray. Allard placed the food on the table. "More wine Madame?"

Anna looked at her glass- it was over half empty. "Yes please."

Allard looked at Colton. "Another one pardner?"

Colton smiled at the man. "Oui s'il te plaît." (Yes if you please).

Allard placed the plates and beckoned for the young man to follow- without a word they were both gone.

"How long have you been in Paris, Mister Maguire?" Anna asked.

"Three days now. I figured I could use a week of relaxation between taking a dusty train here and taking a boat back to America. Now I wish I had given myself two weeks. Wonderful town, Paris."

"Just three days? In two weeks, I imagine you'd be speaking perfect French." Anna took a piece of fish on her fork.

"Seems I'm pretty good at picking it up." Colton ate some of his broccoli. "I speak Creole, Cherokee, and Choctaw. I figure if you're traveling through someone's territory, it's only polite to be able to say 'hello' when you come upon them."

"It is funny you should say that; I was discussing that very subject…"

"Sorry I'm late!" A man said as he rushed up to the table.

"Pierre." Anna said with a smile. "Detained again?"

"Yes." Pierre glanced at Colton. "Unexpectedly detained and drawn into a long conversation with no resolution."

Colton stood. "Colton Maguire, sir." He held out his hand. He looked down at Anna. "I hope you don't mind I was keeping the lady company after an… unfortunate incident earlier."

Pierre shook Colton's hand as he sighed. "She hit someone again." He didn't say it as a question. "Pierre Dudas. A pleasure to meet you."

Colton laughed as he shook Pierre's hand back. "I have to say it was quite an impressive strike. I see you are familiar with it." Colton gestured at a chair. "Please, Sir."

"Anna has taken up pugilism." Pierre said as he sat.

"And calisthenics as well as weight lifting." Anna added.

Colton stared at her wide-eyed. While he knew many fit women back in America, it was mainly due to farming and ranching chores. Lifting weights recreationally was something he had never seen a woman do. "Weight lifting? I've never seen a woman lift weights… wash tubs or fence posts, sure. To be honest with you, I've never seen a man do it either. Seen in in magazines though. Been to some boxing matches so I'm sure they did it for training, I suppose."

Pierre gestured at Anna. "Anna believes it is important to be self-sufficient. Pull her own weight, so to speak."

"Wow, I guess Paris is a lot rougher than I thought." Colton ate the last piece of his fish.

"Oh, it's not for Paris."

"Do you want to order something to eat, Pierre?" Anna interrupted, hoping to steer the conversation away from where she feared it was heading. Because most of Pierre's conversations ended up in the same place. "The fish is excellent."

"A drink perhaps?" Colton suggested.

Pierre looked at the pair's plates. "It seems the both of you are practically finished with your meals. I'd hate to have you sit and wait while…"

"No, not at…" Began Colton.

Allard stepped to the table. "Done for the evening, Monsieur Colton?"

"Ahh." Colton chuckled. "I suppose so." He held up a finger. "I suggest we continue the conversation while we walk towards an establishment that serves ice cream."

Anna clapped her hands as she stood. "An excellent idea." She hoped the change of scenery would allow her to keep the subject away from Africa.

Colton also stood. "A walk after dinner is always welcome. And this is a beautiful city at night."

"For ice cream." Anna reminded.

Pierre stood as well. "Of course."

"Then I shall charge your room, pardner?" Allard said.

"Merci, Monsieur," Colton said. "Passe une bonne soirée."

"Vous aussi." Allard responded.

Colton looked down at his saddle. "Ah, merde." He said as he looked at the stairs.

"I shall have it taken to your room." Allard offered.

"Did I mention that this place is outstanding?" Colton said with a short bow. "Because it is."

"Merci," Allard said as he gave a return bow.

With that the trio moved out onto the busy Paris streets.

-2-
HEADING TO THE BIG WATER

The ape opened dinner plate sized eyes as a familiar scent came to his nose. He swiveled his head around without moving his body as he searched for the source of the smell- they were near. Two natives came into view.

The ape had developed categories for the animals he encountered in the jungle: 'friend', 'threat', and 'not a threat'. As he had gotten older -and larger- most of the animals in the 'threat' category were moved to the 'not a threat' category. In fact, only one remained a threat; the lion. Or more precisely, an entire pride of lions. Even at his current height of twenty-one feet, he still kept his distance from the several large groups of lions that prowled the open areas. When he encountered lions individually, they would stare at him and give him a wide berth.

When he encountered a group of them, they would also stare at him but he noticed the lionesses would maneuver around to try and surround him. It was hard-wired in his mind that 'things that eat meat' behind him were a threat. So he avoided them. The other 'things that eat meat' hunted alone- the panthers, leopards, and cheetahs gave him a wide berth. Along with 'things that eat meat', there was one large rotund animal he avoided; the hippo. He had hoped that at their size, they would fit into his 'friend' category but they always seemed to be in a bad mood when he wanted to play. This kept elephants as the only large animal in his 'friends' category.

The ape knew that the dark-skinned natives weren't a threat. But they weren't in the 'friend' category either. Remaining motionless under the tree, he watched them to see if they looked in his direction. He was often surprised with how close they would get and still not notice him. Panthers would lock their emerald green eyes on him as they passed by. He never considered attacking the big black cats but thought instead they would make fun playmates. His friendly hoots and reaches for them had only gotten him a threatening growl and a swipe of their paw in return. So he stuck with the playful elephants.

One of the natives finally noticed him. His eyes got large as he looked up, their eyes meeting. "Ekinene Ekisodde!" he chattered with the other and pointed. The ape had come to associate this sound with himself because of how often the natives made it while pointing at him. Once a group had caught him napping by approaching from downwind and it was this exclamation that startled him awake. Both of the natives before him right now immediately bent over, eyes to the ground and then backed away.

The ape stood, content in knowing these two understood his position- the Alpha Male of the jungle. Natives tended to be in the 'not a threat' category but occasionally he would come across some that would throw spears at him. Oftentimes a good bellow and chest slapping would make them leave. Sometimes he had to give them a more direct lesson in who he actually was in the jungle. Thinking of his, he remembered the light skinned natives he had encountered a short while ago. They did not shout the familiar 'Ekinene Ekisodde' when they

saw him. They instead raised their spears to their heads and stood still. It was very confusing to the ape- these lighter skinned natives stood still with their spears raised when the sound of thunder rang out even though there were no dark clouds in the sky. The sharp pains he felt were also confusing as he did not see anything close enough to touch him. Confused by the sudden pain, he had turned and ran into the cover of the jungle and climbed a giant tree, knowing that was where he could be safe. After all, none of the dark skinned natives would have dared to chase after him- why should these be different? When the light colored natives came in looking for him, he decided they needed a lesson in not following him into the jungle so he dropped down directly on top of one of them. His eleven tons ended that problem immediately. The other he picked up and examined closely. He looked similar to the dark skinned natives he was used to, only much lighter and wearing different coverings. As the man struggled to get out of his grip, the ape bit his head off and spat it out. While he did occasionally eat meat, plants and fruits made up the majority of his diet. There just weren't enough termites in even the biggest mound to make it worthwhile for him to eat those tiny bugs. So he hadn't in decades. The ape had tossed the body onto the jungle floor along with his crushed companion. Within two days, there would be no trace of any of them left beyond their guns and bits of clothing. The three dark skinned natives that were with them ran off, so he let them go.

The ape absently scratched at his still-sore shoulder as he continued the walk he had started just a little while ago- south to the Big Water- even though that was the direction the two dark natives had just gone. After his encounter with the light skinned natives he had headed north for a time while his wounds healed. He now wanted to return to see his friends.

It was a long time ago that the natives where he now lived had finally learned their place and had stopped attacking him. They had lost a great many of their group before they learned that hard lesson. As he had done since then, he just walked past the group of 'not a threat' natives, ignoring them. Back then, they were almost as tall as his shoulders- now they were barely taller than his knees. He understood that he was the one getting bigger; not them smaller. When he first arrived to the

area- brought a long, long time ago from his native lands and family by some other natives, they were actually taller than him by a little bit. That journey had lasted for many days as they took him across a very big water to a place with white buildings.

He had spent a long time in a cage or in a large garden with a chain keeping him in place. Until that day when he decided he would test his strength against the chain. He was both surprised and pleased to see he could break it. After running through the confusing maze of white and tan buildings, he had come to a more familiar maze of trees and mountains. He had been there ever since, traveling north and south along the mountains and rivers, eating, sleeping, and playing. The other apes he had encountered looked familiar to him but wanted nothing to do with him- especially when he started towering over them.

The ape reached over and pulled several mangos from a tree and popped them in his mouth. He remembered having to climb mango trees to eat its fruit. Now he was able to just reach them from the ground. At least on the smaller trees. There were mangos that towered over him that he still climbed on occasion, but there were enough smaller ones he only did it for entertainment not necessity. He looked down at the dark natives, who stood with their heads down to show their place in the jungle. While the dark natives weren't really fun to play with, he didn't feel any ill-will towards them. In fact, on several occasions he had saved some from the stealthy leopard or ferocious lion. For playing, he was relegated to just one other large animal; the elephant. There was a large tribe of them that lived near the Big Water that he would play with in the water. He hoped he encountered them again.

As he walked off, he gave one mango tree a violent shake, sending a dozen mangos falling down around the natives. The ape gave several hoots in return to the native's cheers as he continued on his way, content in his good mood.

-3-
STROLLING THE BOULEVARD DES CAPUCINES

"So," Colton said as the trio turned off of Rue Scribe onto the tree lined Boulevard des Capucines. "You mentioned a pavilion. Are you involved with the exposition?" Colton asked. "I've been to the top of the tower; most impressive."

"So you've been to the top of the tower?" Anna tried a different route for the conversation to travel. "The sights from up there are amazing."

"Indeed, Miss Garnier." Colton said. "It reminds me of being out in Wyoming and the views there. I understand the Eiffel Tower was the centerpiece of the exposition a couple of years ago. What will be the centerpiece this time?" He added, unknowingly steering the conversation right back where Anna didn't want it.

"The centerpiece? My dear man, the centerpiece will be *my* pavilion." Pierre said. "It will be the talk of the town. The country. The *world*, probably."

"Gads." Colton smiled wide. "Now you have my attention, Mister Dudas."

"Here we go." Anna said as she looked around worriedly; the sidewalks were busy since it was a pleasant evening. "Just try and remain calm this time, Pierre."

"Well," began Pierre as put his hands behind his back, "it will be exotic animals never before seen on the continent." He waved a hand dismissively then returned it to clasp the other, "None of that disgusting 'humans behind glass' like before, or worse; in cages. I will be displaying live exotic animals."

Colton nodded at the man. "You know, I was just in Africa and I saw a great number of unusual animals. Things I had never seen before. Giraffes for one." He looked at Anna as he held a hand high over his head. "Towering things with a body like a horse but a twenty foot neck that its head is

perched upon. Most amazing thing; they are so large and gangly they seem to be moving in slow motion when they run."

"I've only seen them in pictures," Anna said.

"Amazing things, giraffes. And hippopotamuses." He cocked his head to the side. "Hippopotami? What say you, Mister Dudas?"

"Both are correct," Pierre said. "Since hippopotamus comes from Latin, the 'i' can be used to make the plural, but being English, an 's-e-s' is also acceptable."

"I am always amazed at where animal names come from," Anna tried to turn the conversation again. "In fact, just today I was discussing that very…"

"They are quite dangerous too, I have been told." Pierre interjected. "So how long were you in Africa, Mister Maguire?"

"Colton, please. I was there for a month. I was on a big game hunt in eastern central Africa. Down to Lake Victoria. We were hunting the big five, mainly. Have you ever been?"

"Why yes, twice. I have been working with an export company getting animals for our exhibit and I am going back shortly to take stock of what will be sent in the final shipment." He smiled. "One of the big five would definitely be impressive. They have none of them in the Ménagerie du Jardin des plantes, that I can tell you." He said, referring to the botanical and animal gardens in the city- the second oldest zoo in the world, only predated by the Schönbrunn Animal Garden in Vienna, Austria.

"What do you have so far?"

"I have two hyenas, several types of monkeys to include two baboons, some meerkats." He paused as he thought. "A giraffe, several ostriches… oh, and two zebras."

"The giraffe will definitely be an attention getter." Colton said. "Hey; maybe you can charge people to feed it. Increase your profits."

"Oh no." Anna shook her head. "World's Fairs and Exhibitions don't make money."

"Really?" Colton asked.

"My father told me the Exhibition here in 1898 made some money, but most don't make a thing."

"Oh, he's wrong about that." Pierre said flatly.

Anna put her hands on her hips. "What did you say?"

"I'm new around these parts, Pierre but I've heard that tone before." Warned Colton.

Pierre held up his hands. "Now hold on Anna; let me explain."

"Explain how my father is wrong? Oh, I want to hear that."

"No; it's just a narrow way of looking at things." Said Pierre.

"Now you're calling my father narrow minded?"

"No!" Pierre snapped. He looked at Colton. "I'd have brought vipers back with me, but I already have one."

"What?"

Colton laughed. "That's what we call digging yourself into a deeper hole."

"Let me explain Anna." Pierre smiled warmly. "You know I meant no offence; I admire your father greatly. And you too."

Anna let her hands drop to her sides. "Go on then."

Pierre came to a stop and eyed her for a moment before speaking. "When your father says that exhibitions do not make money, he is speaking too narrowly." He held his hands in front of him, cupped together. "The exhibition itself may indeed not make any sort of profit. This is in fact true more often than not" He opened his hands so they were a little farther apart. "But around the exhibition, people are using taxis and eating at street vendors and restaurants. They are buying souvenirs as well." He spread his hands out wider. "And hotels and hostels are renting rooms to people who came to see the exhibits."

"Yes, I see your…"

"While people visit, they also buy clothes, hats, other personal effects." He spread his hands out as wide as they would go. "And visit other museums and galleries, paying entrance fees there."

"Very well, I concede…"

Pierre stood on a bench keeping his arms spread out. "And the people who come to the exhibition will see Paris and want to return later to see the things they did not have time for the first time."

"*Yes*, I understand now what…"

"And!" Continued Pierre as he raised his hands over his head. "One cannot forget the exhibits themselves which show advances in the sciences from around the world."

"Quite the showman, isn't he?" Colton said.

"You have no idea." Anna said as Pierre stepped up onto his back of the bench, using a lamppost for balance. "Oh dear."

"And," Pierre said even louder. "When the youth see such exhibits as the Lumiere brothers' gondola ride surrounded by moving pictures making it seem as if they are *actually flying* instead of standing in a wicker basket, it plants a seed of innovation in them. Oh yes!" He raised one hand over his head as people turned to look at him. "More important still are the advances in electricity and construction which will pique the interest of visiting children, putting them on the esteemed paths of architecture, engineering, chemistry!" He moved to stand on just one foot, letting the other dangle as he pointed down the sidewalk.

Anna noticed that a crowd had stopped to watch.

Pierre continued: "Across the *world*, there will be profits in the sciences for a generation to come because of France's exhibition here in this town. Because of France!" He put his foot back on the bench and brought both hands up over his head, balancing precariously. "Vive la Franc!" He added to the applause of many of the patrons.

"Pierre, you are making a spectacle of yourself." Anna said.

Pierre hopped off the bench then gave several short bows. "Perhaps just a little."

"I can't see how you wouldn't make money with a pitch like that." Colton clapped. "Very motivating."

"What I need is a one-of-a-kind centerpiece. Something everyone will be talking about throughout the city."

The trio started walking again as the crowd dispersed.

"You need a giant ape," Colton said flatly.

"What?"

"It was a joke."

"What giant ape? Do you mean a silverback ape? We saw a group of them on my last expedition to the Free State of

Congo, down by Lake Tanganyika. But we weren't able to get close to them."

"Pierre, please." Anna said. "That's some joke, Mister Colton. A veritable comedian in our midst."

"What giant ape?" Pierre pressed on.

"While we were hunting, we stopped at the shores of Lake Victoria and one of our guides told us about this giant ape that lived there."

Pierre cocked his head. "Did you see it?"

"Pierre, please." Anna said again.

Colton shook his head. "No, I wasn't interested in shooting apes so I stayed at the basecamp while the others went in search of it."

"And?"

"And they never came back." Colton said with a shrug.

"What did you do?"

"Well, we waited for three days for them to come back. Past the two they said they'd be away, that is. Then on that fifth day when I woke up the other two guides were gone. They got bored, I suppose."

"And that's when Mister Maguire said 'oh dear'."

Colton smiled at Anna. "Yes that is exactly when it happened."

"Marooned in Africa! How did you ever get back?"

"I traveled around the banks of the lake to a small mission and paid a local to take me by boat to Zanzibar where I traveled to Spain on a merchant ship."

"And the giant ape?"

"Oh I doubt he could negotiate passage on a merchant ship; he's probably still by the lake."

Anna snorted a laugh.

"*Mister Colton*." Pierre said.

"You are funny indeed." Anna said. "Why it reminds me of something I was discussing just today…"

"We were talking about the giant ape." Pierre reminded.

"Never saw it." Colton said.

"There probably isn't such a thing," Anna said. "I know that look in your eye, Pierre."

"Something dealt with your entire party out there." Pierre said. He narrowed his eyes at Colton. "Is there something you are leaving out?"

"Ahhh, let's see. Oh! I said 'oh dear' when I realized I was alone?"

Anna snorted again.

"Mister Maguire…" Pierre reached out to him. "Colton. This could make my entire career. It could make *history*. Are you leaving anything out?"

Colton sighed. "While we were waiting, the two guides I was with said the others would never come back. They said so right after the group went in search of the ape. And they were right."

"Because of this ape. This big ape."

"It's not *just* a big ape. Apes are big. You've seen them, right Pierre? The males can weigh upwards of four hundred pounds. Right?"

"Indeed. The eastern gorilla is quite large. Bigger than their western cousins." Pierre said. "And?" He coaxed.

"The guides were probably exaggerating." Colton shrugged. "You know, trying to get the Mlungu to offer more money for a wild goose chase."

"What's that?" Anna asked.

Colton stared at her. "It's when you go in search of something that isn't really there or that you have no chance of actually catching; like a wild goose." He gestured at a nearby ice cream parlor. "There."

"No, no; I know what a wild goose chase is; what's a… Mlungu?"

"Oh. It's what natives call us white people."

"Really?" Anna saw an opportunity: "What does it mean?"

"It's very interesting, you see since we…"

"You two can discuss native languages later," interrupted Pierre. "Now about this ape."

Colton stopped in front of the display window and began to peruse the various flavors of ice cream. "It's a big ape that lives in the Great Rift Valley. He moves up and down it from Abyssinia next to the Dead Sea to the north all the way down to Lake Victoria. Pistachio, I think."

"How big?"

Colton held his thumb and pointer fingers close together. "A pistachio is about this big."

Anna snorted. She held her fingers apart as well. "This big Pierre. Did you hear that? Why I would…"

"Colton, please." Pierre said.

"They say he stands twenty feet tall."

"Twenty?" Pierre leaned. "*Twenty* feet?"

"Pierre, I don't think you should be jumping at the exaggerations of local guides." Anna warned.

"Well said," agreed Colton.

"Twenty feet." Pierre said again. "And you know where they were going to find this ape?"

"North of our basecamp on a nice little inlet on Lake Victoria. The water there is shallow out about a hundred feet. We saw elephants there, playing in the shallows."

"So you could find it again if you had to."

"Oh sure I coul….No, no no. I have a ticket on the Campania. First class even. I'm heading back to America."

"Colton, listen. All I'm asking…"

"First pistachio ice cream, then America."

"Listen Colton, I can make it worth your while to accompany us."

Colton smirked. "First Class on a Cunard ship. That's pretty worth my while."

Pierre stared at him for a moment. "So we get the ticket changed for three months from now." When Colton opened his mouth to speak, he held up a finger. "You stay with me and get a fully funded expedition, then you get to go to the exposition when it opens, then sail back First Class. *And* I'll give you five percent of ticket sales for the first week."

"I'm lucky to be alive." Colton pointed out. "Did I mention that?"

"But this time we will be prepared." Pierre said. "We will be taking precautions." He pointed at Anna. "And not just for you; Anna will be going on this expedition as well."

"Oh, I don't think that's a good idea at all."

"I am quite fit, Mister Maguire and can take care of myself." She smiled. "As you have seen firsthand this evening."

"Dealing with a masher is one thing. Dealing with… something that is able to dispatch two well-armed, seasoned

hunters and three local guides is a horse of a completely different color."

"How much longer are you in the hotel?"

"I leave on Friday on the Campania."

"This Friday?"

Colton nodded.

"Then you check out of the hotel a couple of days early and move into one of my guest rooms. Tomorrow morning we take the train to LaHarve and get your ticket postponed then I show you around my exhibit and you can meet some of the other members of the expedition. What do you say? This is an opportunity of a lifetime."

Colton exhaled slowly. "I'm just worried that my lifetime might just run out just a few months from now."

"We will be completely safe, I can assure you." Pierre said. "It is a minor delay for such a chance at adventure; we are but four months from the opening of the exposition."

Colton considered the offer for a long moment. He knew that the ranch he owned with his brothers was operating just fine and they did not mind him being away. He decided he would send a telegram in the morning explaining his delay. "Fine. Except since it's well past checkout time now, I'll check out in the morning. These are nice people; it would be rude to just disappear in the middle of the night on them."

Pierre held out his hand. "Excellent. I will meet you at my exhibit. We are set up with the colonial exhibits on the hill at Trocadero Palace. I can meet you there at say… nine o'clock? I will give you a tour and we will take the train after lunch."

Colton sighed again. "I'm probably going to regret it but alright." He shook Pierre's hand. "I'll meet you there at nine."

" 'Creatures never before seen' is the name of my exhibit. I will send a coach there at eight to pick up your bags." Pierre smiled. "And your saddle."

"Only twice more on the stairs, Mister Maguire," Anna laughed. "Pierre has a small guest room on the ground floor for elderly visitors that you can occupy."

"As long as your house isn't six stories tall, upstairs is fine."

"Then you shall be on the second floor away from the street. The corner room affords two windows for a nice evening breeze."

Colton let go of Pierre's hand. "Fine. I'll be ready by eight."

"Excellent. You won't regret this Colton; you are making history."

Anna looked down at the various flavors of ice cream. "Perhaps you can both come for dinner tomorrow so I can hear how the plans have progressed. I'm sure father will be interested as well since he's helping finance the expedition."

"That would be excellent. Colton?"

"It will be a pleasure." Colton smiled at Anna. "So what flavor are you getting?"

"Lemon sorbet. It's my favorite."

"Hard to beat a good sorbet. N'es pas? Maybe I'll add an extra ball of that to my cone."

"That's a smart move." Anna said. She looked at Pierre. "But are you sure about this Pierre? I mean- can you trust what the local guides told him? They are prone to superstition and exaggeration, as you well know."

"I know, but something kept those men from returning." He held up a hand to beckon the server. "Whether they met their fate, or just left we'll never know. But something kept them from returning to their camp. And that's exactly what my exhibit needs." He held up three fingers. "Three cones. One pistachio and lemon sorbet, one with two balls of lemon sorbet, and I'll have blackcurrant and banana."

"On the same cone?" Colton peered at Pierre.

"I walk to my beat, Sir." Pierre replied.

"I suppose you do." Colton said. He reached into his pocket. "This is on me since starting tomorrow I work for you."

"It's a deal." Pierre said.

After they had gotten their ice creams, Colton toasted the pair with his cone. "I will see you tomorrow."

"Until tomorrow." Anna toasted him back.

Colton turned and walked back toward the hotel.

"Shall I walk you home?" Pierre asked. "In case you run into trouble with someone wanting to accost your delicious ice cream cone. Let us hope the natives leave us be."

Anna laughed as she took his elbow. "Of course. I've dealt with one ape this evening; you can deal with any others."

The pair walked away arm and arm.

-4-
PLANS ARE LAID

"So you are sailors then?" Colton asked. He had just gotten a drink and had missed part of the introductions. "Open waters and such, Mister Wiswell?"

After walking around the exhibition halls and seeing Pierre Dudas' 'Creatures Never Before Seen' exhibit, the pair had walked to Pierre's home. They had decided to send a telegram to postpone his ocean journey instead of wasting half a day on the train there and back. Then while Pierre took care of what he called 'pressing exhibit business', Colton had wandered the gardens. He had returned inside after the other guests had already arrived.

Frank Wiswell smiled at Colton. "Big Waters Adventures, actually. We handle top-end safaris to Africa and adventures to eastern Europe and beyond."

"Oh, I misheard, sorry." Colton smiled back. "Pouring scotch had most of my attention." He held up the bottle. "That sounded almost like an advertisement poster. Top you off?"

Frank walked to the bar. "Yes to both…Uhm"

"Colton, Colton Maguire."

"Yes to both, Mister Maguire."

Colton took the man's glass. "Colton will do if we're going to be trudging through the darkest jungle together. Ice? Water? Neat, Mister Wiswell?"

"Frank. Ice this time, please." Frank smiled. "So will you be the bartender on this expedition?"

Colton laughed. "I do make a mean Old Fashioned." He dropped a large clear ice cube into the glass carefully then poured two fingers of scotch into the glass. "Your drink is served, Frank." He held it out. "Cheers."

Frank took the glass and toasted Colton with it. "Cheers."

"Again, sorry I wasn't listening very well; so you do safaris to Africa and Eastern Europe? What sort of animals are you

finding in Eastern Europe? I'm intrigued." He gestured toward some leather easy chairs set together on one side of the large room.

"Well there are definitely boar and bear that will give you pause, but what we mainly are doing *out east* is giving tours of Romania and the Carpathian mountains." Frank said as he sat.

"Romania? I've never been." Colton plopped into the leather chair and put his feet on the matching ottoman.

"Well, there is this very popular book called *Dracula* that deals with a bloodthirsty count who lives in Transylvania and people want to go there and see the sights." He shrugged. "So we take them. And of course Lake Balaton in Hungary. We set up a camp on the shore and let them explore the foothills and such or we take them to one of the resorts for a more civilized stay."

"That sounds interesting."

Frank leaned forward in the chair. "What's interesting is that Pierre told me about your twenty foot ape."

"I never saw it," Colton said as he swirled the ice cube around in his drink. "Hearsay from local guides. I'm not sure how much stock should be put in it."

"But the rest of your party didn't return." Frank pointed out. "What would be the reason for that, I wonder? Did some accident befall those local guides and experienced hunters as they walked around, or something more sinister?" He smiled at Colton. "That's intriguing."

Colton exhaled slowly then took a sip of his whisky. "Yes, yes, I suppose so. Which is all the more reason to not follow in their footsteps."

"We won't make the same mistakes they made." Frank said.

"Okay, Mister Donner."

Frank smiled. "Ahhh yes; the failed wagon train. I read about that. Mistake after mistake."

"Looking back on it yes, but from their point of view at the time, they were right on track."

"Touché." Frank took a sip of his scotch. "But you've still agreed to come along."

"Well, I've told Mister Dudas that I am on the trip conditionally. If I don't feel comfortable with the preparations, I'm going to just head back to safe old Texas."

"Safe old Texas?" Another man approached the pair. "From what I've read about the natives, gunslingers, and bandits, safe isn't the word I would use for Texas. Our adventures on the other hand are what I'd call safe."

Frank gestured at him. "Colton Maguire, Rick Berg; my business partner."

"Pleased to meet you," Colton said. "It's safe enough if you know your place."

Rick moved to another chair and sat. "Know your place? That doesn't sound like the free American spirit I know and love."

"Where are you from?"

"Munich, Germany."

"Well, I'm sure you'll agree there are parts of Munich that one doesn't travel alone at night." Colton said.

"I suppose that is true, yes."

"The same holds true in Texas. If you go riding out in Comanche territory without speaking the language, you can expect to run into problems. Same if you're in a saloon and you decide you're going to teach some loudmouth kid with a gun some manners for mouthing off to a dancer." He nodded at Frank. "Or going out into the jungles looking for a giant ape without planning properly."

"The plans were already in place," Rick said. "We are bringing several of our own people with us as well as hiring plenty of locals. And we've spoken to an expert."

Colton looked at him wide-eyed. "There is an expert on giant apes in Africa?"

"Well, giant apes no," Frank said. "But an expert on apes, yes. I telegrammed a gentleman named Paul Du Chaillu yesterday when Pierre told me about your giant ape and wanting to find it."

"You folks work fast."

"The exhibition starts in under four months," Rick said. "So we've got a hard deadline to get there, grab the ape as well as the other animals that have already been captured, and then

be back in time for the grand opening. We can't have any surprise delays."

Colton whistled. "There and back, I didn't consider that. That's going to be near impossible to do. So did you hear back from this expert?"

"Earlier this afternoon. He was in Africa in forty-six and he studied gorillas there. He thinks that the locals may be exaggerating and the ape may be closer to twelve to fifteen feet, which is still extremely large for an ape."

"There's a big difference between fifteen and twenty, twenty five feet, Frank."

"Keep in mind Colton, that the locals there are typically just around five feet tall, so fifteen feet is three times their height. So it wouldn't be that hard for them to add to the ape's height when it towers over them. Especially if they are excited or scared."

"And you think you can go there, grab this thing and be back in time for the opening ceremonies?"

"Yes. Which is why we leave tomorrow." Frank said. He gestured for Pierre to come over.

"To…tomorrow?" Colton put down his glass. He looked at Frank. "We leave *tomorrow*?"

Pierre sat in a chair facing the trio. "Yes, unfortunately it's too late in the day to catch the train to Marseille. I thought you had heard."

"That seems pretty rushed to me." Colton smiled. "Wait; we're going to Africa by train?"

"To Marseille we are. Tomorrow morning on the nine o'clock train. Then later tomorrow afternoon we board the *Prince of the Waves*, a small British cargo steamer that will…"

"When you say small, how small are you talking?" Colton interrupted.

Pierre gestured to Frank. "Frank is the one who sets it up; he can tell you better than me."

"It's a hundred fifty foot, single screw steamer. In about nine days we'll make Cairo. Then we switch to the Cerberus."

"The three headed dog that guards the gates of Hell? That can't be safe."

Frank smiled at Colton. "It's a sixty-five foot tug that will take us to Lake Victoria."

"A tug? That's an unusual means of transportation."

Frank nodded at Colton. "While that is true, it holds enough coal to go to Victoria and halfway back. When we get to Lake Victoria, the crew will gather lumber to make the return journey while we are out. It also has six cabins so it is comfortable, and most importantly it only takes six feet of water."

"When you say it like that, it does sound like a good choice for transportation."

"And the afterdeck… the space behind the bridge at the back of the boat is very large and open with deck chairs and umbrellas for passengers to relax on the trip. And haul animals in cages on the way back up the Nile. The Cerberus is our go-to transportation to Lake Victoria. The captain has made the trip dozens of times."

"Sounds perfect. How long will it take?"

"Eleven days." Pierre said. "Then on the way back, we will move the deck chairs forward and secure the ape to the back of the tug."

"You're going to keep a 20 foot ape…" Colton hesitated. He looked at Frank. "Say, do you have any idea what that size of an animal would weigh?"

"We have calculated it should weigh ten or eleven tons. Well under the cargo capacity for our tug. Especially after burning fuel getting to Lake Victoria."

"Right. So what I just heard was you're going to keep a twenty foot tall, ten ton beast chained to the back of the tug we are all riding on. I'd need a *week* to figure out all the ways that could turn into a disaster."

"Don't worry Colton; we've got it all figured out." Rick said. "We'll have a veterinarian with us who will be taking care of the ape. We are going to keep it mostly sedated for the trip. It's eleven days to Cairo, then back on the *Prince of Waves* for an eight day sail directly to Paris. Our veterinarian says he can keep the ape sedated for almost half the time without any danger to it. He will allow it to wake up slightly every other day to eat and drink and…" He glanced to where the ladies were- they were out of ear shot- "take care of any ablutions it needs to."

"Do you want the figures on how much feces we expect a ten ton ape to make?" Frank said with a smile.

"I would rather not." Colton said. "But I'm afraid I will experience that first hand. So let's just let it be a surprise."

"Oh, you'll be surprised all right." Rick said as he toasted Colton with his glass.

"Seriously, gentlemen," Colton said. "You all realize this is a fool's errand, right?"

"We have brought a four thousand pound, very angry and confused rhino back from Africa without incident as well as several large crocodiles. From talking to Mister Chaillu, he believes that once the ape realizes his situation, he will not try to escape. Apes and indeed all primates are much more intelligent than rhinoceroses or reptiles."

"Here's hoping you can reason with it." Colton raised his glass.

"Oh, that reminds me." Frank said. "Alcohol consumption is stringently regulated on the expedition."

Colton stopped and looked at the man. "No alcohol?"

"We do have some with us of course, but when traveling in the jungle, it is important to have a clear head at all times because one never knows when an emergency might present itself. An occasional drink is acceptable but there will be no drunkenness by anyone."

"Comfortable and safe." Colton said.

"I'm serious about that, Colton." Frank said.

"I am too. Safe is a nice thing." Colton said. "It's way up there on my list of priorities."

"For us as well," Rick said. "Uncomfortable or dead clients aren't good for business."

"I'll bet." Colton stood. "Well, if we're heading out in the morning, I think I'm going to do some laundry and turn in early."

"We head to the train station at eight. We're booked for First Class." Pierre said.

"Comfortable and safe."

Pierre nodded at Colton. "Exactly."

"See you gents in the morning." Colton drank the last of his drink then put it on the bar as he left.

Frank looked at Pierre. "Can we count on him?"

Pierre nodded. "We had a long talk today. He's up for it. He doesn't like to admit it but he wants to know what happened to the rest of his party just as much as I want that ape for my exhibit."

Frank nodded at the man. "If he becomes a problem, he'll be your problem, Pierre. It's not like he's a paying customer. I've never lost a client on a trip and I'm not going to start now." He looked at his partner. "Rick?"

"I'm with you, Frank." He looked at Pierre. "He does know he's not in charge…of anything, right? He's along for the ride to point us toward where the rest of his party disappeared and that's it."

"I explained it to him," Pierre said. "Don't worry; everything will be fine."

"That's the one thing you never want to hear at the beginning of an expedition to Africa," Frank said.

"Right? If you say that again Pierre, I'm going to insist you go outside, turn around three times, spit, and then knock to be let back in." Rick said with a smirk.

Pierre laughed at the man. "Give it the Hamlet treatment, aye?"

"He's only half joking, Pierre old friend." Frank pointed out.

"I see." Pierre said. "Well, I shall leave you Scottish Lords to it. I'll see you in the morning."

"Good night," Frank and Rick said.

When Pierre had left, Rick turned to Frank. "You think we can trust the American to follow orders?"

"He'll follow them or get left behind," Frank said. "He's found his way out of Africa once, he can do it again."

-5-
LANDFALL

Colton leaned over the rail and looked down at the blue-green waters. As Pierre had promised, the ship's travel had gone by quickly- they would be docking in Cairo within the hour.

Jeanne DuPont sidled up beside him. "Right on schedule, huh?"

Colton smiled at her. "Yeah, yeah; just like you told me." Jeanne DuPont had started working for the Garnier family as Anna's nursemaid then later transitioned to housekeeper when Anna was ten years old. She was going to leave when Anna attended her debutante ball at sixteen however the year before it, Anna's mother died so Jeanne had stayed on to help with raising the young girl. She was now almost fifty and very fit- it was where Anna had picked up most of her habits. Reminding him of his mother, Colton and her had hit it off right away and they had spent the five days quickly becoming friends- much to the chagrin of Frank Wiswell who saw the attractive Jeanne in a different light.

"When Pierre sets his mind to something, he's pretty determined." Jeanne said.

"Kind of like you and shooting?" He had spent a large portion of his time on the ship shooting targets on the water with Jeanne. She was definitely not a 'natural shot' but over the course of the five days had become fairly adept at it. When they weren't shooting or chatting, he was scouring below decks for items that would float that they could shoot at when he tossed them over the stern of the ship. Until the Captain told them to stop throwing things overboard. So they had to be more discrete about their antics.

"I'm getting pretty good, you've got to admit." Jeanne said. She smiled at him. "I don't think I'm going to get more practice later."

"Maybe we can take potshots from the back of the tugboat, right?"

"As long as the Captain is okay with it."

Colton looked down at the water again. "I don't have a good feeling about this trip, Jeanne. I don't mind telling you that."

"These gentlemen know what they are doing. It's their business."

"I suppose." He looked at her. "But promise me if things go wrong, you'll stay beside me so I can keep an eye on you."

"A soft hearted Texan. Did you grow up that way, or did Paris do the trick?"

"Paris of course; I was too busy lassoing dust devils and straightening out the Rio Grande when I was a kid, Ma'am." Colton said in an exaggerated western accent. He continued in the same accent: "Je pense que c'est le dicton." (I think that's the saying.)

Jeanne laughed again. "You're incorrigible."

Frank walked up to the pair. Despite his early misgivings, he had gotten to know Colton while sailing- at first because he wanted to try and get closer to Jeanne, but later because Colton was genuinely amicable. Of course, he was still interested in the attractive -and apparently unattached- Jeanne. "What are you two up to now? Planning on shooting more bottles off the back of the ship before we dock?"

"If I recall, Mister Wiswell, you also partook in that activity."

"Purely for medicinal value, Miss DuPont. It's always good to keep up on one's marksmanship skills."

"And I appreciate the help in emptying the bottles." Colton said. "My shooting was surely suffering from drinking all that wine by myself."

"The two of you." Jeanne shook her head. "I'm going to pack my bags while you two incorrigibles stay here."

The pair watched her leave.

"She is a remarkable woman," Frank said.

"She reminds me of my mother. I guess that's why we've gotten along so well." He smiled at the man. "I can put in a good word for you here and there, if you'd like."

Frank smirked. "If she caught you trying to play match maker, I believe she'd whip you."

Colton laughed. "I believe she would." He got serious. "Listen Frank, I keep hearing you and Rick talking about how safe your expeditions are, but there was something out there that was able to handle two experienced crack-shot hunters and three local trackers. Every one of them armed yet not a one of them came back." He gestured toward where Jeanne had left. "I know you're interested in Jeanne but I've got feelings for her too. And while I'm fine with you and Rick running the show, I'm going to be glued to her hip to make sure nothing happens to her."

Frank put his hand on Colton's shoulder. "I appreciate it. If things go wrong, it's good to know that I won't have to worry about Jeanne. Pierre will look after Anna, of course so that means Rick and I can deal with matters at hand unencumbered."

"So what is your plan for this beast?"

"We've got fifty gallons of Chloral Hydrate to knock the thing out. The veterinarian has shots he will use once he's aboard."

"How do you get it to drink it?"

Frank shook his head. "We're not going to get it to drink it; we mix it with Ethyl Sulfide to dissolve it. It's not something you drink; we have these two-gallon demijohns that we'll fill up and throw at it with this catapult we have rigged up. We figure it won't take more than four or five to put it down."

"You worked this all out on board?"

Frank shook his head. "No; it's the same setup we use when we trap other animals. We lob them at the animal and when they break, they release a gas that'll knock out even the biggest ones."

"What's the biggest animal you've used it on, that Rhino?"

"Yes, used it on a Rhino for this Prussian Prince that wanted one for his zoo."

"How big was it?"

"It was just over forty-one hundred pounds. A white."

"There are white rhinoceroses? We saw a couple of grey ones on our trip but we didn't get close enough to shoot any."

Frank shook his head. "No, no. They are only called 'white' because of a misunderstanding. They were called 'wide mouth' rhinos by the Dutch in Africa but the English mistook 'widj' which means *wide* in Dutch for *white*. So obviously the English called the other type black, and the names stuck even though they are all grey." He smiled at Colton. "Those silly Englishmen and their misunderstandings."

"Unglaublich." (German for unbelievable).

Frank did a double take at the man. "You are full of surprises, Sir."

"I try." Now Colton chuckled. "Now I'm curious; what's the *smallest* animal you've used that stuff on?"

"Well… Rick, actually."

"You gassed your partner?" Colton chuckled. "Nice."

"We were moving some jars and one of them fell. Rick got a big whiff of the stuff and that was it."

"Well, I guess it's good to know there are no lasting effects, right?" Colton said.

Frank laughed. "Yes, quite." He gestured toward the cabins. "I'm going to get my bags out. You should too. Rick is pretty serious about staying on schedule. As is Captain Hogan on the *Cerberus*. Once we make landfall we all need to be ready to transfer over or we'll get a good shouting at."

"Thanks for the warning."

The two parted ways as the ship prepared to dock.

-6-
BIG WATER WITH FRIENDS

The elephant trumpeted loudly as almost a hundred gallons of water were dumped on her. She picked up several gallons of water in her massive trunk and sprayed them forcefully at the giant ape. Being a full-grown elephant, she was almost thirteen feet tall and was able to hit the ape squarely in the chest.

The ape laughed as he fell backwards, sending a three-foot wave of water toward several babies playing in the shallows. He picked up his head and hooted at the elephant. Even though the water was almost eight feet deep where he was, he still bounced on the bottom- he was far too heavy to float, and knew from a terrifying experience that if he ever got in over his head, he would be unable to keep his head above water. It was only due to a nearby log sticking out of the water that he had avoided drowning. While his current height of just over twenty-one feet allowed him to go much farther out into the lake, he still remained within a very safe thirty feet of shore and never got over waist deep if he could absolutely avoid it. Sitting in the Big Water with friends was the only exception.

The ape rolled to his side and ran his hand down the back of one of the baby elephants. Its parents had known the ape since they themselves were babies so they knew he was no threat whatsoever. The baby however was caught by surprise by the act and trumpeted a warning as it flapped its ears- something it had seen the females in its family do many times. The ape grunted back at the elephant as he put his head low, looking into the elephant's eyes. "Oooh?" He said to it as he ran his hand down its back again. When he got halfway down he started to scratch much like he remembered his own mother scratching his back in his now-distant memories.

The baby elephant did not seem to appreciate the scratching and moved away, trumpeting as it went.

The ape put his hand in the water and sent a three-foot wave toward it. The wave splashed against the elephant who trumpeted a more friendly response; this less-physical interaction was more to its liking. So the ape sent another wave that direction.

The elephant moved a little farther away- toward a group of basking crocodiles. While the ape was aware that they were no threat to him, he knew that crocodiles would definitely attack a baby elephant. He kept an eye on it to make sure it didn't move closer to them. As far as he was concerned, the elephants were family.

The ape sat up as several native females on the shore started shouting at him. He heard them gibbering as they waved their hands in a threatening manner at him. If he had understood them, he would have been offended by the names they were calling him for disrupting their morning clothes washing. The ape had experienced the male natives chattering and gesturing at him but always in a more subdued manner. And they tended to move away from him even when he did friendly things like drop mangos or bananas near them. The females seemed to have a more temperamental approach if their sounds were any indication. Unfortunately, this meant that he tended to try and annoy them just to get them to react- not out of any maliciousness but because it was entertaining. He sent another wave of water toward the elephant that also happened to be in line with the females on the shore. This time one female even waded out almost knee deep and shook a fist at the ape. The sounds she was making were definitely not an approval of his actions.

The ape gave what he thought was a consoling hoot at the females then returned to playing with the larger elephants that enjoyed having water dumped on them.

As he dumped a double handful of water on the matron elephant a loud sound rang through the area. The ape looked up at the blue sky- it wasn't thunder. He looked toward the jungle expecting to see natives with the long sticks that he knew also made that sound. He saw no one. The sound of crocodiles splashing into the water as one of them writhed on the bank made him look in that direction first, and then out onto the water. He saw one of the large tan logs he had seen

on several occasions- it usually had unfriendly natives in it- was coming toward the small inlet they were all occupying. The smaller brown ones that actually looked like logs carried also- dark colored natives that either left him alone or ran from him. They were 'not a threat' things. These larger tan colored logs had the lighter skinned natives that were definitely now in the ape's 'threat' category.

The ape moved to his feet and growled a warning to the young elephant as he tried to shoo him off. The young elephant did not understand and turned to face him, ears flapping defiantly. He slapped the water with both hands and turned to one of the adult elephants. He let out several hoots and a growl then slapped the water again as another peal of thunder cracked through the air. The adult elephant understood the signal and let out a warning trumpet to the rest of the herd and started for shore. The ape looked at the baby elephant to make sure it was following the other elephants. It was on its side in the water. On her way by, the matron elephant slapped the side of the young elephant with her trunk in a signal to follow. The baby elephant remained on its side in the water. The female elephant stumbled to a stop then then turned to look at it. She rubbed it with her trunk then let out an angry trumpeting. She looked toward the boat then to the other elephants. Torn between the two, she finally shuffled after the rest of the herd toward the safety of the jungle.

As the elephants retreated to the safety of the jungle, the ape turned toward the boat- it was now heading straight for him. The occupants were now chattering loudly and pointing at him. He looked around and spotted a large log where the crocodiles had been. Not worrying about them- he was in *their* 'threat category'- he ran through the knee deep water straight for it. Passing the dead baby elephant as he went made him even angrier. Another sound cracked through the air as he felt something hit his shoulder. Thanks to almost a foot of thick fur, it felt as if something had hit him hard but not done anything more. He reached over and rubbed the area then looked at his hand confirming there wasn't blood coming from the spot. Another shot rang out as he reached the twenty foot Marula tree log. He enjoyed eating the fruits of the Marula tree because of the effect it had on him. Unknown to him (and the

elephants that also ate it) the Marula fruit would ferment while still on the tree, causing its eater to become drunk. He looked toward the boat and thanks to jumping tree to tree as a youth as well as throwing things, naturally extrapolated the force needed to put the tree on an intercepting course. With a grunt he threw the log sending it end over end toward the tan boat and its chattering occupants. Without looking to see where the Marula log was going to land, the ape looked around for something else to throw. He spotted a very large tangle of roots and stump of some other kind of tree. He lifted the seven hundred pounds easily to his shoulder then threw it shot-put style at the boat which had slowed because the first log had hit the front of it (killing the driver) before rolling into the water. This time he watched as the tangle of roots hit the boat right in the middle and stayed there. It leaned to the side as the stump started to slip off putting the edge of it completely under water. Within moments the entire thing was swamped. As the water flooded in, the natives jumped out and made for the bank farther down from where the ape was.

The ape looked at the distance and decided he could walk to them in the shallow ten foot deep water and deal with them before they reached shore. He had taken two long strides when he spotted several very familiar looking logs bob to the surface. He decided he would move away and let the crocodiles deal with the natives. Since the crocodiles left him alone - even the largest croc's tiny reptile brain was able to register that an ape well over twice their size was not in their 'something to eat' category- he didn't feel any ill will towards them. The shrieks of the natives in the water let him know that the crocodiles were dealing with the problem well enough that he didn't have to intervene. The ape watched the thrashing in the water as one by one, the light colored natives were pulled under. Just when he thought they would all be taken, one made it to shore. A female if her hair were any indication. He had noticed that the ones that smelled like females invariably had longer hair than the ones that smelled like males. He had different feelings for the female natives than the male ones since they never attacked him and treated him more as an equal than groveling. In fact, one had even slapped his finger when he had reached out and poked her in the back in the darkening twilight of the jungle.

Much to the amusement of the ape, she had shrieked when he did it. When she saw what had pushed her, she chattered angrily at him then slapped his finger which was as big around as her entire arm. With a final shake of her tiny fist and a some more angry chattering, she had stomped off. This had amused him even more.

The ape watched as the surviving female native fell backwards and sat right at the edge of the water, her head down between her legs.

The ape took a step toward her. Female or not, she was part of the natives that had attacked him earlier and now killed one of his elephant friends so he started toward her. Fury welling up inside him as he prepared to deal with her personally.

The woman turned to look at him as he took another step in her direction.

Her scream was cut short as a large crocodile leapt from the dark waters and grabbed the woman. In an instant she was also gone.

The ape watched the waters for a long moment, feeling no remorse for the female. He turned and waded back to the baby elephant. He picked it up and carried it out of the water. When he passed the native females who were still on the shore, they cheered at him instead of shouting angrily. He wasn't sure why but it seemed that sinking the tan boat and dealing with light colored natives was something that they approved of. He filed that piece of information away for whenever he dealt with the dark female natives again as he gave them several friendly hoots in reply. He also definitively put light-colored natives in the 'not friends' category for any future contacts.

The ape stopped as he reached the edge of the jungle. The elephants were there just inside the darkness it provided. He hooted what he hoped were consoling sounds as he placed the dead infant down. The other elephants came around the baby and prodded it with their trunks. The ape sadly rubbed the largest elephant on the back then moved off to leave them alone. He decided he would resolve his feelings by eating a large amount of the Marula fruit. The very ripe ones. He knew from previous experience that it would give him a nice calm feeling while he sat. He had also learned that trying to walk

around after eating a large amount of the fruit would just have him falling over a lot. Sitting was what needed to be done. He looked back at the water- it was once again quiet. He entered the jungle in search of a Marula tree- he knew there were several around the big water, deciding he would eat a belly full them come back to the water and watch the animals on it until the evening. And maybe pet the elephants to try and make them feel better.

-7-
THE NILE

Anna sat on the edge of the railing, feet dangling over the side of the tugboat. She leaned against the side of the massive crane at the stern of the tug.

"Good morning. Enjoying the views, *Miss-ss* Garnier?" Colton said as he stepped beside her. He drew out the 's' in 'miss'.

"Oh very much so." She said sarcastically as she pointed. "Look; a tree!" She pointed in another direction. "Look, another tree!"

"Did you spot the bushes we passed earlier? They were on this side of the boat. I hope you didn't miss them."

"Bushes? I have seen a *lifetime* of them the past week and a half, *Miss-ster* Maguire. I… oh look a mango tree, what luck!" She pointed again. "And to think I left my Kodak back in my room. Maybe I'll bring it up after breakfast."

Colton laughed. "Scoff now if you like, but you'll be sorry you didn't take any photos when you get back to boring Paris, Anna."

"Paris? *This* is boring. Day in and day out of thick jungle." She gestured at the jungle. "At least in Paris…"

"There are buildings everywhere. Buildings, buildings, buildings."

"Colton, you are truly…"

As the tug chugged along, they passed a group of natives on the shore- it was three men and two younger boys. They were all armed with spears and two of the two men had bows and a quiver of arrows. One of the men also had what appeared to be a musket slung over his shoulder. They were less than twenty yards from the boat because the river was narrow at that point.

Colton pointed. "Well that's new." He said matter-of-factly.

"Goonya!" One of the men shouted as he pointed toward them.

Colton waved back at them. "Hello! Errr… Ciao, seniore! Buon giorno" (hello sir, good morning)

"Colton, you are too funny." Anna said. "You really think they speak Italian?"

"Oh, I hope not; that's all I know how to say in Italian."

"Goonya!" The man said again.

Colton waved again. "And to you too, good sirs. Goonya!"

The native shook his head as the tug continued past them.

"Oy!" A voice called from behind Colton and Anna.

Colton turned to look. It was the captain- Sam Hogan. "Ahoy Captain Hogan. A fine morning to you!"

Captain Hogan shook his head at him. "You two, I should'a known." He said in his thick Australian accent from the small balcony in the front of the bridge, a good twenty feet above them. "You know what that bloke was shouting?"

"Hello?" Colton said.

"Goonya is native for *crocs*, Mate." Captain Hogan said. "This river is lousy with them." He pointed at Anna. "Get your feet back inboard, you crazy Sheila. Crocs can jump, ya know! They'll snap onto your leg and pull you overboard and that would be the last anyone would ever see of you."

"Crocodiles, really?" Anna casually looked down. There were two very large crocodiles keeping pace with the boat directly below her. "Oh!" She startled and tried to pivot around but lost her balance, falling toward the water.

"Oy!" The Captain exclaimed. He turned toward the helmsman. "Man overboard!"

The helmsman immediately sounded a long and a short burst of the horn- a signal to everyone that they should come to the main deck for an emergency and throttled back the engines. The captain had spent nearly half an hour going through ship procedures and emphasized several times that horn blasts were not to be ignored.

Captain Hogan drew his pistol as he turned back to keep an eye on where the woman would be in the water. He hoped he could fend off the crocodiles until they got her back aboard. He saw Colton reach out and grab Anna by her shirt at the shoulder as she tipped out past the point of no return.

Colton was pulled to the rail when Anna's butt slid off the railing as the tug lurched forward from its wake pushing it forward when the engines were put into neutral. Her feet danged down to within a couple of feet of the water. He reached over and got a second handful of her shirt. "Hey!" He exclaimed as he reached further down. He grabbed her by the belt and tried to pull her up. "Hang on!" He said as she slipped farther down, her momentum threatening to pick his feet off the deck as he leaned out over the rail.

"To what?" Anna exclaimed.

One of the crocodiles raised its head and snapped at Anna's feet- not a foot away. The other disappeared under the water- ostensibly to jump out of it.

"No, no no!" Colton shifted his weight and pulled hard on her belt. When he got her a little higher he grabbed her by the seat of her pants as she put her hands around his neck.

"What?" Anna tried to look down at the water but Colton's arms were in the way. "What?"

"Choking!" Was all Colton was able to say.

The tug's horns made two more quick blasts.

The submerged alligator jumped out of the water. It had miscalculated its trajectory thanks to the tug's slowing speed and its jaws snapped shut within inches of Colton's hands. If it had been on target, it would have gotten most of Anna's legs in its mouth.

"Get your feet over the railing!" Colton leaned back as he picked her up.

The crocodile splashed back into the water and dove again.

"Get your feet over the railing NOW!"

Dutifully Anna twisted sideways and pulled her knees to her chest to get her feet clear of the railing.

Colton stepped back still holding Anna by the seat of her pants as he dragged her back onto the deck.

Frank came out of the front passageway door to see Colton muscling Anna across the deck, hand on the seat of her pants. Her feet dangling above the deck ineffectively as he dragged her backward. "I say!" He said as he quickened his pace toward them. "Colton!"

Colton continued to walk backwards, Anna's toes scraping the deck now.

"Colton!" Frank said as he reached them. "What do you think you're doing?"

"What?" Colton finally let go of Anna once he was almost ten feet from the railing, her face was buried in his shoulder. Her shoulders were shuddering as if she were crying.

"I can't believe what I just…"

"Oh!" Anna said "Oh, Colton!" She said as she stepped back. She couldn't stop from laughing. "You should have seen your face."

Colton bent over and put his hands on his knees. They were shaking as he took several deep breaths. His face was pale.

"Colton?" Frank said, now he was unsure of exactly who needed assistance.

Colton rolled back and sat on his butt. He kept his hands on his knees. He was shaking all over. "You scared the daylights out of me."

Anna continued to laugh. "Oh Colton, are you alright?" She bent down. "Oh, you poor dear."

"What are you two up to?" Frank said.

Colton put his head between his legs and took several deep breaths. "Oh man." Was all he managed to say.

"Stay off the railings!" Captain Hogan shouted before returning into the bridge.

The helmsman sounded three short blasts signaling an 'all clear' to the passengers as the engine started again.

Colton pointed at Anna. "She was sitting… there… on the railing… we were talking. And…" He took several deep breaths. "And… crocodile jumped up." He held his shaky hands apart just a little bit.

"What?" Frank said.

"This close. And…"

"The Captain pointed out to me that crocodiles can jump so I probably shouldn't have my legs hanging over the side. When I tried to get back over the railing, I almost fell in. Until the brave Texan Colton Maguire came to my rescue." She put her hands to her mouth as laughed again. "You poor man."

Colton leaned back, putting his hands on the deck behind him. "I'm getting you a deck chair from now on." He looked at Frank as if it just registered he was there. "Frank! Did you know that goonya means crocodile?"

"Yes, in fact I did." Frank said. "And enkula means hippo; another temperamental river animal. They kill more people than crocodiles do, actually."

Anna put her hand on Colton's shoulder. "Oh, Colton I'm sorry, really I am."

Rick and Pierre ran out of the front passageway door. When they spotted the other three, they went to them.

"What's going on? Did we spot the ape?" Rick asked.

"No. Nothing like that." Frank said. "Just more Anna and Colton antics, it seems."

"Me? I was just hanging about." Anna said as she snorted a chuckle. She patted Colton's shoulder. "Colton here caused the commotion."

"Me?" Colton held a hand out to Pierre. "Me? I'll tell you all about it over coffee and eggs, Pierre. Before Anna can tell *her* version of it."

Pierre pulled Colton to his feet. "What'd she do?"

"Me? Noth…" Anna started.

"She almost fell overboard and Colton here wrestled her back onto the ship right out of the waiting jaws of a crocodile." Frank said.

"Jaws of crocodiles-sss. There were two of them." Colton said. "Big, big crocodiles that were jumping up at her… us."

"Anna!" Pierre exclaimed. "Are you okay?"

"Anna? *Anna*? She's fine." Colton put his hand on his heart. "She almost gave me a heart attack heading toward the water after those natives warned us about the crocodiles."

"Natives?" Pierre said.

"It was nothing." Anna said. "I was just enjoying the morning views, chatting with natives when Mister Maguire here overreacted."

"See?" Colton pointed at Anna. "And the twisting of the story starts already." He put his arm around Pierre. "I'll tell you what your Anna was doing over coffee." He started for the doorway. "Rick? Whose version do you want to hear?"

"Coffee, huh?" Rick said.

"There'll be eggs and bacon as well."

"Lead the way, Colton." Rick said.

"Well, I never!" Anna said. "You embellish *one* story to make it more interesting and you're branded for life."

"One?" Frank said with a chuckle. "Was that the incident with the lifeboat, or when you fell off the dock in Cairo?"

"Or the fisticuffs in the Hotel Scribe?" Colton said. "I am sure this one will be 'the great Nile River misunderstanding'."

"Say, I seem to recall an incident on the bridge of the Prince of the Waves involving a certain young lady wanting to learn to steer a ship." Rick offered. "Unauthorized relief of the night watch and unlicensed piloting, I believe were the charges from the Captain. He even mentioned piracy."

Anna pouted. "I think I've been insulted. Pierre? Will you defend my honor?"

"Maybe after breakfast, Mon chéri." Pierre grinned and held out a hand. "Remember I was present for most of these… misunderstandings." He waggled his hand. "Come, Miss Instigator; the breakfast awaits."

"Fine." She smiled at him. She nodded at Colton. "Thanks for the quick thinking."

"Don't mention it." Colton nodded back. He took a deep breath. "Whew! That was sure a lot of excitement before eight o'clock."

"So what about these natives?" Frank said as he gestured toward the door.

The group went below decks to the small but well apportioned galley. The cook was busy preparing breakfast.

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"We should have stopped and asked those natives if they had seen a great ape recently." Frank said as he sat with his plate.

"I was kind of busy at the time," Colton said. "Counting crocodile teeth."

"Once we get to Lake Victoria tomorrow morning we will start our search," Pierre said. "We'll find him then. I'm sure of it." He nodded at an older man sitting at a second table with a young man- the older was the expedition's veterinarian, the
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younger his apprentice. "Then we'll be on our way back once he's secure onboard, right Mister Aslou?"

The older man looked over at Pierre. A smile played across his face. "Oui, Monsieur. *If* you find this gigantic ape, I will be prepared to put it to sleep for you. Do not worry yourself."

"And have you worked out how much food we're going to need to bring with us?" Jeanne asked. "The poor thing will need to eat."

"Oui. When we go ashore, I will take a couple of the crew and gather mangos and other fruits as well as bamboo and such. We will store it in the two lifeboats."

"Will the life boats hold enough food for the entire trip?" Anna asked. "We will get to Paris with a skinny ape."

"I plan on us going ashore every couple of days to gather fresh fruits and bamboo and such as we travel back to Cairo." He returned to his breakfast. "If you find the ape, that is." He shook his head. "How I was ever convinced to leave the menagerie, I will never know."

"This is exciting, you have to admit that Mister Aslou," the young man said.

"You are supposed to be interning at the zoo in preparation for your studies, not gallivanting around the Dark Continent in search of an ape that probably does not exist, Ryan."

"Yes, sir," Ryan replied. He gave Colton a smile.

"I have found that life is the best education, Ryan" Colton smiled back at the youth.

"*Books* are the best education, Colton." Mister Aslou replied.

"Books are good too Jean Paul, but the young man will need stories to woo young ladies; 'there I was, reading a book in the library' won't do the trick you know."

"Eh." Jean Paul chuckled. "I suppose not." He shook his head again. "But how a man of my experience was convinced is beyond me." He gave a smirk. "I think I am past the need for stories to entertain my wife."

"Oh, it is important to have new stories at the ready." Colton said. "Not that you're not already interesting enough, of course."

"Huh." Jean Paul answered.

"We'll find it, Mister Aslou." Pierre said. "I have a really good feeling about the expedition."

Frank slapped Pierre's shoulder. "Stop saying things like that."

Rick laughed. "I think he does it just to bug you at this point."

Frank pointed a fork at Pierre. "No more comments like that until we're back in Paris. Then you can tell me 'I told you so' for a week straight."

"Deal." Pierre said.

"Is that when I can also tell you this expedition was a mistake?" Mister Aslou asked as he gathered up his silverware and plate.

"You will be too busy being amazed, I think." Pierre said.

"Huh." Mister Aslou said again as he took his and Ryan's plates to the kitchen. "We shall see, my young man."

-8-
LAKE VICTORIA

The ship exited the narrow river into Lake Victoria. The far side of the lake disappeared into the horizon as the shores on either side stretched away from them. Covering over 26,000 square miles, it was the largest tropical water lake and the second largest freshwater lake in the world after Lake Superior

Anna was at the front of the tug with Pierre beside her. Everyone else was either below decks or napping the afternoon away under umbrellas on the rear of the tug.

"So we're just going to sail around the shore of the lake looking for the ape?"

"We don't have the time for that. This lake is over two hundred miles long and a hundred fifty miles wide at its middle; it would take us two months with all the twists and turns of its shores to sail around the perimeter. There's a small village a few of miles down the west coast. I asked the Captain to head to that and we'll ask if anyone has seen anything."

"I thought Kampala was on the lake. Why don't we go there?"

"The odds of this large ape going near any sort of large town are slim but the smaller villages have probably seen it in the jungle. According to Paul Du Chaillu, apes are really shy so our best bet is in small villages. I figure at worst we will have to sail halfway down that side before we hear something. I'm sure there are all sorts of legends about a giant ape."

"Legends, Pierre? We can't go listening to legends for clues."

"Anna, remember that legends are stories that are born of fact." Pierre said. "If we sail down the coast and ask the villagers about a giant ape, I know we'll hear about it before we're half way down."

"And if we don't?"

Pierre sighed. "If we haven't by then, we can always head straight across and try the other side."

Anna frowned. "It's a needle in a haystack."

Pierre sighed as he put his arms around her waist. "I know it really is. And the whole time we're chugging around the river, the Exhibition opening is getting closer and closer. If we don't find anything in two weeks, we will have to head back empty handed."



"Maybe we'll find something else that is interesting that we can bring back instead. You already have some wonderful animals in Paris."

"I suppose so." Pierre said.

"And you have the ones in Cairo waiting to go back with us now." She ticked off on her fingers as she listed them: "The

meerkats, aardvarks, and porcupines. Pierre, the exhibit will be exciting for everyone."

Pierre nodded. "Yes, they are very interesting one and all. But still. A giant ape."

Anna put her arms around his neck. "Well, in any case we will enjoy our African cruise any…" Her voice trailed off.

"Anyway?" Pierre finished. He pulled away from her and smiled. "Right?"

Anna's eyes were wide, looking over his shoulder.

"What is it?"

"Right there." She said without moving her lips. "There on the shore. A gorilla petting a baby elephant."

"What?" Pierre laughed. "Gorillas don't pet elephants, mon chéri."

Anna put her hands on his shoulders and turned him around. She peeked around his shoulder as she pointed. "Right there. See them?"

Pierre sighted down her arm. There on the shore a mile away, there was a gorilla sitting waist deep in water beside an elephant. It was indeed scratching the elephant's back.

"That, my dear Pierre is a gorilla petting a baby elephant's back." She hugged him from behind. "Aww; maybe they are friends. How adorable they look. A couple of friends enjoying a late afternoon dip. Colton is right; I really do need to keep my camera with me all the time."

Pierre looked at the far shore. "Well, a baby elephant is three or four feet tall so that would make that ape a good twelve feet tall."

"That's what that expert said, right? That is still a good size though, isn't it?"

"Oh yes. Yes it…" Pierre squinted at the unusual pair. "Wait." He cupped his hands over his eyes to shield them from the sun. "Wait." He turned and kissed her. "Oh, I can't believe you spotted them! Wait here." He turned and ran toward the bridge. "Captain Hogan!" he shouted.

"Aye?" The Captain said as he came out onto the little balcony. "What now?"

Pierre pointed. "There on that shore over there is our ape. Can I borrow your binoculars?"

"Do you want me to head that way?" He removed them from his neck.

"Ready." Pierre held his hands out.

"Ready? Ready what? To head to shore?"

"To drop the binoculars to me."

The Captain pulled the binoculars closer to his chest. "This is my only pair. How about you come up here and get them?"

"I'm Captain of our cricket team. You can drop them."

"Did I mention it was my only pair?"

"Captain, please!"

Captain Hogan held his breath then dropped the binoculars. When Pierre caught them, he released the breath. "Want me to head that way?"

"No, not yet. I don't want to spook it back into the jungle. Just slow down until we work out a plan."

"Okay." Captain Hogan gave a sloppy salute. "We'll drop to an idle." He looked toward the ape. "Huh." Was all he said before returning to the bridge. A moment later the engines throttled down.

"Mister Aslou!" Pierre shouted toward the back of the tug then he turned to Anna. "Is it still there?"

Anna nodded. "They seem to really get along. What did you need the binoculars for? We can see them from here."

"Mister Aslou!" Pierre shouted again. He didn't wait for a reply as he sprinted back to Anna.

"Are you okay?" Anna asked.

"I'm better than okay if I think I am right." Pierre looked through the binoculars. "Mon dieu!"

"What?"

"Look." He handed them to her. "Just look."

Anna obliged. "Okay." She said as she looked at the pair. "It's a much clearer gorilla petting a baby elephant. Aww, that's sweet."

"Anna dearest, baby elephants don't have tusks. And tusks grow slowly. Look at the tusks."

"They are nice and curved." She pulled the binoculars away from her face and looked at him. "Just like in the pictures."

"Yes. Of *adult* elephants."

"Okay." She lowered the binoculars and smiled at him, sill not understanding.

Mister Aslou approached the pair. "What is it?" He said gruffly.

Pierre put his hand on Anna's shoulder. "An adult elephant is a good ten or eleven feet tall." He looked at the doctor. "Isn't that correct, Doctor Aslou?"

"Yes it is. You called me to tell me about elephants?" Mister Aslou said as he raised an eyebrow at him.

Anna looked through the binoculars again. "What?" She looked at Pierre. "That means…"

"That's a giant gorilla."

"What?" Mister Aslou said. "What are you talking about?"

Pierre took the binoculars from Anna and handed them to the man. "Look out there." He pointed at the shore.

Mister Aslou looked where he had pointed. "Mon dieu. That… cannot be."

"Oh it is. *That* is a twenty, twenty-five foot gorilla sitting there because *that's* a full grown elephant."

Aslou lowered the binoculars and looked at Pierre. "Then I will not wait until Paris to say so; this is a terrible, terrible mistake. An ape of that size? No."

"Is there a party starting on the foredeck?" Colton asked as he and Jeanne walked up. He looked toward the shore where everyone else was looking. "Hey, is that a gorilla petting a baby elephant? I'd say that's the damnedest thing I've seen all year."

"Unfortunately it is not, my American friend." Mister Aslou said.

Colton laughed. "Well Jean Paul, that's what it looks like from here, n'est-ce pas?" (is it not?).

"Non, mon ami. It is a gorilla petting an *adult* elephant." Jean Paul handed the binoculars to Colton.

"Oh… my….God." Colton said. He turned and looked at Pierre. "Will that thing even fit on this tug?"

Pierre looked back at the shore. "To be honest with you, I'm not sure. More importantly; can you knock out an ape that size, Mister Aslou?"

"I will have to make some calculations but if it breathes air, it can be knocked out with Chloral Hydrate."

"Pierre." Jeanne said. "That is amazing."

"I'll be famous." Pierre said as he looked at the ape again. "World famous."

Colton handed the binoculars to Pierre. "So what's the plan, boss?"

Pierre looked from the shore to Colton and back. "What?"

"*What's the plan?*" Colton asked again.

"Oh. We'll work something out while Mister Aslou is calculating the correct dosage."

Colton patted the man on the shoulder. "Make sure your numbers are right, Jean Paul; the last thing we need is that thing waking up and getting upset with us as we steam our way back up river."

"Oui." Jean Paul said as he headed toward his cabin.

"I'm going to sit down with the Captain and Rick." Frank said. "We'll plan on going ashore in half an hour."

"Is that enough time to come up with a plan?" Colton asked.

"We need to catch that thing while it's out in the open. Especially now that we know how big it is. I sure don't want to try to drag *that* through the jungle while it's knocked out."

"I agree. Mind if I sit in?" Colton asked. He raised his hands defensively. "Just to listen in."

Pierre looked at the ape again. "Sure, sure. We'll all meet in the galley so everyone can listen in. We need to get ashore as quickly as possible. See you inside." He moved quickly to the front of the bridge again. "Captain!" He called up.

"What now?" The Captain said as he stepped out of the enclosed area. "What's the plan?"

"We're going to have a quick meeting in the galley to come up with one. In the meanwhile, can you put us out of sight so we don't spook it and meet us there?"

The Captain surveyed the area- there was a jut of land nearby that would allow them to do that. "I'll have us sail just past that point." He said as he pointed. "And we'll lay up there. I'm heading below now."

Pierre gave him a wave as he opened the companionway door. When he looked back everyone was still standing on the deck looking at the ape. "Come on!" He shouted. Without waiting, he turned and went through the door.

-9-
NAP IN THE SUN

The ape sat in the cool water as he pet the matron elephant of the herd. He had known her since she was as small as the one that had been killed. In fact, he had known this elephant's mother as well. This particular herd of elephants was the closest thing to family he had in the jungle.

The ape leaned back and ate another handful of the fruit. He had taken a hollowed out log and filled it completely with the fruit so he could carry it back to the water with him. He relaxed as the calming effect of the fermented fruit washed over him. Even when the elephant left to rejoin her herd, he remained to watch the water. Birds flew by as well as several logs carrying natives. Whether they noticed him at all, or just chose to pass him by, he didn't care. As he looked, a very large log seemed to slow down when it got even with him. There were several of the lighter skinned natives on it but since it was so far away, he couldn't make out more details about them. Since they seemed to be keeping their distance, he just ignored it and returned to watching the wildlife on the lake.

When he looked back toward the middle of the lake, the very large log was gone. Deciding it had moved off, he closed his eyes to take a nap in the warm afternoon sun.

-10-
DANGEROUS CARGO

Frank and Rick moved slowly through the jungle, going under branches instead of twisting them out of the way. While it made for slower progress, it was definitely much quieter. The machetes they carried were a last resort for cutting foliage.

"How much farther?" Jeanne asked softly. She was walking close to Colton.

"It's got to be just ahead. That little spit of land they put the tug behind wasn't more than a couple hundred feet wide." Colton gestured with his pistol.

Frank turned around- he was just ahead of them. "Shhh." He said as he brought his fingers to his lips. He looked at Colton's outstretched gun. "If you could restrain yourself from shooting my ape, I would appreciate it."

Colton smiled at the man. "Don't worry, Frank; my plan is to grab Jeanne and run like the dickens if anything happens."

"Hey Colton, do you know how fast you have to run to not be eaten by a lion?" Pierre asked. He was behind Colton.

"No." Colton said.

"Only a little faster than the slowest person in the group."

"Well that's very reassuring," Jeanne said.

"Do you think you can run faster than Jean Paul?"

"Oh, I think so." Jeanne answered Colton. "Definitely."

"That should make you feel better." Colton said as Jeanne snickered.

"I am not sure that I appreciate the levity of this group as we approach what is without a doubt the apex predator on the *continent*." Rick said.

"Shhh!" Frank said again. He skidded to a stop causing Colton and Jeanne to run into the back of him.

"What is it?" Colton said. He brought his pistol up again.

"There he is," Frank whispered.

The group moved up beside Frank to look.

The ape was sitting in about three feet of water, leaning forward slightly with his head down.

"Is he asleep?" Jeanne whispered. She looked at the doctor. "Could he just be asleep there?"

"Possibly. Apes do sleep a great deal of the time," Jean Paul whispered back. "And I am sure he isn't afraid of any predators bothering him so he would just sleep where he wanted to."

"Should we try and get around front to see if his eyes are closed?" Pierre asked.

"Leave it to us," Rick said. "Frank?"

Frank chuckled. "You know, this sounded like a good idea but now that I'm looking at the thing…"

"Let's go." Rick turned and walked into the jungle.

"Want my gun?" Colton asked.

"No; I think if I shot it, I'd just make it angry." Frank said as he followed his friend.

Jeanne stepped over to Anna. "Stay close, Anna," She put her hand on her shoulder. "Okay?"

Anna hadn't taken her eyes off the ape. "It's amazing, isn't it?"

"Amazingly huge." Jeanne said.

"Amazingly dangerous." Colton offered.

The group stood in silence with only the sounds of birds breaking it. Finally Colton pointed. "There they are," he said in a hushed tone. "They're… Oh man." He cocked his pistol. "They're going to get killed."

Frank and Rick stepped out of the jungle in front of the ape. Its eyes were closed and it was breathing deeply.

"It's got to be twenty feet tall." Frank whispered.

"Head for the deep water if it wakes up." Rick whispered back. He raised a hand and waved at the group. When they looked at him, he brought both hands up to the side of his head, palms together and closed his eyes.

"We need to knock it out while it's sleeping." Frank said. "Let's go." He reached over and grabbed his partner by the shoulder and started to pull him away.

As they went Rick glanced to where the others were- they were now out of the jungle and approaching the ape from behind. "That's not the best idea," Rick whispered.

"What?"

"That there." Rick pointed. "That's not the best idea."

Frank turned to look. He stopped and waved his arms frantically as he shook his head.

The entire group stopped and stared at him.

Frank gestured back toward the jungle. 'That way' he mouthed as he gestured.

Dutifully the group moved to where Frank pointed.

"What were you thinking?" Frank whispered.

Colton shrugged. "We figured you were calling us over because the ape was asleep."

They all turned to look- the ape was indeed still sleeping.

"Who'd have thought apes were heavy sleepers?" Colton said.

"I'm not looking a gift horse in the mouth. We need to knock it out while it's sitting still so no one gets hurt." Frank said.

"I'll get the gas." Rick ducked back into the jungle.

"Doc, you should come with me, the rest of you should wait here."

"Are you sure?" Anne asked. She looked at the ape again. "I mean…"

"Yes, definitely." Frank cut her off. "Everyone wait here until it is unconscious." He looked at the ape again. "In fact, Pierre, can you go back to the boat and have the captain pull out into the bay? When the ape is out, we need to get it loaded and secured as quickly as possible."

"Okay, if you think so." Pierre looked at Anna. "Come back to the boat with me?"

"I'll wait here." Anna hadn't taken her eyes off the ape.

"If you don't go to the boat, wait here." Frank said to her. "Do *not* come any closer." He looked at Colton. "Colton?"

"Sure; I'll stay here with the ladies, make sure they're safe."

Frank chuckled. "I was actually going to ask you to come along with me."

Colton looked at the ape. "Oh, well…sure. I suppose I can do that." He smiled. "I thought I was supposed to stay out of the way. That's what Rick told me back at Anna's house, if I remember correctly."

"Well, I'd like your help out there."

"So what do we do if it wakes up?" Colton put his revolver away.

Frank patted him on the shoulder. "Run as fast as you can, and pray it chases someone else." He smiled. "Because that's what I'm going to be doing. Rick said to head for the water if it wakes up, so that sounds like as good a plan as any."

"Nice. Okay let's go." Colton tipped his hat at Anna and Jeanne. "Ladies, I will endeavor to be back shortly."

The two men walked gingerly back onto the beach.

"Please don't take this the wrong way," Colton whispered. "But what the hell is the plan?"

"We're going to gas the thing while it's asleep." Frank whispered back. A jingling made him look back. "Here we go."

Rick and Jean Paul approached. Rick was carrying a large crate and Jean Paul was carrying the ship's twelve foot boat hook. There was a large rag wrapped around the end of it.

Colton moved quickly over the sand to Rick to help carry the crate.

When they all got together Rick picked up one of the large jars.

"Good thinking, Doc." Frank said. He took the pole from him. "Right under the nose?"

Jean Paul nodded. "Yes, until it is unconscious."

Colton looked up at the ape. "How will we know?"

Jean Paul smirked. "You'll know."

"Okay, stand back or you'll be under too." Rick said as he opened the jar. He held it at arm's length.

Frank backed up while sliding the pole through his hands until he was at the very end of it, leaving Rick at the end with the bundled cloth. "Fill me up."

Rick obliged by pouring a liberal amount of the liquid onto the rag. When it was dripping wet, he put the lid back on the bottle. "Okay."

Frank heaved the pole up and walked toward the ape. When he got close enough, he braced the pole on his belt and held it as steady as he could under the ape's face.

"How will we know if it worked?" Colton asked.

"The Ether Sulfate evaporates quickly, Mister Berg. Get ready to reapply it." Jean Paul said as he ignored Colton.

Rick flipped back the lid on the bottle and approached Frank again. When he got near, Frank pivoted the pole down so he could re-soak the rag. "I'd prefer another rhino," Rick whispered with a smile.

Frank smiled back as he hefted the pole again back into position.

The ape snorted several times, partially opened his eyes then fell straight back, head resting on the soft sand out of the water. His eyes were still cracked open slightly.

"So that's it?" Colton said in a normal voice. "You got it?"

"We sure did." Frank smiled as he put the end of the pole into the sand. "Nice and easy." He put his other hand on his hip, posing with a big smile. "Damn; we should have brought a camera."

"Uhm, Mister Dudas, I would recommend keeping that by the creature's nose for at least the next ten minutes with one or two more applications." Jean Paul said. "Just in case."

"Oh, right. Right Doc." Frank held the pole so the rag was in front of the ape's nose. "We need another pole to hold it here while we get ready."

Rick moved to him. "I'll keep that in place. You get the boat backed in here." He looked at Jean Paul. "We can move it without waking it up?"

"Most assuredly," Jean Paul said. He looked out over the water and raised his hands to signal the boat. "We need to get it aboard quickly."

"What's the hurry, Mister Aslou?" Frank asked. "That ape is out for the count."

"Yes Mister Wiswell; it is." He gestured into the jungle. "But from my discussions with other naturalists before coming on this expedition, I believe that the natives won't take kindly to us removing their majestic ape. It is not like they have a high regard for us white interlopers as it is."

"Oh. Okay." Frank said. "Colton?"

"Frank?" Colton said. He was staring at the ape. "That's the biggest thing I've ever seen."

"Keep an eye on the jungle in case any natives take issue with us."

"Right." Colton drew his pistol and cocked it. "Right." He started surveying the jungle, weapon at the ready.

Anna and Jeanne walked over.

"Oh Pierre, you did it." Anna said. "Oh, you're going to be famous."

"First things first Miss Garnier." Jean Paul said. "We need to get it onto the boat and then all the way back to Paris." He moved closer to the ape to examine it, Anna close behind.

Frank looked out on the water- the tug was chugging away from the shore. "What are they doing?"

Jeanne shook her head. "I have no idea. They aren't leaving us are they?"

"No, there's no way Captain Hogan is leaving." As they watched the boat slowed, stopped then after a moment started backing straight toward them. "Maybe he wanted a straight shot?"

"I have no idea," Jeanne said.

"Well, we can ask him when he gets here." Frank said.

Anna ran her hand through the ape's thick fur. "It's like a bristle brush."

Jean Paul nodded. "Apes have thick fur as it is. I imagine this fellow is practically bullet proof with his fur."

"Bullet proof?"

Jean Paul shrugged. "Well, to smaller weapons like we have. And definitely against spears and arrows. The locals probably consider him a god." He gestured at Colton who was still scanning the jungle. "That's why we need to be cautious. We are taking away at the very least an animal they have known their entire lives and respect greatly to at worst, their jungle god."

"A god? I can't imagine."

"This ape is well over a hundred years old. Probably closer to two hundred. Generations of natives have told the tale of this beast. And at this size, there is nothing in the jungle that can challenge it. Oh yes; I believe they could easily consider this ape a god." He turned and smiled at her. "With a small, 'g'

that is." He looked out at the water- the boat was backing toward shore. "We are most definitely taking some dangerous cargo aboard."

-11-
CAST DIE

Pierre stepped up onto the back of the tug. He had a small rope coiled in his hands. He waited until the boat came to a stop within twenty feet of the ape. "Catch." He tossed the rope to Frank.

Frank caught the end of the rope and began pulling it in hand-over-hand. "Rick, how's it looking?" He called over his shoulder.

"It seems to be sound asleep." Rick called back.

Jean Paul stepped up beside Frank. "With the dosage it has received I believe the ape will sleep at least three or four hours."

"We got lucky, Doc." Frank said. As he pulled the rope, he got to a much larger rope- as thick as his wrist- with a grunt, he kept pulling it to shore. "Real lucky."

"We did. It was drunk."

Frank stopped pulling in the rope. "Drunk?"

"Well, drunk might be a strong word. Tipsy might be better." He gestured over his shoulder. "The log beside it had some fermented fruit in it from the Marula tree. While it could never eat enough of them to actually get drunk, it would definitely provide a calming effect."

"So it was sitting there in the water eating it? Why?" Frank started pulling in the rope again, letting it pile up at his feet.

"It may have been mourning."

"It started in the morning?"

"No." Jean Paul sighed. "It seems that a juvenile elephant was shot and killed earlier today. The ape was probably here when it happened. Since elephant are also large apex animals with strong family ties, they might have been friends."

"Apes and elephants friends? You're putting me on."

"I have a Labrador retriever that simply adores my parakeet, Archie and Archie loves him back. Archie will ride

around my home on Argos. They share his water bowl, roll around on the floor, and Archie will even take a nap on Argos' paw when he takes a nap." He patted the man on the shoulder. "I have found that animals are often far better people than people are."

Frank laughed. "Is that why you became a veterinarian?"

"It is indeed, Mister Wiswell." He looked down at the coils of rope at Frank's feet. "I think that is probably enough."

Frank nodded. "I hope so. I think we should rope it around the shoulders under the arms and pull it aboard that way." He looked at the boat. "Unless the captain has another plan. He's the best person to ask on matters such as this."

Jean Paul pulled Frank closer. "You are also a very good person, Frank. Truly you are. This is why I must tell you that I feel that bringing this animal out of its natural surroundings is a mistake. Possibly a deadly one. I wish you would reconsider."

Frank smiled at the man. "I appreciate the advice Doctor, I really do. But I'm a hired hand. It would be Pierre that you would need to convince."

Pierre jumped into the waist deep water and waded toward Frank.

"But I don't think you have any chance of doing that." Frank added.

"Captain Hogan said we should put the rope under the ape's armpits and tie it behind his back then he will pull it around so it goes onto the boat head first and face up."

Frank looked from the ape to the tug. "That's what I thought but now that I'm looking again I'm not sure that is going to work. Won't the ape stay put and the boat get pulled ashore? He's a pretty big weight sitting there in the sand. A giant ape anchor."

Pierre shook his head. "Captain Hogan dropped both forward anchors before he backed in. He's planning on using those as well as the engines to keep us from getting pulled aground."

Frank patted Jean Paul's shoulder. "The die has been cast, Doctor." He reached down and took the end of the thick rope and started pulling it toward the ape. "Rick? You're better at knots than I am; you want to do this?"

"Sure, sure." Rick said. "Hey, Pierre, we need a shovel to get under the ape to run the rope. Since you're already wet, can you get one from aboard?"

Pierre gave a wave as he turned and waded back into the water.

"Bring my camera!" Anna called at him.

"Excuse me, Doctor." Frank moved beside Rick. Jeanne and Anna were with him. "Okay, we need to get this thing aboard quickly."

"Can we not call it a thing?" Anna asked. "I mean… it just sounds…"

"I'm sorry," Frank said with a smile. He held the end of the rope out for Rick. "Rick? Will you do the honors?"

"You got it." Rick took the end and started pulling it around the ape's shoulders. "I'll tuck it under it from the back side. Start digging toward me when the shovel arrives."

"I'm sorry, Anna. I promise we will treat this majestic animal with respect."

Anna smiled back at him. "A proper exhibit then? Not just chained to the ground?"

Frank looked from Anna to the ape and back. "No chains?"

Anna took a step closer and ran her hand through the ape's course hair. "If it's at all possible. I mean, I don't want anyone hurt but there must be a way."

"We are kind of limited on space, Anna. The other exhibits we got are going to fill up the area. Rick and I have been pretty busy getting animals for Pierre you know." Frank said.

The ape opened an eye slightly, its pupil swiveling down to look at Anna. She was petting it on its chest so she didn't notice.

Jean Paul sidled up to Anna. "I'm glad you will be an advocate as well as I." He whispered.

"Rick, where is the Ether?" Frank whispered. "Riiick." He whispered a little louder.

"Frank?" Anna looked at him. "Are you okay?"

Frank pointed at the ape's face.

The ape blinked slowly as Anna moved in front of its face. She put her hand on his massive cheek. "This isn't right, is it."

Jean Paul moved beside her. "No, I'm afraid it's not."

"There is no way I could convince Pierre, is there."

"No." Jean Paul said softly. "The die is indeed cast."

Rick walked up beside them. He held the rag up to the ape's nose as it took several breaths. "Okay, we're ready to get it aboard. They brought the launch over so you can get on it here."

Jean Paul put his hand on Anna's shoulder. "Let's get aboard so we're out of the way." He said to her. He looked at Rick. "It may open its eyes a little but it really is unconscious. You do not want to overdose it." He gestured at the rag. "I do not recommend administering another dose for three hours."

Rick pulled the rag away from the ape's nose. "Oh, okay Doctor Aslou."

Pierre waded ashore carrying a shovel and Anna's camera. "Here you go." He offered her the camera.

"I'll take a few pictures then I'll get aboard," Anna said. "I'll stay out of the way."

"Fine then," Frank said. He took the shovel from Pierre. "Let's get to work."

Jean Paul and Anna moved around the giant ape as she took several dozen photographs. Once she was out of film, the pair walked to the beach and climbed into the twelve foot launch then returned to the boat.

-12-
NATIVE ENCOUNTER

Pierre stood amidships with Captain Hogan and Jean Paul- the others had all gone below for lunch.

The trio stared at the large ape. His legs were three quarters of the way across the open area at the back of the tug, his head resting just inside the transom on a makeshift pillow of several boxes covered with canvas. Thanks to the ape's position, the tug's bow was noticeably higher out of the water. After unsuccessfully trying to swing the ape around using the crane, the captain decided to just pull the ape aboard feet first. The water was shallow enough that its head remained above water. Once it was aboard, the captain had decided against trying to swing the ape around because of the danger of the boat tipping as the animal's eleven tons were shifted around. A tarp had been used to make a makeshift shade over the animal's head.

"If he wakes up, we'll be just like the *Pelican*." Hogan said. "Damn it all; we should have brought a barge with us. At least then we could just cut him free. Now…" His voice trailed off.

"The *Pelican*?"

Hogan nodded at Pierre. "Three Hundred Twenty-foot tramp steamer. Back in October of ninety-seven she got caught in a storm bound for China."

"What happened?" Jean Paul asked.

Hogan looked at the man. "They were never heard from again." He smirked. "Well, not exactly."

"Not exactly?" Jean Paul asked nervously. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"In May of ninety-nine someone found a message in a bottle off the coast of the Alaskan territory from a sailor on the *Pelican* saying they were going down about 140 miles south of the Aleutians and the crew was getting into flimsy lifeboats."

"That is not comforting at all." Jean Paul said.

Hogan smiled. "Buck up; the good news is that we don't have flimsy lifeboats." He slapped the man's shoulder. "Right, mate?"

"Have I mentioned that I think this is a bad idea that will lead to catastrophic consequences?"

Now Captain Hogan poked him in the shoulder. "Don't be a Sheila, Doc."

The ape made a loud snorting sound as it started to snore. All three men turned to look at it.

"Crow, what a site." Captain Hogan said as he looked.

"So how are we for fuel? We seem to be moving pretty quick," Pierre said, changing the subject.

"We burned over half our load getting here sailing upriver," Hogan said. "And I took from the aft stores expecting the ape to load us down if we did find it." He looked at the ape. "We'd be looking at the sky from the helm if I hadn't." He pointed toward the front of the boat. "So now we're using the front coal. Since we're with the current we'll get back a couple of days early. We are going to need to sidle up to shore and cut down some trees to get us back. But we'll store them up front to keep us balanced."

"A couple of days early is…"

A shot rang out.

Jean Paul staggered back several steps then fell onto his butt.

"What the?" Captain Hogan looked out at the jungle. "Those damned natives. I was worried they might try something."

Another rapport cracked through the quiet air. Captain Hogan ducked, already too late as a musket ball buzzed by his head like an angry hornet.

"Damned natives." He dropped to a crouch. "Belly!" He called to the man at the helm. He had ducked out of sight as well. "Full speed! Get us out of range!"

The rotund man stood back up only enough to see out the front window as the engines roared to life.

"But keep us off the banks!" Hogan shouted over the engines. "And give the 'stay below decks' blast!"

The tug turned sharply as the helmsman started to make his way around a sharp bend in the river. While he did, the

horns gave two short blasts and a long one. After a couple of seconds, they did so again to repeat the message.

Pierre crawled to Jean Paul on his hands and knees. "Doctor, are you okay? Where were you shot?"

Jean Paul had lay back on the deck and had his hand to his other arm. "Arm." He winced. "It's definitely broken but the ball went straight through." He looked down at the pool of blood. "I haven't had too many human anatomy classes but I'd have to say its cut through something important as it went."

"What… what do I do?" Pierre asked.

The horns sounded the three-blast warning again.



"Enough with the horns!" Captain Hogan yelled. Another rapport, this time from farther away made him duck again. "Mister Aslou, are you okay?" He called back.

Jean Paul raised a bloody hand and waved him off dismissively. "It's just a scratch." When he lifted his hand, blood spurted out of the hole.

"If that's how you bleed from a scratch, I'd hate to see what a real hole looks like."

"What do I do?" Pierre asked again. He looked at the hole which was bleeding at an alarming rate.

"Grab both sides as tight as you can to stop the bleeding. And send for Mister Hauser."

"The cook?" Pierre asked.

"Let's get you inside, Doc," Captain Hogan said. "So that crazy Hun can get you fixed up." He moved beside the injured man. "We're out of range now, I'm sure."

"Okay, we're going to get you up, Doctor." Pierre crouched as he put his hand behind the man's good shoulder. He still had his other hand on the wound but since he could only apply pressure to one side of the arm, it started bleeding again.

"No, tie something around my arm at my armpit before you do. Otherwise I'm going to run out of blood before you get me down there."

"Right." Pierre put his hands behind the man's shoulders. "Captain?"

Captain Hogan took the cravat from around his neck. "It's not the cleanest around, Doc." He twirled it then ran it around Jean Paul's arm up at his arm pit.

"Tie it as tight as you can."

Captain Hogan smiled at him, "Make it a good knot, said the veterinarian to the sailor." He tied the cravat tightly. "There you go."

Pierre removed his hands slowly from the entrance and exit wounds. The wounds continued to bleed but only a little bit. He gave a satisfied nod. "Okay, let's go."

"I'll hold my arm, just don't drop me." Jean Paul said. He moved his hand to cradle his broken arm. "Okay. I'm ready; let's go."

Captain Hogan grabbed him at the knees. "Okay, up."

Frank opened the companionway door. "What's going on up here? Everyone's worried."

"Get below! We've had a native encounter and they're none too pleased with us, it seems." Captain Hogan said. "But hold the door for us first."

The two men shuffled to the door as another shot rang out- this one was from considerably farther away. Even so they ducked their heads as they continued to shuffle to the door.

-13-
PREPARING FOR THE EXPOSITION

Pierre flopped down in the overstuffed leather chair. "I'm beat."

"You need to learn to delegate," Colton said. He was sitting in another large leather chair. His feet up on a matching ottoman. He swirled the large cube of ice around in his drink. "You can't do everything yourself. That's the first rule in owning a ranch."

"I don't own a ranch." Pierre said as he rubbed his temples.

"It applies in this case as well." Colton sat up. "Let me ask you a question."

"Is this a long, multi-part question that takes an hour?"

"Not this time." Colton took a sip of his drink. "It's an easy one; why do you have people working for you if you don't trust them to do what you hired them to do?"

"That seemed to have multiple parts." Pierre said. He leaned his head back and closed his eyes.

"I'll make you a drink while you think it over."

"That would be nice." Pierre said.

Colton went to the bar and dropped a sugar cube into a tumbler then added a splash of bitters from a small glass bottle. As he added a little water from the ice bin to it, he crushed the sugar cube with a small silver pestle. After putting down the pestle, he filled the glass half way with whiskey then carefully placed a large ice cube into the glass. "Are you thinking or asleep?" He asked as he took a paring knife and cut a long slice of peel off an orange. It was already missing a great deal of its skin.

"I'm not asleep. Yet."

Colton nodded as he rubbed the orange peel around the rim of the glass. He gave it a quick twist over the drink then slipped it between the ice cube and the edge of the glass. He

dropped a cherry in it then as he walked to Pierre he swirled the glass to chill the whisky. "Your Old Fashioned is served, Sir."

Without opening his eyes, Pierre opened his hand. "I am much obliged." He opened one eye. "Did I use that correctly?"

Colton put the drink in Pierre's hand. "You did indeed." He returned to his chair and sat. "So, what's your answer?"

Pierre took a sip of his drink and nodded approvingly. "I hire people to do things I can't do myself."

"Because you don't know how?"

"Sometimes," Pierre admitted. "One can't be an expert on everything you know."

"Oh, I know." Colton said. "And why else?"

Pierre let out a long sigh. "Fine…Because I don't have time to do all the preparing for the exposition myself."

"Exactly. So what still needs to be done for the opening in two days? Is all the food taken care of?"

"Yes. I have a local merchant supplying fruits and vegetables for the ape."

"The barges secure? The curtain hung?"

"Barges are anchored nicely and the curtain gets hung today. The other animals we brought back seem to have all adjusted to the exhibit well but even so, today at noon Doctor Aslou is checking on them again. I was going to go down and…"

"And nothing. If you have people dealing with the animals, you have people dealing with the animals." Colton interrupted. "What else?"

"I still need a sign and I need to make sure the area is cordoned off."

"How about I take care of the sign later this afternoon? I'm sure I can get one painted up by tomorrow."

Pierre held the glass to his forehead. "That would be nice."

"I'll get Frank to get the area blocked off." When Pierre didn't say anything, he continued: "You really should work on your speech." Colton took a sip of his drink. "What's the sign supposed to look like?"

Pierre thought for a moment. "I'd like a large ape on it. Standing up, arms out as it snarls. And I want it to say 'King of

the Gorillas' in large red letters across the top. And I want it big enough that you can see it from the back of the viewing area when you enter but not so big it blocks the people sitting at the sides from seeing the barges. And I want the whole thing to be very colorful. A bright background. Perhaps the ape standing on a large patch of green grass with a blue sky behind it."

"Talk about long and multiple parts." Colton said. "How much are you willing to spend on a sign?"

"Not more than ten Francs."

"Well, I shall endeavor to meet all your expectations, boss." Colton answered.

"Boss? You're working for me now?"

Colton chuckled. "I sure have been. Since we left the restaurant. Free room and board as pay, and I recall you saying something about ten percent of the ticket sales for the first month."

"I believe it was five percent." Pierre pointed out.

"Ahhh yes; in all the excitement, I must have rounded up." Colton finished his drink. "I'm going to get your sign done up just like you want."

"Yes; that would be nice."

"Fine then. You take a short break, figure out what you're going to say, and I'll see you at dinner." Colton stood and walked to the bar. He poured a splash of whisky into his glass, swirled it around the remnants of his ice cube then downed it. "I am off to find an artist. There's got to be *one* in Paris, right?"

-14-
KING GOR

Anna sat on the bank of the Seine River next to the Pont d'Ilena. The Eiffel Tower was behind her. "Well, there is it." She gestured out at the water. "A watery cage."

Jean Paul sat beside her. "It really is the best course of action."

"I suppose." Anna sighed. After a moment she chuckled. "Poor Pierre."

"What? Why?"

Anna pointed. "He hasn't seen the sign yet. He's going to be upset, I think."

Jean Paul looked at the sign. There was a ferocious ape painted on it. It was standing on what seemed to be a bed of flowers. Over his head, as if he were holding it was 'King Gor' in very large red block letters.

"That is not what he wanted?" Jean Paul said. "It is truly eye catching."

"He wanted it to say 'King of the Gorillas' but the painter switched it because it would have made the letters too small."

"King Gor does have a nice ring to it." He said it again with a growl. "King Gor! The kids will love it. We should have paper masks made up for them to wear."

"Of the sign?"

"No; ape faces. I'll bet Pierre could sell those hand over fist for five centimes." (Five cents).

The pair watched in silence for several minutes as boats traveled up and down the river. Anna leaned back on the white steps and looked up over her right shoulder at the massive statue there. The bridge had been commissioned in 1803 by Napoleon Bonaparte himself to commemorate his victory in Jena. Four large statues of soldiers were carved by prominent sculptors and placed, two at each end of the bridge in 1853. The one she was looking at was a Roman soldier and his horse.

"Do you think they had any clue their empire was ending?"

Jean Paul looked at her. "Who?" He turned his head in the direction of hers. "Oh; the Romans." He looked back out on the water. "Political corruption, endless war with the Huns, and overspending ended that empire; not a large ape." He sighed. "While we may have a bit of turmoil in the very near future, the French Empire will go on, I am quite sure."

"I suppose you're right." Anna replied. She gestured at the two large barges that were anchored thirty feet from the shoreline. There was a steel framework holding large curtains around the edges of them. They were rigged to drop at the grand opening. "Do you really think those will work?"

"The curtains?" Jean Paul nodded seriously. "Most assuredly; gravity never fails to perform."

"Don't be a tease." Anna shoved the man with her shoulder. "You know what I mean."

Jean Paul smiled at her. "Oh yes; undoubtedly. Apes can't swim so if he isn't sure of the depth of the water, he is not going to just step into it." He smiled at her. "You did say you didn't want it in a cage or in chains."

"This is *not* what I had in mind." Anna replied as she looked around. "When they drop those curtains, it's going to be pandemonium."

"At one Franc seventy-five, it will be a very lucrative pandemonium." He gestured at the tall barriers that had been placed fifty yards in each direction creating a private amphitheater right on the river. "The hard part will be getting people to leave so that others will pay the admission fee." He shrugged. "I doubt that even the Moon will be enough to lure people away." Another exhibit was a 10,000 times magnification of the Moon using the largest reflecting telescope ever built that projected onto a 1,500 square foot screen in a planetarium that would seat 2,000 people. "After all, people see the Moon every day; a twenty-one foot ape is a different matter entirely."

Anna sighed. "I don't have a good feeling about this."

"I must admit nor do I." Jean Paul said.

Colton flopped down beside the doctor. "Me neither." He said.

"You neither what?" Anna asked.

Colton smiled at her. "Oh, I have no idea; I figured I'd just be agreeable."

Jean Paul laughed. "We can always count on you being that." He patted Colton on the leg. "Go with the flow, I think is the American term?" He gestured at the statue of the Roman soldier. "Say, did you know that phrase was coined by the Roman Emperor, Marcus Arelius?"

Colton looked at the statue. "Is that him?"

Jean Paul laughed again. "No; as the emperor, he wore more clothes than that."

"I imagine that is probably true. A nice robe I think it was called."

"Tunic is the term."

"Ahhh; Tunic. And probably a cape. I think I've seen one draped over a Roman emperor's arm."

"That would be a toga."

"Of course." Colton said. "Tunics were more Greek."

"Yes, you are correct. Are you aware that…"

Anna watched as the two bantered back and forth. As their friendship had grown, so had their bantering- it could go on for an hour if no one interrupted them. "If you two are through discussing Roman emperors…" Anna said.

"I recall you bringing them up first," Jean Paul said with a smile.

Anna gestured at the barges. "What do you think of those barges as a place to keep that ape?"

"I have heard on good authority that apes can't swim." Colton said. "So they should work, right Doc?" He patted Jean Paul on the shoulder- the one in the sling.

Jean Paul winced. "Yes; they should. You know, I have it on good authority that patting someone's bullet wound isn't a neighborly thing to do."

"Oh, sorry!" Colton put his arm around to the other shoulder. "Is it healing well?"

"My doctor says it is. I just need to make sure I don't try using it too soon."

"That's definitely true. You would end up with it hurting for decades."

"Yes. Another month and he said I would be back to normal. He also pointed out that if it had happened to me twenty years ago, it would have already been healed." He sighed.

"Whom the gods love dies young; best go first." Colton said.

"Colton, did you just quote Herodotus?"

"I did indeed, my friend."

"If you two would stay on the subject," Anna interrupted.

"We were discussing bullet wounds." Colton said with a smile.

"We were discussing the ape." Anna snapped.

"Sure, sure." Colton smiled at her. "Everything will be fine. Don't worry."

"It's not like he's been shot." Jean Paul pointed out. "Like I was."

Colton nodded at the man. "That is very true. Why once I was…"

Anna stood quickly. "*That is* quite enough. I'm going to find Pierre. You two can continue to banter back and forth like an old married couple." With that she stomped off.

"I'm dashed." Jean Paul said. "Dashed, I tell you."

"Me too." Colton said. "Not as dashed as I'll be when this place plummets into chaos when that ape gets free. But dashed none the less."

"That's what you're expecting?"

"Sure; I'm expecting the worst to happen. I know what this ape can do to a group of well-armed experienced hunters. A lousy thirty feet of water isn't going to stop that ape. But telling Anna what I thought wouldn't solve anything."

"So will you be here tomorrow?" Jean Paul asked.

Colton stood and offered a hand to his friend. "That I will."

"To gloat?" Jean Paul let the other pull him to his feet.

"To try and save lives." Colton responded with a sigh. He put his arm over Jean Paul's shoulder, resting it gently on the wounded one. "And you my friend should stay as far back as you can so you don't reinjure yourself."

"I shall watch from the back." He gestured with his good hand. "Let's follow that woman to hear what Pierre has to say

about all of this. The sign arrived this afternoon for the exhibit and I don't think Pierre has seen it yet."

"Yes." Colton looked at the sign. "I hope Pierre will understand that I had left *exact* instructions for what it should look like."

"I hear that the artist said 'King of the Gorillas' wouldn't fit across the top unless the sign was eight feet wide and then it would be blocking the view. So he took some artistic license."

"I didn't know you even needed a license to practice art."

"Nicely done, my American friend."

The two walked off arm in arm, chatting as they went.

-15-
AN EXTRAORDINARY TALE

Pierre walked to the center of the barge and peeked into the curtain. The ape was sitting down and breathing slowly. "Will he be okay?"

Frank nodded at him. "He'll be fine. Don't worry. I've got it all taken care of."

Pierre frowned. "I just can't have any more mistakes."

"Listen Mister Dudas, he was trying to do what you said with the sign." He held up his hands plaintively. "You wanted it readable from the back of the seats but not so large that it would block anyone's view. There was just no way to put 'King of the Gorillas' plus a painting of a gorilla on it and still have it small enough to do that."

"King Gor? Honestly; it sounds like a carnival attraction."

"Well, you can always have it changed later." Frank smiled. "Unless 'King Gor' catches on."

Pierre frowned again. "Just be ready; we start in a couple of minutes."

Frank gave him a thumb's up. "You got it, Mister Dudas."

With a nod, Pierre pulled the curtains closed again. They had managed to sail into the port in the early hours of the morning and then move the ape into a warehouse before too many people noticed. As Colton had observed 'a few onlookers is good because they will spread the word about the ape and as usual, the stories will get bigger as it's passed along.' He looked out at the crowd- there were almost a hundred people seated on the steps. Many looked at him when he turned around. "Here we go." He said to himself. As he raised his hands above his head he shouted: "S'il te plaît! Attention, attention!" He was pleased that not only everyone looked, but the conversations stopped- it was dead quiet as the last few people took their seats.

Finally when everyone took their seats, he lowered his arms. "Thank you all for your patience and giving me some of your valuable time. There are indeed many wondrous things to see here at the exposition and I genuinely appreciate the time you have given me." He raised his hands again. "But it will be worth it, *I assure you*!"

Several people jeered- they had been waiting almost half an hour already.

"Patience please!" Pierre said.

"Show us something or we'll leave," a spectator shouted back. "We assure you!" He added to laughs from those around him.

With a deep breath, he started his prepared speech:

"We spent months searching the darkest of Africa for animals to amaze and enthrall you all. Over a dozen were brought back and set up a mere stone's throw from this very stage. Then, once I had returned to our beloved Paris, I heard of an unbelievable tale. An extraordinary tale. A giant ape that bested an entire *expedition* of experienced adventurers! Adventurers and hunters who were never seen nor heard from again."

He paused as chatter started up in the crowd. Many had heard the rumors about a giant ape- now rumored to be almost fifty feet tall- snuck into the city in the dead of morning.

"And I realized that my other animals, which definitely are amazing to behold would pale in comparison to this supposed giant ape. So with a small band of brave men, I set off into the barely explored Great Rift Valley, where white men have never set foot, to find this ape. After a fierce battle where we lost not only two of our own, but several were injured, we captured the beast!" He had decided that a little lie about the events surrounding the capture of the ape were required because 'we found him drunk and asleep on the shore of Lake Victoria' would not evoke the emotions he was hoping for. "With the survivors of our brave expedition, we traveled up the Nile from its very headwaters." He held his hands up again. "It's very headwaters! In a boat barely big enough to contain the ape." He brought his hands down and pointed at the deck of the barge. "To here, my fellow Parisians. My fellow members of the Human race. Right here for your amazement. But I now

beg you. I beg you to remain in your seats and not let the primal fear that is deep in all of us of the unknown to take over your minds. Above all, please, *please* remain calm!"

Chatter started up again.

Pierre smiled. The crowd was just as anxious as he had hoped they would be. He turned sideways and gestured at the curtains. "From the depths of the dark continent itself I give you…" He hesitated- while he did not like the title, there was nothing he could do about it now. "King Gor!"

At that cue, the curtains were dropped revealing the giant ape sitting on the barges. He was leaned to one side, braced up by his arm. His head was down and he didn't even raise it after the curtain fell.

Unknown to him, Frank had given him one final dose of Ether Sulfate to ensure the ape remained calm.

A hush fell over the crowd. Even seated it was obvious that the ape was larger than any ape they had ever heard of. Several people stood as the ape lifted its head to look at them. When it growled, more did.

"Remain calm, you are perfectly safe!" Pierre said as he moved to the middle again. "Remain calm!" He was elated- he knew that the panic that the audience felt right now would have them tell their story to anyone that would listen- his exhibit would be the highlight of the entire exposition.

The ape pushed himself to a seated position and looked around the crowd slowly. As he looked at different sections of the seats, those people stood. After only a few moments, everyone was on their feet.

"Please return to your seats!" Pierre shouted.

The ape leaned to one side then threw up. Due to its size, it was close to fifty gallons of vomit. It flowed over the deck in all directions.

When the smell wafted into the audience, several people there also threw up.

Within moments everyone began to exit the area as the smell overcame them. As they got to the exit, many began to laugh. Within a mere five minutes, the entire area was practically empty.

-16-
AN EXHIBITION TO AMAZE AND ENTHRALL

Colton leaned over to Jean Paul and whispered. "This is not at all what I was expecting."

"Well, vomiting is better than trampling, I would say."

Colton patted him on the back. "I think I'll go down to see if I can help Pierre salvage this. The poor guy." He started down the stairs.

"Good luck, Colton!" Jean Paul called after him. "I will stay up here where it is safe." Then to himself. "And the air is fresh."

As Colton approached Pierre he saw that he was arguing with Rick Berg. He stopped several feet away from them. The two of them were completely ignoring the crowd which had gone from mesmerized to determined to leave within moments.

"This is absurd, Rick. *Absurd*." Pierre gestured at the people who were now quickly leaving the area. Many weren't even looking back at the ape as they did. "You've ruined me!"

"It's dangerous to just have this thing fully awake and not in a cage. We felt…"

"We felt?" Pierre interrupted. "*We felt?* This is *my* operation and whatever *you* feel does not trump *what I say*. You are not to give this ape any more sedatives. Do you understand? *None!*"

Colton took the last couple of steps to get beside the pair. "Pierre…" He started.

Pierre wheeled around on him. "And I don't need any clever Americanisms from you!"

"I was just going to ask how I can help." Colton said gently. He put his hand on Pierre's shoulder. "Tell me how I can help, Pierre."

Pierre took several deep breaths. "I'm sorry Colton." He looked out at the almost completely dispersed crowd. "Well…

we have to get the stands cleaned up before we let more people in. Can you arrange that?"

"Yes, I can." Colton smiled gently at the man. "It may not be an American saying but … A bad dress rehearsal means a great show."

Pierre signed. "Yes, I've heard that one too."

"I'll take care of it." Colton said as he walked off. "We'll be ready in a half hour, tops."

"What do you want me to do?" Rick asked.

"Stop giving that ape doses of damned Ether Sulfate." Pierre snapped. He took another deep breath. "And please see if you can get the barge cleaned up."

"I'll do that, but I won't be responsible for what happens." He turned and looked at the barge. "Frank!" He called.

Frank Wiswell was beside the giant ape that was now sitting up. "What?" Frank called back. He leaned on the long pole that had a large bottle tied to the end of it.

"No more doses!" Rick called to him as he walked up the flimsy gangway to the barge. As he went, his boots splashed as the gangway dipped into the water. He moved to a trot, holding his hands out for balance.

"What?" Frank said.

Pierre turned away from them, not caring how their discussion went as long as the ape was alert from now on. He hurried to catch up to three men he recognized who were walking away. "Gentlemen, I hope you will return later. We experienced a…. miscommunication that caused the ape to not be at top form."

The shortest of the men looked at Pierre- they had not stopped walked. "Your ape is impressive Mister Dudas. We would love to speak to you about procuring it later." He gestured around. "Once your carnival of intestinal odors is over."

Pierre knew the man- Henry Larchmont; one of the directors of the Ménagerie du Jardin des plantes - the largest civil zoo in Europe and the second oldest in the entire world. He had put up some of the money for Pierre's expeditions with the understanding that any animals he captured would go to the zoo after the exposition. "Mister Larchmont! A moment,

please." He trotted to catch up to them as they had still not stopped.

"Speak as we walk, Mister Dudas; we are endeavoring to make it to the Lumiere brothers' ship adventure before we have lunch." He glanced at Pierre. "*That* is an exhibition to amaze and enthrall."

"As you well know, animals are often unpredictable." Pierre stopped walking hoping the others would as well. To his relief they did.

"Yes, I know well enough," Henry Larchmont said. "Indeed, animals can be most uncooperative at times." When Pierre started to speak, he held up a hand stopping him. "Which is why we are going to give your exhibit *one* more opportunity."

"After lunch," said the tallest of the three- Justin Trudeau. He was also on the board of the zoo and the sponsor of several other exhibits at the Expo. He was also the owner of a very successful shipping line. "You know, now that I have you here before me, I must ask how you managed to get that thing into Paris without me knowing about it." He added tersely

Pierre nodded at the man- while he had seen him at some functions, they traveled in much different social circles; Trudeau with the extraordinarily rich, and Pierre with merely the upper middle class. "There was no slight intended, Sir." He said, hoping to not insult the powerful man. He had actually specifically avoided his shipping line because he was on the zoo board. He and Henry Larchmont were known to be close friends and ruthless businessmen. In fact, Justin Trudeau had joined the board of the zoo when during a safari a year ago, one of the other board members had been killed by what was reported at the time as wild animals. Both Trudeau and Larchmont had corroborated the incident. "As you well know, there are other shipping companies operating in Northern Africa besides yours and the gentleman who I had tasked to secure shipment into the city picked another company without my knowing. Once fees had been paid, it would have been rude to make last minute changes. We were after all, on a tight schedule to be here for the opening of the exhibition and weren't even sure we would capture the ape at all. When we did, it was very much a surprise that it happened so quickly."

He smiled at him. "If I am ever in need of shipping services, I will not overlook you."

"Yes, after that well-rehearsed speech, I am sure you won't." Justin responded with a thin-lipped smile. "Until one o'clock then, Mister Dudas."

"I look forward to it Mister Trudeau." He gestured at all of them. "Enjoy your boat ride and lunch and I will see you all at one. There will be seats reserved front and center for you all and even two or three more of your guests if you choose to bring some."

Justin nodded. "Until then."

With a nod and a very relieved sigh, Pierre turned and made his way back to the barges.

-17-
WHITE NATIVES EVERYWHERE

The ape sat groggily, one arm out to steady himself. His thoughts went back to when he was beside the big water, when his young friend had been killed by the white natives. He had that same feeling of dizziness even though he hadn't eaten any of the fruit. He was now sure that the feeling came from whatever was from the small thing that the white native man held up to his face. He had tried several times to hold his breath and not breathe it in but the man had waited him out.

He looked around; trying to get his eyes to focus but all he could see was grey. He looked down and could see his feet and the ground clearly enough but ahead, it was all grey. It confused him. He took several deep breaths. The fruit they held to his face made him sick to his stomach which he did not like at all. He felt like he had eaten a bunch of bad fruit and felt like he needed to throw up. He took several deep breaths to try and calm his stomach.

He looked down at his feet to try and steady his stomach. While he understood he needed to throw up sometimes when he had eaten something that was not good, the feeling he had now was that he was going to throw up whether he wanted to or not. As he looked down, it got brighter around him.

He looked up and instead of grey he saw a large number of white natives- both female and male directly in front of him. There were white natives everywhere, in fact. To the sides was water- how deep he didn't know. That was not a direction he was willing to go. Even if he weren't sick. The natives were seated in front of him and staring at him. He pushed himself into a more upright position- he knew he couldn't stand with how dizzy he felt- and grunted a warning at them. He was sure he couldn't fend off an attack but hoped he could bluff them. The ape looked around the many white natives searching for the long sticks that made sounds like thunder. Those concerned him because they sometimes left holes that hurt for

weeks. Sometimes they would run with red and white blood as they healed. He was relieved he didn't see any because he wouldn't be able to move fast enough to avoid them. He resorted to grunting a warning at them instead. When they stood, he thought they were ready to run, so he grunted more at them. The only escape seemed to be directly ahead. He looked down and saw that there was water in front of him as well. He had jumped that distance many times before but with a clear head. He was sure he couldn't do that now.

A wave of nausea ran through him and he turned his head to the side and threw up. It seemed like everything in his stomach came out even though none of it tasted bad when he had eaten it.

He was pleased that the white natives all started to leave. He was sure he couldn't fight even one of them off and needed them out of the way to escape.

As he took deep breaths to try and clear his head, the white native male who held the fruit in front of his face approached him. Once again he had the bad smelling thing on a stick. This native he wanted to kill more than any of the others. He tried to reach out but was afraid of losing his balance and falling into the water so he was helpless to stop the man. To his relief another native came up to him. The two gibbered for a moment and the native put down the stick with the small thing on it.

The ape started breathing deeply to clear his head. As he did, he laid down on his side, head near the water. He looked at the water; it was dark which sometimes meant that it was very deep. Other times however the water was very dark but very shallow and tasted of dirt. Since he was safely out of the water, he scooted closer to the edge and put his arm into it, feeling for the bottom. He was pleased to feel sand with his fingers. He scooped up a handful of sand and let it sift out of his fingers. One thing he was sure of was that water got shallower the closer he got to land. He also knew that if his hand touched the bottom, he knew he could stand in the same spot with his head safely out of the water. This side of what he was sitting on was now an escape path as well. Relieved, he kept his arm in the cool water as he breathed deep. His head was already feeling better. As he lay there, the grey came back into view. It seemed

to be as sturdy as vines close together. He now considered the water to his front his best escape path since it was closer to land and had to be shallower than the water beside him.

-18-
THE KING OF THE ENTIRE GREAT RIFT VALLEY

Pierre stood at the middle of the barge looking at the crowd. There were barely half as many people as there was the last time. He looked down at the front row. The three zoo board members as well as four other men he didn't recognize were seated front and center. He gave Henry Larchmont a nod.

Henry looked at his pocket watch. It was now five minutes past one o'clock. He wound it casually as he looked around. It was obvious his patience was nearing its end.

"Ladies and gentlemen," Pierre said. "I thank you for the opportunity to show you something you have never in your lives have seen before!" He held his hands up above his head. "We spent months searching the darkest of Africa for animals to amaze and enthrall you all. Over a dozen were brought back and set up a mere stone's throw from this very stage…." Pierre gave the same speech he had given the first time.

When he finished, only a few people clapped. He realized he would need different introductions for when people came a second or even a third time. For now, he was glad he had any audience at all. And that he hadn't been forced to give refunds to anyone in the first audience since they had paid to see an ape and they technically had.

He turned to his side and gestured at the curtain. "Please remember to remain calm ladies and gentlemen, as I present to you… King Gor!"

On cue, the curtain dropped.

The ape was once again seated on the deck of the barge. This time however, his hands were on his knees. He looked very casual and relaxed as he sat looking out at the people.

Once again, several people stood in alarm.

Pierre quickly moved down the gangway to the shore. "Please remain calm; you are in no danger!"

The ape stood.

The people who were standing were joined by others. Even Henry Larchmont and his companions stood.

"What I give you is an anomaly in the animal kingdom." Pierre said as he ad-libbed. "While I am sure you have all heard of, and possibly even seen gigantism displayed in us Humans at various carnivals and side shows, never has it been so prominent in an animal." Pierre looked at the back of the area where Colton and Jean Paul were. Anna was there with them now. Colton gave him a thumb's up. Anna beamed at him and clapped. Pierre nodded back as he continued with his speech:

"Gigantism in the animal kingdom is uncommonly rare because as an animal gets substantially larger than their fellow creatures, they are unable to breed thereby passing their gigantism to their offspring." He gestured back at the ape. "This is the last of his line. The King of the entire Great Rift Valley. Revered as a god by the natives and feared by all other predators on the entire continent!"

As if on cue, the ape roared long and loud. He pounded his chest several times.

Henry Larchmont took a step forward, eyes locked on the ape. He was determined to have it added to his zoo at any cost. It would easily double the profits of the zoo. And more importantly secure his name for posterity.

"In fact, when we found him, he was cavorting with the only animals even close to his size; the mighty elephant! Giants from completely different species who respected each other!" Pierre said. He pointed at the audience. "Both living together, ruling the jungle as equals! Alas, if only we humans could get along so well."

The ape took several steps back onto the second barge as it looked at the shoreline. The entire thing shifted as the ape's eleven tons pulled on the anchors. The edge of the barge closest to shore rose completely out of the water.

"My God," Henry said. "He's going to jump to shore."

"There is no way he can jump that far, my friend." Justin said. "His bones wouldn't be able to support him. He can't jump just like elephants can't jump because of their size."

"Mister Dudas!" Henry called as he stepped forward several more steps.

Pierre looked over at the man, slightly annoyed that he was interrupting him. "Mister Larchmont, it is quite all right. I can assure you…"

As Henry took another step forward, the ape took three quick shuffle-steps and leapt from the barge directly toward the audience. As he pushed off, the front barge pushed completely down into the water, its deck awash.

"We are all quite safe, Sir. Remember that apes can't…" Pierre was still looking at Henry Larchmont when a shadow passed over him. He looked up to see the ape above him. His mouth opened in awe.

The ape landed directly beside Henry Larchmont. Henry backpedaled and then fell backward. The ape let out another long roar as it pounded its chest. He had cleared thirty-five feet. It didn't seem to notice the man on the ground at all.

Trudeau moved quickly to his friend and as he tried to help him up, the rest of the crowd turned and rushed toward the exit. Several people who were closest to the water went in that direction instead, hoping to find safety in the river. The two men at the apes feet remained on the ground, motionless.

The ape reached out and grabbed a man as he went past. He roared in his face then threw him toward the exit. The man flew cartwheeling and landed almost seventy five feet away on the other side of the partition.

Pierre stood frozen looking at the back of the ape. It picked up another spectator and threw him this time out into the river. He landed almost thirty feet away and unlike the man thrown over the partition, survived the landing so he started to swim to shore.

Justin Trudeau allowed Henry Larchmont to pull him to his feet. "You will get me that ape, Justin!" Henry said, his face inches from the other's. "I don't care how you do it, or what you have to do, *you just make it happen*!" He shoved the man toward the exit as he followed close behind. "It will secure our place in *history*."

"Pierre!" Rick Berg called from the barge. He was holding a long pole with a jar of Ether Sulfate on the end. "Pierre!"

The ape recognized the man's voice and turned to look.

Rick started down the gangplank toward Pierre, pole over his shoulder. "We've got to get it knocked out!"

The ape pivoted around and jumped again, landing in the water between Rick and Pierre.

Rick looked up at the ape then held the pole out in front of him. "I've got him!" He said. "Come here you stupid animal!"

"Rick, be careful!" Pierre warned.

The ape took a step toward Rick, eyes on the end of the stick. He knew the effect it had on him but didn't understand how it did what it did. He only knew that smelling it made him dizzy. So he reached down and grabbed the gangplank and shook it violently. He took two large steps into the water to get a better grip on it to shake it even more. It was almost ten feet deep at that point, but not even to the ape's waist. The ape reached over and slapped the gangplank, pushing it completely under water in the middle.

Rick fought to keep his balance but failed. As he fell into the water, he lost his grip on the pole. When he came to the surface, he frantically looked around for the pole. While he looked for it, the ape reached down toward him.

"Rick, look out!" Pierre called but it was too late.

The ape grabbed the man and held him up to his face and let out a long growl.

"You stupid animal!" Rick shouted as he struggled to escape. "Frank! Get the other…"

The ape brought Rick up and bit off his head. He tossed Rick's body into the water then spat the head out. As he turned to look at the crowd, he reached down and casually took a handful of water to rinse out his mouth. He then waded out of the water back to shore. When he got there he let out a triumphant roar as he slapped his chest.

"Rick!" Frank shouted from the barge, unable to do anything else. With the gangplank gone, he would now have to swim to shore. Toward what appeared to be a vengeful and very deadly ape there. He wasn't convinced he needed to make the attempt. "Pierre!" He shouted instead.

Pierre stood frozen in terror as the ape walked past. He wasn't sure whether the ape didn't consider him a threat or just didn't notice him.

The ape let out another large roar as the last of the crowd scampered out of the viewing area. He beat his chest again

victoriously then looked around the area, satisfied. Pierre was still standing a mere twenty feet away. The ape looked down at him then his eyes got wide with recognition and he took a step toward him.

"Hey!" Colton shouted from the entrance. "Hey, hey!!" He waved his arms as he moved down the stairs.

The ape looked back at him and let out a growl. This was another he recognized.

Colton beat his chest and shouted at the ape.

The ape turned to face him and returned the challenge.

"Swim away, Pierre!" Colton shouted as he beat his chest again. "Swim for it!" He went down one more step. He was now within fifty feet of the ape. "Hey big fella!"

"Colton!" Anna shouted. "Get back here!" She was at the entrance with Jean Paul. "Colton!"

The ape looked back at Pierre then to Colton. He took another step toward the more aggressive challenger- Colton. He hooted at him and waved his hands, ready to kill someone else he recognized. Even though this particular native hadn't done anything to him, he could remember he was part of the group that took him from the Big Water. At this point, that was enough.

As the ape took another step toward Colton, Pierre took two long steps and dove into the water. Even though it was barely waste deep where he was, he swam to the bottom and away from shore as quickly as he could. When he got to the side of the front barge, he surfaced and looked to see if the ape had followed him. He was relieved it hadn't.

"Give me your hand." Frank said from the barge. He leaned over and offered his hands to Pierre.

Pierre grasped both of Frank's hands and allowed himself to be pulled aboard. "Thanks. I'm glad that thing didn't come this way."

"What are we going to do?" Frank asked.

"Colton." Pierre said as he stood. He spotted his friend and shouted louder. "Colton I'm safe; get out of there!"

The ape looked back to the barge and the two men there. They were a good distance away and on the water. With a frustrated grunt, he turned and with speed belying his size, he bolted toward Colton.

Colton was prepared for the charge and even though the ape was surprisingly fast, he turned and sprinted out of the area without looking back. *You'll either get away or have your head bit off.* The thought gave him extra incentive to run as fast as he could.

As Colton cleared the entrance, Jean Paul grabbed him and pulled him to the side, against the barrier out of view of the seating area. "Are you crazy?"

"I had to give Pierre a chance to get away," Colton said between breaths. "Rick sure didn't get that chance."

"We *all* need to get out of here," Anna said. "Before that ape gets here."

Colton looked at the entrance. "He should be here by now. He's pretty damned fast for a big guy."

The three looked at each other in silence. Then they all looked up.

The ape was looking down at them over the ten foot partition.

"Oh my God." Jean Paul said. "Well, that's that."

The ape growled at them.

"You two run toward the bridge." Colton said. "Get under it or inside a building so it can't see you. I'll lead it away."

"What? You can't do that!" Anna said.

Colton looked at Jean Paul. "Get her out of here or we're all dead." He looked up at the ape who growled again. "You want to talk this over?"

The ape started to reach over the partition at them.

"Go!" Colton said as he sidestepped away from the pair, he raised his arms over his head and waved them. "Hey now big fellow. Let's not lose our head." As soon as he said it, he regretted his choice of works. "If at all possible, that is." He bolted from the area.

As the ape kept his eyes on Colton, Jean Paul slowly led Anna away.

Colton took several deep breaths. Thanks to his conversations with Jean Paul while on the tug boat as well as the *Prince of the Waves* in the Mediterranean, he had learned a lot about apes. He lowered his arms and looked down at the ground, not making eye contact with the ape. He backed away opposite the direction Jean Paul and Anna had gone. Now he didn't make a sound.

The ape pushed his way through the entrance, bending the steel pipes easily. He beat his chest and hooted at Colton as he approached.

Colton continued to back away, arms slack at his sides and head down. Finally when he was over twenty feet away from where he had started, he stopped walking and sat. Head still down.

As Colton looked at the ground, the ape's feet came into view. "Well, so much for Texas." He stole a glance at the ape. It was looking down at him. Colton lowered his head again. "Okay, big guy, get it over with. No hard feelings, huh?"

The ape looked down at Colton sitting on the ground- obviously not dominant anymore. He reached down and shoved him onto his side. When Colton felt over, the ape hooted at him. He shoved him again, rolling him several times. The ape hopped and hooted with amusement, seeing him completely submissive. With another hoot, he pushed Colton again, sending him rolling another four or five feet.

Colton rolled along the ground again, fully expecting to get picked up and decapitated at any moment. After several seconds, he hazarded a look. The ape was walking away from him. With a relieved sigh, he rolled onto his back and stared at the sky. "Colton, you are one lucky son of a …" Screams interrupted his introspection.

He hopped to his feet and headed toward the screams- at the large plaza at the base of the Eiffel Tower.

-19-
THE BLACK THING

The ape walked away from the white native, satisfied that he had submitted. He actually recognized the native and remembered that he had given him pieces of fruit and even rubbed his foot while he was tied to the large floating log. He remembered it was comforting. So when the native had submitted, he didn't kill him. He wasn't an ally like the elephants were, but he was definitely not in the same category as the ones that tied him down or made him smell the fruit that made him dizzy.

Now the ape just wanted to return home. The loud noises, lack of trees, and large number of natives was not right and he did not like it. He wanted to escape this unfamiliar place but he was unsure where to go.

He stopped in a large open area and looked around. There were light skinned natives all around but he felt they were in the 'not a threat' category with how they were screaming and running from him. He looked around trying to see which way the jungle was but didn't see more than a few trees clumped together. Then he noticed the large thing in the middle of the open area. It was tall, very tall and black. It was taller than any of the trees he had ever seen. He walked over to it and grabbed it. It seemed hard. He leaned back pulling on it to test its strength. He had learned as he had gotten bigger that vines and trees that he thought could hold him often couldn't. He also knew that the higher up he went the less likely things were to hold him.

Confident it was strong enough at least on the lower parts, he started climbing it. It was actually easier to climb than a tree- there were spaces all over it for his hands and feet to grasp as he went up. And up he went. Higher and higher. Once he was up on it higher than he had ever been before, he stopped and looked around. All he could see were more of the white and tan buildings he remembered from his youth. He looked up,

there seemed to be a place to rest a little farther up. He started climbing again, deciding to rest when he got there. He wasn't used to climbing this much anymore- even the trees he climbed didn't take long to get to where the branches were too small for him. He could reach all the mangos and coconuts he wanted from the ground. So he only climbed occasionally now.

As he swung his legs over onto the open area, more white natives screamed and moved away from him. He took a step forward and looked around. Everyone was running and no one seemed to have one of the sticks that made the loud sound that hurt him. Just in case, he gave them a loud howl and then turned to look out over the edge. He decided he was as high as he had been on the white cliffs above the river. He looked up. A great deal of the black thing seemed to still be above him. With another grunt, he looked out over the edge again, hoping to spot anything familiar looking. Not seeing anything, he moved around the edge to the other side to look there.

He ignored the sounds of the natives behind him- they were definitely in the 'not a threat' category. Even so, he growled as he became frustrated looking out into the distance. Nothing at all looked like his familiar home.

-20-
EIFFEL TOWER

Colton ran toward the screams. They were coming from the bottom of the Eiffel Tower. He looked around but didn't see the ape anywhere.

He reached out and grabbed a man who was running. "Where is the ape?" He asked.

"It tried to pull it down then when it couldn't it just started climbing!" The man wrestled out of Colton's grip and pointed upward. "It's up there!" He ran off without another word.

Colton looked up just in time to see a large black foot disappear out of view. "Well now, that's going to be an issue."

Anna and Jean Paul ran up to Colton.

"Where'd he go?" Jean Paul asked.

"Up, apparently." Colton said as he pointed.

"I don't see him," Anna said.

"He's on the first observation deck." Colton said. "Hear the screams?"

Jean Paul nodded. "Probably trying to get his bearings. He's hoping to see the jungle."

"We've got to stop him. Doc?" Colton asked. He was still looking up. "You got any ideas?"

"None come to mind," Jean Paul admitted. "I hope those people just stay away from him and don't do anything rash."

"Like what?"

"Jump." Jean Paul said to Colton.

"Oh boy." Anna said.

"Well he's not going to see the jungle from there," Colton said. "How high up is that first viewing deck, anyway?"

Anna and Jean Paul both answered together: "A hundred eighty-seven feet."

Colton chuckled as he looked at them. "You *both* know that off the top of your head?"

"Well, it's kind of a big thing here in Paris, the Eiffel Tower." Jean Paul said. "No pun intended."

"How the hell are we going to get him down?" Colton asked. "Do you think you could lure him down, Doc?"

Jean Paul thought for a moment. "I have no idea. I mean… he's going to want to eat at some point. And perhaps get a drink. So he'll have to come down eventually." He put his hand on Colton's shoulder. "You seem to have built some rapport with him. Perhaps you…"

"Who, me?" Colton interrupted.

Jean Paul nodded at the man. "Absolutely. That's why you're standing here instead of missing your head."

"Jean Paul." Colton said. "I'm glad you find humor in this, but people are going to get hurt."

"No, I'm serious Colton." Jean Paul said. "I know for a fact while we were on that tug and on the steamer that you were always nice to the thing. I saw you giving it fruit. And then back there when you showed that you knew he was in charge, he didn't kill you." He pointed upward. "A thing that big has a brain to match. It's a smart animal and I'm sure it remembers that you were kind to it." He nodded at Anna. "You and Jeanne as well. No. The only chance we have of getting that thing down alive is if you two are involved. He's sure not going to trust me or Frank."

"He sure seemed to know who Rick was." Colton said. "Okay then. He might trust us. How do we use that to get him down?"

Pierre ran up to them, Frank right behind. "Where is it?" Pierre asked, out of breath.

Colton pointed. "Up there. Heading toward the second observation deck. See him?"

Pierre looked up. "Unbelievable." Was all he could say.

"I'll go get more Ether Sulfate." Frank said. "We've got plenty of that on the barges."

"Frank," Jean Paul said. "After you bring it here, you need to go away. You understand?"

"No. No, I don't. I'm going to help catch the thing before he kills more people."

Colton shook his head. "That ape has a beef with the people that have been mistreating it."

"Now wait a minute," Frank interrupted. "I've only had that thing's best interests in mind. I've made sure it was fed and taken care of."

"You helped take it from its home. Plus you also are one of the two that have been putting it to sleep with that Ether Sulfate and that ape seems to have figured out what those jars do. Which is why Rick is dead." Jean Paul said.

"You need to stay safe, Frank." Anna said. "After you get the chemicals, you should just go to my home or Pierre's and wait there."

"That's the best idea." Colton said. He looked up as more screams wafted down to them. He didn't see the ape. "He's on the second deck." He prodded Frank. "Go! Get as much of that stuff as you can, we'll keep an eye on it from here. And get help."

Frank nodded and ran back to the barges.

"Jean Paul, Pierre; can you speak to the local authorities to get some police or army or someone down here to handle the crowds?" Colton asked. "We need help moving these people away and having someone they recognize as an authority figure would help."

Jean Paul smiled at him. "I would think everyone would recognize a Cowboy as an authority figure." He patted his friend on the shoulder then moved off in search of a local official.

"Colton, what are you going to do?" Anna asked. She brought her hand to her mouth. "You can't just go up there… that thing… what it did to Mister Berg."

"We will have to get it down here before we try to knock it out. If it's unconscious up there, the only option will be to push it off and that would kill it." Colton shook his head. "We've got to get it down here." He looked over to the base of the tower. There were groups of people coming off the elevators located on the four legs. "That's good people are getting off safely." He looked back up. Several people were climbing down the outside of the tower from the second observation deck. "And that's not so good."

"That's not good at all. I hope no one else follows them." Pierre said.

"So how are you going to lure it down?" The sound of police whistles made her turn and look at the tower. "That's a relief."

"We should go over." Pierre said. "To make sure they know what they are dealing with."

"Maybe you can get them to call the Army." Colton said. "I'm not sure what they would do though." He pointed. "You go see what you can coordinate. I'm going to help people down."

"Colton you can't!" Anna said.

"That ape knows he has already knocked me down a peg. I think I'll be okay."

"I'm coming with you." Anna said.

"Oh, no way. There is no way…" Colton started. His voice trailed off as Anna turned and ran toward the base of the tower and the elevators. "That woman." He looked at Pierre. "If you don't propose to her my friend, I surely might." He turned and jogged to catch up with Anna.

With a relegated sigh, Pierre walked toward where Jean Paul was already speaking with a policeman. The fact of the matter was that he had already asked her to marry him twice and she had turned him down both times.

-21-
FIRST DECK

Colton caught up to Anna. "Anna, I don't think this is a good idea."

She slowed but didn't stop running. "Oh, and it's a good idea for *you* to go up there?"

"Well, I was hoping to try and keep folks calm and get as many into the elevators as possible."

The pair weaved through the people who had gotten off the elevators and were running away from the tower, finally reaching the closest leg. "And I can't do that?" Anna said.

"Sure you could." Colton held the elevator door open as she stepped in.

The man operating the elevator looked at the pair with wide eyes. "You're…. going up?"

"Yes; to the observation deck. Let's go." Colton said. "We need to get those people down."

The man gave a nod, and then rotated the handle around to make the elevator start moving.

"No." Colton turned to look at Anna. "No, that is not it at all."

"What's not it?" Anna was looking up through the top of the elevator.

"It's not that I think you can't help get those people down."

"Then what is it?" Anna snapped at him. She put her hands on her hips. "What? Is it because I don't have a pair of pistols?"

"No. All these would do is make it angry, I think."

"Then what?"

"I…I couldn't bear it if you were hurt." As her eyes got large, he closed the distance between them and kissed her.

Anna brought her arms up and put them on Colton's shoulders, kissing him back.

The lift operator cleared his throat.

Both Anna and Colton turned to look at him.

"Well?" The man said.

"I hope you don't get hurt either," Colton said with a smirk. "But I'm not going to kiss you if that's what you're aiming at, Monsieur…"

"Clément," The man said. "*Americans*." He pursed his lips. "We are almost there. Do you have a plan, Cowboy?"

"Colton, s'il vous plaît." Colton looked up as well. The platform was rapidly approaching. "How many people can you fit in here, Monsieur Clément?"

"The Fives-Lille elevators on the East and West legs hold ninety-five each. Forty-six in the single cabin Otis elevators on the North Side pillars. So two-hundred eighty-eight per run."

"Yes, yes," Colton said. "But that's not the most you can fit in there, correct? This is an emergency."

The man considered that for a moment. "Weight is not a consideration as the lifts are of course designed to hold twelve times their load capacity. Perhaps another twenty-five, thirty more per car, standing, Mister Colton."

"Excellent; almost three hundred." Anna said.

The lift operator raised a finger. "True, but at any given time on a nice day like today during the Exposition, keep in mind there are over four thousand visitors on the tower."

"Four *thousand*?" Colton said.

"Oui." The man nodded. "The first observation deck alone is four thousand nine square meters." (43,163 square feet).

The doors opened and people started to crowd in before Anna and Colton could get off. Colton took Anna by the hand and pulled her out behind him. "Get as many as you can in here!" Colton shouted. "I will tell the other operators."

"Oui!" Then man shouted back.

As Anna and Colton cleared the throng of people, they found themselves in the center of the immense viewing platform- it was two-hundred sixteen feet across.

Colton looked around. People were crowded against three of the pillars. As people took the two elevators down from the third and second viewing areas, the crowd grew larger. The ape was standing by the south pillar- as luck would have it, blocking one of the smaller-capacity elevators.

The pair watched for a moment- the elevator operators were indeed having people stand as well as sit in the cabins. The ape was standing by the south pillar leaning out at it looked down and around.

"So what's your plan again?" Anna asked.

"Well, I think folks are handling the evacuation well enough on their own." He pointed toward the ape. "We need to figure out how to get that big guy back down on the ground." He stepped in front of Anna as he raised his voice to speak to the ape. "Hey there big fella."

The ape turned around and surveyed the platform, eyes stopping on Colton and Anna.

"Maybe we shouldn't be here." Anna said.

The ape narrowed his eyes and hooted at them. It was not a friendly hoot.

"Easy now.' " Colton said as he bowed down slightly. "Take it easy."

The ape took a step forward toward the pair.

Colton removed his hat and bowed again. "It's okay," he said in a calm voice. "We're here to help you." He pointed at the side of the tower. "Why don't we just climb down together?" He took several steps that way as he pointed.

The ape looked where Colton was pointing then took a step that way. He looked out in the distance, not seeing any forest in that direction.

"Just over the edge, big fella."

The ape shook his head in frustration and hooted at Colton.

"We'll get you down, I promise." Colton said as he reached the railing. He held a hand out toward the ape then pointed downward with the other hand. "This way."

The ape slapped the deck several times then with a grunt he reached up and grabbed a girder and swung upward and out of sight.

"Use all the elevators!" Anna shouted as she pointed at the vacant south elevator.

The operator of that elevator stepped out and raised his hands. "Give me seventy five people!"

A stream of people started snaking toward the man.

"Seventy five!" The man shouted as he stepped to the side of the doorway, allowing people to enter.

Colton jogged to the edge of the viewing platform where the ape had disappeared and leaned out. Thanks to the tower getting smaller as it went up, he was unable to see the ape. "Oh boy."

"Colton look!"

Colton turned to look at Anna. She was moving to the far side of the tower, opposite him as she pointed. He looked in that direction.

There was a massive dirigible floating upward. "It's *La Franc*!" Anna said. "Look!"

The 170 foot long, 66,000 cubic foot ship turned in a graceful arc around the tower as it gained altitude.

Colton skidded to a stop beside Anna- he had never seen anything that big before, much less floating in the sky. "What in the world is that?" He had seen his share of hot air balloons but none of them even compared in size to this.

Anna beamed at him. "The Army has arrived." She pointed. "They have two soldiers with them, see?"

"I'm not sure shooting at the ape is going to work out." Colton waved back to one of the soldiers. "Do they even know what they are going up against?"

Anna shrugged. "They are experts."

"French soldiers are experts on giant apes?" Colton said. "Anna, *no* countrys' soldiers are experts on giant apes."

The pair watched as the ship turned in a broad arc around the tower then disappeared from sight.

"I hope that thing keeps its distance. Or that ape doesn't try to jump onto it." Colton said. "Let's go up one more deck to see what's happening."

"You don't want to go down?"

Colton shook his head. "I'm sure Pierre and Jean Paul have it all under control." He pointed out into the air. "They got that thing here pretty quick, didn't they?"

"Well, okay." Anna said. "Although I suspect you just want to get me in an elevator again." She narrowed her eyes at him.

"Well now, Ma'am," Colton said. "I'm sure I don't know what you mean."

The pair jogged across to the far side of the platform where one of the 'up' elevators was. They waited until it arrived and a large number of people -a great deal more than should have been in the little compartment- exited.

"Take us up, Sir." Colton said to the lift operator.

"Up?" The man said. "But…that thing is up there."

Several shots rang out.

"Let's go! You need to get back to get more people anyway." Colton pulled Anna into the elevator behind him. "Up!"

The man shook his head then operated the lever, coaxing the elevator upward.

The elevator seemed to move painfully slow as more shots rang out. "Do you happen to know what those soldiers would be firing with?" Colton asked the man.

"We carry the Berthier."

"I'm not familiar with that weapon, Mister…"

"Tremblay. It's a semi-automatic rifle," the man said. "It fires three-shots from a magazine. Eight-millimeter rifle."

"Eight-millimeter?" Colton put his hand on a pistol. "I've fired one of those Lugers. Those are nine millimeters. And those seemed tiny."

"What are yours?" Anna asked.

"Colt Forty-Fives, of course." He paused. "They are equivalent to almost an eleven and a half millimeter. And I wouldn't think of shooting that ape with them; they'd probably just make it angrier than it already is."

"Americans." Mister Tremblay said.

"Oh!" Colton said as the elevator stopped; "I almost forgot why we were here." He gave Anna a quick smooch on the cheek.

"You're absurd." Anna said with a headshake.

The doors opened and several people tried to crowd in.

"Let us out first!" Colton said. "Please!"

"*Out*?" A man asked. "If you insist, but make it quick, sir."

Colton shook the lift operator's hand. "See you soon, Mister Tremblay."

"I sincerely hope so."

Colton once again pulled Anna through the crowd. While this area wasn't as large as the deck below, it was still 123 feet across and almost 15,000 square feet.

"Where is it?" Colton ran to an edge and looked up. "Check over there!" He pointed across the way.

"Oh no!" Anna said. "Colton, come here!"

Colton turned and jogged across the platform. "Did they kill it?"

Anna pointed at the distance. "No."

"What's out there?" Colton looked out at the city.

"The Bois de Boulogne. That's where it's going."

"The what?"

"It's a huge park that was built by Napoleon." Anna said. "It came up here to get its bearings; climb the tallest thing around to see where you are. It's heading back to what it thinks is its jungle."

"But it's climbing up again." Colton said as he pointed. "He's not heading that way."

Anna considered that for a moment. "He's going higher because he doesn't know it's a big forest like I do. Once he gets at the top of the tower, he will be able to see it clearly then he will go there."

"Great; so we can get a head start on him. We need to get down right away!" Colton turned and looked. Each of the elevators had a large crowd around them. "Oh boy. Come on." He once again took Anna by the hand and pulled her toward the elevator they had originally come up on. "We need to get down there."

When the elevator doors opened, they almost immediately filled with people. "Monsieur Trembley!" Colton called. "Monsieur Tremblay!"

The man stood on his toes and looked over the crowd. "What is it?"

"We need to get down! The ape is on the move."

"To the Bois de Boulogne!" Anna added.

"Mon dieu." Tremblay said. "Let them through." He paused. "They are… experts?"

Colton started toward him. "That's better than complicit." He said softly to Anna directly behind him.

When they got to the door Colton tipped his hat at the man. "Thank you Monsieur Tremblay."

The man shook his head. "Yes, yes. I'm sure. If two will please get off so these two can enter." He said.

"Why should we get off?" A woman asked.

"First off, Ma'am," Colton said as he took his hat off. "We are with the group that brought the ape to the exposition and are trying to contain it. Second, the ape is climbing higher to figure out where the forest is. Once it has done that, it will go straight there to familiar territory. It will be moving away from the tower so there is no longer any danger here." He gave her a smile. "We are only trying to prevent anyone from getting hurt so we need to get to the ground before it does so we can help capture it."

With a frown, the woman and her husband exited the elevator. "If it is to save others, then please go."

"Thank you so much." Anna said as they squeezed into the elevator.

"Now if Mister Clément will be as accommodating on his elevator, the chase is on." He smiled at Anna. "We can head it off at the pass."

Anna shook her head at him. "Have I said you are ridiculous?"

"I believe it was absurd last time. Ridiculous is an improvement I think."

-22-
VANTAGE POINT

The ape grabbed one of the thick pieces of black above his head- it did not give at all as he squeezed it like a tree branch would have. Still confident that it would hold him, he swung his legs up, feet grabbing hold. He straightened up and started climbing again. As far as things to climb, this was more comfortable than any tree he had been on, and it had not even made the slightest sound like it was not going to hold him. If he were not in a completely strange land, it would have been enjoyable.

The ape breathed deeply as it climbed- it was more than he had ever remembered climbing. Once again, he came to an open area. Needing to rest he stepped onto it. White natives screamed and moved away from him. He grunted at them anyway.

The ape turned and looked out. Still more buildings. He let out a frustrated grunt and stomped across to the other side of the open area, knocking down several natives as he went. Since he wasn't angry at them, he didn't step on them. This time when he reached the other side he spotted some green. He squinted his eyes to block the sun as he looked. It looked like it might have been a large jungle but he wasn't sure. He let out a hoot of joy, planning on climbing higher to make sure it was his jungle when he heard a voice he recognized. He turned and scanned the white natives. He squinted his eyes as they fell on one that he definitely knew. Then a white female stepped out from behind him. The ape knew that one as well. Of all the white natives he knew, these were two he hated the least.

The white native took another step toward him, removing something from his head as he did. He lowered himself to the ground. The ape grunted with pleasure that this white native knew his place. The male pointed at the far side of the area, out into the distance as he walked that way. Curious, the ape looked in that direction. He didn't think this particular native

would try and trick him like the ones with the poles and the bad smelling thing would, but even so he didn't really trust him. He knew dark native females could be trusted a lot and dark native male could be trusted a little, and perhaps the white native women could be trusted somewhat, but being a male and being part of the white natives that had attacked him put this male on poor footing. The ape growled at the male to let him know his standing when it came to trust.

The white male continued to move to the side, pointing as he did. His voice was calm and seemed friendly, like some of the black males that had helped him a long time ago when he had been bitten by a hippo. The ape looked where he was pointing. There was nothing in that direction. Not like the hint of green he had seen behind him. Maybe the white native was trying to trick him after all.

He grunted his distrust and slapped the ground to emphasize the point- he wanted to return to the jungle and that was not the direction. He reached up and grabbed the black thing to climb higher to make sure he knew it was his jungle. With a grunt, he pulled himself up and started climbing for a better vantage point.

As he got his feet under him, he heard a sound like thunder which he knew wasn't thunder but the sticks that the white natives carried. He turned to look, not knowing where they were. There in the open air was a large grey cloud. A very large grey cloud. Somehow, and he did not understand how, there were two white natives under the cloud. He had never seen natives in the sky before- white or dark. Another sound cracked through the air as he felt something hit his arm. It was the feeling of a branch hitting him, not one poking into him. Even so he knew the long sticks could hurt him and had left holes in his hands and even one in his cheek that took a long time to heal.

He growled at the cloud holding the natives as another thunder rang out. He moved quickly to the side to put part of the large black thing between him and the grey cloud with natives on it.

He looked around for something to throw at them but no part of the large black thing seemed like it would come off- it

was full of holes but fairly smooth on the sides. Then he noticed a large flat part sticking out. It was held in place with vines. He knew he could break vines of all sizes so he quickly climbed over to it as the grey cloud came around the corner. Another sound rang out but he didn't feel anything again.



The ape grabbed the large flat piece and was satisfied to feel it pull away from the side of the black thing. A large container tipped over spilling what seemed like thick black water down his arm. It didn't hurt so he ignored it. Holding tightly to the black thing with both feet and one hand, he yanked the flat piece away- the vines holding it broke after the second pull. He looked at the grey cloud. It was moving closer to him. Something he had never seen clouds do either. He judged the distance between him and the cloud. He had gotten very good at throwing things thanks to throwing logs and rocks at the white natives when they approached him on the water. He leaned back and threw the flat thing toward the grey cloud.

He missed but only by a very little bit. The grey cloud must have gotten scared because it turned and moved away from him.

The ape beat his chest with his one free hand in triumph as he howled. Satisfied the grey cloud had learned its lesson, he started climbing up again. As he went, he moved to the side where he thought he had seen the jungle. Like the trees he had climbed, the black thing was getting narrower as he went up. The ape was worried he would run out of a safe place to climb before he was sure where the jungle was.

He was relieved he reached another flat place to rest- the climb had made him very tired. As he swung onto this area which was much smaller than the other two, he was pleased to see there were no white natives here. He looked out at the distance; there was indeed a very large jungle in the direction he was looking. He sat for a long moment to regain his strength before starting the long climb down and the walk to the jungle. He was very, very high up and did not want to fall to the ground if he lost his grip.

He grunted with satisfaction as he looked at the jungle, hoping he would find the elephants at the big water when he got there. After everything he had been through, he missed seeing his friends.

-23-
BOIS DE BOULOGNE

Colton put his hand on Pierre's shoulder as he and Anna joined him and the group of men in uniform. "So what's the plan?"

Pierre pointed at one of the soldiers. "Captain Marceau here has two dozen troops mustering. They will be here within a half hour."

"Oui," The Captain said. "I also have two seventy-five millimeter field guns en route as well. We will stop this beast here and now."

"I don't know if you have half an hour, Captain," Anna said. "In fact, I am sure you don't."

"Who is this woman?" The Officer said. "And why is she here?"

"This is Anna Garnier, an eminent specialist on apes from the National Museum of Natural History and she was personally involved in its original capture in Africa," Colton said, hoping Pierre wouldn't correct his lie.

"Now I ask who this American is." The Officer said testily. "And why I should listen to his endorsements."

Pierre nodded toward Colton. "This gentleman was also part of the expedition to capture the ape. He is an experienced big game hunter, Captain." He looked at Anna. "Why don't we have time to wait for the reinforcements?"

"We were up there with it," Anna said. "The ape was searching for its home, I'm sure of it." She pointed south. "It has seen the Bois de Boulogne." She said referring to a 2,100 acre public park located nearby. The land for it was ceded to the city of Paris by the Emperor Napoleon III to be turned into a public park in 1852. It was a five-year project where almost half a million trees were planted, several lakes, streams and hills were constructed, as well as dozens of venues.

"The forest," the Officer said. "Are you sure?"

"It is the only thing nearby that looks even remotely familiar to it, Captain." Anna said. "It's going to climb down the tower and make straight for the forest. We need to…"

The Captain turned to another soldier. "Lieutenant, contact the soldiers and tell them to remain where they are. The… issue will be coming to them. Let them know it will be coming directly at them from the Eiffel Tower. And be quick about it."

With a salute, the lieutenant ran off.

"The soldiers are already at the forest?" Pierre said.

"Yes; we were conducting maneuvers there, fortunately."

"You're firing *artillery* in the Bois de Boulogne?" Anna asked. "I don't believe that's what Napoleon had in mind when he had it built."

Captain Marceau let out a long sigh. "Madam, we were conducting maneuvers and dry fire exercises in the forest with soldiers who live in and around the city. It allows the citizenry to see their Army in action, building confidence in them." He put his hands on his hips. "Furthermore, I was unaware I needed to secure *your* permission to do so; I ignorantly assumed that the French High Command was sufficient."

Colton laughed. "For that remark alone, I would like to buy you a drink at some point, Captain."

Anna elbowed Colton.

"Colton, please." Pierre said. "Captain, if at all possible we would like for the animal to be taken alive. It presents a huge scientific opportunity for France. And as of yet, it has not killed any Parisians." He added, hoping that the officer had not heard about Rick Berg, who technically was not French.

"Do you have a means of containing it?"

Pierre shook his head. "We were using the river to contain it when it jumped ashore. We don't have any cage large enough for it. We do have a supply of anchor chains on the barge if we are able to get it down."

"Surely it isn't as large as you say." The Captain said. "No?"

"Twenty-one feet in all," Colton said. "We've measured it while it was asleep."

Frank ran up to the group. "Okay," he said out of breath. "I have ten gallons of Ether Sulfate on the way. That should be

plenty to get it knocked out and keep it that way for a few hours."

"Ahhh; so you do have a means after all." The Captain said. "This may turn in our favor yet."

"Well, we have a chemical that will knock it out, the problem is administering it to the ape; it is a gas that it has to breathe in. And we can't risk getting that close to it in its agitated state."

"Maybe we don't have to," Colton said. He turned and looked at the tower. The Le Franc was moving away from it towards them. "We can use that thing to drop the gas on it!"

Captain Marceau turned to another soldier. "Tell the Lieutenant to contact the Le Franc and tell them to go directly to the Bois de Boulogne and put down there. Go. Now." He looked at Pierre, then with a sigh to Anna. "How long will it take for that ape to walk to the forest?"

Anna looked at Pierre. He shrugged at her; her guess would be as good as his. "Well, that is about four kilometers. Traveling at a normal pace across open ground, I would say within fifteen minutes if it is not distracted along the way." She pointed again. "It will go across the Pont d'Ilena and straight through Trocadéro Gardens to get there. It is smart enough that once it gets its bearing from the top of the tower, it will know how to get there from the ground."

"We need to clear a path for it so no one gets hurt, Captain." Colton said. "And we need to be there waiting for it."

"Mon dieu!" The Captain exclaimed.

"Captain?" Pierre said.

The Captain pointed. "The beast is on the move! It is truly as massive as you say."

They all turned to look. The ape had exited the topmost viewing platform and was hanging onto the outside of the structure with just one arm and foot holding it in place. It was looking toward the Boulogne forest. They couldn't hear it, but with its mouth open and head tilted back, it was definitely roaring.

"Mon dieu," the Captain said again softly.

"Okay, we need to get going." Colton said. He pointed at several motorcycles near them. "Those yours, Captain?"

"Oui."

"Get men on a couple of them and get that ape a clear path to that forest. Can you ride one of those, Pierre?"

Pierre shook his head. "No, I never have. Have you?"

"I have." Colton nodded. "We have a couple of Hildebrand and Wolfmuller motor cycles on the ranch. A '94 and a '95. Those look like newer models but their operation should be the same." He looked at the Captain. "Can you ride?"

"Of course." The Captain replied. He pointed at Pierre. "You shall ride with me." He pointed at Frank. "Where is this gas?"

"They are bringing it from the barges." Frank gestured toward the river then looked that way. There were two men jogging toward them. Each was carrying two metal cans. "Oh! There they are now."

"You will ride in the La Franc to dispense the gas." Captain Marceau turned to the last of the soldiers near him. "Take this man and the gas and get them to the forest. When the Le Franc puts down, have him get on." He looked back at the tower. "It is moving."

"I'm riding in what?" Frank asked. "And what is it putting down?"

Everyone turned to look at the tower again. The ape was indeed climbing down the tower. It did not seem to be in a hurry.

"Hopefully it keeps its leisurely pace." The Captain said. "You, American…"

"Colton." Colton interjected.

"Will take this woman expert on the last of the motor cycles and ride with us."

"Yes, sir," Colton said. He patted Frank on the shoulder then pointed to the airship which was now moving toward the forest. "That beauty right there is the *La Franc*." He smiled. "I am honestly jealous."

"What?" Frank said. "How in the world…"

"Let's go!" Pierre said as he moved toward one of the motor cycles. "We don't have time to waste."

-24-
THE LA FRANC

Colton peered out from the bushes along the path. The group had arrived well ahead of the ape thanks to the motor cycles' breathtaking top speed of almost forty-five miles an hour. "Captain, have you made sure that that airship keeps well above that ape? I'd hate to think what would happen if it jumped up and grabbed it."

"It will remain at 50 feet. I cannot believe that ape would be able to jump twice its height," the Captain assured. "As long as Monsieur Wiswell's aim is true we will have it." When the ship had landed, a dozen glass carafes were taken from a nearby café to drop the Ether Sulfate onto the ape's head to incapacitate it. Along with a very hesitant Frank Wiswell, they were loaded into the *La Franc* which then rose back into the air.

"Frank has a score to settle with it; he won't miss."

Captain Marceau looked at him. "Is there something you are not telling me?"

"Well, when Pierre said that the ape had not killed any Frenchmen, he was technically speaking the truth. The ape has in fact killed one man; a German named Rick Berg. He and Frank were partners."

"Pah; technicalities." Captain Marceau shook his head. "Civilians speak in technicalities when it suits them."

"Weren't you once a civilian, Captain?" Colton said with a smile. "At some point?"

"No; I was *born* into the military." Captain Marceau answered. "For several generations my family has been a military family serving France. And I was born in a military hospital in Algeria where my father, a Colonel was assigned."

"Touché. Chacun voit midi à sa porte." Colton said. ("Everyone sees noon from their door", meaning 'everyone sees things their own way.')

The Captain looked at Colton. "Now I believe we owe each other a drink."

"Deal." He pointed; a soldier was rapidly approaching on a motor cycle. "Here we go."

Captain Marceau looked across the path to his lieutenant. He was in radio contact with the *La Franc* that was making lazy circles above the area. The lieutenant gave him a thumb's up.

The soldier on the motorcycle skidded to a stop in the middle of the gravel path, lowered the kickstand and ran to where the Marceau and Colton were. He rendered a quick salute as he crouched. "Captain, it approaches! I have never seen such a beast ever. I would have thought..."

"Alright, alright Private Packard," Captain Marceau said. "Move behind us to the other soldiers and get a rifle. You are our second course of action."

"Yes sir," The private said as he gave another salute then scooted off into the bushes.

"Do you have an American saying for this moment?"

"Waiting to get beat up stinks." Colton answered.

"D'accord." (I agree).

The pair sat in silence for several minutes until the ape came into view.

It was walking slowly on all fours down the center of the cobblestone road, cautiously looking to both sides as it went. When it reached the large entrance to the forest, it stopped. It stood upright and looked into the forest. Most of the trees were taller than itself so it couldn't see very far into it.

The ape moved to one of the large columns at the entrance of the massive park. It grabbed the stone and pulled on it- it wobbled back and forth. With a dissatisfied grunt, it stepped just past it instead of climbing it for a better vantage point. It looked up hearing the unfamiliar flap-flap-flap sound of the blades of the out-of-sight airship. It still had not entered the forest. It looked back at the street- there were now vehicles as well as horse drawn carriages passing by on the busy street.

The ape looked down at the motorcycle. With a grunt, he knocked it over but didn't step past it.

"It's not coming in," Colton said as he stood. "We need to get it off the main street." He raised his hands as he stepped onto the path. "Hey there, big fella. It's me again."

The ape immediately looked down at Colton then took a step toward him a growl starting at the back of his throat.

Colton lowered his hands. "Easy, easy," He said in a calm voice like he was talking to a spooked horse. "I'm not going to hurt you." He took several steps toward the ape. "You know me, right?"

The ape slapped his chest and hooted loudly.

Colton returned the gesture and hooting. "Remember me?" Colton bowed down as he approached. "You know me."

The ape hooted again at Colton. This time it was a less-aggressive hoot.

"Colton, don't get any closer!" Anna peeked out from the bushes on the other side of the path.

The ape looked in that direction and grunted angrily at the surprise interloper.

"Let's not upset the nice ape, okay?" Colton said. He took another step toward the ape. "Come on big fella, this way." He beckoned the ape to come to him. "Come over here." He said calmly.

The ape now looked at Colton, taking a step toward him. Thanks to his size, the one step put him within ten feet of Colton- easily close enough to grab him.

Anna stepped out from behind the bushes. "Colton, you are going to get yourself killed!"

The ape once again turned his attention toward Anna. He hooted at her several times.

Colton turned and looked at Anna. "You are a most consternating woman, Anna." He said testily. "In case you haven't noticed, I have the situation well under control."

"And you, Colton are equally exasperating." Anna stepped onto the path, hands on her hips. "I will not have you put yourself in danger for no reason."

"No reason?" Colton gestured at the ape that was looking between the two as they spoke. "*No reason*? A twenty-one foot, rampaging ape is reason enough."

The ape took a small step forward as the *La Franc* passed silently overhead on a favorable breeze. He towered over Colton.

"Please move back, Anna," Colton said. "Let me handle this."

The ape squatted down and hooted at Colton. It reached out a hand toward him.

Colton looked up at the ape. "Right? Females!" He reached out and patted the ape's hand. "They bring out the beast in us, don't they fella."

"I think you mean 'best'." Anna said. "Oh Colton, you are far too close to that thing."

Colton shook his head. "Animals are animals are animals. If you treat them right, you can even have an accord with a mountain lion." He patted the ape's hand. "We need to get you back home, don't we?" He said in a soothing voice. "Back where you belong."

The ape pushed Colton over then laughed at him.

"So we're back to that, are we?" Colton moved to a seated position. He slapped the ground in front of him. "Oooh! Oooh!" He said.

The *La Franc* crept directly overhead.

Captain Marceau caught Anna's eye then held a finger up to his lips. He looked up- Frank was leaning precariously over the edge of the gondola, holding two large carafes.

The ape rocked back and sat on his butt. He stretched out his legs and hooted several times at Colton. Colton was now between its knees.

"Oooh!" Colton said again as he pointed at the airship. This close to the ape, he hoped to have the ape consider him as an ally instead of counting him as one of the attackers. "Oooh!"

The ape looked up just as two large carafes smashed into his forehead. They shattered spilling Ether Sulfate down its face. He reached up and wiped his eyes as he rolled to one side, the hairs on its leg brushed Colton's head as it rolled. Another carafe hit him on the cheek as he did. The carafe didn't break but instead spilled its contents into the ape's nose.

The ape snorted, trying to clear the liquid as another carafe hit him on the top of the head, also breaking.

The ape worked his way to his feet shakily. He looked up at the *La Franc*- it was still overhead. Frank tossed another carafe toward the ape. This one hit it on the shoulder, spilling its contents instead of breaking.

The ape's head was now surrounded in a cloud of Ether Sulfate.

The ape growled and jumped up to grab the airship. Thanks to ape physiology, the span of its arms was actually several feet more than its height so each arm was a good twelve feet. And even with only a groggy fifteen foot jump, his hand passed within a mere foot of the airship.

As the ape hit the ground, he fell to his butt with only his hand keeping him from toppling completely over. As he groggily pulled his feet under him to try for another jump, the electric engine of the *La Franc* came to life, propeller roaring at top speed. With a lurch, the ship moved from directly over the ape as it jumped again.

The ape's hand passed directly behind the ship as it floated away.

As the ape hit the ground, his knees buckled. He looked at Colton wide-eyed as he fell onto his knees.

Colton took a step forward, hand outstretched. "Easy fella, it will be okay."

The ape's eyes rolled back in its head and with a final hoot, it fell forward onto the path. It was not even able to break his fall with his hands, causing a large gash on his forehead as his head hit the cobblestones.

"Someone get the doc!" Colton called as he ran to the ape. He took off his shirt and pressed it into the foot-long gash in the ape's head. "And those chains!"

Captain Marceau walked out from behind a bush and to Colton. "Monsieur Colton, I believe I will be buying *all* the drinks when we finally sit. That was either the most foolish or most brave thing I have ever witnessed."

"It's surprising how those two often overlap." Colton said. He leaned against the ape's massive head still holding his shirt in place. "This is a pretty nasty cut that's going to need to be tended to before we get him home."

"Where is home for such a beast?" Captain Marceau asked.

"Colton, you…. you…" Anna couldn't finish her sentence in her combination of anger and fear and relief. Instead she clenched her fist and punched him in the chest. "You could have been *killed*!"

"Madame, your husband is quite the hero. And I must say very brave as well." Captain Marceau remarked.

"*Husband*?" Anna shook her head. "He is definitely *not* my husband, Sir." With that she marched off before starting to cry.

"I apologize; I just assumed with the banter between you…"

"No apology required, Captain." Colton said with a smile. "Although I am indeed tempted to propose to her. She's quite a woman."

"You mentioned a mountain lion earlier so I assume you have experience with ferocious cats. I believe you would be proposing to one." He reached out and stroked the coarse fur on the ape's head. "Incroyable." (Incredible)

For a long moment, the two men stroked the animal's fur. Finally, Captain Marceau broke the silence: "So where does such a creature come from?"

"Africa. South of Somalia. There is a large valley that runs for hundreds of miles from the Red Sea coast all the way to Lake Victoria. He lives there." Colton said. "We came here by way of the Suez Canal on a steamer."

Captain Marceau nodded. "That is a long and dangerous voyage with such a beast as this." He looked around; a crowd was gathering as word spread of the giant ape being caught. "And that is once it is out of the center of Paris. Another challenging proposal, I should think."

"I can't believe you got it." Jean Paul said as he approached, Pierre trailing behind him. "Pierre, I'm so sorry."

"There's time for that later," Pierre said curtly. "Right now we need to get this thing out of the city before it kills someone else."

"Doc, this thing has a pretty nasty cut on his head. I think it's going to need stitches." Colton switched hands holding his shirt. "I'm keeping pressure on it for now."

"Good, keep doing that." Jean Paul turned to the Captain. "Where is the nearest fire house?"

"Fire house?" The Captain asked, confused with the new line of questioning. "Why?"

"They have teams of horses so they will also have a large-animal veterinarian on retainer. I will need help with the stitches. We need to do that before we even consider trying to

move it. If we can even move it, that is." He added thinking back to how hard the engines on the tug worked to pull the ape aboard.

"What does an animal this large even weigh?" The Captain asked.

"From the depth indicators on the tug, we put it at about eleven tons." Pierre said.

"I see. Oh, to your other question, I would suggest the Triumph Ice House." Captain Marceau pointed out of the park. "They are down the street about three blocks on the left. They deliver ice to the premiere hotels in town and have a large number of horses. That would be closer than the fire house which is another several blocks down, and would also have immediate access to such a doctor. In fact, it may even be the same one."

Jean Paul looked at the ape. "Fine. Can one of your men run and get their veterinarian?" He looked up and around as he put his hand on the ape. "Would your flying machine pick this up?"

"Even with all the ballast dropped and a full load of hydrogen? I doubt it." Captain Marceau shrugged. "But that is a question I do not know the actual answer to." He gestured for the lieutenant who was now standing with the other soldiers about twenty feet away, looking at the ape along with the crowd. "Lieutenant Montgolfier!"

Dutifully the Lieutenant jogged over. "Captain?"

"Find out what the lift capability of *La Franc* is."

"Almost three tons." The man answered without missing a beat.

"I see." Captain Marceau said. "Well, that leaves eight tons to go. I do not see how to pick up eight tons of *anything* out here on a Parisian street."

"Pardon me, Sir but the *La Ville de Paris* could do it; it is a newer design and much larger than the *La Franc*."

"Lieutenant, I did not realize you were such an expert on dirigibles."

"As a Montgolfier, ballooning is a hobby of mine, Captain. I hope to join our military's aeronautical endeavors when the opportunity presents itself."

"My apologies, how did I not realize you were part of that famous family? Well then, as my new expert on the subject, where is the *La Ville de Paris* currently?"

"It is near the Dourdan National Forest. They are doing test runs there."

"Where's that?" Colton asked. "This fellow can't sleep all week here you know."

"It's about fifty miles south of here." The Lieutenant answered. "It could be here within four hours."

"Four hours." Colton whistled. "We'll need more Ether before then."

"But that gives us time to make other plans." Captain Marceau pointed out. "In any case, we will have the *La Franc* put down until it arrives. Lieutenant, please go to the Triumph ice house and have their animal doctor brought here with whatever supplies he will need to deal with this animal's injury."

"And what is that, exactly?" The Lieutenant looked at Colton then at Doctor Aslou.

"Tell him it's a foot-long cut that is fairly straight, Lieutenant Montgolfier." Colton said.

"Oh, and tell him we will need about three feet of catgut and the largest taper point suture he has," Jean Paul added.

"Off with you." Captain Marceau ordered.

"I understand, Sir," The man gave a quick salute then as he left, took two soldiers with him- ostensibly to corroborate his story about a giant ape in the park.

Jean Paul looked at Colton and smiled. "Did you know that in the 1760s, Claude Bourgelat established the World's first school of veterinary medicine?" He pointed southward. "In Lyon, not five hundred kilometers south of here."

"I did not." Colton admitted. "Forward thinkers, you Frenchmen. Did *you* know that the Montgolfier brothers invented hot air balloons in the 1780's?"

"I did know that." Jean Paul said matter-of-factly. "And I am extraordinarily pleased that you did without me telling you."

"Then I should also tell you…"

"*Gentlemen*," The Captain gestured at the ape. "On to more pressing matters; while this ape is indeed a wondrous sight, it

cannot become a permanent addition to the Bois de Boulogne. Forward thinking or not. We need to get it moved to the port. Preferably before it wakes. This means we need to get those anchor chains that were mentioned earlier."

"They are beside the Pont d'Ilena. I arranged for two barges to act as a display area for the ape." Pierre said.

"Fine, come with me, sir." Captain Marceau said to him. "You three have this situation under control here?"

"Yes." Anna answered before the men could.

Captain Marceau pointed at Colton. "Remember what I said my young man, eh?"

Colton nodded. "Oh, I do indeed."

"What?"

Pierre ignored Anna and moved closer to the ape. "This has ruined me." He put his hand on the creature's shoulder. "You've ruined me, you great and wondrous ape."

"You will get through it, Pierre," Anna said as she moved beside him. She put her hand on his shoulder. "I have confidence in you."

"Not so much confidence though." He snapped. "Colton, stay here with this thing. You'll have more of the Ether Sulfate when Frank gets on the ground." He shrugged from under her hand and moved off quickly. "Let's go, Captain."

"You got it, boss." Colton called after him. He snuck a look at Anna. She was stroking the ape's fur. "Something on your mind?" Colton asked. As he swapped hands again, he hazarded a look under his shirt. The bleeding had slowed. "The bleeding has almost stopped but he's going to need stitches or he'll have a real nasty scar."

"He has gotten others." Anna said as he moved her hand to a bare patch on the ape's shoulders. There was a raised jagged scar there where several decades ago a hippo had bitten it. "That will just be one more in a long line of them."

"Hopefully he'll be around to get more scars later." Colton said. "We've still got to get him out of town, out of the country, hell; out of the continent."

"Once that other air ship arrives, we will get him safely on his way home." Anna said even though she wasn't sure it was true.

-25-
FIXED DICE

It had been a long four hours as the *La Ville de Paris* sailed to them. Thanks to having an internal combustion engine instead of an electric one like *La Franc*, it had a far greater range and could be refueled quickly.

By the time the other airship had arrived, Jean Paul and the other veterinarian had sewn up the ape's wound and given it another dose of Ether Sulfate. For payment, Anna took several photos of the veterinarians with the ape.

The two airships hovered over the ape, tethered to the ground as thick mooring ropes were attached to the ape's shoulders, waist and knees. Due to ape physiology, its legs were shorter than its arms making it top heavy so the larger *La Ville de Paris* was positioned over its head and chest with the smaller *La Franc* handling only its legs.

"Do you think these ropes will hold?" Colton asked Pierre as he checked the knots at the ape's knees. Pierre was examining the rope at the other knee.

"Well twenty-two thousand pounds divided by ten ropes is twenty-two hundred pounds each and the sailors said the ropes could handle up to twenty five hundred pounds." Pierre shrugged. "But that is probably when the ropes are new. So the best I can say is I hope they do."

"You're becoming a little bit of a pessimist, Pierre." Colton said. "It doesn't suit you."

"The woman I love and admire dearly refuses to marry me, my reputation has been destroyed, I have lost hundreds of thousands of Francs, and I am responsible for the death of a good man. I am sure you can allow me a little pessimism."

Colton had focused on only one part of Pierre's statement. "Anna turned you down?"

"Twice, Colton. *Twice*." Pierre smirked at him. "I see where your priorities lay, my friend."

"Now hold on Pierre," Colton said as he put his arm around his friend. "She is indeed an amazing woman but we are from two completely different worlds." He gestured around. "I would never be happy pent up in even such a wonderful town as Paris, and she would go stir crazy living on a half-million acre ranch in the middle of Texas with the closest town a dusty forty minute motor cycle ride, or a three hour horse ride..."

"A half million acres? I can't even fathom the size of that." Now Pierre put his arm over Colton's shoulder. "You do not give the outward appearance of being so rich."

"Well, it's a family ranch; my three brothers and I run it together. But land is cheap in Texas. Especially out in the middle of nowhere."

The pair moved off to the side.

"So why do you have so much land if it's not worth anything?"

"It's to keep the hundred and fifty thousand head of cattle. Which by the way are the real money makers."

"I see. I would love to see it someday."

"You are most welcome. I've got a pretty nice homestead set up next to the rest of the family." Colton smiled. "I could teach you to ride a motor cycle. There's really nothing to run into out there besides cows and they tend to move out of the way."

"That sounds wonderful." Pierre said. "Perhaps if I… as you Americans say *lay low* for a while, I could return and rebuild my life."

Colton saw Anna and Frank approaching. "Maybe you could invite Anna. A change of venue might help with your proposal."

"I do not think that's the problem." Pierre said.

"Hey you two, we're pretty much ready here." Colton said. "How are things on your end?"

"We have a tug set up to move the barges to the port. There is a crane at the docks that can pick up twenty tons so it can transfer the ape to *The Monarch*." Frank said.

"*Monarch*? What kind of ship is that?" Colton asked.

"Hopefully not an expensive one," Pierre said sourly.

"It is being provided at no cost." Frank said.

"What?" Pierre and Colton said together.

"How is that possible?" added Pierre

"Mister Trudeau said he was glad to let us use it."

"*Justin* Trudeau?"

"Yes. You know him?"

"Who is that?" Colton asked. "And why is he loaning us a boat for free?"

"He is on the board for the city zoo," Pierre said. "Along with Henry Larchmont who said he wanted to talk to me about acquiring the ape."

"Well, that solves your problem, Pierre. Henry and this Justin fellow buy the ape from you and you're back in the black." Colton remarked.

"They didn't mention buying the ape, just transporting it for you back to Africa." Frank said.

"What kind of ship is it?" Colton asked.

"It's a hundred fifty-five foot, two-masted steamer. It's a nice looking ship."

"But…" Pierre interjected.

Frank continued: "They said the ape would fit in the hold easily so you won't have to keep it on deck."

"That would be safer, I think." Anna said.

"*But.*" Pierre said louder. "Why would Justin Trudeau give me free use of one of his ships to take away the very thing they want for themselves?" He shook his head. "It doesn't make sense."

"Are they friends of yours?" Colton asked.

"Not hardly."

"So acquaintances is a stretch?"

Pierre nodded at Colton. "I've seen them from across the room as they have spoken to their very rich friends. Mister Trudeau financed part of my expeditions to Africa with the understanding that all the animals we captured would go to the zoo when the exhibition was over. And…"

"I'm beginning to not trust this guy." Colton said. "Wait… and what?"

"Let's get this ape moving there." Pierre said, changing the subject.

"What?" Colton asked, confused by the sudden change of subject.

"Captain, are we ready?" Pierre said as he walked toward the man.

"Oui. We are ready now." Captain Marceau said. "Getting this ape off the streets should be done as soon as possible. While the crowds are cooperative."

The crowds around the ape had grown considerably. Captain Marceau had positioned his soldiers around the ape to keep the area as controlled as possible. The only thing that seemed to be in his favor was that the citizens of Paris were passing by the ape in an orderly fashion- there was a steady stream on either side of the ape walking slowly by. The ones brave enough moved in close and ran their hand through the ape's fur. Several with cameras had set up tripods and took photographs, ostensibly planning on selling them to earn a small fortune in the following days.

"If everyone could stand back please," Captain Marceau said loudly. He gestured to his Lieutenant. "Get the airships aloft. We shall follow on the ground to the barge." He looked at Pierre. "Oui?"

"Yes" Pierre responded. He pointed at Frank. "You should go pack bags for a trip back to Africa. If you feel up to the return trip."

Frank sighed. "I suppose I should go along."

"I'll go pack too." Anna said. "Since you asked."

"I did not," Pierre snapped. "I would rather you did not come along. It could be dangerous."

"I agree completely." Anna said. She offered her arm to Frank. "Since you're staying at my home, will you accompany me there so we can *both* pack?"

"Anna, please." Pierre began.

Colton suddenly realized the problem between Pierre and Anna. "Anna, please make sure you're ready to go in a couple of hours," Colton said as he moved beside Pierre. He nudged him with his elbow. "Repeat that," he whispered harshly.

"Yes. Uhm… two hours so please do not dawdle." Pierre gave Colton a glance. "We are on a tight schedule?"

"We are." Colton affirmed.

Anna squinted at Pierre then she and Frank walked off, arm in arm.

To gasps from the crowd, the ape lifted off the cobblestones.

Colton and Pierre also stopped talking to watch.

"Mon dieu." Colton said softly.

Now Pierre elbowed Colton. "Stop it."

"Oh no, I meant it." He tilted his hat back on his head as the ape rose higher. "I could live to be two hundred years old and this right here would be the most amazing thing I will have ever seen." He put his hand on Pierre's shoulder. "So what's the deal with this Pierre Trudeau and Henry Larchmont?"

"Those two are ultra-rich and do what they please to accomplish their goals."

"That's something rich people all around the world do. What of it?"

"Pierre Trudeau wanted to be on the board of directors for the zoo but none of the other members were willing to step down no matter how much he asked them to. A few months later, on a safari hosted by Henry Larchmont, one of the participants was killed."

"Accidents happen on safaris. They can be dangerous, as I know all too well from personal experience."

The pair had been watching the ape rise up to the treetops. "His name was Alexander Puga." Now Pierre looked at Colton. "He was on the board."

"Oh well..."

"Apparently he was dragged off by two lions."

"Lionesses."

"What?"

"Lions leave the hunting to the lionesses. And they live alone when they are adults. As a rule one lion, many lionesses and cubs make up a pride."

"Oh no," Pierre said. "They were emphatic that it was two lions that did it. They witnessed it."

"So two armed hunters watched two male lions who live alone, work together to drag away an armed man and they didn't get off a shot at either of the lone predators? And the armed Mister Puga also did not get off even a shot? Yet no one questioned their story?"

"As I said, they are among the richest men in France. Europe even. One does not question their integrity lightly, especially when the other corroborates their story."

"I don't think getting on that ship is a safe thing to do." Colton said. "They'll get out to sea and pitch us out in the Mediterranean. They'll blame the ape for it and then come right back in with not a witness to contradict them."

"What other choice do we have?" Pierre said. The ape had cleared the trees and was now moving slowly toward the river. They could hear car horns as the ape passed over traffic. "The die has been cast." To make matters worse, the crowd of people was now moving slowly with the floating ape.

Colton looked back at the soldiers. "Maybe I can fix the dice."

"I believe the saying refers to dies for casting metals, not the throwing ones for games of chance."

"Nice; I did not expect a Jean Paul answer." He patted his friend's shoulder. "Go with the ape and get him moved to the *Monarch*. Do you think we will actually be ready to sail in a couple of hours?"

Pierre shook his head. "In reality, dawn is probably more likely."

"All the better." Colton said. "Once you get him safely in the hold, go pack. If you could pack all of my accoutrements and bring them too, I would appreciate it. I will meet you on the boat."

"The saddle too?" Pierre started after the crowd.

"Leave the saddle and my lariat." Colton paused. "Make sure you bring my other pistol, holster, and all my ammunition."

"All of it? You have close to five hundred rounds."

"A wise Frenchman once said 'Luck favors the prepared'." Colton pointed out. "I'll see you aboard. Follow your ape."

Pierre gave a wave over his shoulder before moving to a jog to get ahead of the crowd.

Colton looked around. Captain Marceau had moved away with the ape but the Lieutenant was still there with several soldiers. "Lieutenant Montgolfier, may I have a moment of your time?"

-26-
NAPOLEON'S CORPORAL

Pierre walked onto the gangway of the *Monarch*. It was a large, well weathered cargo ship. A thick smoke stack projected high above the bridge behind the main cargo area. In front of the cargo hatch as well as behind the bridge two thick masks stuck almost a hundred fifty feet into the air to provide even more speed while underway. The main cargo hatch was open like the mouth of a giant clam. He watched as the ape was lowered into the ship's massive hold. Thanks to this ship's size, the ape fit entirely within its main cargo area which was forty-five feet tall. It had been decided that the ape would rest on a large cargo net almost ten feet off the ground. His feet were going to be secured to it so it could sit up but not stand. This would allow people to walk under the ape to clean up after it as well as to raise food up to it without having to get too close.

As Pierre watched, two sailors walked by- they, like the ship looked well-weathered. One eyed him as they passed. He leaned over and whispered something to the other. Pierre's stomach was in knots- he was sure the entire crew had been paid off by the Trudeau and Larchmont. He looked back at the dock, hoping to see Colton.

A man moved beside Pierre making him startle.

"I am sorry, Mister Dudas." It was Captain Marceau. "I was ensuring everything was under control before releasing my men for the night."

"I'm sorry; I am a bit on edge at the moment." Pierre admitted. "Actually, I suddenly have a concern that you might be able to help me with."

"What would that be?"

"We are leaving in the morning. I thought it was to be at dawn but the First Mate tells me it will be with the tide at seven. I need to return home and pack for the trip back to Africa but…" He looked up at the bridge.

"But you are afraid the ship might actually leave sooner?"

"Exactly. Would you be able to position a couple of men here until I return?"

"At seven this morning?"

Pierre shook his head. "No, no. Your men wouldn't need to be here that long. I would be back within two hours. Then I believe I could keep watch until everyone else arrived." He smiled. "It is the time between my departure and my return that concerns me. In all practicality, a steam powered ship does not really *need* to wait for the tide to sail."

"That is even easier done then." The Captain turned to look at the gangway. There were three soldiers standing there. "If you are back in two hours it won't even be midnight so I do not even need to send a relief for these three soldiers. Come, I will alieve your fear." He gestured toward the gangway.

When the two got there, Captain Marceau nodded at one of the soldiers. "Corporal, Mister Dudas here is concerned that this ship may leave while he is retrieving his luggage from his home. You and your two men are to remain here and ensure this ship does not sail until Mister Dudas returns. If things seem unstable, remain until all of his people arrive."

"Yes, Sir." The Corporal said as he rendered a salute. He lowered his hand slowly. "Errr… How far does my authority range, Sir?"

Captain Marceau smiled at the young man. "*You* are to be the epitome of Emperor Napoleon's Strategic Corporal." He gestured at the dock. "Impound the entire *port* if need be."

"Yes, Sir." The Corporal said. He pointed at the Privates. "One aboard the ship, one on the dock. I will stand on the gangplank." He nodded at Pierre. "And I do not plan on getting wet, Sir."

Pierre laughed. "My fears are definitely allayed, Corporal. Thank you for your service." He turned to the Captain and extended his hand. "I will return as quickly as possible."

"Of course." Captain Marceau shook Pierre's hand. "We are at the service of the French people."

"Thank you. I should be here within two hours. I just need to pack my bags and leave an account for my father to take to the authorities. I am sure that the investigation into Mister Berg's death is already underway."

"Good night to you, Mister Dudas." Captain Marceau said. "I will speak with the Captain to make sure he understands the power my mighty Corporal wields, and then retire for the night."

With a final handshake, Pierre ran up the docks in search of a taxi.

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Pierre made it back to the docks in less than two hours. His father, while not pleased with him leaving the country during a murder investigation, took Pierre's statement and bid him a speedy journey in returning the ape to its home safe and sound.

Pierre looked around the docks as he made his way to the *Monarch* but still did not spot Colton. He looked back- there were several porters carrying his and Colton's things. "The *Monarch* is at the end of the pier." He said as he pointed. "If you could take it all below to one of the cabins, I would be in your debt." Without waiting for a reply, he jogged to the gangway.

There was a Private on the dock at one end of the gangway. As Pierre approached, the Private pointed his rifle at him. "Halt and identify yourself."

Pierre slowed to a walk. "I am Pierre Dudas; you are guarding the ship for me, Private." He explained.

The Private looked to the Corporal who was now standing on the ship itself. The Corporal gave him a nod.

"Welcome aboard, Mister Dudas." The Private said as he slung his rifle. "As you can see, the ship waits."

"Were there any issues?"

"No, Sir. There was no attempt to sail."

Pierre patted him on the shoulder as he passed. "Thank you."

"You are the first here, by the way." The Corporal said as he moved to the gangplank.

"No one else?" Pierre looked back at the dock. "Not even an American Cowboy?"

"What? I am sure I would have noticed that, Sir." The Corporal said with a smile before becoming serious. "There
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have been twenty-three sailors in various dress that have boarded the ship since we took watch. Also the First Mate, a navigator, and three engineers left then returned. Not together, that is. And the Captain came aboard shortly after you left. My Captain spoke with the First Mate." He paused for a moment. "I am afraid I do not have an accurate number of personnel on the ship because I do not know who was already aboard when we started our watch."

"Damn." Pierre swore. "Where are you Colton?"

"Do you want us to continue to keep watch?" The Corporal gestured behind Pierre. "Oh, your bags are here so we need to either move to the dock or move to the ship, Sir."

"I can handle it from here, I think." He put his hand on top of his coat pocket. Colton's other pistol was in it. It was loaded and he had another twenty rounds in the other pocket. There were several hundred more in the luggage. "I do appreciate your assistance, Corporal."

"We are glad to be of service." The Corporal smiled. "And we appreciate you hurrying back; the Captain gave us tomorrow off so the evening is ours."

"Off with you then." Pierre said. "The city is yours." He reached into his pocket and took out two fifty cent pieces (enough for eight to twelve beers depending on the establishment). "Drink to our success." He handed the coins to the Corporal.

"Gentlemen." The Corporal said. "Mister Dudas has given us a mission and we shall not fail him."

With that the three soldiers marched off quickly.

Pierre frowned. "Well, that's one problem solved." He gestured at the porters. "If you could cart those down to a cabin, I will separate them myself." Behind them he saw Frank approach. He also had several porters carting his gear. "Frank!"

"Pierre! Anna is right behind me." Frank jerked a thumb toward the beginning of the pier. "Where does our stuff go?"

"If you stay here and keep an eye out for the others, I'll go find out." Pierre answered. "Have you seen Colton?"

"How could we? He was staying at your home and we didn't go there."

"Right." He gestured to all the porters. "Follow me please." He turned and walked onto the ship and toward the

superstructure. At its base were double doors ostensibly leading below deck as well as up to the ship's bridge almost twenty feet above.

When Pierre got to the door, a grizzly looking sailor was coming out. "Excuse me," Pierre said.

"Yes?" The sailor replied. He didn't look at Pierre.

"Do you by any chance know which cabins we will be occupying?"

"I would say you are all one deck down and aft." He pointed toward the rear of the ship. "That way. There are a dozen nice cozy cabins for guests there. Six per side." He still hadn't looked at Pierre. "Take your pick." He said as he walked off.

Pierre developed a knot in his stomach. "Could you put my gear in one cabin, Mister Wiswell's next to mine and Ms. Garnier's across from us?"

The porter in front gave a nod. "Of course, Sir."

Pierre looked toward the front of the ship. There was a group of sailors there milling about. Even armed he didn't want to deal with several soldiers at once. He decided he would speak to the Captain to determine his intentions. With a relegated sigh, he entered the door and started up the stairs. He kept his hand on the outside of his pocket as he went.

When he finally reached the bridge he was disappointed to find only a watchman there. It seemed the Captain was in the galley which the watchman said was also one deck down and forward of the bridge.

As Pierre got to the main deck, he ran into another set of porters. "Whose bags do you have?" He asked.

"We have Doctor Aslou's luggage. Where does it go?"

"Down one deck in the guest quarters. Follow me." Pierre said as he started down the stairs. When he got to the bottom of the stairs, he pointed through a water-tight door. He suddenly realized he wasn't sure which cabins the porters had already put luggage in since he hadn't mentioned right or left sides. "Hmm. Please just put them in one of the first available would be fine, I suppose." He said.

"I'll get the rest of the doctor's luggage into a cabin." The porter assured him.

With another sigh- it was becoming a habit- he started forward.

The galley was at the end of the hallway and reached from one side of the ship to the other forming a dead end. Pierre peeked into the room. There were several dozen tables set up in neat rows with a large serving window that led into the cooking area. All the tables were empty save one. There were three men sitting at it, huddled together. With yet another sigh, Pierre entered. "Excuse me." He called.

When none of the men looked up, Pierre called louder. That time one of the men looked over. "Yes? Can we help you?"

"I am Pierre Dudas; I was hoping to speak with the Captain."

Another man looked over at him. "That would be me; Captain Seville. We are fairly busy at the moment, can it wait?"

"I do not believe so." Pierre said. He put his hand on his pocket in what he hoped was a nonchalant motion. "I won't take much of your time."

The man gestured. "Then come over. I'd rather not be shouted at from across the room."

Pierre quickly moved to the table. The other two men were dressed similarly to the Captain- perhaps the First Mate and a lead Engineer. "As I said Captain Seville, I am Pierre Dudas. It is my ape that is being returned to Africa."

"That is what I have heard," the Captain said sourly. "When I was awoken from a rather nice sleep earlier this evening." He gestured at the map on the table. "We were discussing our best time for Cairo."

"Oh, okay." Pierre said. The knot in his stomach was still there. "What will that be, Captain?"

"We are expecting it to take us five and a half days to arrive."

"Five *and a half*?" Pierre said. It had taken almost twice as long the last time.

The Captain frowned at him. "We may be able to make more time if the weather allows but it is three thousand three hundred kilometers and we can travel about six hundred in a day. Those numbers are hard and fast. Basic mathematics puts us at five and a half days. King Neptune willing."

"Oh, I meant no offense," Pierre said quickly. "I was surprised it would be so quick; it took us almost twice that amount the first time."

"Well, you were traveling the other direction. With the currents is always faster than against them."

The third man at the table chuckled.

"Yes, well then. We leave with the tide for Cairo?"

"Unless you have a different port you'd like us to sail to." The Captain said as he stood. "I have to be honest with you, Sir. I am quite put out that we are making this sailing. We were supposed to be in port for a full week of shore leave as we returned from America just yesterday. Earlier this evening the *owner* contacted me to order me to sail for Africa. At my home. Now, I have worked for this company for almost three years and have never had a reason to speak with Mister Trudeau. Directly or otherwise; I receive my routes from the home office. So I am not sure what strings you have pulled to deprive my men of their five days of hard-earned shore leave, but neither them, me, nor my wife are pleased with how they were plucked."

"I had merely sent a companion to the harbor to try and secure a passage. I assure you, the first I heard of Mister Trudeau offering his ship for our task was when he had returned. I was quite surprised." Pierre noticed that the First Mate was looking the other way during their conversation. "I apologize to you and your wife for the inconvenience, I truly do. Because I am also at a loss."

"Well then," the Captain said. "We are on the same footing it seems." He held out his hand. "I will endeavor to get you to Cairo as quickly and safely as possible."

Pierre shook it. "And we will keep the ape under control to allow that to happen." He said, feeling that the Captain had no nefarious plans for him or the ape. The First Mate was another matter entirely. "Thank you again," He said as he turned and left as quickly. When he got to the hallway, he leaned against the wall and took several deep breaths. He wasn't sure how the First Mate was going to accomplish Justin Trudeau's plans, but he definitely felt like the Captain wasn't aware of them. Unless, as Colton had suggested he was going to be thrown overboard and the ape blamed as well. If there

were two factions aboard the ship- regular sailors and lackeys of Justin Trudeau, he needed to figure out who was in which camp. "Colton, where are you." He said to himself as he headed to the stairs.

Lost in thought, he climbed the stairs without watching ahead of him. When he got to the first landing and started to turn for the second, he ran into two sailors coming down. Bouncing off one, he ended up with his back against the wall. "Sorry, I wasn't watching where I was going." He said automatically. He looked at the sailors. Unlike the others he had seen, these two were clean shaven and very fit looking.

"Mister Dudas?" One said. He was taller than Pierre by a full six inches and definitely more muscular.

Pierre put his hand in his pocket, prepared to shoot right through it to save himself from the two men. "What do you want?"

The taller one moved closer to him and whispered. "Mister Maguire sends his regards."

"What?" Pierre pulled the pistol out of his pocket and swung it back and forth, pointing at both of the men. "What did you do to him?"

The second sailor put a finger to his lips. "Please Mister Dudas, we must be quiet." He looked up the stairway.

"Move away!" Now Pierre pointed the gun at that sailor. "Or I'll shoot!" He hadn't lowered his voice.

"Please!" The first said. "Mister Dudas, we are *with* Mister Maguire. We were in the park when he asked Lieutenant Montgolfier for some assistance in ensuring everyone's safety." He looked down at the gun. "*Please* put that away."

"Where is Colton?"

"The last we saw of Mister Colton, he was in cabin number nine. He sent us to find you. He should still be there." The man pointed down. "Let us take you there. And please put the gun away before someone sees it."

Pierre was torn- the man's story seemed plausible, but going with them into a cabin also seemed dangerous. They did not look at all like any of the other sailors he had seen so far so they could easily have been sent by Trudeau to join the ship's crew. As the owner of the company, he could add whoever he wanted to any ship of his. "I am not sure I am willing to do

that." Now he pointed the gun at the first sailor. "It seems we are at an impasse."

"Oh, wait." The second sailor smiled. "He gave us a password in case you didn't trust us."

"What password?" Pierre said. "We never discussed…"

"We're here to fix the dice." The first sailor said.

The second sailor shrugged. "To be honest, I do not know what that means but he said you would."

"Take me to that crazy American." Pierre put the pistol in his pocket.

"Follow us." The taller one said turning to go down the stairs.

-27-
DOMESTICATED WOMAN

Pierre followed the two sailors to the cabin with a small brass number nine on it. The taller one looked left and right then opened the door. "After you."

Pierre stepped in. The room was small but well apportioned- there was a bed large enough to accommodate a traveling couple, a small table with three chairs and several cabinets that ostensibly served as wardrobes. Even with him, the two sailors, and the three men already there, there was enough room to move around.

"Pierre!" Colton was seated at the table. "I'm glad they found you so quickly." He looked at the taller sailor. "It took the password, didn't it."

"Yes." The sailor smiled. "Do you want us to remain?"

Colton shook his head. "No, wander about the ship to get a feel for the layout while the sailors get used to seeing you about."

"Yes, Sir." The man replied as the two left.

"Colton. What is going on?"

"Gentlemen, if you could also do some reconnoitering, I will get the esteemed Mister Dudas up to speed."

With nods of acknowledgement, the other two men left. Pierre noticed that they were all clean shaven.

"Who are all these men?" Pierre sat at the table. "And how did you get aboard?"

Colton leaned back in the chair. "Have you spoken to the captain?"

Pierre nodded. "Yes, he seems to be of a mind to sail to Cairo. I don't think he is planning anything nefarious."

"I also felt that way about him. The First Mate is a horse of a different color." Colton leaned forward. "So I'm glad the lieutenant gave me five soldiers for our trip."

"You have *five* soldiers aboard?" Pierre gestured at the door. "Ahhh; so the clean shaven ones are soldiers."

"*Armed* soldiers." Colton pointed out. "Personally, I don't want to go for a swim in the Mediterranean and I sure don't want that ape back in Paris where he'd eventually escape again and end up killing more people. Then he'd be put down."

Pierre leaned back. "I agree completely. So what is the plan?" A thought occurred to him. "And how did you get aboard? The Corporal on the gangway said he never saw you come on."

"Well, Colton Maguire the American cowboy didn't make it aboard, but sailor Monsieur Octave Tassaert asked permission to come aboard."

"Octave Tassaert? Isn't he that painter?"

"I was going to be a distant cousin if need be. But the Corporal let me on with the other five without a second look."

"So why are you in hiding?"

"I figure that Trudeau fellow let his men know they needed to be on the lookout for an armed American." Colton gestured at his clothes- he was indeed dressed like one of the other sailors. "So I'll let him think I didn't come aboard."

"That is a good plan. Do you have any idea how much of the crew sides with the Captain?"

Colton shrugged. "I worked a couple of paddlewheels on the Mississippi and from what I've seen, run of the mill sailors just do what they're told. I don't figure any of the deck hands know about any sort of nefarious plan; it's the First Mate that we need to worry about. And maybe an Engineer or two." He held his hands out. "Really that's all Mister Trudeau would need in his pocket."

"And as professional sailors interested in keeping a steady income, they're probably not going to tell him no." Pierre put his hands on the table. "So what is the plan?"

"Well we're…"

"Oh!" Pierre interrupted. He reached into his coat pocket and pulled out the pistol and placed it on the table. "I have your other pistol."

"Keep it. We really need each of us to be armed."

"Everyone? Even Anna?"

"Oh yes, even Anna. I procured a Model 1892 as well as a few dozen rounds for her." He reached into his jacket pocket and retrieved a large leather holster. "It's an eight millimeter

and will put a man down. Heavy so it doesn't have all that much of a kick, single or double action, *and* it's easy to reload. If I can talk them out of it, I'll take this thing home with me when this is all over."

"I don't think she should have a pistol."

"Perfect." Colton patted the holster. "You get to give it to her."

"Colton, now listen." Pierre began.

"No, my friend, *you* listen." Colton interrupted. "Because I'm going to tell you what's wrong between you and Anna."

"What? Nothing's wrong between me and Anna."

"You've told me that twice now she's turned down your proposal. *That's a problem*. And I know what the problem is." Colton pointed at the pistol. "This thing right here."

"A pistol? Because I don't want her to have a weapon?"

"No." Colton said. He rubbed his hands together. "Well, not completely." He paused as he gathered his thoughts- this was neither the time nor the place that he planned to have this particular discussion with Pierre. "Anna is a strong woman. Smart and strong. What is keeping her from being with you is that she is worried that you would take those two things from her. Domesticate her, if you will. Force her to be something she's not."

"That's absurd." Pierre snapped. "That's not true at all."

"Pierre, listen to me. Anna needs a husband that will accept her for who she is right now. Maybe when she's a mother, she'll be a little less adventurous. But right now, what she *needs* is adventure. What she's looking for is a husband that will hand her a gun and say 'if things get dangerous and I can't protect you, you need to protect yourself'." Colton pushed the pistol across the table. "And you my friend are that man."

Both men looked as someone knocked on the door.

Pierre put his hand on the Colt.

"Come in." Colton called. "Bad guys don't knock." He said to Pierre with a smile.

Anna peeked her head around the door then smiled. "Pierre, I was hoping… Colton! Frank is looking for you up there."

"I'm Octave for this voyage." Colton said as he stood. He leaned over the table toward Pierre, putting his hand on the

1892 holster. "You get one, *she gets one*," Colton whispered. He stood upright. "I'll go above deck to let Frank know he can stop looking for me." He jerked a thumb at Pierre. "He'll fill you in on the plan, right?"

Pierre let out a long sigh.

"Right?" Colton said again.

"Yes." Pierre picked up the holster and moved it behind his back as he stood. "Come in Anna and I'll explain the plan."

Colton slapped Pierre's shoulder as he walked past. "Problem solved, partner."

"What?" Anna asked as she stepped into the room. She held the door open for Colton.

"Pierre will explain." Colton patted her shoulder. "See you later and remember; it's *Octave*."

Anna laughed. "All right, Octave."

Colton closed the door behind him. He was tempted to listen in from the hallway but decided to alieve Frank's fears instead. He did hear Anna ask 'so what is the plan?' before he left.

-28-
PEARL HEART

Colton ducked as the crate in front of him splintered from the round hitting it. They had crossed through the Strait of Gibraltar the evening prior. Just after breakfast- once everyone was on deck- several deck hands tried to accost Frank. A scuffle ensued as they attempted to toss him over the railing and he had managed to shoot one of the sailors. The other ran for cover.

Frank ran for his own cover when other sailors started shooting at him. Fortunately one of the French soldiers was with him.

"Frank!" Colton called. "You still okay?"

"So far so good!" Frank called back. "They're not getting me over the railing without a fight!" Several shots from his direction emphasized the point. "We'll keep explaining it to them!"

"We need to find a better position." Colton said. "How are things with you two, Ramie?" He called to one of the soldiers- they were hiding behind several crates to his left, forming a semi-circle. Two others were watching everyone's rear to make sure no one snuck up on them.

"No one ever won a battle by being on the defensive!" The soldier called back.

"I agree." Pierre peeked around the side of the large crate they were both behind and fired a shot. "This is getting us nowhere."

Anna ran up behind them. "What are we going to do?"

"I think…" Colton began as Anna stood and fired several shots over the top of the crate.

Colton and Pierre both pulled her back down.

"Don't do that," Colton said.

"I agree completely." Pierre said.

"So what are we going to do? Is the whole ship against us?" Anna deftly reloaded her pistol. On Pierre's advice, she

had practiced unloading and reloading it for the better part of the first day they were at sea. She snapped the cylinder back into place. "How many of them are there, anyway?"

"I think there are eight or nine in all. Most of the crew is staying below and will just join whoever wins. Or at least I hope so." Colton said. "We need to get to the Captain to see if he can rally some sailors to our cause. Or at least stop these sailors from shooting at…"

Anna stood and fired two more shots.

"*Please stop doing that*!" Colton said as Anna ducked back down right before a barrage of return fire.

"Fine. But just so you know, there are now either only seven or eight of them left now."

Pierre and Colton exchanged glances.

"Well the odds are still in their favor with the number of sailors on this ship; they've got reinforcements galore." Colton said. "We need to move. You and Miss Pearl Heart here head back toward the rooms. Frank and I will try to get to the Captain."

"Why can't *we* look for the Captain?" Anna said. "And who's Pearl Heart?"

"The first woman stagecoach robber." Colton said. "I'm hoping that when you two head back, some of these pistol-happy sailors will follow you. If you think you can make it when you get inside, you can head up into the bridge. I'm pretty sure the Captain is below decks; I saw him there as we came up. But I think holding the bridge is important."

"That sounds like a good a plan as any." Pierre leaned out and fired two more shots. "Let me reload then we'll go. Cover me, Anna."

"There you go." Colton said to Pierre. He turned his head and shouted. "Ramie!"

"Oui?" The soldier called back. "I hope we are going to do something because this is getting boring!"

Colton chuckled. "We are getting ready to move. If you can provide cover then fall back to where we are then we will cover your retreat. When you see Frank move, let them have it!"

"D 'accord!"

Colton nodded. "Frank!"

"What?" Frank called back. He was only ten feet away behind some other crates but the ten feet were directly in the line of fire of the sailors. "Do we have a plan yet?"

Colton thought for a moment. He wanted to give Frank directions that perhaps the enemy sailors wouldn't understand.

"Remember back on the tug where the deck chairs were?"

"Yeah!"

"Head opposite that. I'll meet you at the tree! We're going looking for the new Hogan!" He shouted, hoping Frank would know to head to the front mast where they would go looking for the captain.

"Okay!" Frank shouted back. "When?"

"On the count of how many of us *didn't* get sea sick on the *Waves*" he called back. It was only Colton, Frank, and Doctor Aslou who hadn't gotten sea sick. "Remi, we move on the number of you minus two! Ready?"

"Ready!" They both shouted back.

"Ready?" Colton asked Pierre.

Pierre snapped the cylinder of his Colt back into place. "We're ready, right?" He said to Anna.

"I think so." Anna said.

"Just stay low and move fast." Colton said. He looked toward where Frank was. "One!"

"We'll throw a couple of rounds each at them then make a dash for it." He tilted his head up. "Two!"

"Should I stand up to shoot?" Anna asked. "My aim is better that way."

"I'd prefer you didn't," Colton said. "THREE!" He shouted then fired two shots before scooting to another crate farther forward and to the right.

Anna stood and fired three shots toward the sailors behind another large crate twenty feet away. She hit one of them in the shoulder.

Pierre grabbed Anna's hand and pulled her toward the large double doors leading below, firing over his shoulder without looking as they ran. When they were half way there, a sailor exited the doors. He was holding a pistol. Pierre changed course and turned behind a large pile of netting just as the sailor fired at them.

As the three of them started to move, the two soldiers let loose a barrage of shots then ran to where Colton and the others were previously hiding. They reloaded then fired several more shots.

-29-
CHANGE OF ODDS

Frank ran up to the main mast where Colton was crouched down. "Glad you could make it, Colton." He said out of breath.

"Yeah, me too. These odds aren't looking good for us. They can just pull more sailors from below decks. I mean dozens of them." Colton said. He looked toward the rear of the ship. He had heard several shots from the sailors and return fire from what had to be Pierre and Anna. Doctor Aslou was holed up in his room with a shotgun pointed at the door. "We need to get below. The Captain was in the hallway when we were coming up after breakfast. He's still got to be down there someplace."

A shot ricocheted off the mast making Frank and Colton duck.

"Ramie!" Colton shouted. "Ready to move?"

"Ready!" the soldier called back.

"Let's give them some cover fire so they can get behind those air vents over there." He pointed to two large metal scoops bolted to the deck that provided air to the engine room. "Ramie, head to the air vents!" He stood and fired several shots around Ramie and the other soldier as they sprinted toward him.

"I hope they make it," Frank said as he also provided covering fire.

As they neared, Colton pointed to the air vents. "Over there! That way!" He fired his last two shots as the soldiers reached them.

"I'm going to run out of bullets if we keep this up." Colton said.

"You've got almost five hundred rounds. I brought them myself."

"Sure, sure; but not on me. I'd be walking like a hippo. I've got a couple dozen left then I need to get back to the room to resupply."

"Make sure Doctor Aslou knows it's you." Frank said with a smile. "He looked pretty serious with that shotgun."

"That's convenient because this situation *is* pretty serious." Colton quickly reloaded his pistol.

"They will definitely be coming this way." Frank looked rearward but didn't see anyone to shoot at. "We can't stay here."

"Let's climb down into the hold. There's a door from there into the ship two decks below the galley. I saw it when they were lowering the ape down there. Then at least we just have to watch hallways, not all around us."

"Down into the hold? Colton, I'm not sure an angry ape is better than armed sailors."

Several shots rang out. One hit the deck close to where the two men were crouched down. "I believe I just heard we definitely can't stay here." Colton remarked.

Both soldiers returned fire.

"The hold isn't what I had in mind." Another round dug a groove into the deck between the pair. "But I'll follow you. Ready?"

"As I'll ever be." Colton said. "Ramie, fall back and get below deck!"

"Those other two didn't make it to the doors!" Ramie called back.

"What?" A knot formed in Pierre's stomach. "What happened?"

"A sailor came out as they were going there. They're pinned down behind some nets." Ramie shouted. "We will go below deck and circle around to assist them."

"Okay. We're going through the hold to get below deck to find the Captain."

Ramie replied: "But… into the hold?"

Frank grimaced. "I'm glad it's not just me that thinks it's a bad idea."

"After you get Pierre and Anna, go capture the bridge!" Colton shouted before he ran crouched down toward the main hold, Frank right behind as the soldiers fired several shots

toward the front of the ship. Once Colton and Frank were at the cargo hatches, the two sailors retreated to another hatch and climbed below.

The cargo doors were open allowing air and light in –it seemed to calm the ape to have sunlight and fresh air. The pair ducked behind one of the large hatches, Colton looked over Frank's shoulder into the hold. "Into the lions den."

"I'd prefer lions." Frank said. "Uh oh; there're three of them coming this way. And your soldier friends just ducked down into a hatch." Frank fired a shot at the approaching sailors. While he missed, he did force them to find cover. "I'll go down the far ladder." He gestured with his gun.

The large hold had three rope and wood ladders leading into it from the deck; two on the aft end of the opening and one on the front end on the left side.

"Meet you at the bottom." Colton said as he moved to the nearer ladder. As he started to go down it, he fired two shots, holstered his pistol, and then slid off the deck onto the ladder. He hazarded a look down as he started to climb. The ape was wide awake and looking at him. "Hey there big fella. It's just me, okay?" He said in what he hoped was a soothing voice. As he looked down, he was shocked to see that the ape had untied the ropes holding his feet in place. "Uh oh." He said as the ape stood, grasping the thick cargo net with his feet for stability. It was holding onto the ropes of the cargo net with one hand but the other was free.

The ape rose to full height and narrowed his eyes at Colton. Colton looked up. He was now completely vulnerable on the ladder and didn't even have his gun out to defend himself. He quickly started climbing down the swaying ladder, hoping the ape just left him alone.

As Colton climbed down, he could suddenly feel hot breath on his back. He turned his head around- the ape's face was within a foot of him. "Hey big fella." He said as the ape sniffed him. "It's just me." Several voices made him look up- the sailors were looking down at him. One brought a pistol up to his face, aiming for Colton.

"Please don't be upset with me," Colton said to the ape as he took out his pistol. He pointed upward. "Oooh!" He said.

"OOOOH!" Hoping the ape would see the sailors as a common enemy.

The ape flinched as the sailor shot. He looked up and hooted at him.

The shot missed Colton by mere inches- the bullet buzzing by him like an angry bee.

"My sentiments exactly," Colton said. He stretched his arm out so he could sight down the pistol above his head and fired three quick shots- he was down to just one. One of the rounds hit a sailor in the head causing him to slump over the edge of the opening. The other two pulled back out of view.

Colton sheathed the pistol and started to climb downward as quickly as he could. For good measure he gave another "Oooh!" as a warning to the ape.

The ape tilted his head back and howled up at the sailors, beating his chest in challenge.

Colton was now at the ape's knees and still making progress toward the deck when the ape squatted down then jumped upward. He managed to get one hand on the rim of the opening. He looked down at Colton and grunted.

"Oh yeah, big fella." Colton said. He pointed upward. "Oooh! Oooh!" He hooted at the ape. "That'll change the odds. Give 'em hell!"

The ape swung its legs back and forth twice then heaved himself up onto the deck. Colton heard another roar as the ape straddled the opening. "Frank!" he shouted as he looked around. Frank was already at the bottom of the hold. "Go find the Captain and tell him he needs his men to stop shooting or that ape will tear this ship apart and then we'll *all* end up at the bottom of the sea."

"Where are you going?"

"Up" Colton said. "To see if I can help."

Frank gave a wave then jogged toward the doorway leading into the ship.

With a deep breath, Colton started climbing back up to the deck, almost forty feet away.

-30-
DIFFERENT BIG WATER

The ape sat on the vines looking up at the sky above him. When he awoke and found that his legs here tangled up in the vines, he carefully untangled his feet. He tried eating the vines but they were bitter and dry so he laid back on them and looked at the sky. It was always a relaxing thing for him. Being in a cave was also comforting. He had lived in one for a while a long time ago.

He sat up when he heard the loud sound that came from the white natives' sticks. While they usually didn't hurt, he had received several painful holes from them. How he didn't understand. But he knew he needed to avoid them or stop the natives from using them.

While he was looking up, two white natives appeared over the edge and started climbing down toward him- one in front and one behind. Neither had the long sticks that could hurt him. He stood as the one in front of him got closer. He smelled him and realized he knew this native even though he didn't recognize him; his coverings were different. It was the native that had given him fruit and rubbed his feet. And had shown that he was not the dominant one. The ape took another deep breath to confirm who this was. It was definitely someone who was in the 'not a danger' category.

As the ape looked at the native, it hooted and pointed upwards. The ape looked up to see three more natives. They seemed to have things in their hands but they weren't very long. He wasn't sure what they were. Suddenly several sounds like the long sticks rang through the cave. The ape flinched as he got a cut on his hand. He hooted at the natives above him. Apparently the small things could hurt him like the long sticks.

He looked at the familiar native. He raised his hand- also holding a small thing- and he heard several crashes of thunder. Looking up, he saw that one of the natives above was slumped over. The ape realized that the familiar native was trying to

protect him from the other natives. He let out a roar of challenge to the ones above.

When the familiar native hooted a warning of his own and pointed upward, the ape decided he would go find the dangerous natives before they could hurt him again. He judged the distance to the opening of the cave. Even standing on vines, he was confident he could make the jump. He hadn't been given the bad smelling smoke for a while and his head was clear. Squatting down, he pushed himself up and reached for the edge, managing to grab it.

He swung his legs back and forth like he used to do when he jumped from tree to tree long, long ago then grabbed the edge with one of his feet. The native below hooted again at him as he pulled himself out of the cave. The ape was confused- the cave seemed to be on a very large floating log. He looked around- there was dark water on all sides as far as he could see. That worried him. He enjoyed the Big Water because he could sit on land and enter it. This seemed to have no land; it was all around. He decided he did not like this Different Big Water one bit. A loud sound made him look down. There were two natives at his feet. Not wanting to get hurt, he reached down quickly and grabbed both of them. The natives shouted at him as he brought them up to his face. Not wanting to waste time with them, he threw them both out into the Different Big Water as far as he could. First one then the other. They landed with a splash a long distance away.

Since being in water meant death, he was satisfied that those two natives were no longer a danger to him so he looked around the area. There were a lot of the square things he could throw all around. He was glad to see that since he had gotten really good at throwing them at white natives as well as their floating logs. He picked one up in case he saw any natives. Several loud thunders made him duck. When he realized they were not coming from nearby, he hefted the square over his head preparing to throw it. He moved slowly toward the loud sounds. As he stepped around several other square things, he saw two natives crouched behind a pile of vines. These two looked familiar. One was the female that he liked. There was another native who looked like the two he had thrown into the black water pointing one of the small loud sticks at the other

two. With a grunt, he threw the square thing at the single native. It skidded on the ground and pinned the native against a wall. He hooted at the now dead native in triumph and slapped his chest. More sounds made him pick up another square thing and he threw it toward the sounds even though he couldn't see who was making them.

The ape spotted the trunk of a very large tree- the perfect place to see where the other natives were! He took several quick steps toward it and jumped up grabbing it with both hands and his feet. He looked down and around. He didn't see any natives with sticks of any kind. He looked up- the tree was very tall. Not as tall as the black thing he had climbed recently, but still very tall and thick. Sure it would support him for a long way; he climbed it quickly to get to a better vantage point. As he climbed, a very strange feeling came over him. It seemed like the tree was swaying even though it wasn't. It was like *everything* was swaying. He had never felt anything like this before and he definitely did not like it. He grasped the tree tightly as he became dizzy. He tried looking at the large log below him but that didn't help. He looked out onto the black water and that helped a little but the amount of water around him made him very nervous. Even worse, he was worried he could fall off the tree. If he missed the log he was on, the black water meant death. Scared to move, he clung onto the tree for a long time as it swayed back and forth. Then he slowly climbed back down to the ground. The female native he recognized was there waiting for him. He felt a little better to be off the tree even though the ground still seemed to sway. Seeing the native female he knew helped as well so he sat on the ground in front of her. He pulled a square thing close to him in case he needed to throw it at anyone. Just in case.

-31-
MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Frank opened the door and ran into the hallway, not even bothering to close it. They had been told emphatically to always keep water tight doors closed while the ship was underway, but at the moment he had more pressing matters. He looked left and right as he ran, hoping to spot someone who could tell him where the captain was but the hallways seemed to be deserted. He was on the crew deck so he hoped he would run into someone who knew the captain's whereabouts.

He skidded to a stop in an intersection to catch his breath. "Hello?" He called out. "Anyone here?" He looked in all directions hoping to see someone who could help him. And to make sure no armed sailors were sneaking up on him.

A thought occurred to him. He moved to a door and knocked on it. "Hello?" he said. "Is anyone in there?" When he didn't get a reply, he went to the next door.

On the third door, someone responded "What do you want?"

"I'm looking for the Captain," Frank said. "I want to try and talk to him to stop the violence."

"You're the ones causing the violence!" The person inside said.

"Me?" Frank put his hands on his hips. "I was the one that you people tried to toss overboard out here in the middle of the ocean!"

The door creaked open slightly. A young sailor peeked out. "We are in a sea. The Mediterranean."

"That really isn't any better, now is it?" Frank still had his hands on his hips.

"No, I suppose not." The sailor replied.

"Where would the Captain be?"

"On the bridge of course."

Frank shook his head. "No; he was below when we went on deck after breakfast when some of your shipmates tried to throw me into the *sea*."

"Yeah, I saw…" the sailor began.

"Hold it right there." A voice said from behind Frank. "And do *not* reach for anything."

Frank froze. "I am just trying to find the Captain so we can talk this over." He slowly raised his hands over his head. "That's all I'm trying to do."

"Turn around slowly." The voice said.

Frank obliged. When he finally turned around he was facing Captain Seville. "Captain! I was looking for you." He said, relieved.

"I am sure you were." The man pointed a pistol at Frank. "To commandeer my ship." He raised an eyebrow. "The penalty for mutiny is death, you know."

"Captain Seville, we are not trying to take your ship. We are just defending ourselves." Without realizing it, Frank lowered his hands then pointed up at the ceiling angrily. "Two of *your* sailors tried to throw me overboard just after breakfast."

"That is not likely." The Captain snapped.

"Uhm…Captain?" The young man in the cabin said.

"Who is there?" Captain Seville pointed the pistol toward the door. "Come out at once."

The sailor- he looked to be about seventeen years old- stepped out into the passageway next to Frank. "Yes, Sir."

"Pastis, what are you doing here?"

"I was told to go to my cabin and stay out of the way, Sir." The youth answered as he gestured at Frank. "And there were indeed two sailors who attempted to throw this man overboard just a little while ago. Brooks and Wurtzburger. Wurtzburger was shot."

"Why?"

Pastis shrugged. "I am not sure exactly. I was just told that all the… passengers were to be removed. I said I didn't feel comfortable doing that so I was sent to my cabin."

"See?" Frank said. "I am not a liar."

"I certainly did not give any such order." Captain Seville said. "Who told you this?"

"It was Mister Agard, Sir." Pastis looked at Frank. "The First Mate."

"And where is Mister Agard?" Captain Seville holstered his pistol. He hesitated and looked at Frank. "I am probably not as fast at pulling this pistol as your American friend, but I caution you to not test me."

"Captain," Frank began. "We believe that Pierre Trudeau and Henry Larchmont want the ape at all costs and were planning to have us all thrown overboard. Then the ship would return to Paris for them to unload it."

"I would not stand for that." Captain Seville said sharply.

"I don't believe you would. But I also believe that your First Mate was going to either pressure you into doing it, or he would… have you accompany us. Those men are very powerful, Sir. And rich." Frank said. "But right now, we have more pressing matters."

"What could be more pressing than my ship being commandeered?"

The ship rocked back and forth.

Captain Seville looked down at the deck. "Rogue wave?"

"Rogue ape is more like it." Frank said. "Captain, you need to get all the sailors aboard to stop shooting. If that ape gets spooked or angry, it will tear this ship apart and we'll all end up at the bottom of the Mediterranean."

"Pastis," Captain Seville said. "Get dressed and return to your duties in the engine room."

The sailor gave a quick salute and reentered his room.

"We need to get to the bridge." The Captain said. "Let's go."

The ship rocked again as they made their way to the stairs leading above deck.

As the two men climbed the stairs up to the bridge, a commotion on the main deck made them stop.

"What's going on out there?" Captain Seville said as he went to the large double doors.

"People are shooting at each other out there; be careful." Frank cautioned.

Captain Seville opened one of the doors slowly and peeked out. After a moment, he closed the door and looked at Frank. "The ape is apparently no longer in the hold."

"Oh." Frank moved away from the oval window in the door. "That's not good. Not good at all."

Several shots rang out.

"Do you want to deal with the ape while I speak to the crew?"

Frank shook his head. "No, I do not. That ape has an issue with me so I need to keep my distance."

"I see." Seville said. "Then let us continue up." He gestured. "I can address the crew from the bridge."

The two men climbed the stairs quickly. As they went they heard several other shots as well as some loud crashes like cargo boxes were being thrown around the deck.

When they reached the bridge, two sailors were holding the pilot at gunpoint.

"So this is why we have stopped. What is the meaning of this?" Captain Seville demanded. "And who are you two?" he said to the sailors.

"Privates Boisseau and Chapdelaine" said one as he lowered his pistol. "We are Chasseurs of the Second Army." ('Hunters' or infantry). "We are learning artillery procedures so we may transfer to the Corps d'artillerie."

"What in the world are you doing on my ship?"

"We were sent by our lieutenant to protect the interests of France. Namely to ensure the safe return of the ape to its home as well as the safety of these citizens of France in their endeavors to do so."

Captain Seville looked at Frank. "Are you not German?"

"I am indeed, Captain. But we are working for Pierre Dudas and Anna Garnier who are both French."

"We? You and the American?"

Frank shook his head. "No. I had a partner that was… the ape." He looked at the deck. "It is just me now. We were hired to capture the ape."

Private Boisseau stepped forward. "Captain, we need to get your sailors under control before more people get hurt."

Two shots rang out.

"Mon dieu." The Captain said. He took a large red megaphone off a hook and moved to the door that opened to a small balcony that circled the bridge. He retrieved a microphone from another hook as he stepped out onto the

balcony. "Attention everyone." He said into both mouthpieces so that those below deck would also hear. "Attention! This is Captain Seville. ALL hostilities are to cease." He looked down at the deck. The ape was still sitting at the foot of the main mast. There was a woman sitting with him. It was an unusual sight. "I want all hands on…" he hesitated as he realized having all the sailors on the main deck would probably not be a good idea with the ape there. "I want all hands to meet at the Quarter Deck." He said. It was rearmost on the ship and out of sight of the ape. "And I want Mister Agard brought as well. He is *not* working under my orders and is to be apprehended. Anyone assisting him is also to be taken into custody." He put the microphone back on the hook. He looked down at the deck and spoke through the megaphone. "Madame, are you safe that close to that beast?"

Anna looked up. "I believe I am. He seems more confused than anything else. As long as your sailors stop shooting at him." She shouted back.

The ape looked up at the Captain and grunted.

"This is beyond dangerous." The Captain said. When he spied several of his sailors moving toward the ape and the woman, he lifted the megaphone to his mouth again. "Move to the Quarter Deck from below deck. Do not approach that animal!"

One of the sailors gave a wave and they all retreated to a hatch.

"I hope your men listen to you." Frank said. "I understand Mister Trudeau is quite rich."

"They will." Seville looked at the two soldiers. "But if they do not, I hope these soldiers also place me on the list of Frenchmen that should be protected, eh?"

"Yes, Sir." Private Boisseau said. "We will accompany you to the… Quarter Deck?"

Seville smiled at him. "It is at the rear of the ship, my young soldier. Let us go there now." He gestured at the pilot. "And resume course for Cairo." He added casually.

"But…" The pilot said. "We were supposed to head back to… Sir?"

"As I explained to my German guest just a few moments ago," Captain Seville said. "Mutiny is punishable by death. So I

recommend you increase to full speed and resume our course to Cairo and act like that has always been your intention. To do otherwise would bring your loyalty and intentions into question."

"Yes, Sir." The pilot said as he gave a quick salute. "Full speed as ordered." He reached over and pushed the Chadburn lever all the way forward to the 'Full Speed' position. A bell within it started ringing.

As the Captain left the bridge, he was pleased to hear the bell stop ringing meaning that the other Chadburn in the Engine Room had been moved to the same position, showing that they knew to increase to full speed.

-32-
MAKING LIGHT

Captain Seville had insisted for the most direct route to the quarter deck so Frank put his jacket over his head as they crossed the deck in view of the ape.

As they waited more and more sailors arrived.

When the captain felt that the majority of the crew was there, he hopped onto a box. "Fine then. Who is missing?" He looked around the sailors, hoping to see someone he could trust. "Mister Hawkins." He pointed at the man- the ship's Boatswain (he was responsible for the masts, sails, rigging, anchors, life boats, and cordage). "Mister Hawkins, where is the First Mate?"

The man stepped forward. "He is confined to his cabin along with two other sailors who apparently could not be swayed."

"I see." Captain Seville looked at the men. "Ships functions will resume immediately. We are sailing for Cairo, to resupply. Then we will travel through the Suez Canal for the port city of Massawa in the Italian colony of Eritrea, and unload the ape there. We will not risk trying to transfer him to another ship."

"Captain," Frank started. "Maybe…"

"You will notice, Mister Wiswell that I did *not* phrase that as a question. Nor did I ask for a vote." The captain said sharply. He looked back at the sailors. "I find it hard to believe that some of my crew was acting in such a manner. I will assume it was a temporary lapse of judgement. But from now on, we will act like the professional sailors that we are and bring credit upon France as we accomplish our duties." He looked at Frank. "Do you have anything to add, *Sir*?" He didn't expect him to have anything to say but offered only out of politeness.

"Yes, thank you." Frank said as he stepped beside the Captain. "The ape is above deck right now and it seems Anna is keeping him calm. The best thing to do is just ignore it."

The Boatswain spoke up. "You expect us to ignore a twenty foot ape?"

Frank nodded. "Yes. Do not make eye contact with it. If you have to walk past it, just walk past it." Frank thought back to the ape pushing Colton along the ground as it laughed at him. "If it pushes you over, it is just amusing itself. Do not take offense but just move along. It is not an inherently violent animal. So do not provoke it."

"Huh. That is helpful advice indeed." The Captain said, taken aback. He looked at the crew. "I must remind you that that ape is more than capable of sinking this ship, or capsizing it. Adhere to what Mister Wiswell has said and we will be making our return trip to France in a week."

A sailor raised his hand. "Sir?"

"Mister Peters, what is it?" Captain Seville asked.

"Well, I hope you'll forgive me sir, but I am wondering how our pay is going to work." He looked around. "I was given the impression that our mission was to return the ape to France where we would be… generously compensated by Mister Trudeau." He shuffled his feet. "But that does not seem to be the case now. So I was wondering…"

"I will be personally speaking with Mister Trudeau about… current events. I believe he will be quite willing to listen since my only other recourse would be to speak with the authorities about the events aboard the ship. So I can assure you as well as everyone else that you will all be receiving your current pay. Which is handsome payment indeed."

"Thank you, Captain." The sailor said.

Many of the other sailors nodded- it was a question they had as well but were afraid to ask.

"Let us focus our attention to our duties then. The Mediterranean is quick to punish inattentiveness." Captain Seville said. "Mister Hawkins?"

The Boatswain gave a nod then blew four short bursts through the bronze whistle he wore around his neck. "We are at four bells, fore noon. Everyone to their watch who has a watch." He barked. He gave the Captain a nod.

With a nod in return, Captain Seville turned to Frank. "Fine then Mister Wiswell. Shall we go check on your…" he caught himself and smiled. "Oh, never mind; I will go check on your ape since you two are not on speaking terms."

Frank frowned at the man. "I would appreciate it if you did not make light of the matter, Captain." Tears filled his eyes. "The fact of the matter is that I watched that ape bite the head off my close friend of almost twenty years. So do not make light."

"Oh, I…" The Captain put his hand on Frank's shoulder. "I do apologize; I had no idea. Please keep yourself safe and I will check on the ape." Embarrassed by his crassness, he added "I am truly sorry" before leaving quickly.

Frank took a deep breath then another to try and regain his composure. The last thing he wanted to do was cry in front of the sailors. So he returned to his cabin.

-33-
PORT MASSAWA

The *Monarch* pushed through the blue water, passing numerous small villages along the shore of the Red Sea. It was sailing within a hundred yards of shore to avoid the smaller boats that were fishing farther out. As it passed, people would shout at the ship thanks to the giant ape sitting on the deck near the rear of the ship.

Colton and Anna leaned against the rails watching as people would notice the ape and point. Colton would often wave back to them as if they were noticing him instead of the 21-foot ape.

"I'm going to miss this." Colton remarked.

"What; waving at natives?"

Colton shook his head. "No, the beautiful water here in the Red Sea." He smiled. "And waving to folks too, I suppose." He turned and looked back at the ape. It seemed resigned to sit on the deck and hadn't made any attempt to get off even when they moved slowly through the Suez Canal. "Think he knows we're taking him home?"

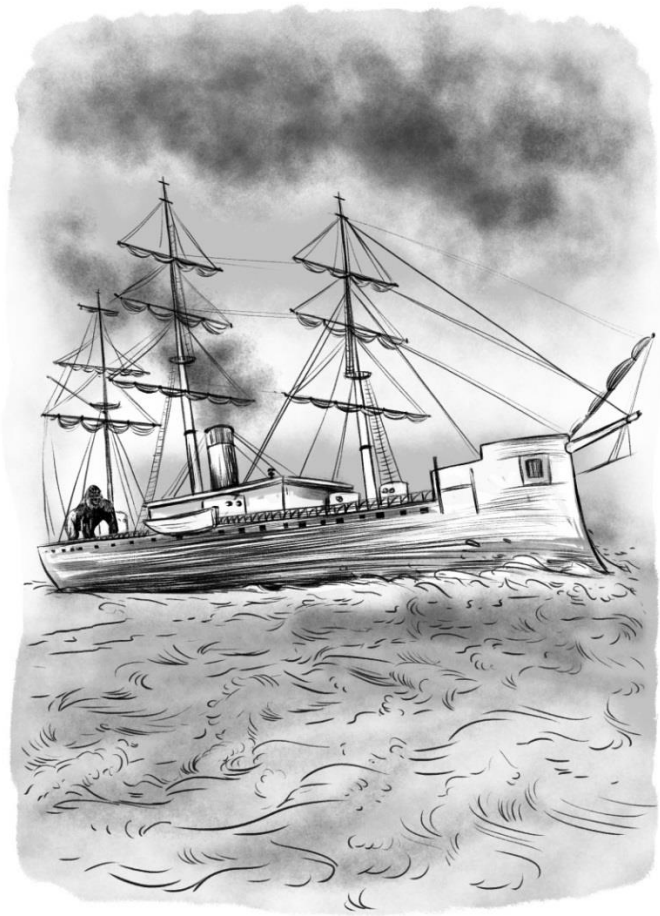
Anna shrugged. "Perhaps. He does seem very intelligent." She had spent most of her time sitting with the ape as it lounged on the deck. Since no one gave it any reason to act out, it had taken to just sitting around in various places on the ship as it sailed. Some of the sailors even interacted with the ape, tossing it bananas or mangos and the ape would respond with a friendly hoot.

"I just hope we haven't domesticated him too much."

"Domesticated? You think we've had that much of an impression on it?" Anna asked.

"I don't know. I just hope it goes back to living in the jungle and stays away from towns and people." Colton answered. "When a wild animal gets too used to people feeding it, it can just start coming into town all the time. Back home

folks will sometimes feed bears thinking they can tame them because they are real smart animals, and if you don't provoke them are pretty gentle and good natured."



"That doesn't sound too bad."

"Sure, until you don't have the food that the bear wants, or you're not giving it food fast enough, or any of a hundred other things that can irritate a bear. Then things get real ugly, real fast." He looked at her. "It never works out, Anna; wild animals are not the same as domesticated ones." He chuckled. "You even need to keep an eye on them in fact; pigs and cows can hurt you quick if you're not careful around them. Horses too."

The pair watched the ape as it moved to the ship's mast and leaned back against it. It closed its eyes for yet another one

of its many naps. It seemed to divide its time between eating, sleeping, and emptying its bowels.

Pierre approached the pair. "Hey you two. How are things?" He looked at the ape. "Asleep again, huh?"

"I really think it's just bored." Colton said. "Back in the jungle, it would be moving around looking for food, interacting with other animals, avoiding predators. All sorts of interesting things. Here it can't do any of that thanks to being surrounded by water. I'm just glad he's decided he's along for the ride."

"Well, we'll be in port in about half an hour, so it can get back to its normal routine then." Pierre said.

"You know, I've been meaning to ask. How exactly have you planned on getting it off the ship?" Colton asked.

"Our resident expert is handling that." Pierre replied.

"Resident expert? You don't mean Doctor Aslou, do you? I don't see how you talked him into something like…"

"I am going to lead it off." Anna cut him off. "He trusts me."

"Oh, I don't think that's a good idea at all." Colton said as he looked at Pierre. "I think you're overplaying the 'do what you like dear' thing."

"*What*?" Anna said.

"No; I'm not," Pierre said. "She's been sitting with the ape for most of this trip; I don't think he would harm her."

"So how do you lead that thing off the ship? You going to hold its hand?"

"If I have to." Anna snapped. "You don't think I can do it?"

"I believe you can do all sorts of things, Anna." Colton said. He thought for a moment. "But… It can't just walk down the gangplank. Hell; I imagine it would just break through the dock if it tried walking on it. Then it would panic and things would get real ugly, real quick. And it sure isn't going to jump in the water no matter how much it trusts you."

"I've been talking to the Captain," Pierre started. "And what we're going to do is run the ship aground just outside of town and get the ape to get off the front. When it gets off, we'll lose eleven tons of cargo so we'll float free of the ground and then we can back away into deeper water." He gestured

into the jungle. "And King Gor can just walk back to Lake Victoria at his leisure."

"Well okay. That does sound like a good plan," Colton said. "I mean… we'll definitely get lighter when it's off so we won't be stuck." He looked at Anna. "But that doesn't explain how you're going to do that."

"The ape trusts me." Anna said. "When we get to where we're going to let it off, the ship is going to nose into the shore. Once we're there, I'll get off the boat over the front and coax the ape to follow me."

"Coax the ape." Colton looked at Pierre. "Coax the ape overboard?"

"We know it can jump a good long way so all we have to do is get it to the front of the ship…"

"Once you wake it up," Colton interrupted Pierre.

"And," Pierre continued, "it will follow Anna ashore. And when we bob back up, we'll reverse engines into deeper waters then dock properly to get her back on board. If we need to get the ape moving in the right direction, we can do that then."

"That's the plan." Colton said.

"That's the plan." Pierre affirmed.

"What's *Plan B* if something goes wrong?"

"Nothing will go wrong," Pierre said.

"Nothing will go wrong?" Colton laughed. "My friend, pretty much *everything* has gone wrong when it comes to that ape!"

"Calm down, Colton."

"Calm down?" Colton laughed again. "Me calm down? I'll…" He looked between Anna and Pierre then turned and walked off.

"Well," Pierre said as he watched the man leave. "That didn't go like I planned." He smiled at Anna. "But I have faith in you."

Anna crossed her arms. "So what is this *do what you like dear* thing that Colton mentioned?"

"Who?"

Anna pointed at the departing Colton. "Him, right there. *Colton Maguire*. He said you were overdoing the 'do what you like dear' thing." She spread her arms out wide. "So has this all been a ruse?"

"No, no. Not at all!" Pierre said quickly then he hesitated. "Well, at first… yes. But then later, no."

Anna turned and walked off.

Pierre let out a long sigh. "That also didn't go like I planned either." He looked at the ape. "It's just you and me now, King Gor. Please be nice to your subjects."

-34-
SHORE LEAVE

"Give him a little nudge," Doctor Aslou said. He was standing on the far side of the ship from the ape along with Colton and Pierre. Frank was still keeping out of sight of the ape. "A nice friendly gentle one."

Anna looked at the trio. "I do not need advice." She looked back up at the sleeping ape. It was snoring loudly. She reached out and tapped its hand. "Wake up." She said.

The ape opened one eye and swiveled it down to look at Anna.

Anna smiled up at the ape. "We're home." She pointed at the front of the ship. "Let's go." She pulled on one of the ape's fingers. It was larger around than her arm. "Come on now."

The ape snorted at her and closed his eye.

Anna put her hands on her hips. "Really? You're going to ignore me? Come on now." She pulled harder on its hand.

The ape looked down at her- now with both eyes. It wasn't an angry look- more curious than anything else.

Anna pulled on his finger again then started to walk away, pointing as she went. "Come on."

"Give him a hoot." Colton suggested.

"A what?"

Colton pushed off the rail and walked to her. He looked up at the ape. "Hey there fella." He pointed where Anna was pointing. "Oooh, Oooh!" He hooted. He took several steps that way then hooted again.

"That's absurd. I'm not going to do that."

"Suit yourself, Ms. Expert." Colton said. He bent over and let his arms hang down. "Oooh!" he said again as he made a little jump. He pointed at the front of the boat.

"I'm definitely not going to do that." Anna said.

"If it helps any," Pierre smiled wide, "I'd love to see you do that."

"I'm still angry with you, in case you've forgotten."

"Let's go." Colton took Anna's hand. "He'll follow along, I'm sure of it." He raised his other hand and pointed. "Oooh! You're due for some shore leave pal, so let's go!"

The ape stood and leaned on the mast. When he looked where Colton was pointing, his eyes got large seeing the jungle.

"Oh yeah, he's coming along." Colton said. "Just ke…" his voice trailed off as the ape grabbed hold of the mast. "Oh hell."

The ape started climbing up the mast, carefully moving around rigging as it went.

Pierre moved beside Anna and Colton. "Once again, this isn't how I planned this to go."

"Maybe you're planning for the wrong thing." Colton said. He let go of Anna's hand and pointed. "Look."

Anna and Pierre looked to where Colton was pointing; a large crowd of natives was gathering on the shore. They were looking at the ape. Many of them had rifles. "We need a really quick plan to deal with natives shooting at our ape and ruining his good mood."

"Oh no." Pierre put his hand on Anna's shoulder. "You don't have that pistol on you still, do you?"

"You know we still have an argument that needs…"

"Anna!" Pierre snapped. "Forget your precious feelings for a moment. People are going to get killed. *Do you have that pistol*?"

"Yes." Anna answered.

"Good. You and Colton get ashore as quickly as you can and try to disperse that crowd. I'm going to get as many sailors as I can to join you." Without another word he turned and jogged toward the double doors that led up to the bridge.

"Anna," Colton said. "He really does love you. And he is truly trying to adjust to your… free willed ways. You need to give him the benefit of the doubt."

Anna pulled the pistol from the pocket of her skirt. "I suppose so. So what's the plan?"

Colton looked at her pistol. "Keep that out of sight for now. Let's go say hello to the locals and find someone who is in charge. I hope we get to whoever that is before that ape decides he's ready for some shore leave." He looked up the

mast- the ape was still climbing. "I hope he doesn't try to go to the very top. Come on, we need to hurry."

When Colton and Anna got to the front of the ship, Colton looked down. "That's kind of a long way down. Especially since that water is probably pretty shallow. This ship can't take more than fifteen feet of water. It doesn't need anywhere that much water up at the bow. Probably ten feet or so." He smiled at her. "Of course, you only swim on the top couple of feet anyway, right?"

The ship had run aground nose first and had stopped almost thirty feet from shore. Even with the shore moving up away from the water, the nose of the ship was still almost twenty feet above the surface of the water.

Colton moved to the anchor windlass. It was a large spool that the anchor chain and rope played through as it was lowered. The chain disappeared through a large hole into a storage area below deck. "We'll climb down the anchor!" He looked around and spotted a sailor. "Hey sailor, drop the anchor so we can climb down! We need to beat that ape to shore."

The sailor walked over to him. "I would have to ask the Captain before I dropped the anchor." He looked at the shore. "We need to be able to pull back from the shore and we can't do that with the anchor…"

"Just drop it long enough for us to climb down then bring it back up," Colton cut him off. "You can't back up until the ape is off the ship anyway."

The trio looked back at the mast.

The ape was over half way to the top -almost eighty feet up. It had stopped and was looking out over the jungle.

"And that's going to be soon." Colton said. "Come on, I don't know how to work this thing."

"Stand back." The sailor pushed a large lever and the huge spool freewheeled as the anchor dropped into the water with a loud 'sploosh'.

"Okay, as soon as we're down, raise it back up so you're ready to get off the sand." Colton said. He moved quickly to the railing and swung his legs over. "Just use the chain like a ladder." He said to Anna as he disappeared from sight.

"What's going on down there?" The Captain shouted through the ship's public address system. "Why is the anchor down?"

Anna waved to the sailor. "Thanks!" She said as she went to the rail and climbed over herself.

The sailor looked back to the bridge. Captain Seville was standing on the small balcony in front of the bridge. He gave the sailor a wave when he saw what was happening.

The sailor went to the railing and looked down. Once Anna was in the water, he turned to go back to the windlass to raise the anchor. He was sure that she would have moved away from the anchor by the time he had walked back, so it would be safe to raise it. The sooner they could pull away, the better. Half way there, the deck lurched to the side. He looked at the mast.

The ape had leaned out, holding onto the mast with one hand and one foot causing the ship to list severely. With his other hand he slapped his chest several times as he howled.

Hurriedly, the sailor raised the anchor. When he looked back toward the bridge, the Captain had already disappeared back inside. Ostensibly waiting for the chance to reverse off shore. The sailor hoped they just backed away and sailed north for the Mediterranean and just left the man and woman and especially the ape ashore.

The ape howled again as the ship righted itself. The sailor looked up to see the ape climb even higher. Apparently it wasn't able to find what it was looking for.

-35-
JUNGLE!

The ape felt someone pulling on his hand. The past few days had been very calm so he knew he wasn't in danger. In fact, he had decided to sleep outside instead of in the cave and the natives did not seem to care. It was confusing because the natives on the large log seemed to not care that he was even there. He opened one eye and looked down. It was the female native. She had been very friendly, sitting with him and even eating with him. She was nothing like his friends the elephants, but even so, the company was comforting.

The native was pulling on his finger and chattering. It seemed like she wanted to play but with the Different Big Water all around, he did not want to get too close to the edge playing so he ignored her and closed his eye.

This time she pulled harder on his finger so he looked down at her, unsure of what she wanted.

The male native he knew came close to him now and hooted at him. He knew from past experience that this native was actually helpful, pointing out dangers. So when he hooted and pointed, the ape looked in that direction. He was prepared to throw some of the large square things if he needed to.

The male native seemed excited about something but he didn't hear any of the cracks of thunder that caused him pain. With a sigh, he stood and leaned against the big bare tree. He looked where the native was pointing and hooting.

Jungle!

The ape got excited. There was a large jungle in front of the log. It wasn't familiar to him but really, most of the jungle looked the same except for the trees he had marked to warn the leopards and lions that the area belonged to him. He tried looking over the trees, hoping to see the mountains. Those would be something he would recognize even from a distance. And the big falling water. But he couldn't see over the jungle.

The big bare tree seemed very solid. Even though it didn't have branches, it did not seem to be rotted. Deciding not to go to the very top, he started climbing up it, hoping to see the familiar mountains beyond the jungle. Then he would know which way to go to get back to the Big Water. And his elephant friends.

As he climbed, the natives below him chattered and ran about. He ignored them. Finding the mountains so he knew which way to go was the only thing that mattered. After everything that had happened, he decided that he would not go back out on the Big Water on the log. If it started to move, he would get off of it and then find this way back home from some other large tree. And if *any* natives -dark or light, friendly or unfamiliar- got in his way, he would *not* let them stop him.

-36-
THE KING'S PROCESSION

Colton clambered down the chain. Since the anchor had only gone down a mere twenty feet, it was chain the entire way. Anchors typically had a length of chain attached to them to help weigh down the anchor then had thick rope for the majority of it. Having a hundred fifty or two hundred feet of thick chain would be unnecessary weight- thirty or forty feet of chain to keep an anchor on the bottom and the rest as thick line worked just as well.

When he got to the water, he pushed away from the chain and fell in. It was over his head. Swimming back to the surface he turned and swam for shore. When he was within ten feet of it, he was able to get his feet under him and walk out.

Colton looked back up at the ship- Anna was almost half way down. "You're going to have to swim when you get to the bottom; it's really deep. I guess it's a little too late to ask if you can swim, isn't it."

"Oh, I can swim." Anna said as he climbed down. "I'm more worried about crocodiles!"

"With the ship running up on shore and that anchor dropping in, I'm sure they're all out of the way." Even so, he drew one of his pistols and moved to knee deep in the water. "I'll keep an eye out though."

"Thanks!" Anna said as she moved clumsily down the chain.

"Put your feet through the loops and use it like a ladder," Colton suggested.

"Stop pestering me!" Anna said back as she worked her way down the chain slowly.

"We're trying to beat the ape to shore you know." Colton said.

When Anna finally reached the water and dropped in, she thrust her pistol above her head; she had been holding it in one

hand and only climbing with the other. She disappeared for a moment then bobbed up, pistol still in the air.

"What are you doing?" Colton laughed at her as he holstered his pistol.

Anna swam to shore keeping the pistol out of the water the entire time. When she was finally able to stand, she was out of breath. "I was keeping my powder dry!"

"That's just an expression nowadays." Colton laughed again. "That pistol fires sealed bullets. All you have to do is shake the water out of the barrel and it's ready to use." He drew one of his Colts and shook it vigorously. "Ready for use." He said as he put it back in the holster.

Anna put the pistol in her pocket. "Now you tell me."

"You've loaded dozens of nice neat sealed bullets into that thing." Colton gestured at the crowd. "Let's talk to the locals."

They approached the natives who were all watching the ape. It was still on the mast looking down at them.

"Ciao signiori. Buon giorno." Colton said. (Hello sirs, good day.)

Several of the men responded in kind.

Colton looked at Anna. "Well, that's all the Italian I know."

"Seriously?"

"Yes, I told you that before on the river. If they speak Cherokee, we're set." He looked at the crowd. "Osiyo unalii" ('Hello friends' in Cherokee).

"You're ridiculous." Anna said as she stepped in front of Colton and addressed the men in Italian: "Hello. We want to return the ape to his home. We need you to let him pass in peace. Who is in charge here?"

Colton smiled at Anna as she spoke Italian.

A man stepped forward. "Why have you stopped here? This ape will destroy our village as it passes."

Anna shook her head. "No, it has been on our ship since we left France a week ago with no incident." She said, feeling that a small lie was okay. "If you do not provoke it, it will just walk by. It lives next to Lake Victoria."

"I do not know that lake." The man replied. "There are no lakes close by so you should take it someplace else far away from our village."

"Colton," Anna said, switching to English, "How far are we from Lake Victoria?"

"What; on foot?"

"Of course; is there any other way?" Anna answered.

"Eeesh. I'd say a good two, three weeks of steady walking. That's some pretty thick jungle out there. Which is why I highly recommend we do not do that."

"The lake is a very large one two or three week's walk from here southwest through the large valley. It is at the end of the river that runs to the sea to the north." Anna told the native man.

"Oh." The man nodded. "There is a chain of large lakes at the end of the valley. That is where it is from?"

"Yes." Anna looked back at the ship. The ape was no longer on the mast. "Please put your guns away or the ape will get upset. If it sees them it might attack."

The man looked at Anna for a long moment as he considered what she said. Finally he turned to look at the crowd and addressed them in their native tongue as he gestured at their guns and the ship.

"I hope he's telling them to put their guns away." Anna said to Colton.

"I've no idea what anyone is saying." Colton admitted. "But at least it all sounded friendly enough. Italian, huh?"

"Yes. That's why Pierre sent me; he speaks Spanish and a little Russian along with English." She shrugged. "After all, this has been an Italian colony for almost eighteen years." Anna said. She looked back. The ape was standing near the front of the ship looking down at the water.

"Maybe it's too far for him to jump? He sure doesn't like water."

"Here, I'll get him." Colton said.

"Wait!" Anna said as Colton walked to the water's edge.

"Oooh!" Colton shouted to the ape as he raised his hands over his head. "It's me again, pardner! You're almost home."

"That man is mad," the Eritrean said. "What is he doing?"

"They seem to have an understanding," Anna answered in Italian.

"Americans."

Anna just nodded.

Colton stepped forward until he was waist deep in the water. "Come on down!" he carefully moved forward because he knew there was a steep drop-off but wasn't sure where it was. However he was sure the ape could jump to where he was standing and would be less than knee deep. He bent over and slapped the water. "Oooh! Come on it; the water's fine."

The ape looked down at the water then again at Colton. He took a step back then leapt over the railing. He landed about ten feet in front of Colton then fell back into the water because of the steep drop-off.

Colton was soaked again as the ape fell backwards. He started to take a step forward to help it then decided there was really no way he could.

The ape thrashed in the water on its back then got its feet under it- it was up to his thighs.

"Nice!" Colton said with a smile. "Messy but very nice." He splashed the ape. The water only reached its belly. "You're back in Africa. Oooh!" He added as he pointed at the jungle. "Oooh!" He splashed the ape again.

The ape hooted back at Colton then put his hand in the water and pushed it forward. A three foot wave knocked Colton onto his butt. The ape put his head back and laughed and hooted.

Colton worked his way to his feet. "I'm glad we're pals."

"Colton!" Anna shouted from shore. "Be careful with it."

"Said the woman who would sit and have lunch with it every day." Colton said as he waded out of the water. Once he got to shore he picked up his foot with his hand and twisted his leg up. Once his heel was above his knee, water poured out of his boot. He did the same to the other one. "Okay, now what?"

The ships engines roared to life as it pulled back.

The ape turned to look. He slapped his chest and howled angrily at the ship.

"You tell 'em." Colton said. He moved beside Anna. "We'll lead it through town then it can just go on its way."

"Sure." Anna said slowly. "I suppose so."

"Wait; are you going to miss that big ape?"

Anna shrugged. "I think I will. But we really need to get him back to where he will be safe."

They both looked at the ape. It was still howling at the ship as it slowed down, pivoted then started chugging forward toward the docks a hundred yards ahead.

"Hey, big fella," Colton shouted.

"Oooh!" Anna said.

Colton looked at her with a smile. "So French, English, Italian, and now ape. Nice."

The ape turned and grunted at the pair.

Colton pointed. "This way." He started walking and Anna fell in step beside him. They were both looking over their shoulders at the ape.

The ape gave a satisfied grunt at the departing ship then sloshed to shore. The natives all moved to the sides creating a corridor for the ape. The men who were armed were holding their rifles behind their backs.

"Look," Colton said. "It's like a King's procession."

The pair continued to walk, looking over their shoulders as the ape passed between the men. When they got to the huts of the village they looked forward to make sure they took the easiest path through. The town was laid out as most African villages were; one large main road with houses very close to each other on either side. There were very few side roads with houses behind the 'main street'. Having the houses in a row made it easier to defend the village because it created a straight 'outside wall'. The main road was a broad thirty-foot-wide hard packed dirt that traveled in a gradual arch through the jungle-ostensibly where the trees were easiest to remove.

When they got to the other side of the village, they looked back. The ape wasn't there.

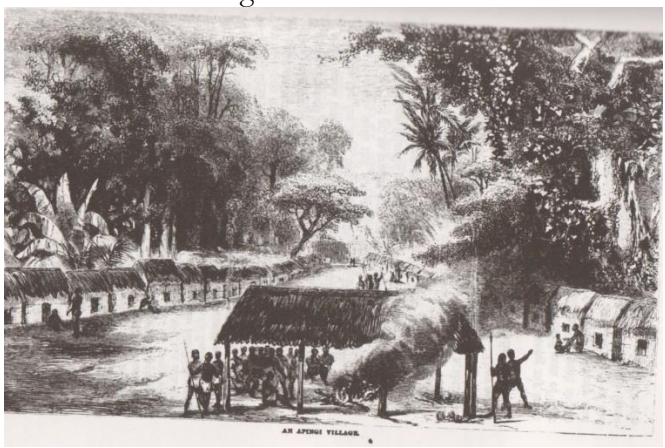
"Well, Hell. How did we lose a twenty-two-thousand-pound ape? Pierre is *not* going to be pleased." Colton said. Since the road curved, they were only able to see about fifty yards down it before huts and trees blocked his view.

"He can't be too far off." Anna said as she turned and started back into the village. "Maybe he got distracted."

The ape came into view. He was walking slowly on all fours looking at all the huts suspiciously as he went. There was a growing crowd walking behind it.

"I wish you had your camera." Colton said. He smiled. "But it would have gotten soaked, I think."

"I think so too. I have plenty of photos of the ape. Maybe Pierre will think to bring it with him."



The ape moved up right to the pair and looked down at them. He grunted.

"I don't know how long this guy is going to stick around," Colton said. "But we better keep moving before it gets upset." He took Anna's hand and started leading her forward. "Oooh!" He said over his shoulder to the ape as he pointed with the other hand.

The ape dutifully let them lead him through town. By the time they got to the edge of the road, it seemed like every villager was following along.

"Okay, I guess we just shoo him off?" Colton said.

"Anna!" Pierre said as he jogged up to them. "I was worried you two would have problems." He looked up at the ape. "But I guess everything is going okay." He held up Anna's camera and snapped a photo of the ape with all the villagers behind it. "Wow." He said as he lowered the camera.

The ape looked ahead into the jungle expectedly.

"He's ready to go, I think." Colton said.

Anna stepped forward quickly and hugged the ape around the leg. "I'm going to miss you!" She said.

The ape looked down at her and hooted. He extended a finger and rubbed her back.

"I think he's going to miss you too." Colton said. "Oh, what the hell. When will I get this chance again?" He stepped forward as well and hugged the ape's other leg. "I'm going to miss you pardner."

Pierre snapped a picture.

Anna and Colton both looked back at him.

"For scale." Pierre said as he snapped another one.

The ape reached down and poked Colton gently. As Colton stepped back, the ape pushed him. The ape tilted his head back and laughed and hooted as Colton fell backward.

Colton put his hands on his knees. "I guess that's as close to a good bye as I'm going to get." He looked up at the ape and hooted at him loudly.

Anna let go of the ape's leg as it stepped forward right over Colton. As he passed Pierre he looked down and grunted at him.

Pierre snapped another photo. "Stay safe, you magnificent animal."

Without looking back, the ape strode purposefully into the jungle, disappearing from view.

Pierre, Colton, and Anna watched the jungle for a few minutes, hoping to catch another glimpse of the ape but it seemed to have disappeared among the trees.

-37-
A COUNTER OFFER

"Wow." Colton finally said. He was still sitting on the ground. "That was a truly amazing experience."

"Indeed." Pierre said as he offered his hand to Colton. "And I appreciate all you've done for me, I truly do."

"Whoa there." Colton said as he brushed off the back of his pants. "That sounds like you're firing me all of a sudden."

"I think I am." Pierre said. He gestured at the path as he started to walk. "We made some powerful enemies back in Paris. It might be best if when we get there, you go re-book that first class ticket to America and just leave."

"That's a terrible suggestion," Colton replied as he fell in step beside his friend. "Do you have a 'plan b' or do I need to come up with one?" He looked at Anna who had also started walking. "I'm sure you can come up with a better plan than that, right Anna?"

"I don't know, Colton." Anna said. "Maybe it's for the best. We've seen what they are capable of; I'd hate to see you hurt on our account."

They walked in silence until they got to the pier. It was deserted except for a native fishing about halfway down it. Boxes and cargo were positioned along it, ostensibly for ships that hadn't arrived yet. The *Monarch* was tied to the dock but the smoke coming out of the smokestacks indicated that the boilers were still hot and the captain was ready to leave at any moment.

Colton exhaled loudly. "No, I've stuck it through this long. We'll deal with those two together." He snapped his fingers. "Or hey, maybe you two come with me to Texas until this all cools down. Give it a year or two then go back to Paris. Right?"

"No, we need to deal with them directly when we get back." Pierre said. "Remember I still have an exhibit in the exposition. I need to get back and see how that is going. The

exposition runs for months, remember." He thought for a moment. "But maybe we should meet them someplace public, I think."

The trio started walking down the pier toward the gangplank.

Colton gestured at the smoke. "The boilers are still running. I think Captain Seville is interested in getting back as soon as possible. Hey, maybe we can *all* go talk to this Mister Trudeau together. The Captain has to pull some weight right?"

As they got halfway down the pier, they came to two large metal cages. There were two adult apes in one and two young apes in the other.

"What in the world is going on here?" Colton said. "What are these apes doing here?"

"I don't like the looks of this at all." Anna said. She stepped closer to the cage as she examined the ape.

Colton waved at a native that was sitting on a crate closer to the ship. He was fishing with a cane pole. "Excuse me!"

The native looked at him.

"Crud. We might need Anna's Italian." Colton waved again.

"What is it?" The native said as he stood, pulling his line out of the water.

"Oh good." Pierre said. "We were wondering what was happening with these apes. Were they terrorizing the village?"

The man walked over to Pierre, cane pole over his shoulder. "No. They were trapped earlier this week in the jungle. They are being sold later today to a ship from Shanghai."

"Shanghai?" Colton said.

The native shrugged. "They come every few months."

"Sold?" Pierre asked.

"To who?" Colton added. "Are they going to a zoo?"

The man shook his head. "No, no; these apes don't go to zoos. They go to the wet markets."

"What's a wet market?" Colton asked.

Anna frowned. "Those are markets in the Orient where live animals are sold."

"To go to a zoo?" Colton asked.

The man shook his head again. "No, bwana. These hold great magic." He gestured at the apes. "Strength, potency, and bravery."

"They use them to made medicinal herbs." Pierre said. "Like they do rhino horns."

"What, rhino horns?" Colton looked at the apes. "That's terrible."

"Ekisodde doggo." The native said with a shrug as he walked off. "It big money, bossman. Big money."

Colton looked at Pierre. "What'd he say?"

"Ape magic." Pierre said with disgust. "Colton, how do you feel about stealing?"

"Stealing is wrong," Colton said matter-of-factly.

"We can't just leave them here. To that." Anna said. She turned to look at the two men. "We just can't."

Colton nodded. "Yeah, I don't think I could just walk past them and get on that boat and sail home knowing where these apes would end up." He gestured at the jungle. "So you think we can get them out of the cages and out into the jungle? I mean, that wouldn't really be stealing; that'd be releasing."

"No, that wouldn't work." Pierre shook his head. "They came from much farther inland, probably where King Gor was from. They'd just get caught again. Probably before they even got out of the village."

"So you want to… steal them?" Colton looked at the ship.

Pierre shrugged. "We made some powerful enemies in Henry Larchmont and Justin Trudeau. If we bring back some apes that they can put in their zoo maybe that will satisfy them."

"To be put in a cage for the rest of their lives?" Colton shook his head as he put his hand on his pistol. "I'd feel better with myself just putting them down to put them out of their misery than ending up in another cage in Paris."

"I see you haven't been to the zoo there in Paris." Pierre said.

"No. It wasn't something that interested me." Colton admitted.

"It is very large and has huge enclosures for the animals. Trees and such. The ape area is a full acre. And they would be treated well." Pierre sighed. "Yes, it's a cage, but it's one

without bars. There's a wall on the back and it's open to the public on the front. There's a moat that keeps them from getting out."

"That doesn't sound as bad as a cage." Colton frowned. "I suppose."

"So about stealing." Anna offered.

Colton looked at the apes. The male and female were staring at them suspiciously. The two younger ones were cowering together, holding each other close. "Okay. I suppose I can live with myself being an ape rustler. I think King Gor would approve. And I guess we wouldn't be returning empty handed. Maybe that would give us a little bargaining leverage. A counter offer even." He looked at Pierre. "As long as you're shooting straight about that zoo being a nice place."

"It is indeed a large and well-funded zoo. And the animals are well taken care of."

"They really are." Anna added.

"So what's the plan?" Colton asked. "Do you have a *good* plan?"

Pierre pointed at the large steel wheels affixed to the bottom of the cages. "I plan on pushing that cage with the two adults with Anna's help and you're going to push that one with those two kids in it."

"That sounds like as good a plan as any." Colton looked back down the pier. "And I say we do that before anyone shows up."

"Okay, let's go."

Colton grabbed the cage with both hands and started pulling it. Once it got moving, he moved behind it and pushed it toward the gangplank. "Do they hang ape rustlers in Africa?"

"I say we don't wait to find out." Pierre said. He started pushing on the cage. "Anna, my love, if you would help me steal these apes, I would be forever indebted to you."

"It will be my pleasure." Anna said with a smile as she leaned forward and started pushing. As the cage started to roll, the apes moved to the far side of it.

"Hey, you know what?" Colton called back at them. Since his cage was lighter, he was almost at the gangplank. He looked onto the ship. "Get this cage aboard." He said to a sailor. "We'll get them stowed below properly once we're under

weigh." As the sailor started down the gangplank, Colton jogged back to help his friends push the much heavier cage.

"What's that?" Pierre said. He was starting to sweat as he pushed.

"I happen to know this gal who works at the National Museum of Natural History."

"You do?" Anna said.

"Yes, in fact she works in the anthropology department. I'm sure we could work it out that she is involved in overseeing the care of these apes. To make sure they are treated right." Colton got behind the cage and started pushing also. "And from what I know about her, no one pushes her around." With three pushing, it moved quicker down the wooden pier. "*No one*."

Anna laughed. "You truly are ridiculous."

When they got to the bottom of the gangplank, two sailors were pushing the cage with the young apes up it. Their cage with the two adult apes was so heavy they weren't able to push it over the thick lip of the gangplank.

"Anna, go tell the Captain that we're ready to sail right now. By the time they get the lines untied, we will have this cage aboard." Pierre said.

"Thank you." Anna leaned in and kissed Pierre on the cheek, edged around the cage then ran up the gangplank.

"Yeah, that gal is really coming around, my friend." Colton said.

"Indeed she is. I appreciate your help with understanding her."

"She's a simple gal, Pierre." Colton said with a smile. "Get into shootouts, steal some apes with her, and you're heading toward matrimonial bliss." He elbowed his friend. "Trust me."

Pierre took a step away from the cage. "You think I should propose to her again?"

Colton smiled wide. "Oh yeah, definitely. I say you do it while we're out on the Mediterranean with the moon out. I can't imagine she'd turn you down."

"What is that American saying; 'the third time is a charm'?"

"That's it exactly."

Pierre looked at the apes. "I hope this satisfies them. They aren't as impressive as King Gore. I can't imagine anything would be."

"But they're getting all those other animals you caught as well."

Pierre shook his head. "Those were already going to them for their financial help, remember? They probably won't be pleased with just normal sized apes."

"There's nothing else out here to steal." Colton looked around. "Even the ship is already theirs."

"Hopefully it will be enough."

"Oh I've got just the ticket!" Colton snapped his fingers. "In my conversations with the Cherokee and Shawnee back home, they've mentioned this huge beast that lives in the forests and mountains in America."

Pierre frowned. "Another ape?"

Colton shook his head. "No; there are no apes in America. This is something else. They call it Tsul'Kalu or Sasquatch. It's big, not King Gore big, but still big and covered with hair."

"I don't know." Pierre said. "One giant beast was enough of an adventure."

"They say it's only seven or eight feet tall. That will be tiny after what we've just dealt with."

"I suppose we can save that as our 'plan b' when we speak to Mister Trudeau and Mister Larchmont. I hear it's important to have a 'plan b'."

"It is my friend." Colton said as the two sailors came down the ramp. He looked at them. "You two pull and we'll push. Just mind the teeth."

With a nod, the sailors grabbed the cage and started pulling. With the four men working together, they got the cage over the lip of the gangplank and started slowly rolling it toward the ship.

When they were almost to the top, the ship's horn sounded one long blast indicating the ship was preparing to leave immediately.

"Good bye Africa." Colton said. "Until next time."

-38-
BIG WATER

The ape pushed his way through the jungle. He knew he was close because he could smell the water. He had been walking for a very long time. At first he wasn't sure if he was going the right direction but on the second day, he was able to climb a tree and see the tops of the mountains that he knew.

Then on the next day, he found the running water. He knew that the running water led to the Big Water so he followed that the rest of the time.

As he pushed past some trees, he could hear the loud trumpeting of his friends. Excited, he let out a loud roar.

He was rewarded with a loud trumpeted reply.

The ape moved to a lope, pushing past trees that were large, and knocking over smaller ones. Within just a little while, he emerged from the forest onto white sand. Ahead of him, the Big Water disappeared into the distance. He let out another roar.

Off to the side out of sight, the elephants responded.

The ape moved to a full gallop on all fours toward their sounds. As he came around a patch of trees, he spotted his friends. They were as usual playing in the shallow water. Without slowing, he ploughed into the water and ran up to the large matron elephant.

The elephant raised its trunk in greeting as the ape approached, trumpeting several times.

When the ape finally reached her, he skidded to a stop and plopped down in the water. He hooted at her with joy as she approached. When she got to him, she leaned against him with her 10,000 pounds. He leaned forward and hugged her around the neck as her trunk encircled his.

The ape hooted again as the other elephants came close to touch him with their trunks in greeting. Their friend was home.

As the animals enjoyed their reunion, a movement on the water caught the ape's eye. Without letting go of the elephant, he swiveled his head around to look. There was a small log with two dark natives in it. They slowed to look at him.

The ape let out a long howl at them.

The two natives in the log raised their spears and cheered back at him. They sat back down and started rowing again. This time faster. By that evening and for the next week, the jungle drums were alive as village after village celebrated when they learned that their ape had returned.

All was well again in the jungle.

Fin

-39-
EIFFEL TOWER AND OTHER FACTS

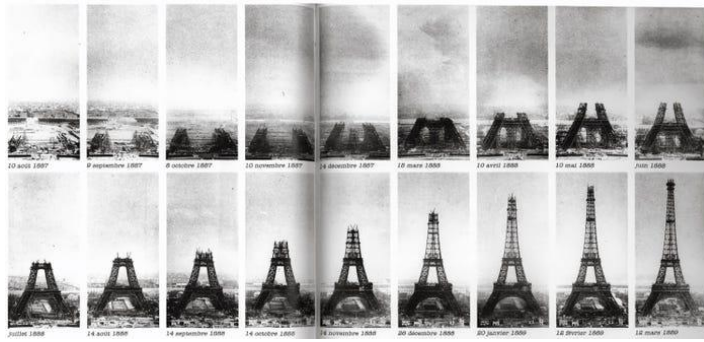
The Eiffel Tower project was spearheaded by Gustave Eiffel and designed by Maurice Koechlin and Émile Nouguier, two senior engineers working for the Compagnie des Établissements Eiffel. It was envisioned after a discussion about a suitable centerpiece for the proposed 1889 Exposition Universelle, a world's fair to celebrate the centennial of the French Revolution

Work on the foundations started on 28 January 1887. The main structural work was completed at the end of March 1889. The tower was not opened to the public until nine days after the opening of the exposition on May 6th. Visitors were required to climb the staircases until the lifts entered service on the 26th of May;- 347 stairs to the first level and then 327 stairs to the second level. The third topmost level was another 991 stairs up from there, or 1,665 stairs in all.

Up to 5,000 visitors can be on the tower at one time.

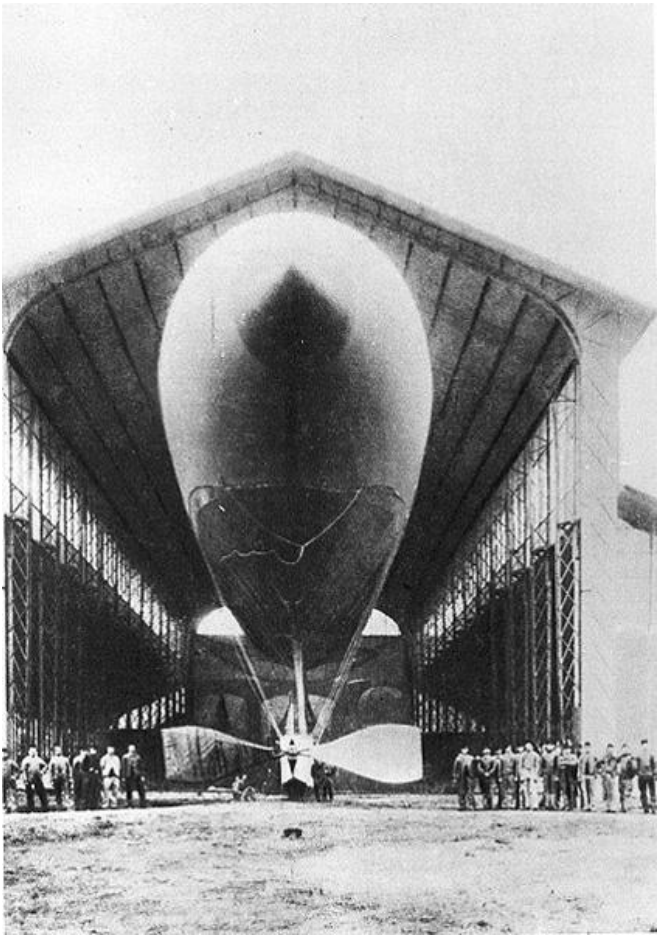
The tower is 1,063 feet tall, about the same height as an 81-story building.

Area of the 1st platform= 43,163 square feet.
Area of the 2nd platform= 14,638 square feet.
Area of the 3rd platform= 2,841 square feet.



Actual photos of the Eiffel Tower as it was built.

The *La Franc* was a real French airship built and flown in 1884. It was 170 feet long, carried two crewmembers and held 66,000 cubic feet of hydrogen. It was electric-powered with a 959 pound zinc-chlorine flow battery. She proved herself as a true airship by flying around the Eiffel Tower, both with and against the wind; something balloons could not do.



The *La Ville d'Paris* was also an actual airship built in 1902-3. It was powered by a 70 horsepower 4-cylinder Argus gasoline engine driving a single propeller at the front of the nacelle. It was 203 feet long and held 110,000 cubic feet of Hydrogen.



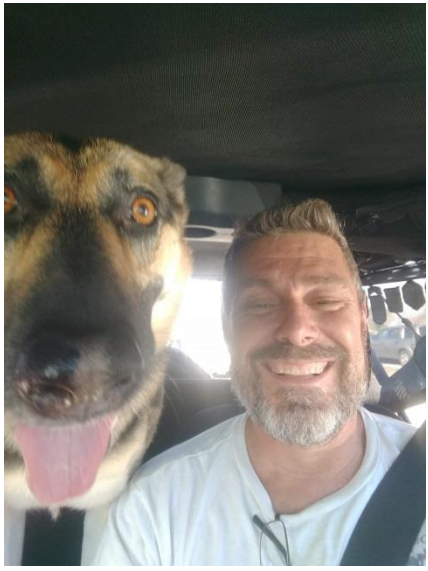
The historical images in this story are from *Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa*, by Paul D Chaillu; 1861. It is in the public domain. For an unvarnished, unique perspective of Africa, I highly recommend reading his book.

Mister Du Chaillu was the first white man to travel through interior Africa from 1855 to 1859, traveling close to 4,000 miles on foot and canoe. He often traveled alone or with natives he had hired to villages that had never seen a white person, collecting animal specimens, trading, and making friends. He became famous in the 1860s as the first modern European outsider to confirm the existence of gorillas, and later the Pygmy people and cannibals (whom he found to be very friendly even though he was worried they would want to eat him) of central Africa.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert is a retired Army Chief Warrant Officer Four with 25 years of service working in Military Intelligence. He lives where most retirees live; Central Florida.

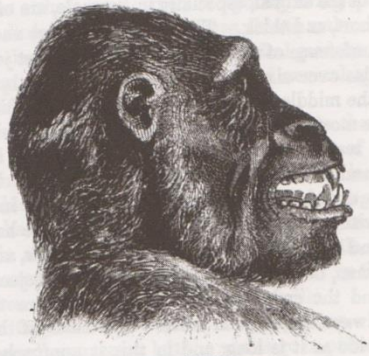
Along with writing, Robert spends a lot of time driving the trails around the southeast in his 2014 Jeep Wrangler 'Spatter'. When he can get away with it, he takes his daughter's Dog 'Seven' along for the ride.



This book is the second in a new series he is writing called "*The Alternatives*". The first book deals with a young Kansas newsie named Honus who is whisked to Kansas a couple of weeks before Dorothy arrives. It is titled *The Red Brick Road* and is available on Kindle and Paperback. His cozy mystery *Pulling the Trooth* (that is not a typo; the murder takes place at a dentists convention) will be the start of a new series *Summer Schauers Mysteries*.

Robert's other series include an inspirational science fiction trilogy *The Prodigals* and a fantasy series about a couple of gnomes who sell used magic wands; *Tales From a Second Hand Wand Shop*. He also has written several horror short stories.

the occiput to the supraorbital ridge. The immense development of the temporal muscles which arise from this ridge, and the corresponding size of the jaw, are evidences of the great strength of the animal.



GORILLA'S HEAD.

The eyebrows are thin, but not well defined, and are almost lost in the hair of the scalp. The eyelashes are thin also. The eyes are wide apart; the ears are smaller than those of man, and in