

COMIC SUPPLEMENT—4 STORIES AND FREE GIFTS

The POPULAR



Free Gifts
FOR READERS

AT GRIPS WITH A GORILLA!

BY
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HAMILTON.

OUR CONGO BOY SCOUTS IN
BREATHLESS ADVENTURE! ANOTHER

The Shot!

"STOP!" Lyn Strong shouted out the word.

It was not often that Lyn, the leader of the Popolaki Patrol of Boy Scouts, was angry; seldom indeed that such a note of sharp command was heard in his voice.

Stacpoole stared round in surprise, and an angry flush came into his cheeks. The patrol were on the march through the dusky depths of the Mbari Forest, following a narrow track among the giant trees hung with immense creepers.

Dobolobe was in the lead, testing the path as he went with his spear; then came the five Scouts in single file; and in the rear Mpoke, the cook, carrying the cooking-pots and other impediments. The Scouts were on their homeward march, after a safari of five days in the Central African forest. The safari had been a great success; the man-eating lion had been killed, the skin of "Simba" was being taken home as a trophy.

They moved slowly along the forest track, for the tropical heat was intense, and scarce a breath of air stirred among the thick trees and underwoods. Monkeys clambered on the branches that overhung the path, peering down with bright eyes and puckered little faces from the foliage.

Stacpoole had lifted his rifle to take a pot-shot at a monkey swinging on a branch beside the track.

Fatty Page came next in the file, and Fatty gave a grunt of disapproval, but did not speak. But Lyn, from the rear of the file, came running forward, shouting to Stacpoole as he came.

"Stop!" Stacpoole's finger was on the trigger; but he paused in sheer astonishment and stared at his patrol-leader.

"What the thump—" he began. Lyn grasped the barrel of his rifle and forced it down. The column came to a halt.

"Stop that, Stacpoole!" snapped Lyn. "You're too fond of blazing away with that rifle!"

"I suppose I can take a pot-shot at a monkey if I like!"

"Well, you can't!" said Lyn. "What do you want to kill the poor little beggar for? Let him alone!"

Stacpoole breathed hard, and his eyes gleamed as they met Lyn's. There had always been a latent hostility between the two, and now it seemed to be coming to a head.

Stacpoole's face was set and savage.

"I'm goin' to take that pot-shot!" he said coolly.

"You're not!" said Lyn.

"What the dooce business is it of yours?"

Stacpoole's voice was rising. It was from sheer thoughtlessness that he had taken aim at the harmless little colobus monkey. But now he was determined to take the shot, if only to show Lyn Strong that he could do as he chose.

The little black-and-white monkey was still swinging on the branch in the leisurely way of the colobus monkey. He was blinking at the Scouts with mild interest, evidently quite unaware of his danger.

"Shut up, Stacpoole!" said Pip. "Who's leader of this jolly old patrol? Cheese it, old bean!"

"Yes, cheese it and let's get on!" urged Fatty Page. "I'm getting hungry!"

Dobolobe had stopped, and was looking back. Mpoke had stopped, too, with a clatter of cooking-pots. The two natives looked on in silence at the group of Scouts in the narrow path.

"Get on!" repeated Lyn.

"I'm not gettin' on yet!" drawled Stacpoole. "I'm goin' to take a shot at that monkey!"

Lyn set his lips. "If you can't be trusted with a rifle, Stacpoole, it will be taken away from you!" he said.

Stacpoole's eyes blazed. "Who's goin' to take it?" he sneered. "I am, unless you give me your word not to use it without orders!"

"For goodness' sake, Stacpoole," exclaimed Pip Parker impatiently, "stop playing the goat!"

Stacpoole did not heed him. His eyes were fixed on Lyn Strong with angry defiance.

"Do you think I'm a Kikuyu, like your confounded gun-bearer, to take orders from you?" he said.

"I mean what I say!" answered Lyn. "Yesterday you shot the head off a parrot to show off your shooting! You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself!"

"I'm goin' to please

myself about that!" drawled Stacpoole.

"Look here, you fathead—"

At this moment the colobus monkey, as if tired of inspecting these strange visitors to his haunts, swung himself away into the underwoods.

In an instant Stacpoole swung the rifle up and fired. The action was so swift that Lyn had no time to catch the barrel again and deflect it. The bullet crashed away through the jungle.

There was not a chance in a hundred of hitting the vanishing monkey. It was out of pure bravado that Stacpoole had fired.

But following the shot there came a long, wild, wailing



from the dense mass of vegetation beside the path. It was a cry of pain—the cry of some living creature stricken to death—and it sounded terribly like a human cry.

Stacpools gave a start.

He had missed the colobus monkey, he knew that; but the bullet had found a billet in the dense jungle.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Lyn.

The Scouts stood stock-still in horror. There was a sound of a fall, followed by a low moaning.

"My hat!" said Pip, with a deep breath. "You've done it now, you fat-head! You've posted some native in the bush!"

"A—native!" Stacpools' face was white as chalk now. "I—I— Good heavens! How was I to know there was anyone in the bush?"

He dropped the butt of his rifle to the earth. The hand that held the weapon trembled.

Lyn turned from him and plunged away through the lianas and the rope-like fern creepers that hung from the trees. After him the Scouts hurried. Stacpools came last, white with horror. The low, moaning sound guided them; but it ceased suddenly. Plunging through the jungle, Lyn reached an open space by a great mubugu-tree, where a body lay extended on the ground.

He gave a gasp of relief.

"A gorilla!"

Tracked by the Gorilla!

THE gorilla lay dead by the mubugu-tree. A stream of blood ran over the rough wiry hair. Stacpools looked down on the body and panted with relief. The sight was not a pleasant one, but the thought that his reckless shot had killed a human being had thrilled him with horror.

"Only a monkey!" he said, with an attempt at flippancy.

"It might have been a nigger, for all you knew!" growled Pip.

"Well, it wasn't a nigger," sneered Stacpools, "and gorillas are dangerous beasts, and the more of them that are wiped out the better."

"They're not dangerous if they're set alone!" snapped Pip.

Lyn was not speaking. He was bending over the rough, hairy body, still now in death, though its meaning, so human in its note, still seemed to ring in his ears. His face was dark with anger.

"Well, it's dead!" said Fatty Page. "Let's get on, for goodness' sake. I'm getting famished."

Lyn turned on the dandy of the patrol. His eyes were gleaming.

"Yes, let's get on!" he said. "The sooner we're out of this the better for all our sakes!"

"Are you afraid of a dead ape?" sneered Stacpools.

"Don't be a fool! You've killed the female gorilla—and the male can't be far away! If you'd ever been near a male gorilla in a rage, in thick jungle, you'd know what it means. If we all get as far as the siva alive we shall be lucky."

"Oh, rot!" said Stacpools unceasingly. But he cast a quick glance round him as he spoke. He had never encountered an enraged gorilla; but he had heard THE POPULAR—No. 360

enough about the giant ape to have an idea what it would mean.

"My hat!" muttered Pip. "You duffer, Stacpools!"

"I suppose we can shoot the brute if it turns up!" said Stacpools, with a carelessness he did not feel.

"You can suppose what you like, you fat-head, but get on!" growled Lyn. "I won't take away your rifle—you may need it badly before we get to camp. Move on, you fellows!"

The Scouts plunged back to the forest path, where Bobolobo and Mpoke were waiting.

"Get on, Bobo!" called out Lyn. "Haraka! We've got to get out of this jungle's quick!"

"O Bwana—" began Bobo.

"That shot killed a female gorilla!" said Lyn.

Bobo waited for no more. He hurried along the path, and the Scouts followed him.

The leisurely march was leisurely no longer. The Kikuyu set the pace, and the pace was swift.

Stacpools' face wore a sneer, but he hurried with the rest. All the Scouts, in fact, were well aware of their danger.

The path was narrow, walled on either side by thick jungle and massive trees. An attack, if it came, would come without warning; and there was little hope for anyone upon whom the grip of a gorilla's hairy arms closed.

Suddenly, from the silence behind, came a sound—a yell so full of rage and grief that it thrilled the hearts of the Scouts as they heard it.

They knew what it was—the yell of the male gorilla, who had found his slaughtered mate.

"Oh, crickey!" gasped Pip.

Bobolobo looked back.

"Haraka! Bwana!" he called. "Hasten, lord! The Terrible One of the Forest seeks blood!"

Bobo was almost running now. The Scouts followed him at a trot. In the rear came Mpoke, with clattering pots, alarm in his black face. Yell on yell sounded far behind, awakening every echo of the tropical forest. There was something hideous, half-human, in the shrill yelling of the gorilla.

But the yelling suddenly stopped. The Scouts, panting, and dripping with perspiration, hurried on after the Kikuyu. They knew that the gorilla was seeking the enemy that had slain his mate, and they hoped to be far enough away before he got scent of them. Once the giant brute scented them, and understood to whom he owed his bereavement, it meant a fight to the death in thick jungle, where all the advantage was on the side of the gorilla. And the ape, once in pursuit, would cover the ground with a swiftness they could never hope to equal.

"Look out!" yelled Pip.

There was a crashing in the branches. From the foliage a hideous figure dropped into the path, not a dozen paces behind the Scouts.

"Shoot!" shouted Lyn.

The Scouts swung round, their rifles up.

The gorilla stood in the forest path, in full view. He was a gigantic brute, six feet high, though his stooping attitude made him look less. Thick wiry hair covered the huge body. The face, black as a Negro's, was smooth; the eyes gleamed red. The face looked more like that of some bestial human savage than that of an animal. The red eyes glared at the Scouts, flaming with rage. Evidently the gorilla knew to

whom he owed the loss of his mate, though his fury was directed against the whole party, not the particular slayer.

For an instant he stood there, glaring; and then, as the rifles cracked, he leaped away into the jungle. The branches cracked and crashed under his weight as he sought cover.

Perhaps the numbers of his enemies had daunted him. But that he was gone, not one of the Scouts believed for a moment. The bullets whizzed away harmlessly through the jungle as he disappeared.

"Get on!" shouted Lyn.

The Scouts ran along the path.

Crashing in the jungle accompanied them. The gorilla was keeping pace. Every moment the Scouts expected to see him leap out into the path and land with clawing, hairy arms on one of their number.

But now the jungle was thinning. A gleam of water showed ahead, shining in the sunlight. It was the lake at last—the "siva" for which the patrol were heading.

At a little distance from the edge of the forest lake the jungle fell away; and there was an open space.

Never had the Popolaki Patrol been so glad to get into the open.

They raced across the open space towards the lake.

On the edge of the water the Popolaki Patrol halted, breathless, swimming in perspiration.

"Oh, crickey!" gasped Fatty Page, fanning himself with a broad leaf.

"Oh, jummy! I'm glad we're out of that!"

"Safe now, dear man!" drawled Stacpools, half contemptuously. "By gad! What would they say in Mawmoo? We came on safari to hunt a man-eatin' lion, and we're runnin' away from a monkey!"

"I only wish we had a chance of running away!" snapped Lyn. "We've got to camp here! I shall not sleep to-night."

Stacpools shrugged his shoulders.

"I shall," he yawned—"and soundly! I'm tired!"

"What about building a boat?" asked Pip, with an uneasy look back at the jungle.

Lyn shook his head.

"A boat would be no use against that brute! Fire may keep him off! Even a gorilla will not pass the fire, as a rule! But we've got to keep our eyes peeled to-night."

Bobolobo and the Bushmen gathered wood swiftly, to build a circle of fires round the camp. Stacks of wood were placed within the circle, to replenish the fires during the night.

The night fell with tropical suddenness. The red sunset had been shining on the gleaming surface of the siva when the Scouts reached it. Now black shadow lay on the lake, and the surrounding trees were lost in an indistinguishable mass.

In a half-circle, enclosing the camp on the shore of the siva, the watch-fires crackled and flamed.

Blackness fell on the vast forest.

Outside the circle of fires, all was dark, and somewhere there in the gloom roamed the watchful, implacable gorilla, waiting and watching for a chance to attack.

Not till the fires were blazing, and all was as safe as it could be made, did the Scouts think of supper. Till then, even Fatty Page contented himself with a bunch of plantains.

Mpoke, the bushman, gathered three

large stones from the lake shore, to make the simple fireplace of the natives, and built among them the cooking-fire. From the cooking pot slung over the fire came an appetizing scent that made Fatty's mouth water.

By the lake shore, circled by watch-fires, the Scouts sat down to supper, and, while they ate, many an anxious glance was cast towards the dense blackness beyond the fires. Once or twice, a hyena came snuffing out of the jungle, with green eyes scintillating in the firelight, and skulked away again, unheeded by the Scouts. It was of the gorilla they were thinking, of the terrible beast more dangerous than the lion or the rhinoceros, lurking in the darkness, sleepless and implacable, thirsting for vengeance. There was likely to be little sleep that night in the camp of the Popolaki Patrol.

The Attack in the Night!

"'M turnin' in!"
Stacpools yawned as he spoke. Fatty Page, who had supped not wisely but too well, was already dozing, though he had no intention of

defence. But, enraged and exasperated by the killing of his mate, the gorilla was a more dangerous and ruthless enemy than the man-eating lion whom the Scouts had trailed and killed. But it was not Stacpools's way to admit a fault. He chose to take the view that Lyn was exaggerating the peril.

"Turn in if you like!" said Lyn curtly. "I'm keeping watch."
"We've seen nothin' of the brute since we camped. It's gettin' on for midnight

"Yes, shut up, old bean," said Pip. "You've played the goat and there's no getting out of that, if you jaw all night."

"Ja!" remarked Smut, with a nod. Stacpools flushed angrily.

But he turned away without another word, with a contemptuous smile on his face. He moved to a distance from the other fellows, and rolled out his blanket.

Silence lay round the camp by the river. Lyn rose to his feet presently, and moved round the circle of fires.

Nine or ten fires were burning, at regular intervals, in the half-circle that shut in the camp against the lake shore. Every now and then, Bobo or Mipoko would replenish the fires with bundles of brushwood. Not for a moment were the flames allowed to die down. But when they were not replenishing the fires, the Kikuyu and the bushman dozed, within the ring of flames.

Lyn glanced at Stacpools, as he passed him. The dandy of the Popolaki Patrol was stretched on his blanket, his head pillowed on his wallet, sleeping calmly. A glimmer of starlight fell on his face, and showed it, handsome and peaceful, but with a slight sneer

on the well-cut lips even in slumber. Lyn did not believe that Stacpools was sincere in making light of the danger, but certainly he was sleeping profoundly, careless of peril real or unreal. Lyn gave him a look and passed on, and came back to the spot where his comrades sat.

Fatty Page was fast asleep now, and snoring. But there was no need to awaken him. Pip Parker and Smut sat with their rifles across their knees, their eyes open. Pip was nodding a little, but the Dutchman was as wakeful as Lyn.

Lyn dropped to a seat on a log, resting the butt of his rifle between his feet, looking away towards the darkness beyond the flickering fires.

Round the camp the vast forest formed a wall of blackness. So far, there had been no sign of the gorilla. The flaming circle of fire seemed to be keeping him from approaching the camp. It was rare for any wild beast to venture to pass the fires, and Lyn began to believe that the gorilla was waiting for day.

The hours of watching passed wearily to Lyn, and he longed for morning. It seemed, after all, as if the night was to pass without alarm.

Then suddenly, breaking the silence with a shattering effect, came a wild scream in the gloom.

Lyn leaped up.

That fearful cry came from within the camp, close by the lake shore, at a little distance from the circle of fires. It came



Cry after cry broke from Stacpools as he felt the enormous hairy arms of the gorilla crush him.

sleeping. Fatty, indeed, intended to keep awake all night, but though the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak.

The rest were alert. Lyn, who had the responsibility for the lives of his comrades on his young shoulders, was most alert of all. Not for a second did he mean to close his eyes. And Pip Parker and Smut were, for the present at least, wakeful and watchful too.

Stacpools did not look sleepy. As a matter of fact, it was on his mind that he had brought this deadly and unnecessary peril on the patrol. For the gorilla of the African forest, terrible brute as he is, only demands to be let alone, and will seldom or never make an attack save in revenge for an injury or in self-

now. I fancy that monk's fast asleep long ago."

"Rot!" said Lyn. Stacpools shrugged his shoulders. He was making sight of the matter, as much to irritate his patrol-leader as anything else. He knew that all the patrol condemned his action, both for its thoughtless cruelty, and for the trouble it had caused, and he disliked the position it had placed him in. He was in a mood for a quarrel, if only to give the other fellows something else to think about.

"Well, I think you're a lot of nervy asses!" he said deliberately. "I think that—"

"You can think what you like, Stacpools," interrupted Lyn, "but shut up and go to bed."

from the spot where Stacpoole had lain down.

It was repeated—a series of frantic terror, echoing wildly through the camp, awakening every sleeper. It was followed by a strange growling howl.

"The gorilla!"

Lyn leaped towards the spot.

The gorilla was within the camp, and he had attacked the sleeping Stacpoole.

How he had entered the camp mattered little then, he was there, and Stacpoole was struggling in his fearful grasp. With lightning speed, Lyn tore to the spot.

Cry after cry broke from Stacpoole, inarticulate cries of fear and horror.

The grasp of the immense muscular arms of the gorilla had awakened him from sleep. A hideous grinning black face was close to his own, the hot breath fanned him like steam, the hug of the enormous hairy arms crushed him.

Helpless as an infant, Stacpoole was grasped by an arm and a leg, while the gorilla's free hand was already about to tear him, when Lyn came panting up.

Lyn thrust his rifle muzzle fairly into the black, hideous, grinning face and pulled the trigger.

There was a yell of rage from the gorilla, and, to Lyn's intense relief, he turned on his new enemy. Had the huge claw torn at Stacpoole, nothing could have saved his life. But the blaze of the rifle in his face diverted the giant ape's attention, and he pitched Stacpoole aside and turned like a tiger on Lyn.

Lyn met him with crashing rifle-butt; and *Smot* fired the next moment, and his bullet tore through the hairy body. The next second *Lobolobo* was thrusting at the ape with his spear, *Mpoko* stabbing at him with a *Kikuyu* knife.

Pip and Fatty were rushing up, rifle in hand. Foes surrounded the giant brute, and he glared from one to another in demonic rage, screaming with fury. But the numbers, and the wounds he had received, daunted him, and he skipped suddenly away towards the lake, bullets whistling after him as he skipped. There was a splash in the shallow margin of the *siwa*, and the gorilla was gone.

Taking the Chance!

"STACPOOLE, you're hurt!"
Lyn ran to help Stacpoole to his feet.

The dandy of *Popolaki* leaned heavily on his arm, shaking from head to foot. The horror of that terrible awakening in the grasp of the gorilla was still strong upon him. But he was unhurt, save for a few bruises where the terrible arms had grasped him.

"Hurt, old chap?" exclaimed Lyn.

"No."

Stacpoole was white as chalk, and his breath came in gasps.

"How the thump did the brute get into camp?" exclaimed Pip. "He never passed the fence."

Smot, the silent one, pointed to the *siwa*.

"That's it," said Fatty Page. "The brute waded along the lake; it's shallow close by the shore. Those brutes are cunning."

"You should have kept with us near the fence, Stacpoole!" said Pip. "You're rather an aw, old bean!"

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Stacpoole grinned faintly.

"More than that," he said. "I'm the prize man—the world's prize idiot! Strong, you've saved my life!"

He shuddered.

"I should have been torn in pieces! My hat! Let's get back to the fence."

Not an eye closed in the camp for the remainder of the night. Once or twice, from the blackness, came a howl, and the Scouts knew that it was the voice of the gorilla. He had taken many wounds with him when he fled; but it was doubtful whether he was disabled.

Glad enough were the *Popolaki* Patrol when a glimmer of light showed on the surface of the *siwa*, heralding the dawn. The sun leaped up in the east, and it was day.

Before it was fairly light the Scouts snatched a hasty breakfast; and under the rising sun they broke camp and tramped.

It was a day's march to *Masumpwe*; and they hoped to be home by sunset. But the greater part of the day's march lay within the *Mbirri* Forest; and they knew that their steps would be dogged. Until they were clear of the forest, danger haunted every step.

Many times, in the hot hours of the morning, the crashing of a branch, the cracking of the canes, told of an implacable pursuer dogging them.

For some distance the forest was open, and the gorilla did not venture to approach close at hand. But towards midday the Scouts struck a track of dense jungle, traversed by a game-path scarce a foot wide; and they breathed more quickly as they entered the narrow way.

Stacpoole dropped to the rear of the file, behind *Mpoko* with his clattering pots.

Lyn glanced back at him.

"Don't lag behind, for goodness' sake, Stacpoole!" he called out. "If he catches one of us alone—"

"Oh, rot!" answered Stacpoole.

Lyn flushed with anger, and his eyes sparkled. But the next moment Stacpoole spoke in quite a different tone.

"Sorry, old man! Don't mind my cheek! Nature of the beast, you know."

Lyn stared at him, and laughed. The happenings of the night in the camp by the *siwa*, had evidently made a difference to the lofty and self-satisfied dandy of the *Popolaki* Patrol.

"All serene!" said Lyn. "But, for goodness' sake, don't give that brute a chance at you."

The column wound on by the jungle path, every eye on the alert, each right hand grasping a rifle. Until the jungle was passed it was a tense time for the Scouts.

The path wound almost like a cork-screw between walls of giant elephant grass, ten feet high, with patches of thorny bush.

Stacpoole dropped farther and farther behind; it was easy to do so without his action being observed by his comrades, on the winding game-path. And when *Mpoko*, at the tail of the column, passed out of his sight, Stacpoole stopped.

He faced round, and waited, with a grim, set face.

That gorilla, following relentlessly on, was not far behind, he knew. That the fierce brute would take advantage of the thick cover of the jungle to creep close up to the column and make a sudden leap on one of the Scouts was only too probable. And Stacpoole had made up his mind that when the attack came it was upon him that it should fall.

It was he who had brought this danger on the patrol; and it was for him to face it.

There was a sudden rustling in the great stalks of the elephant-grass, and a hairy body leaped into view, not a dozen paces from him.

It was the gorilla; half-crouching in the jungle path, his black, glittering eyes fixed on Stacpoole, his muscular arms resting on the ground before him.

For a second that seemed an age he crouched there, still, silent, motionless; and in that second Stacpoole felt that his heart had missed a beat.

But he was cool. His rifle, clamped to his shoulder, bore steadily on the giant ape. His steady eye looked along the barrel. One shot—there would be only one shot, and, if it did not stop the gorilla, the next moment he would be torn limb from limb. Yet he was cool as ice as he took a slow and deliberate aim; after the first second, never had he been steadier, his brain clearer.

That brief pause seemed to last an age; then, with his burning eyes and clanging arms, the great ape launched himself at the Scout. His leap covered the ground with incredible swiftness; and at the same time Stacpoole, his rifle steady as a rock, fired.

Bang!

The roar of the rifle awoke a thousand echoes in the jungle. The bullet, well-aimed, smashed through the head of the gorilla; but the impetus of the leap carried the great beast onward; and as the huge body crashed on him, Stacpoole for a moment was sick with horror, with the feeling that he had failed.

But he had not failed. It was a dead body that crashed on him, dead as it touched him; and it rolled away from Stacpoole as he fell under the shock.

There was a distant shout; the shot had been heard by his comrades. Stacpoole stood still, staring down at the body of the giant ape. He could scarcely believe that he had killed it. Running feet sounded on the jungle path, running with desperate speed. Lyn Strong came panting up, the rest of the patrol breathless at his heels.

"Stacpoole!"

"All serene!"

Stacpoole turned to him.

"You lagged behind!" exclaimed Lyn. "We heard your shot—What?"

"Look!"

Stacpoole pointed to the great hairy body, half-hidden in the elephant-grass. Lyn stared.

"My hat! The gorilla!"

"I've had luck!" said Stacpoole. "I didn't lag behind, old bean—I stayed behind because I reckoned it was up to me. And I've had luck!"

"You've got the gorilla!" yelled Fatty Page.

Stacpoole grinned.

"I played the goat yesterday," he said, "and it was up to me! Strong, old bean, you saved my life last night, after I'd checked you and chivvied you, and brought the whole patrol into danger. From now on, I'm terrin' over a new leaf. Next time you catch me swankin', kindly give me the end of your boot, and I'll learn to behave!"

Lyn Strong laughed.

"I'll give you my hat instead!" he said, and held out his hand.

The *Popolaki* Patrol resumed their march in cheery spirits, and under the setting sun they trailed into *Masumpwe*, home at last from their long safari.

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("THE LOST HUNTERS" is the title of next week's exciting tale of the *Popolaki* Patrol.)