

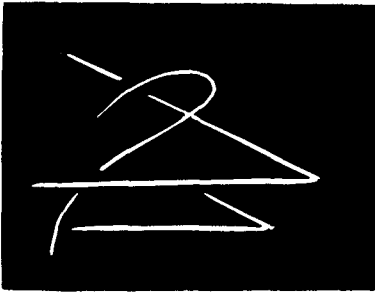
knee. "Now don't worry Edith, we'll see you through this, Martha and I." Edith wanted to giggle. She sniffed instead.

"Edith," Karen said timidly. She sniffed too.

"What?"

"I get 60 cents allowance every week and I can give you half of it." Edith was startled. When she was ten she received 80 cents a week. She wouldn't have given anyone half of that 80 cents. Well, I'll be damned she thought. And then before she had time to really think about it she was crying again.

— Lola Chadwick, H. Ec. Soph.



## Well, Old Boy---

**T**HERE was a narrow road through the forest, a road that turned and climbed laboriously between dark walls of sugar pine and spruce. In some of the rougher parts of the road grew grass and small shrubs, but it was a road that would have being for many years, for vegetation was hesitant to fill it; at this altitude the king was wind and cold, and seldom life. Although the trees here were very large and old, the forest was not thick, and there were many clearings and patches of bare rock. There was little grass here, and something in the form and stature of the trees told of conflict, for the air was thin and hard, and beneath the largest trees there was always old snow that never melted.

The road led to a clearing at the summit that was a single sheet of rock, and from here spread the world. . . the south was fold after fold of heavily forested valleys and slopes which swept into the great ranges just beyond the clearing. It was very high, too high even for most birds. . . the only things above this place were the sun, white peaks

and a wandering eagle. Over everything, except for the sound of the wind, there was silence.

Then there was the sound of an engine coming up the road. There was a small green truck that fought its way from ledge to ledge, sometimes almost stopping as if to gather strength, and then roaring slowly on again. When it finally gained the crest of the summit it was a very tired truck, and it stopped at the place where the road came into the clearing and sat there steaming.

There were three men and a bear in the truck. The three men sat in the front seat, and the bear sat in the box of the truck in a cage made of heavy bolted timbers. The truck rested for a moment, and the door opened. Three men got out, stretched, and looked about them. Two of the men were dressed in the green mackinaws of the Forest Service, while the third was a civilian wearing a nondescript sheepskin coat.

"This is the place," said one of the foresters. He was the oldest of the three men, a man approaching middle age, but he had the young-old look that men of the open sometimes have; his face was smooth and unlined but there was gray in his hair. His age lay less in the graying hair than in the impression of quietness and capability that he gave when he spoke.

"It's far enough away," said the younger ranger.

"Is this where you usually take them?" asked the civilian.

"When we have to take them," said the ranger with gray hair. "This is the best place I know of. There's nobody that bellyaches more about a bad bear than an Ohio tourist, but when it comes to seeing or hearing them shot they cry like hell to the old man, and then I get pulled on the carpet for letting them know about it . . . I killed one up here a couple of years ago; you weren't here then, Ed."

"Where we going to do it, Sam?" asked the young ranger. "In the truck?"

"No, that's no good. . . we'll only get the cage all full of blood and crap and besides, let's kill the old boy out in the open. . . we can do that."

He reached into the cab of the truck and pulled out a cased rifle. He drew it from the case and worked the action twice; then he reached into his coat pocket and brought out

a handful of shining cartridges. He filled the magazine and handed the rifle to the young forester. It was a short, heavy, well-balanced weapon that had seen much wear. It was no more than it was, a polished, worn work gun that had killed many times.

The ranger walked around behind the truck and looked in through the heavy wooden timbers.

"Well, old boy, we gave you three chances; three nice long rides. You had to come back and get snotty with just one Ohio school teacher too many. You'd hurt somebody sure if we just let you romp around down there. It's your own fault, dammit!"

"What's he got against Ohio schoolteachers, Sam?" asked the man in the sheepskin coat.

"A bad belly, primarily," answered Sam. "Eating all the junk the past fifteen years or so that he's eaten is enough to give anyone a bad belly, even a bear. God, those damn tourists. . . I saw some woman just the other day letting her kid feed some old sow licorice. . . they think it's cute. One of these days some dyspeptic old devil is going to bat somebody half way to Fresno, and then there'll be hell to pay. It'll be our fault, of course. Damn dudes. . ."

"Why, Sam," grinned the young ranger, "there's nothing wrong with dudes!" Sam looked around sharply, but saw the joke and then smiled.

What I meant was, "said the civilian," is why doesn't Sam like Ohio schoolteachers."

Probably because he was raised in Ohio," answered the young ranger.

Sam looked around again and said, "All right, let's get this done. You have the Springfield, Ed; I'm going to try something. I'll unlatch the cage and we'll walk to the edge of the brush. He'll be out in a few minutes. When he comes out I'm going to try the pistol on him. . . I want to see if a 38-44 will do the trick. Connell says it won't. If it does, O.K., but you back me up with the Springfield just in case. If I yell 'Shoot!', you shoot! Got it?"

"I've got it."

Sam pulled a heavy iron rod from the latch of the cage and laid it on the ground. He motioned toward the trees with his head, and the three men walked to the other end

of the clearing, turned, and waited.

Finally there was motion in the cage; a loud snuff and then a blow. The door swung open. Sam reached inside his mackinaw, drew out a large revolver, and watched the cage. A great black head looked out and hesitated; the bear jumped to the ground. He was old and heavy. The long muzzle, once brown, was now gray, and his pelt was patchy with old scars . . . he had known many autumns and combats in the high meadows. . . he was a great and tired old warrior who had walked through a million miles of mountain, and whose children were as the leaves of the trees.

He took three shambling, powerful strides, his claws clicking against the stone. He held his head high, sniffing.

At the boom of heavy pistol he roared, and rose on his legs. He unfolded from a compact bulk and reared up and up, a tower of bone and muscle nearly nine feet high. The heavy pistol bullet had torn across his forehead, and streams of blood poured into his eyes and from one side of his head. Twice more the pistol boomed. At the third shot he dropped to all fours, but immediately stood erect again with a roar that rang through all the valleys and mountains of the earth. He had been struck three times with heavy bullets, and now he thought of but one thing. Something before him in the redness had presumed. . . he would dash it to the earth and destroy it. His vision was obscured with blood, and at each roar, torrents of bright blood splashed upon the rock, but still he sought, moving the huge head from side to side. . . seeking, ever seeking. Again the pistol boomed, and again. With each shot came a bellow that the men could almost feel forty yards away. He dropped to his feet and ran a few yards toward the men to rear up again, a bloody-browed black giant. He was the only thing in the world, greater even than the mountains behind him; a colossus of rage and sound. He loomed there, an insulted giant, so near that the men could see the great yellow of his mouth and hear the intake of his breath as he bellowed.

“Shoot, dammit, shoot!”

The young ranger stood rooted, watching the thing before him. It was seeking him, and the rifle was useless. He could not move. He was numb, and his face was the color of the old snow on which he stood. Before that Goliath of

rage and pain he was only a man who presumed, and at last the Goliath had found them. . . even through the sight and smell of his blood he found what he sought.

Sam tore the gun from the hands of the other man. The high, flat crash of the rifle came even as the bear was dropping to its forefeet to charge. At such close range the three men could see the impact of the expanding bullet as the bear dropped forward to meet it. The bear continued falling, loosely and heavily, as wild things fall when they have instantly been struck dead. There was another shot, but the bear did not move.

The two younger men sat down and looked at each other. The civilian took out a cigarette and lit it, and Sam bent down and picked up his pistol. He looked at it and said, "Connell was right; never send a boy to do a man's work. Should have known better than to use this thing . . . bad way to do it."

"By all the saints in heaven!" said the civilian. "I've never seen anything like it. . . they all like that?"

"Not all," said Sam. He looked at the middle of the clearing, at the red and the black. "He was an old-timer, and quite a bear. . . quite a bear."

"Are we going to skin him?"

"No. . . his hide wasn't much to begin with; it's less now. No, we'll just leave him here on the summit."

"Well. . ."

"Well, let's start down; it's late. I guess we've made the world safe for Ohio schoolteachers."

The three men walked across the clearing and got into the truck. Again there was the sound of an engine; the truck backed up, turned, and started back down the road. For a time there were the sounds of tires sliding on rocks, of gears grinding, and the engine, but finally all was quiet again.

A high wind was rising in the tops of the embattled spruce trees and darkness was coming up out of the valleys. There was a smell of snow in the high places. Except for the high stirrings of the air there was silence in all those valleys and mountains of the earth that had rung with battle; and in the lofty sweep of the sky there was a moon that saw nothing but peace.

— John Madson, *Sci. Soph.*