The Snows of Kilimanjaro

Kilimanjaro is a snow-covered mountain, 19,700 feet high, and it said to be the highest mountain in Africa. Sometimes summit is called the "Mosi" or "Mountain Peak," the House of God. Close to the western summit there is the dead and frozen carcass of a leopard. No one has explained what the leopard was seeing at that altitude.

"The marvellous thing is that it's paintless," he said. "That's how you know when it starts."

"Is it really?"

"Absolutely. I'm awfully sorry about the odor though. That must bother you."

"Don't! Please don't."

"Look at them," he said. "Now it is sight at it is scent that brings them like that."

The cot the man lay on was in the wide shade of a mimosa tree and as he looked out past the shade onto the glare of the plain there were three of the big birds squatted obsescently, while in the sky a dozen more sailed, making quick-moving shadows as they passed.

"They've been here since the day the truck broke down," he said. "Today's the first time you have lit on the ground. I watched the way they sailed very carefully at first in case I ever wanted to use them in a story. That's funny now."

"I wish you wouldn't," she said.

"I'm only talking," he said. "It's much easier if I talk. But I don't want to bother you."

"You know it doesn't bother me," she said. "It's that I've gotten so very nervous not being able to do anything. I think we might make it as easy as we can until the plane comes." Or until the plane doesn't come.

"Please tell me what I can do. There must be something I can do."

"You can take the leg off and that might stop it, though I doubt it. Or you can shoot me. You're a good shot now. I taught you to shoot didn't I?"

"Please don't talk that way. Couldn't I read to you?"

"Read what?"

"Anything in the book bag that we haven't read."

"I can't listen to it," he said. "Talking is the easiest. We quarrel and that makes the time pass."

"I don't quarrel. I never want to quarrel. Let's not quarrel any more. No matter how nervous we get. Maybe they will be back with another truck today. Maybe the plane will come."

"I don't want to move," the man said. "There is no sense in moving now except to make it easier for you."

"That's cowardly."

"Can't you let a man die as comfortably as he can without calling him names? What's the use of slamming me?"

"You're not going to die."