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# The Purple Plain

By Eric Ambler

Ralph! Why isn't this plane  
ready to fly?  
You want us all to be blown  
to kingdom come? Get going!  
What's the matter with you?  
What are you trying to do?  
What are you trying to do?  
You idiot!  
Sorry, sir.  
Are you all right?  
Everything's okay, sir.  
There's no bombing.  
Are you sure you're feeling all right?  
- I'll get Dr. Harris up here.  
- No, wait a minute.  
I'm all right. I'm fine.  
I thought...  
You'd better get some sleep, sir.  
You're on the first flight in the morning.  
Yeah.  
All right, Sergeant, fine.  
Fine.  
Black Dog Leader to squadron.  
Light flak ahead.  
Let's get above it. Over.  
Red Two to Leader,  
message received. Out.  
What's the matter?  
Didn't you hear the C.O.'s orders?  
Leader to Red Two,  
what's your trouble?  
- What is your trouble?  
- Didn't you hear the orders?  
Leader to Red Two,  
are you receiving me?  
- Acknowledge.  
- Can't you hear the orders?  
Acknowledge. Over.  
Leader to Red Two, do you--  
Okay, Doc.  
Got him?  
Yep. Now, gently does it.  
Hello, Doc.  
See the conquering hero come.

- What was it, cannon shell?  
- Ack-ack. I put on a tourniquet.

Thanks.

Have you released the tourniquet  
since it was put on?

- No, Doc, I left it all for you.  
- Oh, good.

How soon?

- I guess about a couple of days, sir.  
- What do you mean, a couple of days?

Well, sir, it's probably chewed up  
all the cables inside, and I don't think--  
I don't care what you don't think.

Just get it fixed, but quick.

That'll be all right till we get you to hospital.

A few minutes more won't hurt you.

We'll try not to shake you up  
too much on the way.

You can shake  
as much as you like, Doc.

Oh? Feeling good, eh?

- I feel fine. So would you.  
- What, with a piece out of my arm?

Sure, if it meant you didn't have to fly  
anymore with a raving lunatic.

Where's that ruddy fool  
think he's going?

Hey, look out!

Round the bend, Nobby, boy.

Right round the bend.

All right, driver.

- Well, Doc?  
- Hello, sir.

The arm's all right.

I'll evacuate him to Calcutta tomorrow.

But you won't be  
seeing him again for a month or two.

I guessed that.

I've asked for a replacement.

We're a bit short  
of navigators at the moment.

What I really came to talk  
to you about is our problem boy.

Forrester.

What about him?

Didn't his navigator  
tell you what happened?

- Yes, he did.

- Well?

Not my department, is it, sir?

Well, yes, Doc, I think it is.

This isn't the first time, and you know it.

- Nothing wrong with his nerve, is there?

- No, nothing.

Except I think he's round the bend.

What, because he went in without orders  
and pranged some ack-ack guns?

Some people would

call that a very good show.

Well, I don't. I'd say he was  
trying to get himself wrapped up.

Look, Doc, I know he volunteered  
for this show, I know he's a good man,

but I'm going to

have to get rid of him.

You think he's cracking up.

No, I don't.

I think he cracked up years ago.

That's not what his record says.

First-class fighter pilot,

Battle of Britain, DSO and the rest.

He must have taken

a few chances in his time.

Does the record say

they were always necessary?

The fact is he's beginning to give  
people the willies and he'll have to go.

If what you say is true, sir,

I should think that'd

just about finish him.

Well, have you got

any other suggestions?

- What about talking to him?

- I just have. Tore a strip off him.

- What did he say?

- Nothing.

Matter of fact,

he made me feel a complete fool.

Yes, I've noticed he has that effect.  
All the same, sir, I'd like to talk to him  
before you do anything drastic.  
All right.  
Don't be too long about it.  
See you at dinner.  
Don't tell me you find it hot.  
This is really the springtime.  
The real heat begins in June, the rain.  
- Bet you just love that.  
- I don't love it.  
Bet you really get warmed up then  
and get some letters written.  
- I write home every day.  
- Only once a day? You're slipping.  
Of course,  
heat affects people different ways.  
Now, take me.  
I watch my health,  
take plenty of salt, of course,  
but I think the real secret  
is in one's mental attitude.  
Now, I've got responsibilities--  
a wife in England, a family,  
an important job.  
But it's no use moping.  
You know, the trouble  
with you flying people is that  
you're not interested  
in anything else but flying.  
There's a world, people.  
You don't care.  
You need a home, children,  
a thought for the future.  
Now, if you were married  
and knew that when the war was over,  
you had a wife to go back to...  
What? What?  
What's the matter?  
- I thought you said something.  
- That was hours ago.  
Now, I say, that's the trouble with you--  
no outside responsibilities.  
You want a wife and family

and thought for the future.

Now, if you were married and knew  
that when the war was over, you could--

Hello.

Hello.

- Been looking for you.

- Something you wanted?

I wondered if you'd care  
for a trip out of camp--  
a village across the plain,  
Christian community.

What makes you think I had  
anything to do with Christian communities?

It's just a trip, half an hour.

- You go.

- Really nice people.

Very interesting, pure Burmese.

They speak English.

I buy fruit from them.

Well, you bring me back  
a nice cold melon, will you, Doc?

What's this?

To kill or not to kill,  
that's all. That's--

Strange how fascinating  
death can be, isn't it?

Very.

- Is that why you became a doctor?

- No.

I try to keep my patients alive.

Thou shalt not kill but need not strive  
officially to keep alive.

- Did you ever hear that saying?

- Frequently.

Come on, get in.

I see.

A nice jeep ride, a cozy chat--  
a medical inspection.

Okay, Doc.

Very tactfully arranged.

Well, I have to gain  
my patients' confidence somehow.

Another one of my patients.

That's the dispensary.

I'll take you over later.  
Off with you, you little devils!  
Here we are.  
This is for you.  
Now hop it.  
They're wonderful kids.  
I love them all.  
What is this place?  
It used to belong to a planter.  
Now Miss McNab's got it.  
- Who's she?  
- Missionary. Runs the school.  
But she won't be here today.  
Ah, here's Dorothy.  
- Good afternoon, Doctor.  
- Hello, Dorothy.  
I've brought a friend,  
Squadron Leader Forrester.  
He's a pilot.  
Dorothy's from Rangoon.  
- Glad to know you.  
- How do you do?  
Dorothy, my dear,  
we're thirsty men.  
Of course.  
Please sit down, Mr. Forrester,  
and I will get you  
something cold to drink.  
That's very kind of you.  
Lime juice, please.  
The lime juice is wonderful.  
- Whatever you wish.  
- The lime juice will be just fine.  
- Where's Anna?  
- At the dispensary.  
- She'll be back soon.  
- Oh, good.  
- I managed to bring a little rice.  
- Thank you, Doctor. Thank you.  
Please sit down,  
and I will get the lime.  
Thank you.  
I usually try and bring them  
something for the kitchen.

Fruit's all right,  
but not all the time.  
They can't buy food.  
They came here  
stripped of everything,  
all the way from Rangoon.  
Can you imagine what it  
must have been like?  
Hundreds of miles.  
I don't know how any of them  
ever got through alive.  
I hope I didn't waken you.  
I'm sorry, I must have  
fallen asleep for a moment.  
Several moments.  
Where's the doctor?  
He and Dorothy went down  
to the dispensary.  
I'm Anna.  
How do you do?  
My name's Forrester.  
I know.  
They sent me up here  
to see if you were all right.  
They said that you'd gone to sleep  
even before you had time to have a drink.  
Well, that was very rude of me.  
It was very, very rude.  
But no one minded at all.  
Please sit down.  
Thank you.  
That's the best lime  
I've ever tasted.  
When one is thirsty,  
it always tastes better.  
- Have you been in Burma long?  
- About three months.  
- Do you like it?  
- Well, I don't know really.  
Life's pretty much the same  
on an airfield, whatever country you're in.  
Except that it's hotter here.  
When the cooler weather comes,  
you may like it better.



Oh, I don't dislike it.  
I just don't know it.  
No one knows it,  
not all of Burma.  
Rice and rubies--  
that's about all I knew about Burma  
before I came here.  
There are stones here  
if you wish to buy them, Mr. Forrester.  
Well, that's very kind of you.  
It's isn't far.  
Well...I think the doctor  
will be wanting to get back.  
Oh, no, he always goes late.  
There's plenty of time.  
All right.  
I'll be glad.  
These are rubies, sir.  
Yes.  
These are white sapphires.  
And these are golden amethysts.  
They're very nice.  
They say that if you will come tomorrow,  
they will try to have a bigger selection.  
Zircons and emeralds, perhaps.  
That's very kind of them.  
Tell them that I'll try to make it.  
Thank you.  
Please, thank you.  
Please. Good-bye, sir.  
Thank you very much.  
Good-bye.  
Good-bye. Thank you.  
You didn't really want  
to buy the stones, did you?  
Not really, no.  
You're the first officer who's  
come here and not bought jewels.  
Am I?  
All of them come for jewels,  
so I assumed that you had, too.  
That is why I took you to those people.  
You should have said.  
It was very interesting. It's just that

I have no one in particular to give jewels to.

No one? I'm sorry.

No need to be sorry.

The doctor tells me that your sister comes from Rangoon. You too?

Yes. I was

at the university there.

- Studying what?

- The humanities.

It's not very much use to me here.

But I have learned a little about nursing, so now I help the doctor with the sick in the village.

- Are there many sick?

- I'm afraid there are.

How do they feel about us being here?

It's been explained to them that it is necessary.

It's been explained to us, too, that it's necessary.

Down there's the river.

We swim there.

Any crocodiles?

No, no crocodiles.

Very nice here.

Next time I fly over this place, it'll seem more friendly.

Didn't it seem friendly before?

Never thought about it.

Most of you people

hate it here, don't you?

You long for home.

I don't.

Not ever?

Nope.

Well, I guess the doctor will be wanting to get back to camp.

Oy-oy, here he is.

Who's gonna tell him the good news? You?

Yes, I'll tell him.

- Good morning, Sergeant.

- Good morning, sir.

- How's it coming?

- I'll have her ready for you by tonight, sir.

Fine. By the way,

the oil cooler in this engine--

I meant to tell you yesterday,

you'd better change it.

Not me, sir.

What are you talking about?

Time expired, sir. Due for release.

Came through last night.

Me and Clark,

both going home together.

- Clark? Who's Clark?

- Me, sir.

- Oh, Nobby.

- Yes, sir.

Been together ever since

we first joined, sir, Nobby and me.

Congratulations.

Oh, Forrester, I thought

you were over at Doc's.

I couldn't find you anywhere.

This is Carrington, your new navigator.

Got in earlier by Dak from Komilla.

This is Squadron Leader Forrester.

How do you do, sir?

Who told you to move in here?

Well, the Messing Officer.

They're moving a lot of new bodies in.

Everywhere is full up.

Anyway, it's only for tonight.

I'm being sent up to Meiktila.

I'll be leaving tomorrow.

Everything's in a mess

at the moment.

So I see.

- I seem to have put up a black.

- Oh, he's an impossible man.

Of course, we all feel the heat.

And three in a tent really is too many,

but that's no reason to behave

in such a boorish way.

Still, I suppose it was a bit

high-handed of the Messing Officer

just to stick me in here

without even consulting him.

Yes, but what you don't realize is that Forrester invites that sort of treatment.

Puts people's backs up.

Thank goodness I'm a wingless wonder.

I don't envy you flying with him.

Why?

Well, everyone knows

he's round the bend. Everyone.

- Ah, well met.

- Hello, Doc.

I was coming over to see you.

- I've an invitation for you.

- Yes?

Miss McNab, the missionary

from the village--

dinner tonight.

No, thanks.

I take over some rice

and a can of meat and they make curry.

It's delicious.

I'm sure it is, but I can't make it.

I'll pick you up at 7:00.

I said no thanks.

Here, you take this.

I'll take the rice.

We are not divided

All one body we

One in hope and doctrine

Come on.

One in charity

Onward, Christian soldiers

Marching as to war

With the cross of Jesus

going on before

- Good evening, Dr. Harris.

- Good evening, Dorothy.

- Good evening, Mr. Forrester.

- Good evening.

- Something for the kitchen.

- Oh, how good of you.

I'll be in in a minute.

Ah, good evening, Dr. Harris!

Good evening to you.

Good evening, Miss McNab.  
Can I introduce--  
This will be Squadron Leader Forrester,  
I have no doubt.  
It's an honor  
and a pleasure, Mr. Forrester.  
- I'm glad you were able to come.  
- That's very kind of you.  
Nobody told me  
you were so handsome.  
Come on, let me introduce you.  
This is Anna's mother.  
How do you do?  
She can't answer you  
because she can't speak.  
She hasn't spoken  
since the Japs bombed us in Rangoon.  
I'm sorry.  
- Hello, Mr. Phang.  
- A pleasure, Doctor, as always.  
- This is Mr. Phang.  
- How do you do, Mr. Phang?  
Very pleased indeed, sir,  
to meet so distinguished an officer.  
It'll be no surprise to you to learn that  
Mr. Phang studied English at the university.  
English literature  
to be precise, Mr. Forrester.  
Oh, Doctor,  
remember I am relying on you  
to have plenty of ideas  
about the hymns for Easter.  
I've been thinking of nothing else.  
Mr. Phang!  
Excuse me.  
Yes, Miss McNab?  
- Get me another glass, please.  
- Certainly.  
- I'm glad you were able to come.  
- It's good to see you again.  
It was very good  
of Miss McNab to ask me.  
Mr. Forrester, do you know  
that foul, benighted, godless city Katarba?

I'm telling you, the only good thing  
that ever came out of it  
was the bottle of whiskey  
the doctor brought us back from there.  
I don't touch the stuff myself.  
But I daresay it won't do you  
any harm while you're waiting for the dinner.

- There.

- Thank you, Miss McNab.

- And what is it you fly?

- Mosquitoes, fighter-bombers.

I say they are  
wicked, devilish things.

True.

I see you are one of the quiet,  
thoughtful ones, Mr. Forrester.

You didn't tell me that, Anna.

She's very shy, of course.

Well, drink your whiskey.

Dinner will be ready soon.

I told you I'd come again.

I hoped you would.

Miss McNab says you're very shy.

Compared to Miss McNab,  
everyone is shy.

She's quite a character.

We love her.

If it hadn't been for her, none of us  
would have got here from Rangoon.

Yes, the doctor was telling me.

Seems incredible.

Strange things happened  
during the war.

Yes.

Strange landing places.

Strange meetings.

Dinner! Dinner!

It's delicious.

Shall we go?

Some more curry, Mr. Forrester.

You're not eating a thing.

- Did you not like it?

- Oh, it was terrific.

I've eaten too much already, thanks.

I've been admiring your tablecloth.  
Ah, you have an eye  
for fine things, Mr. Forrester.  
It was worked by the girls  
at the mission in Rangoon for Miss McNab.  
They gave it to her  
on her 21st birthday.  
Take no notice of him, Mr. Forrester.  
I'm not ashamed of my age.  
For my 45th birthday they made it,  
and all the way from Rangoon,  
through every inch of the way,  
I kept telling myself,  
'McNab, whatever else you may lose,  
you'll not be losing  
that tablecloth the girls gave you.'  
It's a beautiful thing.  
Aye.  
Three hundred of us died  
on that journey, Mr. Forrester.  
That's how old I am.  
Miss McNab,  
when I get back home,  
I'm going to see that you're decorated  
if it's the last thing I do.  
Ach, don't gab so much.  
Give Mr. Forrester a cup of tea, Anna.  
No, no. I mean it.  
If you want to decorate someone,  
you should decorate the good Lord.  
If you could get His name  
in the honors list,  
you'd be talking, I'm telling you.  
Well, if you'll write the citation,  
I'll see what I can do.  
What you can do, Dr. Harris,  
is to think about Easter.  
What's your favorite hymn  
for Easter, Mr. Forrester?  
Oh, Easter hymns?  
'Hallelujah,' isn't it?  
Yes. 'Hallelujah.'  
'Hallelujah.  
Jesus Christ is risen today.'

Ah, that's splendid.  
I can see you've been  
well brought up, Mr. Forrester.  
Come on, we'll all sing it.  
Jesus Christ is risen today  
Hallelujah  
Our triumphant holy day  
Hallelujah  
Who did once upon the cross  
Hallelujah  
Suffer to redeem our loss  
Hallelujah  
Hymns of praise  
then let us sing  
Hallelujah  
Unto Christ, our heavenly king  
Hallelujah  
Who endured the cross and grave...  
What is it?  
Jap bombers.  
They're trying to find the airstrip.  
There's too much light here.  
You shut the door.  
But the pains that He endured  
Hallelujah  
There's quite a bunch of them.  
The children will be frightened.  
I ought to get down to the dispensary.  
Come on, then.  
Look out!  
Look out!  
Anna!  
Anna?!  
Anna!  
Are you all right?  
Yes. Yes, I'm all right.  
Are you sure?  
- Are you all right here?  
- Yeah, all right.  
Come along, then.  
We'll be needed in the village.  
Dorothy's looking after your mother.  
Come on, Mr. Phang!  
Anna, you'd better get in there



and help out. I'll be in in a minute.  
You two better go and collect the casualties  
and bring them along here.

- What's this? What's going on?  
- Escape from the Japanese.

The Japs aren't coming back here.  
These people don't know that.  
They've been bombed before.  
Will you please attend  
to this one, Doctor, now.

- I'll finish that dressing.  
- Right.

Anna, you'd better go back  
to the bungalow and lie down.  
I'm all right, Doctor.  
No, you're not.  
You're still suffering from shock.  
Now do as I say, please.  
Give me that.

I told her to go back to the bungalow.  
She's still suffering from shock.

- She got caught up in the crowd.  
- I'm all right.

You lie down here for a while.  
Put that blanket over her, will you?  
I must be getting back.  
That last lot sounded as if it was  
near the camp. I'll be needed there.  
I'd better go, too.

There's nothing you can do there,  
but there's a lot you can do here.

- I'll call over for you in the morning.  
- Right.

Mr. Forrester.  
Would you hold her  
while I finish bandaging?  
Surely.

Excuse me if I ask you  
a personal question, Mr. Forrester,  
but are you married?

No.  
I'm glad.

- Do you hear?  
- Yes, I hear.

They are not like us, made of ice.  
They get rid of their sorrow  
and their fear.  
They don't leave it inside, Mr. Forrester,  
as you or I might, to rot.  
That'll be all, Mr. Forrester.  
If you wouldn't mind  
taking her over to the other children,  
I'll see about getting Anna  
something hot to drink.  
The doc's here now.  
I'll have to go over to the camp.  
Please don't go for a moment.  
I have something to tell you.  
- You were going to tell me something.  
- It wasn't much.  
Tell me.  
It was something to give you.  
Open it. It's for you.  
It's for you.  
You have no one to give it to?  
No.  
I'm glad, because now  
you can keep it for me.  
- I can't say anything.  
- Don't say anything.  
There's nothing to say.  
It's only a little thing  
for you to keep for me, that's all.  
Anna...  
Early in the war  
I met a girl and fell in love.  
When I got leave,  
we went to London and got married.  
And that night...  
while we were out  
having dinner...  
there was an air raid,  
and the building that we were in  
got a direct hit.  
She was killed.  
After that...  
I didn't want to go on living.  
You'd think that'd be easy enough

in war, but it didn't work.  
I wanted to die,  
but I got medals instead.  
I could see the trouble  
in your face when you first came.  
It is not good to die inside.  
It was like living a bad dream.  
Here we bury  
the dead in the earth,  
not in our hearts.  
Is the dream over now?  
I think so.  
You said something  
about never going home.  
- What did you mean?  
- I meant just that.  
Would you rather stay here?  
I never want to be anywhere else.  
And will you always come back?  
Always.  
Then I will always be here.  
- Good morning, sir.  
- Oh, hello, Bill.  
- Sit down, will you?  
- Thanks.  
Rather a dull job for you today, I'm afraid.  
I know you won't mind helping out.  
You haven't flown with that new  
navigator of yours yet, have you?  
No, sir, not yet.  
I've got to send a body  
over to Meiktila today.  
You'll be trying out  
the new chap anyway,  
so I thought if you wouldn't  
mind going that way,  
we'd kill two birds with one stone.  
Sure. Who's the body?  
- Blore.  
- Blore.  
- It will be a pleasure.  
- You don't like him, eh?  
- We've been sharing a tent.  
- Oh, I see.

He's a good bloke, though.  
A Cambridge man, physics.  
He's very clever, I believe.  
Didn't know that.  
Well, I've told Blore  
he may be going with you.  
I'll bet that was  
a real thrill for him.  
There's nothing wrong with old Blore.  
He's like the rest of us--  
sometimes needs a change of air.  
Yes, sir.  
I hear you're gonna be my passenger.  
Yes. How long will it take?  
I can't say.  
Carrington will have to figure that out.  
- Thought I might find him here.  
- He went over to the crew tent.  
Well, how soon do you think  
you'll be ready?  
- I've got all my stuff to pack.  
- So I see.  
- There's no great hurry.  
- I'd like to get it properly packed.  
- Anything I can do to help?  
- No, thanks.  
No, don't touch anything, please.  
I want to be sure everything's here.  
Well, is there anything  
I can fix you up with?  
You'll need all the comfort  
you can get at Meiktila.  
I don't think that's very funny.  
It wasn't meant to be.  
Hello, Carrington.  
We've got a job to do.  
Yes, sir, I heard.  
I'll take you over to Intelligence.  
You can make out your flight plan.  
You think you can

**be ready by 12:**

- Yes, I think so.  
- Good.

It's only a small trip, this.  
Interesting from your point of view, though.  
Are you ready?  
Got a hammock rigged up for you  
in the bomb bay. Best we could do.  
Okay, let's go.  
Everything okay?  
All okay.  
Passenger asleep.  
He's lucky.  
By the way,  
this is Jap territory here--  
up to the river.  
They're welcome to it.  
Over there, Mandalay.  
- Where the dawn comes up like thunder?  
- That's the place.  
Would you like to have a look  
after we've delivered the body?  
Roger.  
Starboard engine.  
Starboard fuel off.  
- We're going back.  
- Roger.  
Course 2-0-9er.  
Mayday, mayday, mayday.  
Kong K Cable to Scuttle.  
Starboard engine now on fire.  
Cannot extinguish.  
My approximate position  
is 90 miles southeast of you,  
on course 2-0-9er.  
Mayday.  
- Hold on, we're going down.  
- Roger.  
Mayday, mayday, mayday.  
Kong K Cable to Scuttle.  
Crash landing, crash landing.  
Kong K Cable to Scuttle.  
Crash landing. Crash landing.  
Mayday, mayday.  
Mayday, mayday.  
Kong K Cable to Scuttle.  
We're preparing to crash-land.

Crash landing, crash landing.  
Mayday!  
Mayday! Mayday!  
Carrington!  
Let's get him outta here!  
You got anything to help him?  
- I've got some morphine, I think.  
- Get it quick.  
We'll give him one of these  
and then get him into the shade.  
Hello, Kong K Cable, this is Scuttle.  
Hello, Kong K Cable, this is Scuttle.  
Your QDM, 2-0-9er.  
I say again, 2-0-9er.  
How do you hear me? Over.  
- Keep trying.  
- Yes, sir.  
Hello, Kong K Cable, this is Scuttle.  
Hello, Kong K Cable, this is Scuttle.  
Your QDM, 2-0-9er.  
I say again, 2-0-9er...  
How do you feel now?  
I'd like a drink.  
You got a nice cool  
scotch and soda there, Blore?  
I suppose you mean water.  
We'll have to go carefully with it.  
There's only the thermos flask  
and the bottle.  
How's that?  
We were on course.  
Now, don't you worry about that.  
You just take it easy.  
Did they get a fix on us?  
I don't know.  
I kept calling as long as I could.  
They could work out our position  
by time alone, I should say.  
Parker saw the flight plan.  
What time is it?  
Four minutes past 2:00.  
That's not quite four hours till dark.  
Say three.  
- They're bound to find us before then.

- You think so?

Certainly. They'll have us  
out of here in no time.

Meanwhile, we must organize ourselves,  
see what you have with you.

I haven't got a thing.

I was just flying the airplane.

But you must have something.

Even the smallest trifle may be useful  
in an emergency like this.

Medical card.

Three rupees.

Handkerchief.

What's that?

Don't tell me you've been buying  
those things. They're all phony, you know.

If they got any kind of a fix on us,  
which I doubt...

it's just possible that  
they might locate us here.

Supposing they do, what then?

Well, they get us out, of course.

They haven't got helicopters.

Well, they could drop supplies.

So that we can camp out here until  
the war is over? This is Jap territory.

Yes, we know that, but...

What are you getting at?

Mind if I use your hat?

Carrington, are you awake?

Yes, I'm awake.

- You heard that, what Forrester said?

- Yes, I heard.

Well, I think we've got  
to be very careful.

Knowing him as I do,

well, frankly,

I don't think we ought to place any reliance  
at all on his judgment about anything.

He got us down all right.

We wouldn't have stood  
an earthly with some pilots.

I'm not saying he's not a good pilot,  
but we're not in the air now.

He doesn't care what happens to him.  
Well, I do care what happens to me,  
and I'm not taking any chances.  
If we keep our heads,  
we'll be all right.  
I'm relying on you to back me up.  
You got any more of those tablets?  
There are only a few left.  
They ought to be eked out.  
What's all this for?  
We want some sort of signal  
when they come looking for us.  
When who comes looking  
for us, the Japs?  
You know quite well  
who I mean--our people.  
I think it's time we took a look  
at some of the facts.  
I don't mind looking at the facts.  
They seem straightforward enough to me.  
Our people know  
we made a forced landing.  
Even if they didn't get a fix on us, they're  
bound to know our approximate position.  
Our job is to give them  
all the help we can,  
look after Carrington,  
keep our heads, and...  
- ...hope for the best.  
- What's wrong with that?  
Nothing, if you know  
what the best adds up to.  
They could look for a month  
and not find this place.  
- How long will the water last?  
- Not as long as a month.  
I've got a quart and what's left  
in the thermos flask.  
If we ration ourselves strictly--  
and Carrington, too, mind--  
I suppose it might last three days.  
Though in this heat...  
- What's all this leading up to?  
- Just this.



I think we ought to forget about setting up housekeeping here and start walking.

Walking?

Are you serious?

Now look, we're roughly 30 miles northeast of the river here.

I know this country is murder to get across, but we ought to be able to make it in four days, even without food.

If we make it, we'll be in our own patrol area. We'll have water to see us through.

But what about Carrington?

You don't expect him to walk, do you?

- We'll carry him.

- How can we?

We'll make a stretcher.

There's plenty of bamboo here, and we've got a parachute harness-- we'll fix up something.

Carry a stretcher all that way in this heat under this sun? We'll kill ourselves.

We don't go in the sun.

We go at night.

Have you ever carried a man on a stretcher for any distance?

No, but I'm gonna try, even if it does kill me.

Well, you can kill yourself if you like, Forrester.

You've been round the bend for ages and everybody knows it.

But you're not going to endanger our lives just because you don't give a rat--

Help!

Help!

What is it?

Dak.

- Anyone we know?

- I can't tell, it's too high.

Blind fools.

Never even started to see us.

You have any idea

what it's like trying to locate  
a burnt-out plane  
in country like this?  
I couldn't even recognize it  
from the top of that rock.  
It'll be almost impossible from a plane.  
Turbulence, heat haze, odd forest fires--  
it's a million-to-one shot.  
Blind, stupid fools.  
Look...  
We've got enough water  
for three days, maybe four.  
We've got a lot of pills  
and no food.  
Now either we sit here  
and drink the water and hope,  
or we drink the water and travel.  
Does that make sense?  
- It would if it weren't for Carrington.  
- I told you, we'll carry him.  
The whole idea is crazy,  
and you know it.  
It's still crazier to stay here.  
Now let's get to work on the stretcher.  
Well, I think Carrington  
should be consulted about this.  
Carrington has no option.  
It's his only chance.  
Well, it's entirely your responsibility.  
Responsibility, hell.  
We're going to walk out of here  
and try to reach the river--at night.  
It'll be quite simple--  
we'll march for half an hour,  
then rest for half an hour.  
We're going to make  
a stretcher and carry you.  
- It's hopeless.  
- Blore thinks it's hopeless.  
What do you think?  
You'll have to navigate.  
I don't know.  
You can't just carry a bloke  
on a stretcher as easily as all that.

It's a piece of cake.  
Blore and I are the champion  
bloke-carriers of all Burma.  
Isn't that right, Blore?  
All you have to do is try  
to get some sleep until it's dark.  
Come on, Blore.  
You ready?  
All set.  
Just sing out  
if you feel yourself slipping.  
Okay.  
- How about you, Blore?  
- No, now just a minute.  
All right.  
Ready? Lift.  
All right, put him down.  
It's hopeless.  
We'll never get a stretcher down there.  
Will you stop saying it's hopeless?  
We'll lower him feet first.  
You swing this end around.  
- Absolute madness, the whole thing.  
- Shut up.  
Lift.  
All right, lower away.  
Hold it!  
All right, lower him.  
Slowly.  
That's it.  
Take him over there.  
We'll rest for a bit.  
All right, pick him up.  
Keep going.  
How much longer?  
It'll be dawn soon.  
We'll stop then and rest all day.  
Supposing you slip on the rock  
and break your ankle--  
then where shall we be?  
You tell him, Carrington.  
- Up the creek.  
- That's right.  
And you'll have to

carry us both, Blore, old boy.  
Should have stayed where we were.  
I said so all along.  
Yes, you did.  
All right.  
Let's get going.  
Lift.  
What's the matter?  
There's a sheer drop.  
We'll never get by it.  
Yes, we will.  
Just go carefully.  
- You want me to go in front?  
- Why, don't you think I'm competent?  
Sure I do,  
but let's keep going.  
All right, all right.  
You're the officer in charge, aren't you?  
You're the person responsible.  
All right, then you give the orders.  
'Theirs not to reason why--'  
Are you still with it?  
Blore!  
Blore?  
Are you badly hurt?  
'Badly' is a comparative term, isn't it?  
So I hardly like to--  
Easy.  
The water.  
The thermos--where is it?  
Right over here.  
Everything's here.  
There's nothing lost.  
Let's have a look at you.  
There's something wrong here.  
Looks like you broke  
your collarbone.  
It's a pretty badly scraped face.  
You got some antiseptic in your pack?  
I'll get the webbing off first.  
It'll be light soon.  
We'll be able to see what we're doing.  
I'm sorry. Hurt you?  
No.

Just thinking  
of something funny, that's all.  
Well, that's good.  
I was thinking,  
fancy worrying about the water.  
You had me worried  
about it there for a minute.  
- As if it matters.  
- As if what matters?  
Well, the water.  
I mean, it isn't as if it's gonna be  
any use to us now, is it?  
Isn't it?  
Better lie back.  
Not for me and Carrington, anyway.  
As far as I can see,  
we might just as well shoot  
ourselves now and have done with it.  
Here.  
- Any news yet, sir?  
- Hello, Doc. Yes.  
We've heard from the army.  
The nearest patrol they've got  
is about 20 miles  
from Forrester's last estimated position.  
They've got a signal through  
to the officer commanding there,  
told him to do what he can,  
but I don't suppose that'll be very much.  
You mean we can't expect the army  
to go charging off 20 miles  
into Jap territory  
on the chance of finding three corpses  
and a burnt-out plane.  
That's about the size of it, yes.  
So it looks like  
a complete write-off.  
Yes.  
Well, thank you, sir.  
Hello, Anna.  
Tell me, please.  
I've told you all there is to know.  
Please.  
They were on their way to Meiktila--

Forrester, the navigator,  
and a passenger.  
One of the engines caught fire.  
We didn't have time to locate  
their exact position,  
but we know they were  
over a Jap area.  
We don't know  
if they landed safely.  
It's bad country, though.  
Did he know it would  
be dangerous when he went?  
No. It was practically  
a routine flight.  
He just had bad luck.  
Was the bad luck  
because of something he had failed in?  
No.  
No, it wasn't his fault.  
Then perhaps he will come back.  
Aye, perhaps he will.  
If it's humanly possible.  
He said he would come back.  
Forrester.  
- What's the matter?  
- A plane.  
There it is!  
That plane was looking for us.  
So was the other one.  
We should have had more sense than  
to leave our position until they found us.  
Now when they do see the wreckage,  
there'll be nobody to signal to them.  
They'll think there were no survivors  
and give up the search.  
That plane was on the same course  
we were on--to Meiktila.  
That's the way back home for us,  
the way we're going.  
Now will you stop teasing that shoulder  
of yours and try to get some rest?  
- Rest!  
- Sure, you may need it.  
As soon as it's dark, one of us

will have to go on to the river alone,  
try to get help for the others.  
And who will that be?  
You, I suppose. You're the uninjured one.  
And leave us to rot.  
No, I was thinking  
that you might like to go.  
You can still walk all right.  
I'll stay here  
and take care of Carrington.  
It doesn't make much difference to me.  
You think it over.  
You never liked me,  
did you, Forrester?  
Not now, Blore.  
There's a good fellow.  
I know why.  
It's because I had something to live for,  
a life to go back to.  
I did some thinking last night.  
It's my having a wife  
and family that you hated.  
You need some sleep.  
Somebody said once that in a crisis,  
you could always depend on a man  
of action to lose his head first.  
I never thought I'd  
see that proved up to the hilt.  
Let's talk it over later.  
I'm making a last appeal  
to you, Forrester, for us all.  
Carrington's wounded. He can't  
think straight any more than you can.  
We should never have left  
the plane in the first place.  
We've used up our strength uselessly.  
As for going onward,  
it's sheer madness.  
The only sane course now is to get back  
to the plane as quickly as we can  
and sweat it out  
until the rescue party arrives.  
Well?  
Forrester?

Forrester.

Blore!

Blore!

What's the matter?

- Blore's gone.

- What do you mean?

Blore's gone.

Back to where we crashed,

I guess.

He's left some water in this  
and walked off while we were asleep.

Maybe he's right, huh?

He's a clot and you know it.

Well, I'm gonna bring him back.

I'll make it as quick as I can.

You try to get some more sleep.

There's water if you need it.

Try not to.

I'll be back as soon as I can.

Blore!

Where's old Blore?

Decided not to come.

He's dead, isn't he?

Did he shoot himself?

Poor old Blore.

What do you know about it?

I only said poor old Blore.

Yeah.

Poor old Blore.

He could have been right, though,  
don't you think?

No!

We're gonna get  
out of here if we can--alive.

- You mean you are, don't you?

- I mean both of us.

I'm afraid it's no use,  
my trying to walk.

Nobody's asking you to.

I'm gonna carry you.

How can you?

You'll never be able to do it.

If I help you, do you think you  
can manage to stand up on one leg?



I'll have a go.  
But aren't you going to wait  
until the sun's down?  
We haven't got time for that.  
I'm beginning to get hungry.  
You all right?  
Okay now?  
- I think so.  
- Hold on tight. Here we go.  
Another 50 yards  
and we'll take a rest.  
Did you hear me?  
Carrington.  
Carrington!  
Carrington!  
Sir?  
- Are you all right?  
- Yes.  
We'll rest right up here.  
I'm all right.  
Sorry.  
Time for a drink anyway.  
That's almost the last  
of the water, isn't it?  
Almost.  
- You had yours yet?  
- No, I'll have it a little later.  
Drink it now.  
Let's see you.  
All right.  
How much left now?  
That's the last.  
About had it, haven't we?  
Not yet.  
Pretty near, I'd say.  
- You'd better go on.  
- We'll both go on.  
- You'll never get me out of here.  
- Sure I will.  
You're getting like old Blore.  
- Why?  
- Well, face facts.  
We can't go on without water.  
If you were by yourself,

you might get to the river,  
fill that flask.  
There might even be something  
we could eat there.  
Fruit, maybe.  
Or even a nice juicy trout.  
What's the watch for?  
It'll be dark  
for a couple hours yet.  
I might lose my bearings.  
When it gets light, you fire a shot.  
I'll be listening.  
After that, fire one  
at hourly intervals.  
Okay?  
Okay.  
It's too bad  
I don't have a fishing line.  
I'll have breakfast  
ready for you when you get back.  
Just make mine toast and coffee.  
The Lord be praised!  
Yes. He reached the river all right.  
He was picked up  
by some Naga bearers.  
He took him back with him  
and got the navigator out.  
- Alive?  
- Yes, but only just.  
A few more hours,  
it would have been too late.  
Forward hospital are flying  
them both in tomorrow.  
Anna said he would come back.  
I didn't have faith enough.  
- This is where I get out.  
- Not too much talk, please, Mr. Forrester.  
That's not fair, nurse.  
Mr. Forrester and I...  
got lots to talk about.  
All right, Mr. Forrester,  
that's enough.  
Well, I'll be seeing you.  
Yes, sir.

Thanks for the ride.

- Haven't we met before?

- The face seems familiar.

How about a nice jeep ride, Doc?

No nonsense now.

You're a sick man.

- You're going to hospital.

- You know where I'm going.

I'll take all the salt  
and mepacrine you want.

- Your eyes still ache?

- No.

Let's have a look at your tongue.

What an impossible man you are.

All right, get in.

Hello, Miss McNab.

Look at me,  
crying like a loony.

Have you ever heard  
of such a thing?

There, there.

Where's Anna?

She's in there.

Asleep, I think.

She hasn't slept at all  
till she knew that you were safe.

- You can go in.

- Well, I oughtn't to wake her.

There's no need to wake her.