

WALLING. To Science.

ALL. To Science.

WALLING. I'm going upstairs. To reflect.

COPE. Walling, I — (*Walling holds up a "talk to the hand" hand.*)

WALLING. I need time.

COPE. (*Desperately.*) They said a man who studies snakes and a man who studies prey could never be friends, but we proved them wrong, eh? Haven't we?

WALLING. Have we? (*Walling gives him a look. And exits.*)

COPE. (*To Percy.*) Give me that bottle.

LUCIUS. No, Cope, that is not the way ... (*Cope grabs the brandy from Percy and takes an enormous, despairing swig.*)

COPE. To Science! (*Cope staggers out past Sir Bernard Humphries, who enters. A smooth, career politician. He is serene and unctuous.*)

PERCY. Cope's on the bottle, Jane's dead, and I can't even sit because there's a female on the couch. Contracting presidency has not been a success.

SLOANE. And now I'm late to the Irish Society.

~~PERCY. What's new?~~

HUMPHRIES. Gentlemen, I am Sir Bernard Humphries, private secretary to the *queen*. I wonder if you might direct me to Miss Phyllida Spotte-Hume?

SLOANE. "The hour of judgment is come." She's on the couch. (*Sloane exits.*)

PERCY. Let me handle this, Lucius. Humphries, Sir Harry Percy, gentleman explorer. Miss Spotte-Hume is unconscious on the couch, at the moment.

HUMPHRIES. Well I've come most specifically to speak with her about the *incident* at the palace.

PERCY. Bad business. Very bad business. I know I speak for the whole Explorers Club when I express my regrets. We're all very fond of Phyllida because she's clever and weighs so little, but she's not a member here, you know.

LUCIUS. Percy!

PERCY. We have to think of the club, Lucius. Lucius was all for proposing her, but she doesn't really understand good exploring. Bringing back that NaKong man, very dodgy. I never bring back anything alive.

LUCIUS. Yes, Harper can testify to that.

PERCY. Girls, you see, get attached to things, like cats, and tiny

dogs, or in this case, a feral jungle man. But you can't hold that against them. They get these little whims. That's why we call them "women."

HUMPHRIES. I assure you, sir, we have no intention of holding anything *against* her or this club.

PERCY. Decent of you. Very decent of you. Phyllida? Phyllida, can you hear me? Humphries from the palace and I have worked it all out, and you're not going to be punished for anything.

HUMPHRIES. *No* one is here to punish you, Miss Spotte-Hume. We're all civilized people here. An intrepid explorer like yourself, and a charming lady besides, you are an *ornament* to the Empire.

PHYLLIDA. Thank you, sir. Thank you, Percy. Oh I am relieved.

HUMPHRIES. In *fact*, Her Majesty is rather in need of your *help*.

PHYLLIDA. Anything. Anything, of course.

HUMPHRIES. Excellent. Would you be so kind as to provide some kind of *map* to the Lost City of Pahatlabong? It would be *most* helpful to us.

PHYLLIDA. Certainly. Certainly. I'll draw you one, shall I? It'll be a bit rough.

HUMPHRIES. Oh, we'll *muddle* through with whatever you have, no worries.

LUCIUS. May I ask what the map is for, Sir Bernard?

HUMPHRIES. Of course! No mystery, really. We've declared war on them, so we need to know where they are.

PHYLLIDA. What?!

HUMPHRIES. I know it's a *nuisance*, but we like to be as *precise* as we can with this sort of thing. We don't want to get the *army* out there and lo and behold they've attacked *Malaysia* by mistake. You can't *imagine* the paperwork when that happens.

PHYLLIDA. The paperwork is not what concerns me but a *war*.

~~HUMPHRIES. No need to be alarmed, I assure you. It's not as if we're going to suffer any casualties. I imagine our guns can level Pahatlabong in a day or so.~~

PERCY. Splendid. See, Phyllida, all sorted.

PHYLLIDA. No it isn't! (*To Humphries.*) You said no one was going to be punished!

HUMPHRIES. I said *you* weren't going to be punished. You're *British*. That NaKong chappie is *not*.

PHYLLIDA. But he didn't mean any harm!

HUMPHRIES. Madam, he *slapped* the Queen of England.