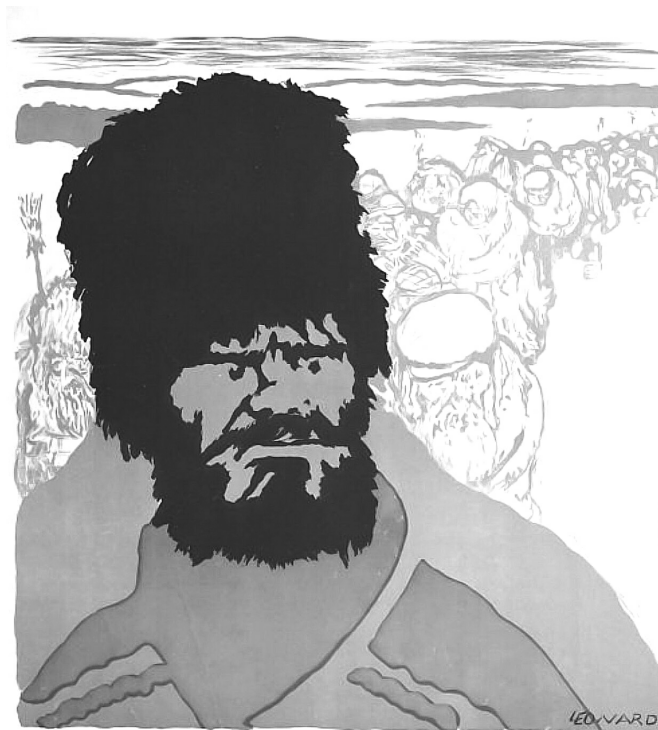


# Warm Hearts in a Frozen Land

by John S. Zielinski

*A fictional adventure story based in part  
on his experiences in Siberia with the American Expeditionary Force*

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## PART ONE

Late in the summer months of 1918, one beautiful morning, when the boys started up for the transport deck, a strange sight greeted their eyes; before them was a strange city forming a horse-shoe situated upon sloping hills, as far as their sight could carry.

Right by the shore, within a stone's throw, was a beautiful large building, which they later found out, was the railroad station. All around upon its hills were large white and red brick buildings, large number of them, they were the old Czar's Imperial Soldiers' barracks; they were gazing upon an Asiatic city and the port of Vladivostok, Siberia.

Upon the bridge adjoining the station were hundreds of spectators, men and women, fighting for a place on the bridge to get a glimpse of three new army transports that arrived unexpected during the night. They could not come close to the transports as the local military guards kept them away, so all kinds of rumors spread among the spectators as to the nationality of the troops on board, although the transport stacks were all painted with wide red, white and blue stripes, and although the "Stars and Stripes" were flying from its mast, the majority were still ignorant of its nationality.

That day they were not allowed to leave the transports, except the commissioned officers on official duty, but were busy waving their hands and returning greetings from shore of some of the U.S. Marines and soldiers and other allied soldiers already there.

But next day was another day, that morning the regimental paymaster was busy paying off in American greenbacks, and after his task was done a general order was issued, pleasing everyone except the men on guard and the Kitchen Police, shore leave until eleven o'clock that night.

Those who know the life of American doughboys can imagine what it meant to turn loose over 2,000 men in a strange foreign city and after they had just been paid off.

John Michalski was a hard working boy of twenty summers, most of his life had been spent around the coal regions of Pennsylvania; his father a miner, and he, himself, spent several months working in the mine until the year 1916 when he decided to join the army, although still a youngster of eighteen years of age.

After serving on the Mexican border for several months, and at various stations in the Philippine Islands, he was now among the first of the American Expeditionary Forces in faraway Siberia, a corporal in the 27th regular Infantry.

John was a perfect physical figure, standing about six feet in height; he was a great lover of sport. Whenever a contest was being conducted in the regiment, he was among the first to participate, in fact right now he held the heavyweight championship in his regiment, of pleasing personality, he was always respected by his comrades, and well liked.

Right now he was among the lucky ones to leave his transport for shore freedom, surrounded by several of his friends who feared to encounter difficulty with native Russian language, but John was to solve the language problem as he could speak fluently the Polish language, that would half way get him by with the Russians as the languages resemble each other a little.

It was a great night, that night at the "Vladivostockye Nomera" on Svetlauskaya Street, the main drag through Vladivostok; the place was packed with every description of uniformed soldiers,

Americans predominating. The pretty baryshnias' (girls) main attention was with the American soldiers, therefore every available chair and table was occupied by the Amerykanskis with baryshnias on their knees and a bottle of vodka in their hand, everybody happy as the vodka began to work on most of them present; some of them were already getting so groggy that neither the chairs nor tables could keep them upon their feet.

John, with four friends was sitting in a corner by a table overlooking the whole room. They were also making merry and having a merry time; every few minutes he had to act as an interpreter for some half-drunken soldier and his baryshnia, or vice versa, until he got tired of it, as his main attention was upon a table in front of him, and a pretty young barmaid baryshnia, dressed in native costume with her long hair folded neatly and strewn on her back. John and his baryshnia were taking turns in sipping vodka out of the same glass, or taking a bite off a long piece of sausage or bread.

His friends were also busy, each one having a nice sweetheart on his knees, the vodka was beginning to tell on the five of them.

The next table was occupied by four husky Russian cossack officers, a bottle and four empty glasses were in front of them, they were sizing up the Americans with great curiosity, especially John and his friends who were near by; now and then they would stick their heads together, their moustaches almost touching, and hold a conversation in a low whisper, with lots of motions and gestures.

The waiters and waitresses were every second on the run, this was the busiest night that the "Vladivostockye Nomera" ever experienced; here and there a dance was going on. Baryshnias trying to teach the Americans their native dances, the soldat instructing, or trying to teach how to step the Fox Trot, Two Step, etc.

John leaned over and whispered something into his baryshnia's ear, she smiled and nodded her head, and stood up on the table. John jumped on his chair and started, at the top of his voice, to arouse a little attention from the crowd, with his friends looking at him with astonishment, partly he succeeded in doing so, a bunch of Americans and Russians gathered around the table, one of the spectators being a Russian with a guitar. John pulled him over to the table and ordered him to accompany his girl on his guitar, with the wave of John's hand she began to sing:

(1) Na cuzyni zacgybajan marno zyte ide.

A roar of applause was a reward for her effort, with a lot of coins being pitched upon the table and in her direction. John grabbed her in his arms and stood her beside him on the floor, while his friends picked up the coins off the floor and handed them to the girl. The crowd began to disperse into the room and to their tables.

John took his seat again and placed his baryshnia upon his knee, to have another drink. Just then one of the Russian officers called for another bottle; the obedient waiter was right there, but just as he approached the table John also asked for another bottle for himself and his friends.

The waiter looked at John's table and the Russian officers'; on John's table were lying nice, new, American dollars, upon the Russian's table were old, temporary, shabby, paper money with hardly any valuation of the temporary provisional government. Well, although the Russians ordered the bottle first the waiter set it down upon John's table and started to count his change necessary for the bottle. That aroused the Russian's anger, without any warning one of them rose up and hit the waiter in his face knocking him down. That was too much for John to stand; leaping a few steps towards the Russian he hit him a heavy blow, knocked him on the table, and with the table to the floor. The three remaining Russians attempted to draw the sabers, but before they succeeded in doing it, John's friends were on top of them, and in a few minutes they were disarmed. Just then, as it looked as if the fight will develop into a free for all fight, an American patrol stepped into the place and ordered ever American soldier out and back to their transport. It was nearing eleven o'clock at night, John and his friends escorted their baryshnias out of place unmolested by the Russian cossacks, who stayed back.

## **PART TWO**

Next day a big parade and general review was held. It was the first time in history that the American troops ever paraded on Siberian soil. They must have made a good impression with the natives as they swung along through Svetlanskaya Street in full field equipment, and they were greeted with applause after applause and in many cases flowers were thrown upon the ranks of passing soldiers. The day was ideal for such occasion, real hot summer day.

After a strenuous long march on a cobble-stone street, they finally reached their destination – an old Russian barracks which were quickly converted into temporary quarters.

After a week later they were on the move again, this time in a little different way, in box cars, packed like sardines, they didn't know their destination, and no one cared much to know as every man was eagerly looking for some kind of excitement and adventure.

After traveling that way a whole day and night they finally wound up in the good sized town of Spaskoe, where they had a chance to stretch their limbs and breathe freely the fresh air. After disembarking and unloading different equipment, they were quartered again in Russian barracks, where they stayed several days and had to sleep on cement floors.

From there the famous march commenced under Colonel Charles Morrow through Siberian swamps, marshes, great forests and hills. Most men not being accustomed to such a strain as covering 20-25 miles per day, were dropping by the way-side, but had to cover the distance by night unassisted as the following wagons had strict orders to pick up no one unless when hurt, so it was a strange sight for a long string of single soldiers trailing the regiment as late as up to midnight.

Finally, after covering a distance of about 200 miles, and passing many villages, through rough roads, they reached their goal – Petrovski-Zavod, and although the majority of the men were suffering with blisters on their feet and on shoulders from the pack straps, they were now hardened and more accustomed to hardships, should they encounter them.

At this place they got the much needed rest, and it was at this place that they were reinforced by fresh troops from Camp Fremol, California, to fill the regiment into the necessary war strength, it was also there that the colonel's famous speech was made about the goose that lays the golden eggs, and of steel discipline, from which time he got his nickname of "Steel-jacket Bill."

From there they proceeded by rail to Chabarovsk, the headquarters of Ataman Kalmikoff, the famous general of the White Russian cossack army, who was ruling the Amur provinces with lash and iron hand, he was supposed to be opposing the Bolsheviks but anybody he disliked was a doomed man, he had to dig his own grave.

From that city John's company was sent down about one hundred miles beyond to be stationed at Enn in Russian Tepluskas (box cars), and there he acted as main interpreter, by now being promoted in rank as a sergeant.

By this time it was winter, and with it severe Siberian cold.

In the middle part of that winter the company was recalled back to Chabrarivak, the headquarters of the regiment, and sent on to warm quarters in Spaskoe, where John was detailed as a chief interpreter of the American Military Police in the city of Spaskoe.

## **PART THREE**

It was night and zero weather, but the moon was shining bright; the streets were almost deserted, but in one of the streets two military policemen were walking along toward their quarters to be checked off duty. Suddenly the taller one grabbed his friend's arm and pointed in the direction of one house, there in its shadow a man was sneaking away with a filled sack on his back. Noticing the two Military Policemen, he ran into the yard of another house, closely pursued by the two Americans who were right upon his heels.

"Where the heck is the Ruski robber," remarked one to another angrily after a few minutes search

around the house. "Well, if he isn't here he must be right in that house, surely he is not under the ground," was the answer, "and we'll try this house, it may be that burglar's rendezvous."

The house was dark inside, as the majority of the houses were on that street, but that didn't prevent the two Military Policemen from banging at the door with all their might and shouting, "Open up, Amerykanski Police."

After a few minutes of their efforts they noticed a little light inside; at the same time a few voices were heard, and children started crying, and then a voice of an elderly woman was heard behind the door, "Who is there, and what do you want?"

"We are searching for a man that ran in here a few minutes ago, don't be scared lady, we will not harm you, we are American Police," was the answer from the outside, the conversation was being held in the Russian language.

"I can't help who you are after, but I swear there is no man inside, nobody else but myself and the children whom you have scared to death, I guess you hear them crying."

"What about your husband, where is he?"

"My husband is dead long ago, he died in the Czar's army somewhere in the Carpathian Mountains, and I'm just a poor widow living with my children, so please go away, whoever you are."

"She will not open," remarked one to another, "what shall we do about it, and I still think she is guilty of something or else she would open."

"Let's break in by smashing the door," answered the second man who evidently didn't understand any of the conversation that was transmitted with the woman, and saying that he kicked the door with full force, that produced the results, the children began to scream louder, but the woman started to plead, "For God sakes, please don't break the door, just have a few more minutes patience and I'll open for you regardless what happens."

With those words she left evidently to get the key for the door, in a minute she was back, slowly she turned the key and the door was swung open, there before them stood a little, stout woman about forty years old, with a candle in her hand.

"There," she said, trembling with fear, "I've told you there is nobody here."

"Can we search your other rooms?" was the inquiry from the same man that held the conversation with her before.

"Why you can search all you want as long as you do not harm me or my poor children."

"Don't fear lady we wouldn't harm your cat, not only you or your children," was the answer as they entered the large warm room.

Once inside the two Military Policemen first looked around for the stove to warm up while the old lady was looking for a match to light the kerosene lamp hanging from the ceiling in the middle of the room, and soon the room was fairly well lighted.

Now they had a chance to look around and size up the things up. In an adjoining bedroom there were three children bunched up on a large wooden bed, peeping out with great curiosity at them and wondering who they were.

"Well, I guess there is no burglar here," said one to another, after looking every room and corner over. "I believe he evaded us somewhere, but what gets me Roy is that the lady is constantly looking at

that there window as though some one had left the room that way, what you say I'll investigate."

With those words he drew his .45 Colt and approached the window, he pushed it open and there was a cry outside, "Aha! Who is here," he said, as he jumped outside to follow the suspect, his friend ran to the window and looked out, the old lady done the same, but the suspect and the Military Policeman disappeared in the darkness.

Surprised and undecided whether to follow his friend through the window or stay back, Roy stood there gazing out and into the darkness; the old lady ran up to him crying, "moya mamsha, moya mamsha," when again a loud knocking was heard in the back of them at the door and a loud voice commanded, "Hey, Roy! Open the door quick." The man named Roy rushed over and pushed the door wide open, there to his great surprise stood his friend with a girl in his arms, her head drooping down, she was dressed in a night-gown and had slippers on, her long beautiful hair hanging down.

"What do you think of the little fool, Roy," he said, and placed her beside the stove, "get me some cold water or snow to bring her to herself, she stood there outside the window freezing to death, afraid to come in, fearing our presence, I guess." Saying that he laid her on an old couch he spotted by the stove in a corner; now the mother became hysterical thinking her daughter was dead; the two smaller girls and a boy ran up to her, also crying at the top of their voices, he had a hard time to keep them away, as she was still unconscious from great strain, exposure and excitement.

Finally Roy brought the cold water in a wash bowl, and both of them started rubbing the limbs, as her fingers were turning white already. Now they both could notice that she was a young, pretty girl about eighteen years of age, beautifully shaped and medium height.

It took several minutes to bring her to, but finally she opened her eyes and called to her mother, "Who are these men," she asked. "why, they are the ones that you run away from and hid behind the window, they are Amerykanski Police."

"Be calm, and please don't get so excited, little baryshnia; if you promise to control yourself and be quiet I'll explain everything," said the man that brought her in. "My name is John Michalski and this is my friend on the police force, Roy Ruble."

Then John explained everything; how he happened to get to their house and asked the mother (who by now had cooled off) to prepare some hot tea, but she was ashamed to say that they had tea but as sugar was scarce they could not afford it.

John then instructed Roy to run over to their quarters, and whispered something in his ear, and Roy departed.

Over half an hour later, when Roy returned, he found the whole family jolly and full of smiles; water was boiling in a samovar ready for tea. Roy put several packages on the table, and took off his sheep-skin coat, to make himself at home; the three youngsters were happy again and playing with nice silver American fifty-cent pieces received from John. Roy was now formally introduced to the pretty baryshnia by John, he said, "meet the burglar that brought us here, Marusha Koshkinia."

## **PART FOUR**

The following night, and nights that followed, John was a frequent visitor at Marusha's house, when on duty in that vicinity he would step in to at least say hello, and when off-duty most of his time was spent with Marusha. He learned that she was well educated, intelligent young girl of eighteen years of age, and had devoted all the time she could to studying the English language, as they spent many an evening teaching each other the two languages. Marusha would correct John to speaking perfect Russian; John in return instructed her in speaking and reading English. She was much devoted to singing and played a mandolin perfectly. One of the first songs John had to teach her, and repeat it many times, until she mastered it, accompanied by her on the mandolin was:

(2) Meet me tonight in dreamland, under the silvery moon

Marusha's most favorite song in Russian was: (and John also had to learn it by heart),

(3) No prasno ty sinda hodisz, na prasno ty noski zbijosz.

Many a night John would stay with Marusha until long after midnight, after everybody had gone to sleep, and soon they both began to realize that they were madly in love with each other, a love they never experienced before in their young lives.

Winter was passing and the snow on Siberian steppes began to melt, but not the hearts of Marusha and John who began to know each other and to love each other more than any time before.

Marusha learned of John's birthday and decided to make him a surprise birthday party, so she got busy, as she wanted to make this a big affair.

With the assistance of Roy Ruble and others of John's friends, she invited all the men from the Military Police that were off duty that day, including the captain in command, and his other friends from the company he belonged to.

With the other invitations of her baryshnia friends, it was an easy task as they were anxious to come to meet the young Amerykanski soldats. She also engaged the best Russian orchestra in Spaskoe. The day was set for Saturday afternoon and everything was ready.

Whether John knew about the affair or not is uncertain, but he came to Marusha's house at the usual hour, fully surprised, and then the fun started; refreshments were plenty, including many bottles of old Russian Imperial Vodka (whiskey). Russian singing and dancing predominated, including the famous cossack dance which got great applause from the Americans present, they also tried their ability in dancing the cossack dance but with much clumsiness which brought loud laughter from the pretty baryshnias, dressed in their native costume.

Several American dances were also attempted, but the musicians not being acquainted with American music had to give it up as a failure.

It was near midnight that the party finally dispersed, and everyone enjoyed the party to the greatest satisfaction, every one was contented and the majority of the Americans escorted their new friend baryshnias to their homes.

It was after midnight and John was about ready to bid his Marusha good-bye, when a sleigh rapidly stopped in front of the house, and hurried steps were approaching the door rapidly. Marusha shuddered in fear, looked at John, and then strained her eyes upon the door, she motioned him to hide behind the stove as there was heard loud knocking at the door, and a loud harsh voice commanded, "Open up." John instantly examined his Colt pistol and shoved it back into its holster, satisfied that it was loaded and ready for all emergencies.

Marusha, after asking a few questions, opened the door and John noticed two cossack officers enter the room.

"Why are you up so late Marusha," one questioned as he attempted to grab her in his powerful arms, but she quickly ducked him and stepped back asking him for his business at this time of night. "Oh, you don't care for me anymore, eh? Did you fall in love with one of those foreign Amerykanskis?" Without waiting for an answer they threw off their overcoats and placed them on a table, both were armed with long sabers, Caucasian daggers, and each had a revolver on the right side in a holster, their breasts were decorated with many shining medals and crosses.

So you have forgotten your friend Ivan Zihonieff," the same man continued, "well I'm anxious to see you and brought my friend along; Vanka Bergnoff meet my girl friend Marusha." Bergnoff advanced with outstretched hand but he met a mean look from Marusha's eyes, "Listen," she said to Ivan, "I want you to know and understand that you are no friend of mine or you would not come here at this time of the night, now you and your friend get out of this house this minute or I'll call the police."

"Ha, ha, ha, call the police against me," laughed Ivan, "don't you know I am an officer of Ataman Kalmikoff and I'm the law here, and I'll do as I please, and no police dares to interfere with an officer of Kalmikoff." With these words he advanced threateningly toward Marusha, "Stay away from me," she shouted pointing her finger at him, "or I call for help from the American police." Ivan and Vanka started to laugh out loud again after hearing this last threat of Marusha and at same time made a gesture toward his saber, "Why you foolish girl," he snarled, "I can cut up a platoon of them with this here saber."

With those words, John stepped out in full view from his hiding place in such a quick way that Vanka, already sitting down, jumped upon his feet, both were startled stiff, "You'll cut up how many," growled John, with color changing on his face from anger, "you cossack rats," he continued, "can cut up a platoon of innocent women and children, not a platoon of American soldiers; now I'm giving both of you, and I am here all alone besides Marusha, [a chance] to clear out of here or your Ataman Kalmikoff will never have a chance to see either one of you alive again."

Simultaneously both cossacks reached for their revolvers, but were just a little too slow for John, whose pistol flashed out like lightning, and two shots rang in the room. Vanka's revolver dropped to the floor; Marusha ran over to John like a wild deer, pleading not to kill them, and Ivan's hands were raised over his head as per command, his revolver remaining in his holster.

Whole house was now in uproar. Marusha's mother ran out into the room, so did her younger sisters and brother, but John calm and cool-headed as ever, now walked up first to Ivan with pistol in hand and snatched the revolver out of his holster, then he unbuckled his saber and pulled out the dagger and handed it to Marusha telling her to hide it somewhere, ordering Ivan to sit down quietly by the table; he now advanced cautiously to Vanya who was carefully wrapping his hand with his handkerchief it proved that the bullet just grazed his right hand causing it to bleed but nothing serious.

After disarming both men and silencing the youngsters and their mother from crying, John questioned Marusha about her acquaintance with Ivan.

She explained sobbing, that she knew him before he left to go to war with her father; her father was killed and she never heard of Ivan until tonight, and never cared for him. John then asked the two cossacks what they intended to do.

"Give us our weapons," they said, "and we swear not only to leave this house immediately but will also leave the city for Spaskoe." Then Vanka started a rough argument with Ivan – that it was all his fault to bring him in so late at night and get in trouble with the American Police.

After having a short talk with Marusha, John agreed to return the weapons to them, as they pleaded that it was a great disgrace for a cossack officer to be disarmed, "We'll sooner face death than such a disgrace," they pleaded, but John, for safety's sake extracted all the bullets from their revolvers and kept any extra ammunition that they had in their possession, they then departed. John stayed in Marusha's house until bright morning, fearing their return.

## **PART FIVE**

Few days later John was called to battalion headquarters to receive instructions for a secret mission. He was to accompany Captain Hathaway and his company of soldiers for the interior to study the conditions of native peasants in their villages and learn the attitude of their political feeling, whether it was pro-Bolshevik or pro-Kolchak regime, who now held the main control of Siberia with assistance of such Atamans as Kalmikoff and Semenoff their armies were known as the Whites opposing the newly formed Bolshevik government.

That night John spread the news to Marusha; she received the news with sadness and started crying; the mission was taking her John for at least a full month and it was dangerous.



Before he left her house, about midnight, she covered him with kisses and tears, and as they were parting she started her sad song:

(4) Adios to you dear Johnny. Adios but not good-bye.

As she got through singing John left in a hurry to get some sleep, as next morning he was to leave.

It was about noon that Captain Hathaway with his company of fully equipped men reached the first village on their scheduled march, followed by two army wagons drawn by Missouri mules, the wagons were loaded with provisions and supplies most necessary; the foodstuff was to be purchased from the natives wherever possible.

The company stacked arms in village square, and the cooks got busy preparing dinner for the hungry men.

Soon the company was surrounded by curious natives, as almost the whole village turned out to look the Amerykanskis over. The center of attraction were the American mules. The natives had, and were, horse lovers, but had never seen mules before in their lives so they started to dicker with the captain through John to swap the mules for their horses, but without any success.

That night the second village was reached and plans were made to put up for the night. Village starosta (mayor) was summoned to assign them to quarters which were the natives' private homes; men were to sleep on the floor, but that was nothing unusual as everyone was accustomed to that.

After supper, at nightfall, captain, officers and John, as an interpreter, were sitting in the starosta's house receiving the village's special guests, who all had one complaint to make – that was against the cruelty of Ataman Kalmikoff cossacks whose confiscations, robberies and other outrages were beyond imagination. All the natives were very bitter against them.

As the conversation, full of complaints, was taking place one of the Lieutenants slowly walked up to the window, looked out, started laughing, and called to the others "Just come over and see what is going on outside," they all walked over and looked out, there before their eyes was a beautiful sight, a big bonfire was built right in the middle of the road, night was pitch dark, and around the fire about a hundred pairs (baryshnias and Americans) were holding each other in the back round the waist, swaying from right to left then turning slowly around in the circle to the left and right as they were singing; with accompaniment of an accordion:

(5) Chocil bym szczo by moi mily, krepko mnia kochet (2 times)

When this song was finished the baryshnias, although still in bashful state, were asking for an American song, so to oblige them the first one was decided upon:

(6) She owns a kopeck (one Russian cent) stand  
One block from no-man's land.

"Gosh, it's surprising how those boys make friends with those Russians in such a short while," remarked the captain as they sat down by the table again. The singing and dancing continued until about midnight.

Several days passed and they were still pushing on toward their goal, that was Lake Hanka. Each night a different village was chosen for the company to quarter and put up until morning, and everywhere the natives were looking them over with great curiosity but treating the men in a very friendly way.

It was two weeks since the company was on a march. One day late in the afternoon John, with

eight other men, was nearing a village, as usual, few miles in advance of the company to make the necessary arrangements for company's quarters and food.

They were in a large farm wagon driven by a native from the last village.

When within a few thousand yards of the village they were headed for, they suddenly discovered a large heap [column] of smoke lifting up in the air, evidently the village was on fire; a few more minutes and the village was within view and several wagons were approaching in their direction. To John's ears came the sound of occasional rifle fire, a village was probably being attacked by some armed party. John ordered the driver to stop, and they all jumped out of the wagon, and spread out in a skirmish formation ahead of the wagon.

In several more minutes the wagons that were loaded with excited men and children came to a sudden halt, per John's command. John and his men immediately started questioning the natives as to the trouble in the village, and why they were fleeing, and soon found the cause. The village was being robbed and pillaged by a few hundred Chinese and Russians, marauders, who were practically all ex-soldiers and now deserters from their respective armies.

A few bands of these marauders were now operating in those parts of the country. The band now in their village was commanded by a cut-throat ex-cossack officer who had mercy on no one that resisted him, and now they were all robbing the natives of their valuables, food stuffs and cattle. The drunken and half-crazed bandits set the fire to a few houses, and the flames were spreading, they have escaped but expect to be pursued by the bandits.

Their expectations were right, as a good size group on horseback was even now seen leaving the village and approaching in their direction. The women and children started to scream, and commenced persuading their husbands to drive on for their dear lives.

John ordered the men drivers to drive on and instructed them to go as far as the main body of the marching company, and notify the captain of the peril that the village was in, and to return back to their village with the company, as John was confident of driving the bandits back to their lair where they came from. Meanwhile John made up his mind quickly, as the wagons were leaving in the direction of the main body of the company, and that was to halt the on galloping mounted bandits.

John's men scattered quickly about ten paces apart and took a prone position, with John a few paces in the rear, their wagon also departed with the others.

The mounted men were galloping on, unaware of the presence of American soldiers; there was about fifty in the bunch; the distances between John's men and the mounted was decreasing rapidly. The Americans in their position were anxiously [waiting] for the command to open fire, suddenly, when about five hundred yards apart, the mounted bandits at the head of the band discovered the squad lying down with their rifles trained on them and commenced halting their horses, motioning and hollering to their comrades that they are in some kind of ambush, but their discovery was too late as nine American Springfield rifles barked out loud, and several horses stumbled to the ground carrying the riders with them. By now they were within a few hundred yards of each other, but as per command they steered their horses in a circle and started back in the direction of the village, with the bullets flying around their ears from the back and a horse or a man falling out of their ranks, dead or wounded; in the distance the fire in the village was spreading.

It was about half an hour before the main body of the company was sighted advancing rapidly, as the captain seemed to fear for the safety of John and his men. In the meantime John was busy with his men dressing the wounds of the bandits, who were greatly surprised at the merciful disposition the Americans were taking towards them, the wounded men expected to be killed, instead they had their wounds dressed. John also learned of the number of men in their band, their plans and intentions, and how they were armed, and to John's great surprise he learned that they were equipped with two machineguns and first class military rifles of old Russian government and Mausers; that their leader

was a blood-thirsty type of man and would put up a battle for supremacy and to save the loot, regardless of whether they were Americans or not, as to that he was unaware.

After uniting with the company again John quickly explained the general situation to the Captain and had not much time to spare as by now a large body of men, mounted and on foot, were seen approaching from the direction of the far off burning village. A short conference was held with other officers and non-commissioned officers and the company started quickly to deploy in a skirmish formation in preparation for the unavoidable battle.

The wagons, including the natives now returning to their village, were left far behind and the company was advancing in perfect order to meet the enemy.

About half of the marauders' band was composed of mounted men, and when at a distance of about a thousand yards they commenced to form a long line in preparation for an attack upon the unknown to them intruders, the men on foot were left behind; they evidently figured that the mounted men were sufficiently strong to kill, drive back or capture whatever armed force was there for them to engage.

Captain Hathaway allowed the charging cavalry men to within 600 yards of his line of men lying in prone position waiting for the captain's command, then a blast of whistles, and a tr-r-r-r, echoed in the air as over two hundred Springfield rifles spoke, including four automatic Browning rifles, half of the attacking line was swept as if by a magic hand, the remaining cavalry men again, like their predecessors, made a wide circle to the right and started to ride like madmen back toward the village and back upon the remaining band approaching on foot, shower after shower of steel-jackets was thinning their ranks, mostly the horses being the victims, as their riders were lying flat upon their backs, almost trying to squeeze into their flesh.

Finally the terror stricken horses and their riders drove right into their comrades' ranks, who were in their rear, but now also retreating in a hurry seeing the cavalry's great disaster, but many of them were trampled down under the hooves of the mad riders in retreat. The whole marauders' band was now a mob of disorganized men, each man for himself was running back to the village to save his hide from the terrible baptism of fire from the rear.

John with his platoon was ordered to advance cautiously upon the village in pursuit of the band.

Ahead of his company with the platoon, they were passing the field along the main road, strewn with dead and wounded men and horses.

Just as John's platoon entered the village, they were greeted with scattered rifle fire, and two of his men fell, but the remainder pressed on the marauders' band which was now hurriedly departing on horseback and in wagons with their accumulated loot.

John's men immediately opened fire upon them, but had to wait for the remainder of the company which gave a chance for most of them to escape amidst the shower of rifle fire from John's platoon.

Immediately after the main body had entered the village, necessary outposts were posted at the outskirts of the village for safety sake while the remainder of the company was put to work extinguishing the now raging fire which now was spreading terribly.

Two chains were formed as a bucket line to bring the water from nearby village wells to the scene of the fire. It was about midnight when the fire was finally extinguished, after a hard struggle, and with the assistance of the natives who were laboring side by side with the American soldiers.

Hailing the American soldiers, and especially the captain, as saviors and liberators of their village, they quickly, the next day, organized a village native band composed of three accordions, two cornets, two snare and one bass drum to escort them through and out of their village, as an appreciation for their kind work.

When time for departure had arrived, the women and young girls were handing souvenirs of all descriptions to the soldiers, while old and young men formed an honorable escort formation between the musicians and the Americans. Amid great cheers and to the air of famous Russian march music,

the American company marched through and out of the village in the direction of Lake Hanka.

Outside of the village a large wagon was again awaiting to drive John and his platoon to the next village in advance of his company, fearing an ambush from the marauding bands.

Remainder of the journey to Lake Hanka was done without any important incidents, although almost every village they came to was in one big lament as they had been visited by one of the marauding bands, robbed and pillaged.

It was about three weeks from the day that they had left their headquarters at Spaskoe that the company finally reached their destination, it was a good size town on Lake Alexandrovka; here the Americans came in contact with the Japanese troops, composed of two companies of infantry and a squadron of cavalry. The Japanese were in town three days and greeted the Americans in a very friendly way.

The Japanese commander could speak passable Russian and explained to Captain Hathaway, through John, in the only restaurant in town, where all the officers gathered for conference, that they also had encountered a large band of marauders, but luck was with his men in defeating them. He feared though that by now the leaders were aware of the number of Americans and Japanese forces and should they unite it would be a difficult matter for either side to oppose them, or hope to completely defeat them individually. He therefore advised the Americans that they should join together and by mutual co-operation they could safely reach their respective commands, otherwise they were facing great danger of being annihilated in the open steppes of wild Siberia.

In the course of conversation the Americans learned the Japanese commander's name, Major Arimaska, a very intelligent man and a veteran of the Japanese army; he took an active part in the Russo-Japanese war and had been wounded in action during the war. The American officers noticed that he was greatly respected by his officers of lower rank.

Captain Hathaway fully agreed with Major Arimaska about his predictions of possible danger and agreed to join his forces with the Japanese, with the Major in command as being a superior officer in rank in the Allied expedition. That greatly pleased the Japanese. They also agreed that after remaining in this town three days, to give the men a necessary rest, they will take a new route of march in the direction of Spaskoe.

It was a happy and enjoyable three days that the Americans spent in Alexandrovka. The price of everything they purchased was doubled over what the natives had to pay but the Americans didn't seem to care or kick much as the dollar was now worth fifty rubles, so they were buying everything the best – eat, drink and be happy, for tomorrow you may die – was their motto. The captain gave them plenty of freedom to enjoy themselves, and had picked comfortable quarters for the men to stay in, as although it was spring time already but not much of it in this part of the country, but the days were pretty warm and pleasant although the nights were still cold.

After three days of wild and merry stay in the town the entire force of American-Japanese soldiers was leaving, to the great disappointment of the natives, especially the vodka merchants, who were making good business and friends from both the Americans and their allies – the Japanese.

John again, as usual, was sent ahead of the main body in customary wagon detailed for the purpose from Alexandrovka, only his detachment of eight men was increased by additional eight Japanese mounted cavalry men, on their sturdy little oriental horses. John was assigned as the commander over both squads, having a Sergeant Japanese with him who could speak fairly good English; the Sergeant had exchanged his horse for a place in a wagon beside John, with one of the Americans who craved horseback riding, and the Sergeant quickly made friends with John and the remainder of the soldiers.

By noon the united force had reached the first village and after having their dinner there, proceeded on. Americans for the first time were looking on their Captain with astonishment, as he was riding horseback beside the Major, heretofore he was always on foot with his company, but he obtained a nice Russian horse in Alexandrovka that any officer could be proud of.

Over a week they marched on through a rough country, hills, woods and marshes, in some places

men had to cut down trees and build bridges for their heavy wagons; roads had to be built through the woods for the wagons to slip through but finally they were now approaching a Mongolian settlement known and called by native Russians as Burats.

John, a few miles in advance with his usual sixteen men, was anxiously and with great interest listening to the native driver of the wagon who was stating that the several following villages to be passed are now settled by the Burats who are great fanatics in their religion, and great worshipers of a dog. The dog is a sacred animal to them and they will even sacrifice their lives in its protection, that they are also a stubborn people, and have not very much use for the white men; their villages are very seldom visited by the white people, and they govern themselves, living in great ignorance.

After listening to the driver's story, John instructed all his men to leave the dogs alone, so as not to get in trouble and ...

[– page 29 was missing –] INTERPOLATION: *The soldiers advance into the village. Seeing this, the inhabitants release their dogs upon them. This leads to the soldiers having to defend themselves.*

... of his bayonet into the large dog's flesh, that enraged the animal to such an extent that it turned him mad and he made one leap for his attacker's throat, but the Japanese was prepared and pulled the trigger, the bullet went right into the animal's open mouth and probably went through him for he instantly turned upon his back on the ground, dead. That did the necessary trick, but for few seconds, as almost every man fired his rifle into the horde of dogs, instantly killing twelve, others momentarily dispersing to their hiding places.

But now the fun began, men, women and children started running from everywhere to the scene of murder of their sacred animals, shaking their hands with anger in the direction of the executors [executioners], they fell upon the bodies of the dogs, crying. John noticed some men coming with shot-guns, so he quickly ordered his men back out of the village to avoid any human bloodshed, and to await the arrival of the main force; they didn't wait very long as the advance posts were seen upon the horizon.

Captain Hathaway laughed out loud after hearing John's story, "Why the idea, John," said the Captain, "after driving off an army of cut-throats you let a bunch of dogs drive you out of the village, but you did right in withdrawing until we arrived, I'd do the same thing if I was in your place."

It was getting dark when the entire force was in the village, and in vain seeking some quarters – at least barns and stables, to put up for the night. The Burats had carried their dogs into their houses, and the entire village was locked up.

John, with detailed squad, was banging door after door, while the rest of the company gathered around their field kitchen, waiting for their warm meal; the Japanese in the rear were doing likewise.

Finally John's patience was exhausted. The next house he came to he intended to get inside, one way or another, after a few minutes of gentle knocking, John called his men over, "Here boys, let's get in, this is enough of this, heave ho," and six husky shoulders hit the door; one more heave and the door flew open. With rifles in position they cautiously entered; upon a brick stove a faint fire was burning, giving fair light upon a large room. John, with his men, noticed several men and women huddled together in the corners, not saying a word, John walked up to the stove and put several pieces of kindling wood upon the fire and in about a minute the whole room was well lighted.

"Ponimayae po Ruski?" (Do you understand Russian?) roared John's voice as he approached one of the groups and grabbed one of the middle aged men by the shoulder "Hey, stoe, stoe" (get up), "there, I'll make one of you Burats talk even if I have to move your tongue myself, where does the starosta live? Now answer me." The Burat just gazed stubbornly upon John's face, the others just looked on as though nothing concerned them. John's men were getting uneasy. "Give him the works, Seargeant," remarked one of them, "that will open up his mouth." Suddenly John grabbed the Burat by his goat-like beard, with one hand, and started pulling it back and forth, backed him up against the wall and started pounding his head against it, "Now will you talk, you son of a dog?" That produced

the results, he fell upon his knees and stretched out his hands, pleading, "Harib, (Master) I'll tell everything I know, don't kill me, don't kill me."

"All right then, lead the way for us and show me the starosta's house." The Burat hurriedly put his long overcoat on and they all left the house.

Starosta, a fat elderly man with a short white beard and moustache, proved to be just as stubborn as the others, he just simply knew nothing, seen nothing, and heard nothing; all he did was to shrug his shoulders, but John found out that it was no use to be polite and diplomatic with these people, so without ceremony he poked the old gent in his fat belly and said slowly, gritting his teeth with anger, "Listen, you fat pig," here he poked him still harder, "you either abide by my wish and order the people to furnish us with the necessities of food and shelter, for which the village will be well paid, or (here he was bluffing), this whole village will go up in flames with nothing left of it but ashes by morning, yes and I'll start with this house." Saying that, he walked up to the fire upon the stove and lighted up a few pieces of kindling wood, that worked wonders. The old starosta was down upon his knees bowing back and forth and begging for mercy.

For that night all the available space in houses, barns and stables was obtained, and necessary provisions acquired, with the great assistance of the old fat Burat starosta.

The next morning the old starosta was mingling among the soldiers in a friendly mood, most of the other Burats were more friendly also. As the time for departure arrived, the starosta led John and his advance party to their wagon, also detailed from that village, and bid him good-bye, he had also detailed a special man to escort them through the Burat settlements so they would not encounter any more difficulties.

From there on everything went on pretty smoothly, and now they were only a few days distant from their headquarters of Spaskoe. The ground by now was gradually thawing, as the days were getting warmer.

One sunny day John, with his mixed detachment of sixteen men, was again nearing a village about noon time.

All along the road in the last three days, John heard the same rumors from the natives – that large bands of mounted men were seen leaving their villages on both sides, the number of these bands varied, some claimed and estimated their number running into hundreds, while others could swear that they ran into the thousands of men on horseback and in wagons. John occasionally related these rumors to the Captain, but the Captain placed little faith in them, saying they must be exaggerated, and anyway he was placing a great confidence in the united force of the Japanese-Americans, nevertheless instructed John to proceed with great caution and not to get too far ahead of the main body.

Now they were nearing the village down the slope and through the dense forest.

Suddenly, around the bend of the road, they came face to face with about twenty men on horseback, riding in their direction, like a flash the men jumped out of the wagon and the Japanese cavalrymen dismounted, their wagon came to a sudden stop, and at the same moment the loud report of rifle fire split the air at very close distance from their right side, and loud cries of *zdoeysia* (surrender) were heard from the front and right as about a hundred men pounced down upon them, they were caught in an ambush.

The men put up a desperate battle while it lasted, but it didn't last very long before they were overpowered, tied up and thrown into their wagon and a wagon a few hundred feet ahead, and hurriedly driven away, they were prisoners.

It was a few hours later that John finally woke up to find himself lying down in a large wagon, which now was in motion; he felt a terrible pain in the back of his hands, and found that they were tied with a rope. John slowly rolled his head to right and left, and realized that where the pain was coming from he must have a terrible bump. Now he began to remember everything – his men, with himself,

bunched up fought fiercely a hand to hand battle with great odds; suddenly a big husky Russian swung his rifle like a baseball bat at John, and before he could duck or knock the blow off, he was caught on the back of the head – everything turned black before his eyes, and that was all he remembered until now, and now he wondered where he was, where was he headed for, whose hands was he in, and where were his comrades. All kinds of thoughts were going through his aching head. Finally he gathered enough strength and cried out to the driver, "Hey, tovarysh (friend) kuda zedzion (where are we driving?)." The driver looked around and gave John a mean look for several seconds and quickly answered, "Malchy sobaka! (Keep quiet dog)."

"Oho," thought John, "I see where my goose is cooked."

About half an hour's more drive and John heard a great number of loud voices around him, and many horses going back and forth by his wagon. Finally they came to a sudden stop, the driver jumped off and walked over to John, "idzi shuda (come here)" he said; "ne mohn (I can't). I am all tied up," said John. "Horosho (all right)" he said as he departed. In a few minutes he was back again with another man, who undid John's ropes, on legs and hands, although John was having terrible pain in his head and body as all this time he was lying on the hard boards on the bottom of the wagon.

As John got upon his feet he could see everything going on around him; he was in a village unknown to him, filled with a great number of uniformed troops, mounted and on foot; a few fires right on the main road were burning and large black kettles with water in them were hanging over the fires, right now the troops were all gathering around the wagons and convoy that brought them in, anxious to see the prisoners that were brought in.

All the prisoners from John's detachment were now ordered to get out from their wagons, and they all obeyed the order, then their hands were tied behind them – three of them were lightly wounded. John was also marched to his men, and was greeted by them all with happiness to see him still alive – they all have the confidence that while their Sergeant is still alive he will manage one way or another to get them their freedom.

Now they were lined up by one of the officers and separated from their comrades, the Japanese who were taken to one house and the Americans to another.

As they entered the house they were ordered to sit down in a line upon the floor on one side of the room. The room was filled, mostly of higher rank, eating and drinking, now their interest was centered upon the American prisoners who quietly sat down upon the floor. Practically every one present in the room was armed with a saber, pistol or a bayonet. One of them, half-drunk, approached the Americans saying, "You're the sons of a dog that drove us out of that village a few weeks ago," saying that he kicked one of the men, "just when we were having one good time with the baryshnias."

"Well, we did a good job, didn't we," answered John in Russian. "Oh, ty (you) ponimayes po Ruski (understand Russian)," now he walked up to John, "but that will not save you from being shot in the morning with the rest of them, your hours are already counted, wait till the commander arrives, he will pronounce the sentence of death upon all you dogs."

"Yes," answered John and got up on his feet, "We may die from your murderous hands of outlaws and bandits, but the vengeance of our death will be terrible, which will fall upon your necks sooner or later from a powerful mother-land government of ours, the United States of America, and its loyal army that is here in Siberia, every stone will be turned to capture everyone of you and bring you to justice, then beware, for you will all die." A complete silence was now in the room, all eyes upon John's face, who was standing before them not as a prisoner but a representative of a great nation, "the United States of America," repeated John again, "has a great patience, but there is a limit to it also and we will be revenged if one hair is removed from our heads," just as John finished his last sentence the door swung open and four men entered, everyone's eyes looked in that direction. John stepped back with horror, his eyes trained upon one man in the lead whom he immediately recognized, it was Vanka, whom he had shot in the hand that night in Marusha's house at Spaskoe.

Vanka, with the three others walked up slowly toward the prisoners, suddenly he stopped -- surprised, he also had recognized John. "Well, well, well," he said as he walked up slowly to John, "if it isn't my old friend and the great lover of Russian baryshnias, how are you," he stretched out his hand.

"I can't shake hands with you, "remarked John, "my hands are tied up in the back."

"Neither do I," snarled back Vanka, "here is my greeting to you," with those words he slapped John hard with his open hand on one cheek, then on the other. John just shook his head from pain and looked at Vanka in great surprise. The whole room was roaring with laughter at John's misfortune. The Americans seeing that gritted their teeth in anger, one of them jumped up and kicked Vanka hard, it made him groan with pain, but another cossack hit him hard with his fist and knocked the poor fellow down to the floor. John now started again, at the top of his voice, "Listen, Vanka you yellow cur, you wouldn't do that at Spaskoe in Marusha's house, and by God you wouldn't do that right here if I had my hands loose, even if I am unarmed."

Vanka again walked up closely to John, his face now more pleasant, "I guess I lost my temper a little," he said, "and I think you fellows are hungry by now, so don't mind that I lose my head occasionally."

"Here," he called one man over, "untie their hands, put heavy guard over them so that they don't attempt to escape, and feed them, I'll be back soon." With those words he left the room, accompanied with the same three men that came in with him.

A heavy armed guard was posted around, and over half of the men present left the room. The prisoners' arms were untied, and they all sat down by the table to eat.

They received plenty to eat, even two bottles of vodka were set down for them. After satisfying their hunger, they started a conversation in a low voice among themselves.

"What do you think of the situation Sergeant," asked one man, "I guess it looks like the firing squad for us, especially if this brute has anything to say, that slapped you in the face, I guess he's got it in for you,"; "and I just commenced to like this country," remarked another. "Something tells me we'll get out of this without a scratch, all I'd like to know is how far is Captain Hathaway and the rest of the company," answered John. "Well," commenced another man, "I've observed that we have traveled due west from the place where we were captured, and we have traveled at least four hours, I should judge that we have covered at least twenty miles or more, and I suppose the Captain may be on our trail already."

"Hush-sh," warned John, "here comes that cut-throat again." All eyes were trained upon the door, where entered Vanka again, alone. He told John to get over to another table, away from his men, and he pointed to the table. "I'll have a little talk with you," he said; in the meantime he pulled the chair closer to the table and sat down. John, in a fearless manner, sat down beside him. "Hey, waiter, "he called out, "let's have a bottle of cognac and some eats with it," in a few minutes it was upon the table, Vanka filled two glasses and asked John to drink with him; they both emptied their glasses, John looking at Vanka with suspicion. "You know," commenced Vanka, "I'm kind of sorry that I slapped your face as you are in plenty hard luck already, and I am kindly sorry for you, you are in [a] bad fix, you lost your girl and had to fall into the hands of your rival as a prisoner."

"What!" roared John, springing to his feet, "what girl?" John was wildly staring at Vanka, "What girl?" John repeated. "Why, no other than your Marusha from Spaskoe was kidnapped by Ivan and she must be with him right now. Ivan will join our forces some time tomorrow and then we have a wonderful surprise for the Amerykanskis, and their friends Japanese not one man here," Vanka banged his fist in anger, "not one man here will reach Spaskoe alive, they all shall die, understand, with their faces facing west."

John sank back in his chair as Vanka grinned and continued, "Yes, we are with Ataman Kalmikoff no more, we were not rewarded enough for our services, here we are our own bosses, we do what we please, take what we want, go wherever we want, there is no law, no government in Russia at the pres-



ent time, and never will be for some time to come. Ivan, his brother, and myself intend to rule this part of the country like others are doing elsewhere, don't you suppose we are as good as Ataman Kalmikoff at Khabarovsk? Well, the American and Japanese are in our way around here and it is our plan to drive them out of here and establish our own form of government, make our own laws, don't you think that we are not strong enough, as we are today, today we command about four thousand men, well armed, next week we may command ten thousand if we can get the necessary arms and ammunition, and so we intend to help ourselves to your American storehouses and from the men we capture or kill," here he filled the glasses again with cognac, "here is to health and victory."

Now John broke his silence and asked, "What do you intend to do with us?"

"With you, oh, you will be at Ivan's disposal when we unite tomorrow in another town, whatever he intends to do with you and your men is up to him. I will take you along with me tomorrow when we leave and turn all of you over to Ivan. Now you and your men had better get some sleep, wherever you can in this room, as it is getting late and we leave early in the morning tomorrow." Vanka got up to leave, but John stopped him, "Answer me this," he asked, "how long since Ivan kidnapped Marusha from her home?"

"Four days ago today," Vanka answered as he left. John went back to his comrades and explained to them everything he had heard.

It was early in the morning, and it was still dark when John and his men were wakened by the guards; they had slept upon the floor; they were served with a little breakfast, and ordered out to their wagons. The Japanese soldiers were in their wagons already, and the wagons were surrounded by six mounted cossacks. John had noticed after climbing into the wagon that one horse was tied up in the back, the horse was saddled, evidently awaiting for its master.

John reached into his pocket, pulled out a sack of smoking tobacco and rolled a cigarette, passing it on to other men with him. The Cossack upon his horse beside John, was sizing [up] the Americans with great interest as they were puffing upon the cigarettes, John looked at him, and asked him, "Here tovarysh (friend) do you smoke?"

"Oh, yes," he answered, "is that the American tobacco?" John handed him the sack but the young cossack answered that he had never rolled a cigarette in his life. "Well, get off the horse and I'll show you how to roll your own, and I'll roll one for you."

"Yes, but I may not dare to do that, the commander might get angry."

"Why the devil should he, we can't run away from the middle of all these armed men and half of you mounted."

"Yes, I guess you are right." Saying that the cossack dismounted and walked up beside John who rolled a cigarette and handed it to him, "Say, Tovyrysh," continued John, "where are we going from here and how soon do we leave?"

"We are going to Nove-Sielo and will leave within an hour."

"Say, do you draw good pay in this service, and how are you men treated? I'm asking this you know, as I'm a soldier myself and everything pertaining to the soldier's life greatly interests me,"

"Oh, we have no regular salaries, but the commander pays us off occasionally, and we also help ourselves whenever we strike a new village or town."

"Oh, you mean from robbing, eh?"

"Well, yes, if you want to say it that way."

"Say, listen, tovarysh," John now leaned closer to him and lowered his voice, "how would you like to join our American army and lead a decent life, not a life of a bandit, get regular pay in good American dollars, and you would have a chance to go with us to America when we leave, and lead a regular life. I'd get you a job and you would be a happy man, not like you are today." The cossack was staring at John with great surprise, "What do you mean," he asked.

"Well I mean this, the Americans and the Japanese are naturally searching for us every minute, when they find your whereabouts I can assure you that you will make a good dinner for a bunch of hungry wolves, but here is your chance, you have a horse and here is another saddled, right now you and I can slip right out of here and take a chance to reach the Americans in safety, where you will be well rewarded." The young cossack shook his head, "Impossible," he said, "it would mean a certain death."

"Well, you are facing a certain death right now, when the Japanese and the Americans get hold of your comrades here, one man will not be left alive, so here's your choice – freedom, reward and happiness, or a certain death, and notice that you are still a young fellow."

"Well, what do you want me to do?"

"Here's what you do, without creating any suspicion, you untie that horse from this wagon, you are armed with a rifle, saber and a pistol – is the pistol loaded?"

"Yes."

"Well, you slip it to me, and several bullets besides, and get into saddle again, when you see me mount this horse you lead the way in the direction where you think the Americans are. I'll follow, when we leave this hornet's nest alive then leave everything to me, and use your rifle and saber to our best advantage."

"But, supposing we don't leave this place alive," he asked. "Raz maty rodila," (we were born to our mothers once) was John's answer.

John's men did not understand the conversation but were amazed to see John armed with a pistol. John explained quickly the entire situation, "That's our only salvation, men, we can't all escape, but if I do I'll bring the help as soon as soon as possible, now good luck and good bye to you all, these Russians will not eat you up alive before we'll rescue you all, and don't look in my direction until I leave."

Every man had tears in his eyes as John cautiously crawled to the back of the wagon and looked around, no one was paying any attention to him except his cossack friend, who was already on his horse.

Slowly John crawled out of the wagon, one leap and he was in the saddle, reins in one hand, pistol in the other, the cossack jammed his spurs into the sides of his steed and made a wild dash down the road followed by John. They were in full gallop before they were noticed and then a turmoil was raised everywhere, a shower of bullets whistled past John's ears but he was lying upon his horse's neck. Several more mounted their horses and started in pursuit. John went right through a great number of infantry-men before they could grab their rifles stacked along side of the road; few more minutes and they were out of the village and in the open; bullets were still whistling past their ears but they rushed on.

"How are you, tovarysh?" said John to his cossack friend as he drew up along side of him, "You are not hurt, are you?"

"Oh, no, I'm horosho."

"Well, where do you think we are headed for, have you made up your mind?"

"Yes, to hell, if those fellows keep following us. Anyway as long as we are able we will continue on this road until we strike first cross roads, then we will turn east where we should in a few hours strike [reach] the Americans and Japanese."

"Say, what do you say we check our pursuers for a few minutes they are too close on our heels to suit me."

"But how?" the cossack asked.

"Here's how," saying that John pulled upon the reins to slow up, pulled out his pistol and with careful aim emptied it into his pursuers. Three horses hit the ground, carrying the riders with them. "How's that?" John asked, laughing. "Good, now it's my turn," saying that the cossack unslung his rifle from his back and dropped the reins upon his horse's neck, turning around he placed the rifle against his shoulder, three more horses hit the ground in a similar way, while others were slowing their horses to wait for a larger number to arrive from their rear. The distance between them was increasing rapidly. "Now we're even," said the cossack to John, laughing.

Finally they came to the cross roads, and were about to turn to the right when the cossack gave out a yell, stopped his horse almost on the spot and made a motion to their left. Now John had also noticed plainly about fifteen mounted men approaching. Now they were about three hundred yards distant, but had noticed the two riders also.

"We are lost," saying that he quickly dismounted, unslung his rifle, "You go!" he commanded saying to John, "in that direction, soon you will meet your comrades, you'll be safe. I'll check your pursuers as long as I can, raz mati rodila."

"But I can't leave you here alone, it will mean a certain death for you," argued John.

"Go!" ordered the cossack, threatening and pointing his rifle in John's direction, "go, before it is too late." Saying that, he slapped John's horse with the butt of his gun, the horse dashed off in a gallop, followed by the young cossack's horse without a rider, in the same minute a rifle commenced echoing at John's back as he was speeding on, it was John's cossack friend attempting to check John's pursuers.

The sun was high up and its warm rays were thawing the frozen ground, the fog was still lingering near the ground, amidst the rising fog a lonely rider was jogging along upon a tired horse, suddenly he stopped and raised himself in his stirrups. In the distance he sighted a large body of men moving ahead of him, on the same road that he was on. "Get up, wolfhound," he said to his horse, "we must find out who is ahead, friends or enemy." The rider was no one else but John. After several minutes of coaxing his faithful steed for better speed John finally could distinguish the reddish uniforms and round caps of the Japanese cavalry, he was within his goal.

Several minutes more of fast riding and John was being halted by the rear guard; they in turn rushed him over to their Major and Captain Hathaway.

The Captain and the Major greeted John with open arms, and John had to relate his story to them twice in succession before they were satisfied. John also learned that a few hundred of American-Japanese were searching the whole neighboring country for their whereabouts and that special couriers were rushed to Spaskoe for aid; in the meantime they were nearing a village where the searching parties are to meet them and there they will hold a conference on immediate future plans.

At noon, after a hurried dinner, the American and Japanese officers gathered in starosta's house,

John was amongst them, the starosta by now understanding the situation had summoned the necessary native guides to lead the way to Nove-Sielo, where they expected to encounter the brigands. There was only one village between them and Nove-Sielo, where they expected to put up for the night, and go into the attack in the morning.

After a conference where plans were well figured and laid out each officer departed to his respective command and the united force was on a move again, this time not in the direction of Spaskoe, but off their scheduled route of march in the direction of Nove-Sielo.

John again was ahead of the main body, only this time on horseback ahead of 36 cavalymen and 32 doughboys in native Russian wagons.

It was sort of a forced march to the next village and the main body reached it before sundown. Immediately the road to Nove-Sielo from that village was cut off by outposts, no one allowed to leave and strong outposts were to notify any approach of the enemy.

This was an uneventful night and early morning found everybody in a happy state of mind; they were talking about the coming battle and cracking jokes about it.

The village was established as a base of operation in event of retreat, or other eventualities, the natives were summoned for co-operation and they started to organize with open heart favoring the American-Japanese forces, girls and women were organized to act as temporary nurses, and several large houses were chosen as temporary hospitals to care for the wounded; wagons were left behind as the main force was moving out in the direction of Nove-Sielo.

After three hours of continuous march the farthest outposts sighted the town in a valley and a larger body of men moving in their direction, immediately the line of defense was being formed, the cavalry was split in half – one half occupied the right flank, the other half the left flank; the Japanese infantry took their respective places on the right and left next to cavalry with the Americans in the immediate center; they were now in position upon a slope overlooking the whole territory.

The cavalry was left a few hundred yards in the rear, and the men on foot were ordered to dig temporary trenches; just then a clatter of rifle fire was heard about 700 yards in front of them in the thicket of young wooded territory between them and the town, it was the outposts in front engaging the advancing enemy.

Ten minutes passed and the outposts composed of American-Japanese soldiers were rapidly withdrawing to the main body closely pressed by the attacking cossacks on horseback, who also were trying to encircle them but in vain. So, after losing several of their men, they withdrew back to the woods allowing the outposts to reach safely their main body.

Half an hour passed in complete silence, suddenly a large number of infantry and cavalry left their concealment in the woods and commenced to advance about half a mile front, at the same time a terrific clatter of rifle fire burst the air, bullets flying thickly all around, in front and above the American-Japanese position. Now their cavalry was preparing to attack, composed of about fifteen hundred men. It will be just a natural suicide if those men attempt to charge our position. Their commander, whoever he is, has a lot to learn about war strategy.

"Why those cavalry men will not have a chance," remarked the Major to Captain Hathaway, thorough John as interpreter. John was in the rear with the staff, "and by the spirit of the rising sun, that's what they intend to do, but they'll never reach us," continued the Major as the charge of the cavalymen commenced. It was a beautiful spectacle, about fifteen hundred men, stretched in a long line, a lance or a saber in one hand and a pistol in the other. They started in a slow trot without any response from the opposing line, but when the line reached within 500 yards a terrific rifle fire and machine gun fire swept their ranks inflicting severe losses, but nevertheless the line dashed on in mad gallop and reached the opposing position in face of withering fire within 50 yards, then as though lightning struck the remainder of the horde, that's the same effect had a few hundred black-hand grenades tossed right in front of them, as the earth, horse and man flesh mixed into one heap along the line. No more than two hundred of these reckless horsemen charged the temporary trenches and drove on to

the rear where they were soon engaged by the prepared and now charging Japanese cavalry.

The sight of the field in front of the Japanese-American line was horrible, men dead and dying, some running to the rear and front, right and left, on horse and on foot, crying and screaming but most of them were doomed with unavoidable death as the main force of the horde commenced a systematic advance all along the line.

"I think they just simply wanted to murder these cavalrymen, whoever sent them against the line," remarked the Captain to the Major, "as I notice they are all using real system and modern warfare in advancing against us," saying that they looked back, the cossack cavalry that just few minutes previously made such a daring charge ceased to exist, what was left of them alive was now being escorted back to the village, by Japanese cavalrymen, prisoners.

"We can't hold out very long here, Major," the Captain started again. "I don't know your situation, but few more hours and my men will be out of ammunition, then, when that happens, God have mercy on us. I'd sooner see everyone of my men fall on top of each other dead than have them fall at the hands of those cut-throats, none of them would die a natural death."

"Well," answered the Major, "my couriers are in Spaskoe by now and reinforcements are on the way by now, may God send them to us on time."

During all their conversation they were eagerly watching the field in front, observing every movement of the army, the cavalry now dismounted and took a position alongside of the infantry.

The enemy was gradually advancing in wave formation, their rifle and machine gun fire increasing and becoming more effective as they got closer, every corpse, furrow, or dead horse was a shield for the advancing bandits as they pressed on; here and there an American or Japanese fell not of his position, killed or wounded, the situation was becoming graver every minute.

Half an hour, or an hour, and the entire hostile force would charge the positions and annihilate the entire united force, as they were out-numbered three to one.

Suddenly John raised his field glasses, in the direction of Spaskoe, and noticed two black spots in the sky, every second they were becoming larger. By now Captain and Major, and other officer's attention, in the staff, was also attracted as the objects were becoming larger, now they could recognize them, two Japanese scout planes evidently searching for them, they were like archangels of salvation for them as now they approached at a great speed. In several minutes they were flying over the field looking and sizing up the field and territory, but now the enemy's line was within two hundred yards, few more minutes they would rush on in a mad charge, but just then the two scout planes flew on and maneuvered their planes back, suddenly they looped down and the same time sweeping the field with their deadly machine guns, when in the middle of the enemy's lines a roar of exploding bombs and grenades burst in the air tearing big gaps and holes in the ground, inflicting terrible destruction upon the excited band of a few thousand men, again the airplanes returned from the opposite direction and again they left still worse destruction than before as their aim was truer. That was too much for the Russians to stand. They started a wild and disorganized retreat back to town, leaving their several machine guns, ammunition, dead and wounded upon the field of battle.

Now the Captain and the Major had seen that their opportunity arrived, quickly the commands were given, and rapidly they were executed, the cavalry mounted their horses again and gave a chase ahead of the infantry, who followed in back with fixed bayonets.

All along the road of forced march toward the town to where the enemy retreated dead bodies of men were strewn all over, the cavalry ahead was doing its real work, large bodies of prisoners were transferred to the infantry to be escorted back to the rear and to the base village.

Finally, the main body reached the outskirts of the town where the cavalrymen were attacking and repelling the attacks from the town, the two scout planes were still flying in the air, now over the town, when the infantry joined the advanced cavalry a cautious entry into town commenced, and street fight-

ing just commenced when terrific explosions rocked the town, they were from bombs dropped again, now upon the town that still was giving stubborn resistance.

Suddenly the firing in the streets and from windows ceased, several men on horseback appeared slowly riding toward the advanced parts of the Japanese-Americans, nervously waving several white flags of truce, the advanced posts halted to wait for instructions from the rear, but they all sensed the meaning, the town had surrendered.

## **Warm Hearts in a Frozen Land**

### ***Synopsis for remainder of the story***

Few weeks after John's departure from Spaskoe, Ivan forcibly kidnapped Marusha from her home at night and carried her into interior where he was organizing his bands of outlaws.

Once having Marusha in his power and possession, he tried to persuade her to forget her American lover and marry him. Marusha would not even listen to him and constantly begged him for her freedom. Ivan did not attempt to harm her in any way but was guarding her closely so she would not attempt to escape.

Under an escort Marusha was taken from village to village and from town to town while Ivan, with his associate officer bandits, were roving, robbing and strengthening their forces. He was growing in strength every day and now he was to accept supreme command over all marauding forces at Novo-Sielo, providing they defeat the combined forces of Japanese-Americans which task they were positive to accomplish.

After Vanka arrived with his troops, they quickly made plans of their battle which was unpreventable, knowing of John's escape, and soon their combined forces were taking the field in wooded territory outside of Nove-Sielo – Ivan and Vanka with them. Marusha was left under guard in Ivan's headquarters in charge of an old trusty cossack in whom Ivan had a lot of faith.

When the battle commenced, Marusha tried to persuade the old cossack to let her escape, for which he would be well rewarded but without success, the old man just laughed at her. After the Japanese airplanes' terrific bombardment upon Ivan's forces, which inflicted heavy losses from the airplanes' bombs and machine guns, as well as the land forces, the whole town was in great turmoil after the results were learned that not half of the men would return alive – the guilty persons of many past crimes were hurriedly leaving the town in every direction except from where they expected the arrival of Japanese-American troops. Thinking that his commander, Ivan, most probably was also dead, the old cossack was finally persuaded to escape with Marusha into a safer place. Saddling two fast horses, they dashed away from Nove-Sielo, but not in the direction of Spaskoe, but in direction altogether unknown to Marusha. Several minutes ahead of the onpressing [advancing] Japanese cavalry, Ivan rushed to the house where he left Marusha while his comrade and friend, Vanka, lay dead on the field of battle.

Finding Marusha gone and learning that she escaped with the old trusty friend, he became angry with rage; drawing his saber, he started slashing the remaining guards, fatally wounding two of them. Seeing a mad man and defending their lives, the guards rushed upon Ivan and in a few minutes he was down on the ground fatally cut up with sabers of his own men; still gripping his saber in his right hand, he died in a few minutes.

After returning to Spaskoe, John found Marusha's mother in great grief and sorrow from the loss of her beloved daughter. John helped and cheered her up but [as much as] he could, he also was in great grief over the incident.

Few weeks later, John's battalion joined the remainder of the regiment under Colonel Morrow and departed to Lake Baikol province, about two thousand miles into the interior of Siberia.

*When a Girl's Tears Saved a Town* (published in the *Buffalo Sunday Times*).

Returning back to headquarters, Berezovka camp.

Being reprimanded, then praised by the Colonel for the noble deed.

John is sent to the farthest American outpost, near Lake Baikal.

*The End of the Train of Death* (published in the *Buffalo Sunday Times*).

Called back to headquarters.

The evacuation of American forces back to Vladivostok for embarkation to the United States.

After three months of hardships and struggle for food, locomotives and other necessities, John's regiment reaches the seaport of Vladivostok at night, after spending almost twenty months in the interior of Siberia.

The following morning John, with a few other friends, walk over to the railroad station restaurant to have something warm to eat and sit down by the table. Pretty soon a waitress walks up to take their order, John looks up, springs to his feet greatly surprised; there before him stands Marusha, she in return cannot say a word for a few seconds but comes to herself first before John and falls upon John's chest, putting her arms around his neck; John's friends walk up, they also know Marusha from the party, but John is busy hugging and kissing his sweetheart as he did not expect to see her any more.

A few days later they are happily married on Marusha's native soil, and a week later she bids goodbye with John beside her to her frozen land from the deck of the U.S. transport *Great Northern*, bound for the U.S.A.

