Fabulous Opportunities in Canada's Modern Boom Towns!

Bluebook

ADVENTURE IN FACT AND FICTION

25c
JUNE

THE WORLD'S TOUGHEST JOB!
They hunt for billions in sunken treasure

RED STAR OVER JAVA
True adventure in the South Pacific

Who wrote what in this month's Bluebook

Purely Personal

It isn't very often that a fiction story turns into fact after the author has submitted his story to an editor. but **Sidney Rogerson** tells us this actually happened

in the case of "The Cocoon" (pages 64-68). And, in case you've already read this spine-chiller and are jumping to the conclusion that caterpillars finally have figured out a way to enslave human beings, you can relax; it didn't happen quite that way. What did happen was that the moth-breeder on whom Mr. Rogerson based his story, and who really *did* grow the moths in his flat, just as Mr. Rogerson wrote it, was divorced by his wife for this activity in much the way the story relates it.

Mr. Rogerson is 58, one of England's leading public-relations experts, and a resident of Suffolk who commutes to London. At present, at the request of Prime Minister Churchill, he is with the British War Office on detached duty from the Imperial Chemical Industries. "The Cocoon" is his first short story.

* * *

Jackson Burke, who wrote "Matadors Die Rich" (pages 26-32), tried bullfighting after hearing that a good lad at this trade can pick up as much as $20,000 in an afternoon; and that was about the rate of pay Mr. Burke was seeking at the moment. As he tells in his story, he retired from the ring after discovering that matadors aren't overpaid, after all.

Born in 1915 on an island in San Francisco Bay *(not* Alcatraz), of theatrical parents, Burke grew up in a suitcase, earned an A.B. degree at the University of California, taught school, and eventually went to sea. He since has settled down to a writing career and, besides his story in this issue, has written four novels, one of which ("The Arroyo") was grabbed by a publisher. You'll read more of Mr. Burke's efforts in upcoming issues of *Bluebook.*

* * *

"I have a very clear memory of my grandfather, who lived near me when I

was a boy," writes **Wayne D. Overholser,** author of this month's novel, "Matt Seery's Town." "He had a marvelous white beard, a cane, a bent leg, and a built-up shoe. But those things were incidental. The great thing about him was that he'd crossed the plains in a covered wagon when he was a boy; and, as far as I was concerned, he was Jim Bridger, Kit Carson and John C. Fremont rolled into one. With that background, it was natural that I'd turn to Western fiction, and I guess that's all there is to the inspiration for *Matt Seery.*"

That's enough, Mr. Overholser, and we hereby give thanks to your grandpop for inspiring this month's book-lengther. Hope he inspired something for a future issue, too.

* * *

We first ran into **Bill Gresham,** author of "Blowdown" (pages 20-25), when he used to pass the early spring afternoons of 1940 entertaining a bunch of us other hack editors with selections on his "geetar." We recall it now as one of the more inspirational interludes of an otherwise dreary magazine era.

Bill told us later that that guitar had come in handy in the depression days, when he'd used it to sing for his supper in cowboy camps. And his other talents did him no harm either; a spell as a carnival worker resulted in his first novel, "Nightmare Alley," which those who didn't read it probably saw when it was made into a successful movie. It was followed by a host of successful magazine stories and articles.

* * *

According to its author, **Bob Arthur,** the idea for "Weapon, Motive, Method" (pages 15-18) came to its creator after he'd read in the paper that truck drivers have more accidents during their first hour on the road than at any other time. The reason? They've just come from quarreling with their wives. Naturally,

that's all Mr. Arthur had to read to set his creative instincts to humming, and he thinks he has come up with a murder method never before used in fiction. We assured Mr. Arthur, however, that he just doesn't understand the vast reading knowledge of the typical *Bluebook* subscriber, and we offered to bet him a lunch that someone will write in and tell us he read the very same thing in *The Boston Needlewoman* for its issue of August, 1906. Mr. Arthur refused the bet.

COMING UP

We would like to report that there is no truth to the rumor that the July *Bluebook* will sell for five dollars a copy and become a collector's item overnight. However, we can understand how the rumor got out; someone stole our July schedule and began passing it around. You didn't see it? Oh, well, everyone else is raving about it, so why keep it a secret. Get a load of this:

ERNEST HEMINGWAY—*Muy Hombre!*
A portrait of a real man.

SECOND-HAND DREAM, by Frank O'Rourke
A heart-tugging baseball story by an old master.

CAPTAIN STREETER VS. CHICAGO
Living proof that you *can* fight City Hall, and occasionally win.

HAIR THE COLOR OF BLOOD, by M. E. Chaber
A fast-action mystery in the modern tradition.

WAGONS—ROLL! by J. L. Bouma
Danger and death on the trail to Astoria.

THE BIG MOGUL OF MUSCLE, by Pat Ryan
How we beat the Russians at their own sports specialty.

ONE WAS A MURDERER, by Horace Brown
One of the seven administered the poison—a true-fact thriller

RELIC, by Ann Gibbons
A macabre short-short about a boy and a treasured skull.

MOUNTAIN MAN, by Tom Roan
Jealousy and hate among the moonshiners of the hill country.

THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN HAND
A top mystery writer turns to fantasy, with wonderful results.

LET'S TAKE A TRIP IN A TRAILER
Thinking of retiring? Here's the last word on America's newest blueprint for happiness.

MACHINE-MADE MILLIONS
Another tip on running your own business, at a terrific profit.

FORBIDDEN TRAILS, by René Belbenoit
The famous author of "Dry Guillotine" writes an amazing, true book-lengther about a sensational escape from Devil's Island!

Bluebook
ADVENTURE IN FACT AND FICTION

June, 1953 MAGAZINE Vol. 97, No. 2
Trademark Reg. U.S. Pat. Off.

PHILLIPS WYMAN, *Publisher*
• MAXWELL HAMILTON •
Editor
LEN ROMAGNA, *Art Editor*
SUMNER PLUNKETT, *Assistant Editor*

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The short stories and novel herein are fiction and intended as such. They do not refer to real characters or actual events. If the name of any living person is used, it is a coincidence.

BLUEBOOK MAGAZINE is published each month simultaneously in the United States and Canada by McCall Corporation. Marvin Pierce, President; Lowell Shumway, Vice-President and Circulation Director; Edward M. Brown, Secretary; William C. Auer, Treasurer. Publication and Subscription Offices: McCall Street, Dayton 1, Ohio. Executive and Editorial Offices: 230 Park Ave., New York 17, N. Y. MANUSCRIPTS and ART MATERIAL will be carefully considered but will be received only with the understanding that the publisher and editor shall not be responsible for loss or injury. SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION: $2.50 for one year, $4.00 for two years, $6.00 for three years in U. S., Canada and Pan-American countries (Add $1.00 per year for other countries). Send all remittances and correspondence about subscriptions to our publication office: McCall Street, Dayton 1, Ohio. IF YOU PLAN TO MOVE SOON please notify us four weeks in advance. Subscription lists are addressed in advance of publication date and extra postage is charged for forwarding. On sending notice of change of address give old address as well as new, preferably clipping name and old address from last copy received. JUNE ISSUE, 1953. VOL. LXXXXVII, No. 2.

Entered as second-class matter November 12, 1930, at the Post Office at Dayton, Ohio, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

PRO and CON

Address all letters to: THE EDITOR, Bluebook Magazine, 230 Park Avenue, New York 17, N. Y. All letters must be signed. None can be acknowledged or returned.

Two-Faced

To the Editor:

By now, you've probably received several truckloads of mail referring to your March cover. He's a pretty good artist, that George Mayers—draws *two* faces at one time.

What am I talking about?

Well, lay the March issue on its back about five feet away from you, with the top edge at your left and the binder edge toward you. Then, using the Arab's right eye as a focal point, you see *another* face superimposed on the one you already have!

Tell me, was it an accident, or was it meant that way?

M/Sgt. Carroll L. Marshall.
Austin, Tex.

This is the kind of letter that drives editors to strong drink, and upsets whole offices while everyone sits around juggling a March BLUEBOOK, *trying to find the other face.*

P.S.—We found it. P.P.S.—It was *an accident. P.P.P.S.—How do people* discover *these things?* —ED.

Flint-Eyed

To the Editor:

The Arab on your March cover is holding what appears to be a flint-lock rifle (He sure looks mean!). But, if that *is* a flint-lock, this guy sure doesn't scare me. No flint!

His best bet is to use the gun as a club, or throw it down a well and use his kris. But if this joker is in the habit of standing around looking tough, while backed up with a gun that won't shoot, I have but one question: How has he managed to live so long?

Stewart McLeod.
Escondido, Calif.

To the Editor:

I have long been interested in the arms and armor of the Orient, and naturally the March cover, showing an Arab with a typical snaphaunce rifle, is of more than passing interest to me. The original painting of this certainly would dress up the walls of my den, and I'm wondering if there's any possible way for me to obtain it? Naturally, I should be quite willing to pay for it.

Walter E. Marconette.
Dayton, Ohio.

The gun will *shoot, and Reader McLeod should be scared if he ever meets our cover-boy; for Reader Marconette is correct in stating that the Arab is holding a typical snaphaunce, a weapon sold to the Arabs by the Germans and the flint of which often is carried only when the gun is meant to be used. Our Arab obviously didn't intend to use his when we caught him, and he looks tough because he has a hangover.*

As for buying our cover paintings, everyone *wants this one. But cover paintings belong to the artist who does them, not to the magazine that uses them—and in this case the artist won't sell, the so-and-so.* —ED.

"All I said was, 'I wish we had a fine, lively little fellow like that around our house.'"

Bird Lore

To the Editor:

Whatever happened to the stories about the flyboys of World War I and after? There were some good yarns turned out some years ago about the Jenny pilots, but recently they all seem to have disappeared (I think Hollywood cracked up the last of the old birds in "Dawn Patrol," but there must be a few of the guys who flew the old crates still around and in a position to spin a good yarn or two). I'd buy anything like "Falcons of France" or "I Wanted Wings."

Any chance?

Lt. J. W. Case.
Heilbronn, Germany.

We doubt it, Lieutenant. Apparently you're getting just as old as the rest of us, for every time we ask that question, some crewcut tells us to go back to our rocker, that there's been another war or so since WW I. You know anything about that? —ED.

Gladiator

To the Editor:

The squib called "Faith, Hope and Charity" (Feb. BLUEBOOK) was excellent but incomplete. The olive in the martini is that the plane which survived, and which is on exhibition today, is the one they called "Faith."

The Gladiator was a braced-wing biplane, mounting (as I remember) only four 30-cal. machine guns shooting from a fixed position. She was a sweetly-maneuverable thing, and they

survived as long as they did due, first, to superb piloting, and, second, to being able to turn inside any of the Italian stuff sent to intercept them. The Gladiator, in short, is remembered affectionately as "the last of the gentlemen's aircraft."

J. W. Paddon.
The Explorers Club,
New York, N. Y.

Beebe Guns

To the Editor:

Dan De Quille (mentioned by Lucius Beebe in "The Wonderful *Territorial Enterprise*" in Jan. BLUEBOOK) possessed the same boisterous talent for describing early Western mining towns as did Mark Twain, Bret Harte or Joaquin Miller. But national fame passed De Quille by. Undeservedly so, too, considering the quality of his comments.

Like the one concerning the relative altitudes of various Sierra towns: "Virginia City," he said, "is the highest place in the nation—beer here is a dollar a bottle."

Ed Mannion.
Petaluma, Calif.

To the Editor:

I enjoyed "The Wonderful *Territorial Enterprise*" because it brought back some very pleasant memories of my own trip through Nevada some years ago. Would it be possible to read some more of Mr. Beebe's stories in BLUEBOOK soon?

George Poulain.
Sydney, N. S.

Shangri-La

To the Editor:

As a very constant reader of your estimable magazine—which I claim is worth every cent you charge for it—I find, quite often, an article which is most informative and worth further reading. In my current copy (March) is a very absorbing article by General Victor Gordon, "There *Is* a Shangri-La!"

The statement here which I find worth further study is the General's supposition that the Mayans crossed the Bering Sea. I gather from the writings on this subject, portrayed by Churchward in "Mu," "Children of Mu" and "The Motherland of Mu," that, in addition to Atlantis, to the east, there was a vast land (of Mu) in the Pacific. The claims that Mu suddenly subsided due to subterranean disturbances could—as both the Mayans and the Aztecs claim—have caused the tidal wave which created Shangri-La.

As a yacht skipper, I once brought a party of explorers to Progreso, where one heard guarded, and garbled, accounts of the never-never land in Guatemala described by General Gordon. It is a place of mystery, where modern civilization makes no impression; that fabulous quantities of gold, platinum and other precious metals exist there is a known fact.

The General's account smacks of complete veracity. Congratulate him for a very fine story.

Edw. Low.
Wilmington, Del.

To the Editor:

That General Gordon story is the biggest lot of flapdoodle I've read in a long time!

So there's a Shangri-La, is there? A place from which no white man ever has returned? Well, if the General took enough time from his whisky-fed dreams to look at any modern map, he soon would find that the area of which he writes, and which is supposed to be so mysterious, is surrounded on all sides by modern communities, with airports, highways, railroads, and maybe even underground streams (which the plantation owners love because it's where they get their water).

Tell me more, won't you—but, in the future, label it fiction.

Gus Henry.
Pleasantville, N. Y.

Sybil

To the Editor:

Some time last summer, you ran an article called "Vanished" which described Richard Shaffer's search for his missing wife. But, although you may have said something about it since, I don't recall ever hearing whether Mrs. Shaffer ever had been found, or what was the final outcome of the story.

What's the word?

Jack Schenk.
Orland, Calif.

Sybil was found. —ED.

Figure of Speech

To the Editor:

"Are You a Mathematical Wizard?" (Jan. BLUEBOOK) is misleading.

The final sentence—"If he meets the train, turns around, and flies back to Chicago, having been gone 9.4 hours, what is the engineer's name?"—is an integrated sentence, calling for the engineer's name to be contingent, some way, on the bird's having flown for 9.4 hours. Looking for the next connected factor, the reader goes to the bird's speed of 116.2 m.p.h., and to other related data. Since flying time and speed are in figures, the reader struggles to find an answer dealing with those figures.

He is sadder, and wiser, to discover, after much thought, however, that it's nothing but a trick question.

Ross Thompson.
Fresno, Calif.

It fooled us, too, Ross; that's why we passed it along. And we'll bet a buck you tried to fool someone else with it after you'd been tricked. Right? —ED.

"Well—he's up."

Thinking Out Loud

We doubt if we're letting any cats out of any bags when we announce that the trouble with most mystery stories we read these days is that they aren't mysteries. In fact, most of the whodunits we've come across recently have about as much mystery to them as you'll find in Grandma's grocery list, and the puzzle, if any, could be solved by a preschool idiot who can't pass a course in advanced sandpile.

Which is possibly one way of introducing "Another Day, Another Corpse," a confection you'll locate on pages 33-43 of this splendid issue. Here is a mystery in the old-time tradition, and one which doesn't tip its mitt until the very last page. On top of that, "Another Day" is something of a social document, too, with a theme which even the author feels is apt to make a few folks mad at us. As every *Bluebook* reader knows, however, having people mad at us is standard operating procedure around here; all we ever hope is that none of them ever takes after us with an axe.

One thing we can tell you in a hurry, though, is that it won't do you any good to get mad at the author. Not this lady. Ruth Hume's family has been mad at by professionals. If you don't think so, take another look at the by-line. Sound familiar? It should—for Ruth Hume's husband is Paul Hume, music critic of the *Washington Post*, and the guy who got that note from Harry Truman about daughter Margaret's singing. Remember?

So, if you've got any complaints about this story, send 'em in. You can't scare us.

* * *

We doubt if you'll have any beefs about our lead story in this issue, however. As you'll note, it's called "Canada Goes BOOM!," and the subtle theme is that it contains all you'll need to know to get filthy rich in our neighboring community to the north. And please don't write us and say you live in Canada, and that it simply isn't true that there are fortunes lying around up there waiting for someone to make them. All we know is what the Canadians tell us.

That and the fact that Moe Smith, who runs our corner newsstand, now makes no bones about handing out Canadian dimes in change, and will take no guff from you if you complain about them.

"Pipe down!" Moe says to you. "'At's th' foist ten-cent dime you seen in years." He should know.

* * *

Which, speaking of the neighbors, reminds us that we had a visit this month from Philip Bernal, who wrote a dandy yarn for our January issue called "... And Bury the Dead." Mr. Bernal has just returned from a tour of duty with the Army in Panama, and he's properly steamed up about our relations with our Central and South American hemispheremates.

"We're losing out down there," Mr. Bernal told us ominously. "The people, especially in South America, just don't like us. And, unless we get on the ball soon, we're going to find ourselves in a mess of trouble."

Specifically, Mr. Bernal says, it's the old American arrogance, the conviction in our collective minds that God created the universe especially for you, and us, and the rich manufacturers of airhoses in South Cupcake, Idaho—and to hell with those unlucky peasants who happen to be so unfortunate as to have been born in any other country than the United States.

Such an attitude, Mr. Bernal feels—and we agree—is just jim-dandy when you're setting up the drinks at the Elks Club or the Fourth of July picnic. But it's pure murder when you're visiting in a friendly country, a country whose citizens you pray will be on your side if and when the big global fuss begins.

"Me, I look like a Spaniard anyhow," Mr. Bernal concluded. "And I speak the language fluently. So, whenever I'm visiting in South America, I avoid embarrassment by telling everyone I'm a Spaniard. It may not be pure patriotism, but it sure as hell guarantees that I'm going to get out of the place without having a brick thrown through my hotel room, or an icepick driven through my new pigskin two-suiter."

* * *

Which attitude is given further credence by the testimony of a gentleman with whom we had lunch just yesterday. This lad is in the advertising business in Brazil, although he's as American as Charley McCarthy. We told him what Mr. Bernal had said, and asked him if there was any truth in it.

Well, sir, two hours later we still were fighting to get back to the office, and our advertising friend still was talking about Americans south of the border. Frankly, he muttered, get us outside the twelve-mile limit, and Americans are the biggest bunch of jerks in the world.

"And don't kid yourself," he warned, "that it isn't doing us harm. The Germans—yeah, the Germans!—are moving

...AND YOU CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT 'EM

"And please help Daddy accept the responsibilities of being a good husband and father."

back in with all the old savvy they were using in 1939. Result—you want to buy something in São Paulo or Santos or Rio, and you want it in a hurry, at a decent price, and of superior quality, you get it from the Krauts. You want to get a kicking around, and made to feel like a beggar with his hat in his hand, then you buy it from the Americans."

The solution, according to this lad, is for us to get wise to the fact that there is culture and intelligence, fine breeding and education, somewhere else besides in Upper Darby, Pa., or Westbury, L. I. And we'd also better start to understand, soon, he yelped, that we can't continue to send, as our representatives in the Latin countries, fuzzy-faced kids just out of college or old hack, retired vice-presidents for whom we can't figure out any other job.

"Our whole future is at stake in this thing," he told us. "For God's sake, can't you do *something* to make America understand that!"

* * *

So, while all that was going on, a story was developing which, if we didn't know the guy to whom it happened, we'd swear it wasn't true.

There was this improper Bostonian, see, a gent who has a 10-year-old son, and along about the middle of March the kid suddenly took to his Back Bay bed, grievously ill and covered with a virulent rash. The best Boston specialists were called in, and they wrinkled their collective brows in therapeutic speculation. The kid failed to recover.

When a month had passed, and the boy, considerably tormented, still showed no progress toward health, the parents decided it was time for drastic steps to be taken—they called in a doc from *outside* the Boston city limits, from a place called New York, of all things. The latter doctor put his finger on the problem promptly.

"It's in his mind," this learned practitioner solemnized. "Find out what's on his mind, what's troubling him, and your worries will be over. Fifty dollars, please."

So the parents went to work. They pumped the kid, they wheedled, they gave him the third degree. And, finally, the boy confessed. Plucking the coverlet and emitting an anguished sigh, he groaned, "Dad, I'm sorry, but I just can't go on living with the Boston Braves playing in a place called Milwaukee."

At last reports, the patient was doing nicely. His old man had reminded him that, after all, they still had the Red Sox. And, as soon as the lad was ambulant, plans were afoot to give him a vacation in Milwaukee, in order to prove to him that no great harm was coming to the true New England accent of Walker Cooper, or to the fine Latin slants of Lefty Warren Spahn.

MAXWELL HAMILTON

SQUIRT'S SQUIRT SKIRTS QUIRT . . . In Ottawa, Ontario, a bandit, aged about 10, shot his way out of a holdup after he had snatched a package of bubble gum from a young customer; when ordered to halt, the young squirt pulled a water pistol, squirted the proprietor in the face and escaped.

PAIN WAS ONLY A LITTLE ONE . . . In Honolulu, Mrs. Annie McShane told her doctor, "There's something wrong with me. I don't know what it is but go ahead and check me up." Three days later she gave birth to a six-pound boy—her first in 17 years of marriage.

NO MORE SKIN . . . In Los Angeles, it was reported that after working to become a success, a skin specialist became a medical case, perhaps the most pitiful imaginable: he had suddenly developed an allergy to paper money.

TWICE AS GOOD . . . In Chicago, an unidentified taxpayer returned to the Internal Revenue Bureau to make a correction on his return, explained he could not write English, changed his signature from "X" to "XX," said, "I forgot I had two names."

BOURGEOIS NECESSITY . . . In Budapest, Hungary, after two factory nursery-school directors tried to buy chamber pots at a Government store and were told that only Japanese flower vases would be available until next year, the trade-union paper *Nepszava* angrily commented, "The small children of the nursery are in no position to wait that long."

UNDER DOUBLE COVER . . . In Hong Kong, when one policeman, posing as a black-market operator, arrested two men trying to buy gold illegally, the arrested pair proved to be policemen, also posing as black-marketeers.

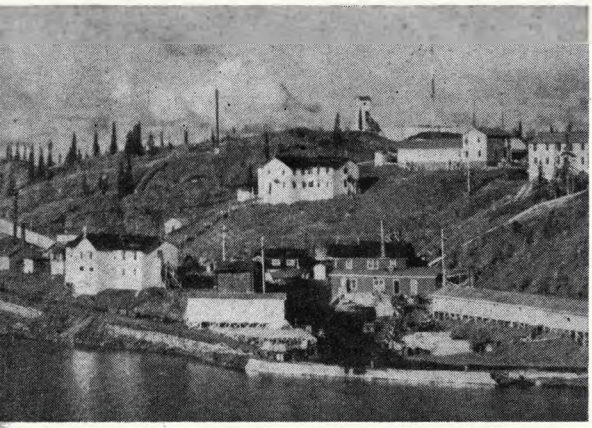
A LIEU-LIEU . . . In the District of Columbia, the city commissioners sent out this bulletin to clarify what must have been an extremely complicated situation: "The second nonwork day of the calendar week is hereby established as the regular nonwork day in lieu of Sunday for the purposes of this sub-section except that the first nonwork day of the calendar week is hereby established as the regular nonwork day in lieu of Sunday for the uniformed forces of the Fire Department."

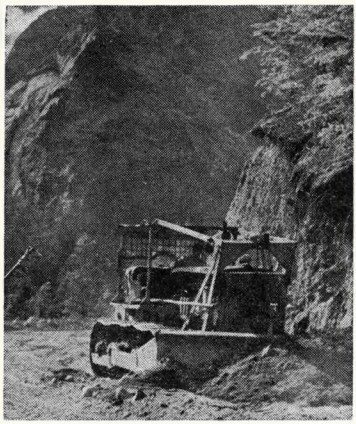
TURNING THE OTHER CHEEK . . . In Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, a train smacked James Ermatinger's automobile on the left side, spun it around and then smashed it again on the right side; the driver suffered minor injuries.

NEVER TOO YOUNG . . . In San Francisco, a baby-sitter won the right to sue a four-year-old boy for damages suffered when the child threw her to the floor in a "furious" attack and broke both her arms. The boy's parents can also be made to answer charges they did not warn the baby-sitter that the child was prone to furious attacks on strangers.

GUARANTEED TROUBLE . . . In Sweden, the Swedish Housewives League is demanding that the Government grant all wives in the country an annual "salary" of at least 1,000 crowns ($194), plus an additional allowance of 500 crowns ($97) for each child. So far, the housewifely proposal is not welcome in Government circles.

Aided by vast new discoveries of gold, silver, nickel, copper, platinum, cobalt, uranium, titanium, oil and natural gas, and by her tremendous resources in virgin forests, Canada is hurtling into her greatest era of prosperity, with the demand for manpower showing no signs of abating. Need a good job? This could be your chance!





Photographs from National Film Board

Canada goes BOOM!

By IRWIN WINEHOUSE

The bandwagon's really rolling north of the border, with the greatest opportunity in history for striking it rich. And here, in a complete round-up, is the whole story—what they need, where they need it, and how to go about getting there.

IN THE DOMINION OF CANADA, there are scenes being re-enacted today that would make a California '49er pop his eyes in the certain conviction he was back once more at Sutter's Mill.

On rocky hillsides in Saskatchewan, veteran sourdoughs and excited tenderfeet have raced to stake out 50-acre claims in a mad hunt for uranium. In Quebec, the mines of the Iron Ore Company of Canada resound to the discovery of one of the largest deposits of this metal ever found on this continent; and at Seven Islands, also in Quebec, one of the greatest seaports—to serve the iron mines—grows by leaps and bounds. At Arvida, Quebec, is currently the world's largest aluminum operation. In Manitoba, mines also are humming in one of the most extensive projects of the century. Uranium also is being mined extensively at Port Radium, in the Northwest Territory, and oil is the basis for a wild and fantastic boom at Edmonton, Alberta.

The entire area of the country, from Newfoundland to British Columbia, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from the northern border of the United States to the Arctic Circle, is one vast beehive of industrial activity, with new fortunes being made overnight, and with the call to adventure, and progress, and prosperity, growing ever louder on the clear, northern air.

John Klassen heard its first faint beckonings back in 1923, when he came to Canada from Russia with $3 in his pocket. Today he's in the pump business, turning out more than a million dollars' worth of pumps annually.

Ernest Ridout heard it when, at the age of 6, he peddled newspapers on the streets of Toronto. He still could hear it seven years ago, when he hauled coal in a couple of second-hand trucks. Today the boom is deafening in his ears, as his real-estate company boasts eleven offices, 175 salesmen and more than thirty-five million dollars' worth of business yearly.

Jack Cooke heard the call as a door-to-door book salesman. Today he's the owner of radio station CKEY, Toronto, the publisher of two of the country's major magazines, and the owner of the Toronto Maple Leafs baseball team.

Almost daily, the list of self-made men grows, and, as fast as they hit the jackpot, newcomers from all over the world surge into Canada to try their own luck at the fantastic stakes that await the man with courage, a spirit of adventure, and the pioneer willingness to work.

What's causing it all? Briefly, vast new discoveries of hidden treasure, new and undeveloped storehouses of gold, silver, nickel, copper, platinum, cobalt, titanium, uranium, iron ore, asbestos, oil and natural gas. Aiding in their development is the thundering power in streams and rivers to create hydro-electricity, in the giant forests that feed the paper and lumber mills. And the inevitable result is new boom towns springing up overnight in what was once vast wasteland.

What are *your* chances for a piece of this great new wealth?

As the head of one Canadian Chamber of Commerce told me, almost gasping out the words at the end of a hectic day, "We need *everything*. Clothing stores, banks, groceries, nightclubs, movie houses, laundries, taxicabs—what can you do? Whatever it is, you can be sure there's a demand for it somewhere here in Canada. And the biggest demand is for manpower, skilled or not."

Sound intriguing? It should; and, if you're floundering in uncertainty in your present job or business, if you can hear that call of the pioneers, and you have the spirit to stake out a new life for yourself and your family, then here's the word, direct from the Canadians themselves, on the best spot for you. Read over the following breakdowns of the activities in specific Canadian boom towns; decide which area best fits your qualifications, or which most needs the specialized services you can provide, and then read over the requirements listed in the box accompanying this article regarding entrance into Canada. After that, it's all up to you.

All set?

Well, first, there's Knob Lake, Quebec. Here's a town on the verge of fantastic expansion. Right now there are only 150 people there, including 8 women and 12 children. Within a year the population will be up to several thousand. At Knob Lake are the mines of the Iron Ore Company of Canada, with the largest known deposits on the continent—at least 400 million tons, enough to replace our own nearly-depleted Mesabi Range.

There's a company clothing store, bank and bakery in Knob Lake now. And that's all! Nothing else. Not even a taxi or a barber shop, a drug store or a laundry. There's one doctor but no nurse, pharmacist, dentist or lawyer. If a town was ever wide open for settlement, with a golden future assured, this is it.

By the end of 1954, iron ore should be pouring out of the area at the rate of 10 million tons a year. Actual mining awaits the completion of a 360-mile railroad from the south. This new lifeline to Canada's great treasure chest of iron, to be known as The Quebec, North Shore & Labrador Railroad, should be finished before winter sets in. Then comes the "boom" for Knob Lake, and there's no telling how far it will go. Beyond the town lie the still-untouched resources of all Labrador. Prospecting is going on right now. More of it will follow as Knob Lake grows and becomes the key center for the entire area.

If you'd prefer a job to setting up a business, a base of operations from which to look around, there'll be plenty of work available. Aside from actual mining, the railroad needs engineers and Diesel operators, as well as a whole host of railroad men.

A look at the map will show that Knob Lake is in mighty cold territory. It's on the Quebec-Labrador border, where the winters are apt to bring minus—40 and —50 degrees in temperatures. Mining will be possible only during five months of the year because of the extreme winter weather, but high pay will provide adequate year-round earnings and give workers plenty of time for trapping, fishing or just sleeping.

At the southern end of the new railroad to Knob Lake sits the seaport of Seven Islands (Sept-Isles). Once a sleepy town at the mouth of the St. Lawrence, today Seven Islands is a hub of activity. Huge loading facilities are under construction. Docks and warehouses are being greatly enlarged. More than 15 million dollars will be spent to expand the harbor. The whole atmosphere is one of intense excitement.

Men talk of the future, of the promised prosperity which lies ahead. And the reason for all the tumult is this: Seven Islands will become a mighty Eastern seaport. It has been chosen for the trans-shipment of all the ore mined in the Knob Lake region. From Seven Islands, the iron will be sent to American blast furnaces along the Great Lakes. (This makes the early completion of the St. Lawrence Seaway a vital necessity to Canada.) As you might imagine, the possibilities for both employment and business in Seven Islands are virtually unlimited.

Current population: 3,000 permanent residents, plus 4,000 "floating" personnel employed in some phase of the ore development.

Official Government estimate of 1963 population: 20,000.

The figures tell but a part of the story. Today there is only *one laundry, one shoe-repair store, one real-estate office, one drug store* and *one bakery* in Seven Islands! There isn't even a separate tailor shop in town! The laundry does double duty as a dry-cleaning store. The only bars in Seven Islands are in the three hotels, only two of which can be considered first class.

The female population numbers close to 1,500, but there are only three beauty parlors to serve them. Want to open a barber shop? Here's the place. Only four in town! On the professional side, there are but two doctors, two dentists and four lawyers. Seven Islands boasts two motion-picture theaters, but only a single undertaker. Ever thought of opening a night club? There isn't one here yet.

I had a talk recently with J.A. Boissinot, the town clerk and treasurer of Seven Islands. "It was so quiet here once upon a time," he said, a bit wistfully. "Now nobody sits still. Everyone has plans. We have to feed and house so many new people." I could see what Seven Islands *didn't* have, but was there anything it had enough of? I asked Mr. Boissinot. "Well, we have about forty taxis. I guess that should be enough. And we have twenty restaurants, which should do us for awhile. But as for everything else—we need it!"

I asked finally for a report on the weather and it was good. "The cold-

est I have ever known here," Mr. Boissinot informed me, "was 10 below zero. But usually in winter it is about 25 degrees, and in summer about 74. Very pleasant."

And that's the story from Seven Islands. Mr. Boissinot will be happy to answer all your questions. Write him at Box 44, Seven Islands, Quebec.

A highway makes the opportunity headlines in the province of Newfoundland, not a town. The 630-mile road across the island from Port aux Basques to St. John's, the capital, doesn't have a single roadside hotel or restaurant, as of this writing.

The highway across this vacation paradise has just been completed, and a new car-and-passenger ferry, put into operation last season, will bring tourists by the thousands from the mainland. This is rugged country, of fabulous beauty. It is virgin territory, filled with trout and salmon streams. The forests of Newfoundland are alive with all kinds of game and fowl, including large herds of moose and caribou.

The oldest British colony, and the tenth and newest Canadian province—originally a self-governing Dominion, Newfoundland didn't become a political part of Canada until 1949—Newfoundland takes a most progressive attitude toward the newcomer. The welcome mat is out, and opportunity beckons. This is the spot for the man who has had his fill of noisy, dirty, city life. Here's the great outdoors in all its magnificence, plus the chance to open a good business. Write to Oliver L. Vardy, Director of Tourist Development, at St. John's, Newfoundland, for all details. I discussed the situation with him, and he had this to say: "We are not only willing but anxious to assist all interested parties in setting up cabins, small hotels and restaurants for the large tourist trade."

Arvida, Quebec, is the site of what is currently the world's largest aluminum operation. At the moment, the population is 12,000. In 1941 it was 4,500. Arvida literally has turned into a beehive of activity, and there's still plenty of room for expansion.

There are two dentists in Arvida, one lawyer, and one optometrist; but not a single nurse. In this community of 12,000 persons, there isn't a single bakery, undertaker or tailor shop. There is exactly one real-estate office, one car dealer, one laundry and two drug stores. Two department stores serve the entire population. It seems fantastic, but there are only two restaurants in all of Arvida, and only two furniture stores. There are twenty-five taxis, but just two garages. Three barber shops, three beauty parlors and three shoe-repair shops round out the picture.

As you might expect, there is a tremendous boom here in the building trades.

The scope for opportunity takes your breath away. When the visions cease, and you begin to think realistically about the situation, you might try writing to J. A. Frechette, Secretary-Treasurer of Arvida, at P.O. Box 2, for further information.

HOW TO GET ON THE CANADIAN BANDWAGON

■ **Interested in staking out a new career for yourself in booming Canada? Then here's all you have to do:**

1. Decide first what you want to do and where you want to do it.

2. If you're interested in a job rather than in opening a new business, send a letter with your qualifications and background to W. K. Rutherford, Director of Employment Services, National Employment Service, Ottawa, Ontario, Can.

3. If possible, take a vacation trip to the part of Canada which interests you most. Talk to the natives. Ask plenty of questions. Then make your move.

4. If you want to open a business, large or small, contact the local Chamber of Commerce or Board of Trade in the Canadian town or city of your choice. There also are Canadian Commercial Representatives, with offices throughout the United States, who are there to help you. Contact the one nearest your home. They include: Commercial Counsellor, Canadian Embassy, 1746 Massachusetts Ave., N. W., Washington, D. C.; Canadian Trade Commission, 620 Fifth Avenue, New York City; Consul of Canada, 532 Little Bldg., Boylston Street, Boston, Mass.; Consul of Canada, 1035 Penobscot Bldg., Detroit, Mich.; Consul-General of Canada, 400 West Madison St., Chicago, Ill.; Canadian Trade Commissioner, 510 West 6th St., Los Angeles, Calif.; Consul-General of Canada, 400 Montgomery St., San Francisco, Calif.

5. When you want to arrange financing for a new business in Canada, contact any Canadian bank with a branch in your nearest big city.

■ **What's the word on emigration to Canada?**

Entry into Canada is simple. Neither a passport nor a visa is necessary, and *everything* is handled by the immigration officer at the border. Just remember to bring along these four items:

1. Proof of nationality and identity (birth or baptismal certificate).

2. Proof of good physical and mental health. A letter signed by a licensed physician will do.

3. Proof of good character. such as letters of recommendation from past employers, business associates, or your local police department.

4. Proof of employment in Canada *or* evidence of financial responsibility. A letter from a prospective Canadian employer will suffice for the first; the transfer of sufficient funds to a Canadian bank will take care of the second. By "sufficient funds" is meant enough to keep you from becoming a public charge.

■ **What about taxes?**

A gloomy subject at best, the tax situation in Canada is almost too good to be true. Example:

1. Even with the Korean emergency, there is no excess profits tax.

2. During the first year of operation, new companies are taxed at a special low rate.

3. In computing taxes, corporations are permitted almost complete freedom in averaging good and bad years.

4. Current corporate expenditures for research may be written off against expenses.

■ **And, finally . . .**

For facts on geography, climate, laws, and the economic picture in Canada (as well as for any other country in the world), drop a line to the Office of International Trade, Department of Commerce, Washington 25, D. C.

Then, too, the Office of Small Business, Mutual Security Agency, Washington 25, D.C., has a Contact Clearing House Service. The latter attempts to stimulate American investment abroad, and you can list your talents and resources with them and ask them to inform you of opportunities in Canada.

And the *Foreign Commerce Weekly*, published by the Department of Commerce, tells just about anything you want to know about jobs and businesses abroad, from running a jute mill in Tasmania to a merry-go-round in Indonesia. A subscription can be had, at $3.50 a year, by writing to the Superintendent of Documents, Washington 25, D.C.

We've talked about the new towns of eastern Canada, but the older, well-established cities are not to be overlooked. Even a metropolis like Toronto, perhaps the most conservative city in the nation, is actually a high-riding boom town. This summer at Oakville, a Toronto suburb, the Ford Motor Company of Canada will complete the largest factory under one roof anywhere outside the United States. It's a seventeen-million-dollar operation which will bring about 5,000 automobile workers into the area, as well as dozens of new businesses, of all types, to serve these people.

In Hamilton, Ontario, the Pittsburgh of Canada, there's a great sixty-three-million-dollar expansion program underway by the Steel Company of Canada. This means more employment, plus new opportunities for small business.

The same story repeats itself over and over again. And, in each expanding community, the demand increases for more and more services. Today, Canada's population is a meager 14,000,000; it hasn't changed much in the last hundred years. But the boom began only six years ago, and the next fifty should see Canada's population top 50,000,000. Translate that increase into goods and services, and you begin to see why we've called Canada a modern promised land.

Flin Flon, in Manitoba, is another area to set a man's dreams in motion. Flin Flon, in central Canada, is the scene of extensive mining operations. The Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Company employs some 3,000 people in Flin Flon, and these, together with their families, now total 12,000, with the end nowhere in sight.

New construction in Flin Flon is hitting a pace of 150 buildings a year.

There are 2,000 pre-school-age children, but not a single specialty shop for youngsters.

Ever thought of opening a roller-skating rink, bowling alley or night club? Steady employment and top wages make this town a natural for any of these ventures. Folks have money, as well as the time to spend in recreation.

Here in Flin Flon are 12,000 people and three dentists—4,000 patients per man! But it doesn't take a professional background to open the door of opportunity. The community has only two dry-cleaning stores; it could support at least three more. Two liquor stores for 12,000 people? That's the present arrangement in Flin Flon. There are five beer parlors, but only two drug stores.

The prospects for expansion are truly exciting. Flin Flon will continue to grow, and offers any newcomer the opportunity to play a vital rôle in its mighty bright future.

For any further information contact G. H. Murton, secretary-treasurer of the town, at Box 100, Flin Flon, Manitoba.

Lynn Lake in Manitoba is another fabulous storehouse of mineral wealth. Beneath its soil lies a vast source of nickel, the largest single ingredient in jet and missile making. Canada always has had about 90 per cent of the world's nickel supply. The discoveries at Lynn Lake, estimated at 14 million tons, assure continued leadership in this precious metal. It also assures the fact that Lynn Lake will grow to become one of the leading communities in all of Manitoba.

The story of the Lynn Lake development begins in the summer of 1941. At the time, Austin McVeigh was prospecting for gold up that way, in behalf of the Sherritt Gordon Mines, Ltd., a company with an exhausted copper mine 165 miles to the south, at Sherridon. As McVeigh paddled around Lynn Lake, he noticed a mineralized chunk of rock on the shore. He took a sample and went back to Sherridon. His find proved to contain six per cent nickel, and Mr. McVeigh had become the father of a new boom town.

The actual birth of Lynn Lake, however, had to await the end of World War II. The nickel discovery actually was kept under wraps until 1947. Then the news leaked out, and one of the wildest staking sprees in Manitoba's history exploded like a keg of powder. Prospectors dashed into the territory from all parts of Canada, staked their claims and waited. Finally, Sherritt Gordon, with the experience and the capital to develop the area, stepped in and consolidated the operation.

With all its good mining equipment standing idle in Sherridon, the company decided to move machinery and personnel north to the new fields at Lynn Lake. When the snows set in, the boys went to work. In the past four winters, nearly two hundred houses have been transported across the ice from Sherridon to Lynn Lake, a distance of 165 miles. Today Sherridon is little more than a ghost town, but Lynn Lake is one of the latest additions to the ever-increasing list of Canadian boom areas.

With a present population in the neighborhood of 1,000, the prospect at the end of the next ten years is that Lynn Lake will contain 5,000 people. That is an official Government estimate, and it means every type of small business will be needed, from laundries to bakeries, from restaurants to hotels. Steady expansion is indicated, and will take its first great strides this year, when Canadian National completes its eight-million-dollar railroad line to Lynn Lake. With a major investment of this sort, you know that economic stability is guaranteed. Ore production will ultimately reach the seven-and-one-half-million-dollar annual rate.

The railroad also will open, for the first time, some 10,000 square miles of rich farmland in northern Manitoba. It will make possible, and profitable, the development of the huge hydro-electric potential from the Nelson and Churchill Rivers.

Uranium City, Saskatchewan, is perhaps the most publicized boom town in all of Canada. It is certainly the newest. The uranium mines began producing this spring, with the first scheduled to be a 500-ton-a-day operation.

When E. N. Shauscon, of Uranium City, told me recently, "We need everything and everyone!" he was not exaggerating one bit.

Two hundred and fifty people stayed on at Uranium City this past winter, in temperatures that dropped to 50 below. Quonset huts were quickly built last fall, once the uranium fields had been opened to the public. After the initial mad claim-filing, of the first few days of last August, folks settled down to build homes. The homes, and the town, still are far from finished. The first barge, with supplies and material, won't get through the ice-bound waterways to Uranium City until June 15th; but, once it does, the town will take a deep, collective breath and start expanding.

As of this writing, business facilities of Uranium City are as follows: one hotel, one bank, one barber shop, one hardware store, one clothing store, one liquor store, one motion-picture theater, one tailor shop, one car dealer, ten taxis, three garages, three restaurants, and two department stores.

There isn't a single bar, shoe-repair store, newspaper, beauty parlor, laundry, drug store, cigar store, real-estate office or furniture store.

The town currently boasts one doctor and one nurse, but not a single lawyer, optometrist, dentist or pharmacist.

By next winter, the permanent population of Uranium City will be 1,000. In 1954 it probably will top 2,000, and go up from there.

The town lies 265 miles from the nearest railhead, which means ground travel from the south is slow and arduous during the summer months and completely impossible in the winter. But there is year-round air transportation to Uranium City from both Edmonton and Prince Albert.

Just a word about the weather. Before you hit the trail for Uranium

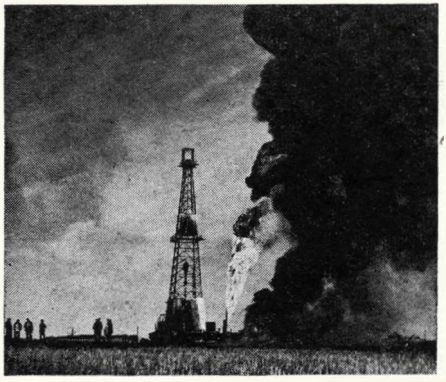
City, be sure you can take the cold. It's rugged living in the ice and snow, when the winds sweep in from the Arctic bringing 40- and 50-below temperatures. You can't do much more than sit around and chew the fat in that kind of weather. But when summer finally arrives, the outdoor man will be in his element. Fishing and hunting are tops, and with July temperatures in the 80's, the world looks like a mighty sweet place from northern Saskatchewan.

One additional note on the prospects in Uranium City: The community also will serve as the business center for Beaverlodge, and a portion of the northern section of Lake Athabaska. At Beaverlodge, Geiger counters are doing handsprings! Uranium ore is known to exist along a giant rift more than eight miles wide, seven miles long and at least 1,000 feet deep. The mining operation here has guaranteed Canada's position as a world leader in the development of atomic energy.

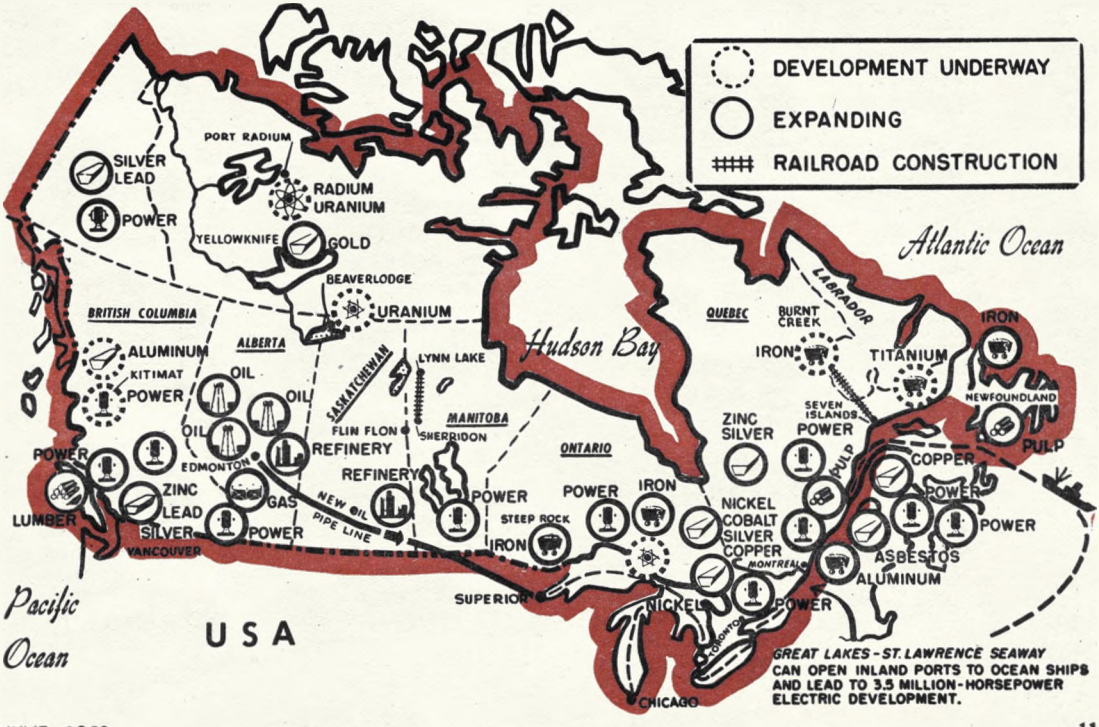
Like the needle of a compass, Canada's future points to the north. In the frozen "wastelands" sits untold treasure beckoning to the man of courage with the spirit of a gambler in his veins!

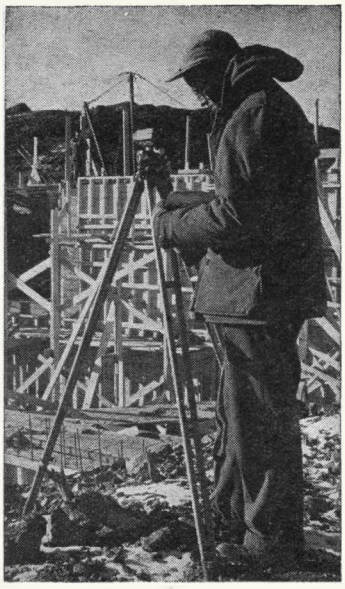
For more on Uranium City, address your questions to the Town Clerk.

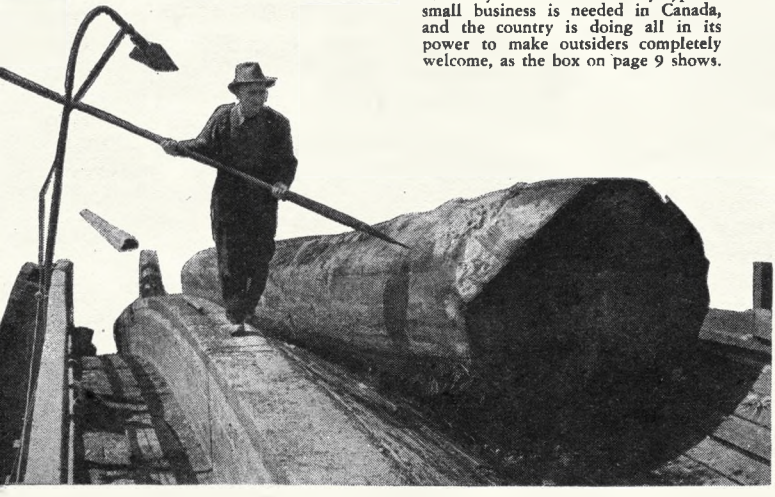
Want to live 28 miles this side of the Arctic Circle? Then try Port Radium, the most northerly mining



With the development of the airplane, Canada's opportunities for opening its vast natural resources, in a wilderness area formerly considered unexploitable, had arrived, and the result has been boom. Just a few of the roaring boom towns are shown on the map below, together with their products.







Not only workmen but every type of small business is needed in Canada, and the country is doing all in its power to make outsiders completely welcome, as the box on page 9 shows.

area in North America. This isn't a boom town with any big business prospects, but it does offer a unique opportunity to make a sizable nest-egg for investment somewhere farther south.

Port Radium is a company town (Eldorado Mining, Ltd.), under the control of the Atomic Energy Commission. The ore for the bomb dropped on Hiroshima was mined here. Today, it still is one of Canada's richest uranium developments. It is a compact operation, with a closely-knit community life. The permanent population is just three hundred. Because of the extreme weather conditions, there is a sizable turnover in personnel. According to the latest report available, the company is interested in hearing from miners, electricians, chemists and mill operators.

This is more than just a job. Port Radium workers *save* between $3,000 and $5,000 a year! The reason is a combination of high wages, plus a Government-subsidized living plan which brings the cost of room and board to about $2 per day.

Three flights a week from Edmonton keep Port Radium in fairly close contact with the outside world. Mail and newspapers come in regularly, along with fresh food, but conversation in the bunkhouses is more apt to be about last night's big poker game, or tomorrow's weather, than it is about the international situation. Certainly the weather bears watching. During winter months, temperatures tumble to a frigid 60 below; in the "summer" the mercury manages to fight its way to a brisk 40 above.

If this invigorating climate is attractive to you, send your application for employment to: Eldorado Mining and Refining, Ltd., P.O. Box 160, Edmonton, Alberta.

BEFORE leaving the sub-Arctic, a word about the historical background of the Port Radium operation. Credit for the original discovery goes to a courageous man named Gilbert Labine. The owner of a defunct gold mine, with a host of stockholders screaming for action, he promised in desperation to find a new mine for the company. In 1929, he set out personally to do exactly that.

Labine flew north to Great Bear Lake, and spent the summer prospecting the region. When his bush pilot returned in the fall, Labine pulled a sled filled with supplies and equipment across the frozen northlands as he searched anxiously, all winter, for some sign of mineral wealth. None had appeared by the time his pilot returned in the spring, and he had completely given up hope. At the last moment, as the tiny plane rose from Great Bear Lake for the return trip, however, Labine's luck changed. Suddenly he spotted an island of rust-colored rocks. That was the clue! Rust meant ore deposits. He noted the location on a map, and decided to return the following year. When he did, he found the first source of pitchblende in the New World.

Labine was a hero, and his stockholders smiled—at least for awhile.

From the ore Labine discovered, enough radium was extracted to drive the world price of the precious mineral down from $70,000 to $25,000 a gram. But the process proved too costly, and by 1940 the mine at Port Radium was closed. A radio-active substance called uranium was also known to exist in the ore, but the world wasn't quite ready for that.

Then came World War II, and the remainder of the story is in the history books. The Manhattan Project brought a secret demand for all the pitchblende available. A security cover was thrown around the Great Bear region, the Canadian Government took over the mine and, one day, we had our first A-bomb.

Today Port Radium is still the last mining outpost. Prospecting continues to the south; and the future

will see many new fields brought in. The task has been made immeasurably easier by the Spartan courage of such men as Gilbert Labine, and the prospectors, geologists and engineers who followed in his footsteps.

EDMONTON, Alberta, once the sedate capital of the province, today is the scene of a wild and fantastic adventure in oil. It is the kingpin of a boom that began in 1947, when Imperial brought in its first well, at Leduc.

What was once peaceful farm country now has become, as a result, a three-ring circus. You find oil wells in the middle of wheat fields, and folks who formerly drank tea are turning to a new concoction called "Calgary Red-Eye," a beverage containing four parts of beer to one of tomato juice.

Typical of the times is a story currently making the rounds. It tells of a poor, miserable soul who suffered all his life without reward. Only after death did his luck improve. When they dug his grave they struck oil.

All the talk in Edmonton is about oil, that black gold which now flows at the rate of 10 million barrels a month through a giant pipe-line network to the Great Lakes. And still the drilling goes on at better than three wells a day. Men continue literally to become millionaires overnight, although few approach the fantastic success of Eric Harvie.

Back in 1943, Harvie, a Calgary lawyer, took a flyer on some land speculation. When Imperial brought in the Leduc well, Harvie found to his extreme delight that he held leases smack in the middle of the field. He formed Western Leaseholds, Ltd., and started in the oil business for himself. Almost every well paid off. He has made $10,000,000 in the last five years, as royalties piled up at a $10,000-a-day rate.

Edmonton, a free-thinking, open-minded place, is the hub of this great empire. Expansion is so rapid that the city keeps struggling desperately to catch up with it.

The local branch of the Imperial Bank of Canada is still housed in a Quonset hut! Here, in a town of 170,000, there are only three liquor stores, six department stores, and just a single newspaper.

A recent official survey estimates Edmonton's 1961 population at better than 210,000.

I asked Don McKay, Executive Secretary of the local Chamber of Commerce, about Edmonton's prospects for the future. He takes a bright, optimistic view. "Folks are coming here at the rate of 10,000 a year, and we expect it to continue that way for quite some time!" A man with ambition and imagination couldn't ask for a better spot.

There also is a brand-new chemical industry opening up in Edmonton. Canadian Chemical Co. is building a $55,000,000 plant to produce chemicals from the liquefied propane and butane gases found in Alberta's oil fields.

This means jobs for 700 people; but, more important than that, it opens a whole industrial complex. The chemicals produced by this new company will put many secondary firms in operation. Anyone interested in producing pharmaceuticals, paints, plastics or agricultural chemicals should give Edmonton, Alberta, his serious consideration.

If you've a yen for the oil business, these are the rules and regulations to follow: An oil company can rent up to two 100,000-acre tracts of land from the Government of Alberta. The fee is $250, plus a deposit of $2,500 for each 20,000 acres. The company has three years in which to locate oil. If none is found, the property must be given up. If the venture is successful, the province gets a 13-per-cent royalty on all oil, plus the right to resell half of the original 100,000-acre tract, the half most distant from the strike. Such properties are auctioned off, and, in the past, the province of Alberta has netted as much as $35,000,000 a year from such sales.

Although Edmonton is growing by leaps and bounds, it is not a *new* city, in the sense of Uranium City or Knob Lake. With 247 restaurants, 56 hotels, 195 barber shops, 82 clothing stores, etc., the situation calls for careful analysis before taking any plunge. The best approach would be to discuss your interests with the Chamber of Commerce. Write that organization at the McLeod Bldg., Edmonton, Alberta.

NOW we turn to the Canadian west coast, where the situation might be put in these words: "The Boom Is Better in British Columbia!" Here you really feel the quickened tempo of life along expanding frontiers. Nature has kissed British Columbia twice: natural resources (huge forests and limitless waterpower), plus a mild climate (warm, off-shore Japanese Current). The region stands like a newly awakened Paul Bunyan, rising after centuries of sleep to perform miracles in an age of miracles. The old and the new confronting each other perhaps is best personified by a little old lady who recently went on a binge in Victoria.

After a killing on a stock deal, she made her way downtown to celebrate at Paul Arsens' "pay-what-you-please" restaurant. She managed to down soup, shrimp cocktail, crab salad, vegetable salad, half-a-dozen fried oysters, a sundae and a piece of pie—all washed down with two cups of coffee. On the way out she put down 50¢ at the cashier's counter for the $4.50 meal. When Mr. Arsens questioned her judgment, she glared at him with annoyance. "Young man," she said, "I never pay more than 50¢ for *any* meal!" And out she marched, with her head held high.

The little old lady is an exception to the rule. Most folks in British Columbia think big. The setting, the opportunities, are so gigantic that you can't help yourself.

THE big show of the province of British Columbia—and what a production it is—is at Kitimat. "Round here lately," one of the local townsmen said recently, "folks are jumpin' like fleas on a dog." And for good reason. The greatest aluminum plant in the world is being carved out of the wilderness. Mountains are coming down. Tunnels are being blasted through rock. Bulldozers are chopping roads through forests, and dams are being poured against lakes. It's all to harness the power of the rivers and to create cheap electricity. The cost: $195,000,000, with another $400,000,000 scheduled to follow.

Right now the population of Kitimat is about 7,000. It will top 50,000 in the next half-dozen years.

Here again opportunity is as wide as the horizon. Whether you're interested in opening a garage, theater, hotel, restaurant or department store, there's room for you in Kitimat. You name it. . . . Kitimat needs it! How about a newspaper or a chain of cleaning stores? A real-estate office or a home-furnishings store? Kitimat is the place. This is the greatest, the fastest-expanding, boom town, with a capital B, in the entire country. It is second to none.

The whole fabulous business started as the dream of Ray E. Powell, president of the Aluminum Company of Canada, who hailed originally from a small town in Illinois. He started at the bottom of the aluminum industry, peddling pots during college days. Today this youthful, white-haired tycoon is Canada's foremost industrialist. The world needed aluminum, and Ray Powell took the gamble.

By 1954, actual aluminum production starts at Kitimat, and the project literally staggers the imagination. Fifty miles from the smelter at Kitimat, a great hydro plant, set into a cavern blasted from solid rock, will generate the inexpensive electricity needed to turn the wheels of this industry. (Ultimately power will cost one-third the price now paid in the United States. Since ten kilowatt-hours of electricity is required to produce a single pound of aluminum, a reduction plant can profitably be lo-

cated in the most remote corner of the earth, if the power there is cheap enough.)

Once production gets underway, a group of smaller firms, utilizing both power and aluminum, will be attracted to the scene, and the future is so bright here it's almost blinding. If it's gotten into your eyes, too, we suggest writing the Chamber of Commerce, Kitimat, British Columbia.

PERHAPS the most heartening way to close this survey of boom towns is with the story of how one sleepy village climbed on the bandwagon after an exasperating series of disappointments.

This is a unique and colorful chapter in modern Canadian history, and one which proves once again that prosperity *is* just around the corner—if you know around which corner to look.

Though one of the finest deep-water ports in all of North America, Prince Rupert, British Columbia, had remained an unwanted town. Lost in the remote wilds of the region, it was left to brood in the shadow of the mountains, on the doorstep of the Pacific, awaiting a destiny it could not foresee.

During the last century, they called this hamlet of tents and plank roads "the city under a curse." Then in the '80s, rumors seeped into Prince Rupert from the East. The town, they said, finally would be linked by rail to the remainder of the country. Some said Prince Rupert might even be the terminus of the line. The town turned from its daily routine of fishing, and looked eagerly toward the mountains. But the waiting was in vain. The highway of steel went to Vancouver instead and the good people of Prince Rupert again gave their undivided attention to catching halibut.

Then, in 1910, for a second time, the town came to life. And again for the same reason. Railroad talk. The sleepy town trembled with anticipation as the second transcontinental railroad headed west. Prosperity was about to turn the proverbial corner.

One small business block sold that year, for $68,000. Plans were afoot for the building of a fashionable hotel, to accommodate passengers who would surely come to await the great liners taking them on trips to the Far East.

Finally the railroad pushed through the mountains, and, with its arrival, the bubble burst. The line's promoter went down with the *Titanic,* and the company went down in bankruptcy. As the railroad became a ribbon of rust, Prince Rupert dropped back into obscurity. The predictions of impending good times had to wait forty years more.

In the decades which intervened, the only visitors to Prince Rupert were tourists from the Alaska cruise ships, who ventured ashore for an hour or two to gaze at the town's famed collection of totem poles. Then came World War II, and the virtues of Prince Rupert were "discovered" for a third time. The credit goes this time to the U.S. Army.

One foggy day in 1942, the Army transport *David W. Branch,* en route from Seattle to Alaska, ran aground at nearby Hammer Island. In an attempt to avoid enemy submarines, the ship had hugged the Canadian shore too closely. But there were no casualties, and the troops soon were ferried ashore to Prince Rupert. Only then did the potentials of this deep-sea harbor, with its standard-gauge, little-used railroad, become apparent to the Army officers.

Almost overnight, the town was activated. The place suddenly went mad.

Dock facilities were increased, ultra-modern loading gear added, and 400,000 square feet of new warehousing space was built. Barracks for 3,500 port personnel were constructed, as well as administration buildings and new railroad yards. Tunnels were opened in nearby mountains, to stockpile bombs and shells for the Aleutians and the Orient. Army Engineers built a staging area through which 73,000 troops passed. Then the Canadian Army moved in to set up a huge air-defense system. And, finally, the Royal Canadian Air Force added a large seaplane base.

The population shot up from 6,000 to 20,000. In three years 3,000 ships used the harbor. Then one day the war was over. The clamor subsided. The Army moved out bag-and-baggage, and once again the town returned to the plentiful halibut grounds offshore.

AND SO Prince Rupert might have remained, sleeping and fishing, but for the gamble taken by an American company named Celanese, which manufactures synthetic yarn.

Celanese found the right combination at Prince Rupert of power, transportation and timber for the production of cellulose. After extensive negotiations, the firm was awarded the first forest management license in the province of British Columbia. This gave the company timber rights to a two-hundred-mile area, with a total acreage equal to that of Rhode Island. In return, Columbia Cellulose, the new Celanese subsidiary, agreed to plant a tree for every one it cut down. This would assure a never-ending supply.

By June, 1951, a $32,000,000 plant stood glistening white in Prince Rupert, awaiting the first of the 225-foot wooden giants. For the first time in its history, the town had a major industry providing steady year-round employment, and with the happy prospect of continual expansion.

Today there are several thousand new faces in Prince Rupert, with more coming in every day, and the current population is close to 10,000. The oldtimers no longer lead a frugal existence; they can afford to indulge themselves in the finer things. They have more time and money to spend on recreation. Prince Rupert can support another motion-picture theater, bowling alleys, and a night club, as well as several more good restaurants.

The present building boom means an increased demand for home furnishings and hardware. Someone's going to come along and open a laundromat; there isn't one in Prince Rupert, yet.

There are any number of opportunities to attract the enterprising business man and, aside from wishing you good luck, we suggest you contact the local Chamber of Commerce for complete details on current needs.

WINDING up, it may have occurred to the reader that this is all very well, but that the areas described in this article all are those which have grown into boom towns because of large investments, by big capital, in basic industries, and that this hardly is an indication that the casual reader can go North and do likewise. But the fact remains that no industry, large or small, can operate without *people;* without people who need to be clothed, and fed, and have their teeth, their shoes, their eyes and their innards fixed; who need to be entertained, to bring up families, to buy automobiles, and a thousand and one other commodities.

And the evidence exists that many a fortune has grown from a very small beginning. Take the case of Leon and Walter Koerner:

The Koerners fled to Canada from their native Czechoslovakia in 1939, and made their way to British Columbia. There they made a down payment of one thousand dollars on an idle mill. Using ancient European drying methods, they proceeded to turn hemlock into "Alaskan pine," and they marketed it successfully. Today, they own six major wood operations, two cellulose plants, and a shingle mill.

Still think it can't be done?

If you do, then you don't belong in the Canada of today. For the Canada of 1953 is looking for pioneers, for adventurers, for the sons of the '49ers. If that's you, what are you waiting for? •

Mystery novels, the baron said, are stupid, just fairy tales for grown-ups. Consider instead the way a really clever killer does it, in real life . . .

Weapon, Motive, Method-

By ROBERT ARTHUR

MY FRIEND, BARON DE HIRSCH, closed the detective novel he had been reading. He criticized it by throwing it into the fireplace, where it burned with a pleasant flame.

"Fortunately it is a reprint and I paid only twenty-five cents for it," de Hirsch remarked. He is a Hungarian and the most civilized man of my acquaintance. His favorite epigram is, "Always remember, there is a little good in the best of us and a little bad in the worst of us."

"Clues!" de Hirsch said, rolling his eyes. "A drop of blood from an East Indian krait, a lead bullet fired during the Civil War, and the thumbprint of a man dead fourteen years! Crime, a man murdered within a locked room in a locked house guarded by a pla-

Illustration by DON NEISER

toon of police. Motive—but I did not read to the end to discover either the motive or the method of committing the crime. I fear they would have left me skeptical."

"I can tell you both," I offered. You see, I had written the book he tossed into the fire.

"Spare me," he said, his manner kindly. "Fairy tales for grown-ups! Yours is a worthy profession and you do but little harm, which can be said of few men. Weapons—motives—methods! Preoccupation with these trifles keeps millions of women from deceiving their husbands, by taking up time that would be otherwise occupied, and takes the place of alcohol in blinding many worthy citizens to the truth about life around them. Believe me, my friend, when human beings murder each other—and the practice is a common one—their weapons, motives and methods, of which you mystery-mongers make so much—pardon the unintentional alliteration—are far removed from your fictional creations."

"It is true that most murders in real life are crudely committed and lacking in drama," I retorted. "However—"

"That is not necessarily what I was going to say." De Hirsch's great, beaked nose flared with inner laughter; his deep black eyes glinted. "I was planning to remark that real-life murders are either far cruder than anything you detective writers would ever dare give your public, or far more subtle. Believe me, in fifty years of knocking around the world I have encountered murders and murderers—or murderesses—"

He paused, lost in some inner reverie for a moment.

"Yes, merely to illustrate my contention I shall tell you of a weapon, a motive and a method of murder as they actually happened. Do not look so eager; the story will not be usable as fiction. Just pour me another brandy and pretend to listen. It is only midnight and I never go to bed before two."

I poured him another brandy. De Hirsch leaned back comfortably in my best easy chair, twirled the brandy glass, and began:

This narration (he said) is the story of a woman. She is a clever woman, she is beautiful, and she is without scruples. I think that if you study history you will find no record of a clever, beautiful woman who did have scruples. I do not go so far as to say no woman has scruples, which of course includes morals, but I do say that such women never make any impression on history. I except Joan of Arc—but then, she did not achieve greatness in a purely woman's rôle.

This woman, however, is at the moment actively making an impression on history. You would recognize her name instantly if I uttered it. I shall not do so. I will call her only Lucy. It is a sufficiently commonplace name behind which to conceal a most unusual woman.

Lucy was born in the slums. Very young she learned—among other things—to read. Her favorite reading was cheap magazines thrown out in the trash by neighbors. Most of the stories in these magazines were Cinderella stories, in which a poor girl married a rich man.

At 14, Lucy tried writing one of these stories, expressing in it her own daydreams. At 16, one of her efforts, crude though it was, struck the attention of a young assistant editor on a confession magazine. He invited Lucy to come in to talk over the story.

At 17, Lucy married the editor, and he taught her to write salable stories. She remained married to him for five years, and wrote a good many stories. I may add that during the last three years he kept her locked in most of the time. Then, as he was obviously never going to be anything but an assistant editor, which is to say a nobody, she divorced him and married the publisher, whom she had met at an office Christmas party.

The publisher was fifteen years older than Lucy, and, though well off, as publishers often are, was dull, as publishers often are. He was not, however, watchful enough to lock Lucy in, so she remained married to him until she was 28. Then, having acquired a high polish, a good education and a lot of ambitions, Lucy divorced the publisher to marry a young Congressman who had visited in their home on several weekends.

He was a very nice fellow, this Congressman, and once again you would recognize his name if I mentioned it. Let me merely call him Tom Johnson. It is a good, average, decent name. It exactly fits him, for Tom was a good, average, decent man.

He was six feet tall, robust, with light curly hair, a big smile, and a heart full of friendliness. One couldn't help liking him. His personality got him elected to Congress when he was only 34, and it kept him there. His method of campaigning was to visit every voter in his district and shake hands. This sufficed. He needed to make no brilliant speeches nor introduce any progressive legislation. Which was fortunate, for Tom was quite incapable of any original thinking whatever.

When Lucy married Tom, she saw in him the raw material to be molded into a public leader. She even looked ahead twenty years and saw him—and herself too, naturally—in the White House. Tom had every quality necessary. He was likable, he never made enemies, never took an extreme position, had a very good speaking voice, a good appearance, and in short seemed an ideal choice for an ambitious woman who could supply the brains he lacked.

There was only one thing she did not take into consideration. This was a natural error since, lacking scruples of any kind herself, it never occurred to her someone else might be handicapped by enough scruples for two. Tom, however, proved decent to the point of folly. (That sentence alone would provide a moralist material for a full-length book upon our social system.)

When the chance came for Tom to run for the United States Senate, the aged incumbent in the office, who had done Tom many favors, asked Tom to wait so that he, the incumbent, could serve one last term. Tom, to Lucy's fury, withdrew from the senatorial race. The old senator won, died in two years—and an unfriendly Governor appointed someone else to the vacant seat.

The example could be multiplied, but it is typical. Tom refused to take advantage of a friend to further himself—and everyone was his friend. When he was 47, Lucy, then 37 herself, knew that Tom never would be President. And she knew also that, having made as many enemies as Tom had made friends, only by being the President's lady could she ever hope to drink the heady wine of complete triumph over them all.

In addition she was no doubt bored with Tom. This, however, was a secondary consideration.

Lucy came to no sudden decision. But, in the end, she realized she must cut herself adrift from this man she had thought would be an eagle, but who had turned out to be only a robin. For a genuine eagle had come along. And his name—again I must conceal his true identity—I shall call Ferdinand Relling.

In every other way Relling was Tom's opposite. Day and night—the comparison is a trite one, but accurate.

Ferdinand Relling was the Lieutenant-governor of a neighboring State. He was 42 and had been in politics less than ten years. Studying him, Lucy saw the man Tom should have been. Relling was unmarried and he needed precisely the qualities she could supply. For Relling, like Lucy, had come from poverty, and he still lacked polish. He had dynamic energy and a compelling personality, but it was not yet harnessed and directed as it should have been. Lucy and he

thought alike. They would work in harness like, shall we say, a finely-trained dance team. And Ferdinand Relling, with Lucy's assistance to keep him from falling into the obvious errors of a man of his background, could and would become President.

Lucy determined that she must marry him. That he would not be unwilling she already had sufficient proof.

Thus far the problem is a simple one. Now enter the complications caused by that puzzling paradox, the Great American Public.

Lucy could not simply divorce Tom and marry Relling. That act might, at the very end, undo all her efforts. In the moment of triumph, the fact that Ferdinand Relling had married a three-times-divorced woman might tip the balance against him. Such is your public, which will nod while a high official steals millions, but will tear him to bits if he steals another man's wife.

Divorce, then, was not the solution. But marriage, after all, is solemnized only until death parts the one from the other. A widow is entirely respectable, where a divorcée is not. (At least the widow is if she comes by her widowhood in a sufficiently conventional manner.)

We thus come, my friend, to a motive for murder—the simple desire to be a widow. Lucy harbored no especially animosity toward Tom. She felt, in fact, scarcely any emotion toward him at all. But she did *have* to become a widow. And it is an incontrovertible fact that for a woman to become a widow a man must die. Thus we have our motive—to this we must now add the weapon and the method.

Under other circumstances, these could perhaps be managed without too much difficulty. There is always the sad accident—a running motor in a closed garage, too many sleeping-pills, a hunting rifle that discharges itself while being cleaned.

BUT we are not dealing with an ordinary murder. The lady who is planning to dispose of her husband may look forward to the most intense publicity a woman could receive. The faintest hint of a mystery or scandal in her background will be seized upon and magnified into mountainous proportions. Already Lucy had enough such handicaps—a husband who died under even the most slightly-mysterious circumstances could well prove fatal to all her ambitions.

But Lucy was not discouraged. She considered closely the character of her husband. He was a very masculine man, somewhat boyish, with all the vanities and humilities of a decent, non-intellectual male. He exulted, he became angry, he hoped, he feared. He was, in short, a man.

And Lucy knew men. Her career was founded upon her positive knowledge.

A few days before Tom's 48th birthday she observed him solicitously one evening and remarked that he looked tired. Tom Johnson denied this, but she persisted.

Presently he admitted that perhaps he could use a little vacation. Congress was in session, but Lucy suggested that he take a week off. They could fly back to his home State and spend the week at the lodge they owned in the hills, about an hour's drive from their home in the State capital. And, she added, Tom could enjoy the opening of the trout season, which coincided with his birthday.

The thought of the opening of the fishing season persuaded Tom. He agreed, provided she would let him drive in to the State capital to his office there every day for a few hours.

THE first days of vacation passed pleasantly. Every morning Tom kissed Lucy heartily and drove down the mountain road to his office in town. It was a winding road, with two very bad curves at the top of vertical cliffs, but Tom was a superb driver. He enjoyed driving fast to demonstrate his absolute control of the machine which carried him. He took the curves at the maximum possible speed, but not a millimeter more, and in all his life he had not so much as scratched a fender.

The morning of his birthday he rose early and donned his fishing clothes. He got out his flies and gear, on which he had put several evenings of loving care, and having kissed his wife, he went out to pit two hundreds pounds of human brain and brawn against a few ounces of piscine equivalent. He was gone all day, returning at dusk with a full creel of trout, several of which weighed fully two pounds. He was tired, but happy.

He found a birthday dinner ready for him. Fine china, polished silver, gleamed on an imported damask cloth by the light of tapering candles. Everything had been prepared except the entrée which was, of course, to be fresh-caught brook trout. He cleaned his catch, and while he bathed, they broiled to a delicious golden brown. When he emerged, still weary but refreshed, dinner was ready.

They sat down to eat, he in slacks and jersey, Lucy in an enticing hostess gown cut unusually low.

She had taken pains to provide the proper wines and brandies. By the time dinner was over Tom was unusually replete, unusually happy—and unusually sleepy.

Lucy lit the fire in the fireplace. Tom stretched out in an easy chair and stared with blinking eyes at the leaping flames. She came over and perched on the arm of his chair.

"Happy birthday, darling," she whispered. "May we celebrate fifty more of them together."

And she slipped a tissue-wrapped package into his hand. He opened it. It was a watch, the finest art of the Swiss craftsmen, telling not only the time of day, but the day of the month for fifty years to come.

"This will mark them for us," she said. "Like it, darling?"

Tom admired the watch. He wound it. He held it to his ear. Then he put it down and yawned.

"Guess I'm a little tired," he said, half apologetically.

Lucy did not seem to hear. She slid into his lap and put her arms about his neck. Her perfume came to him, delicate but heady. Beneath the fine fabric of the hostess gown it was apparent now that she wore precisely nothing.

"Tom," she whispered, "do you love me as much as I love you?"

"A thousand times more," Tom murmured, with unconscious truth. In his arms she was very warm and desirable and very inviting. Her head thrown back against a shoulder, her eyes watched him, heavy-lidded, her lips, warm and red and moist, half parted. And what is more exciting than a wife playing the wanton? Desire stirred in Tom Johnson's blood like an embered-fire seeking to become a flame—

AND now, my friend, occurred in him a conflict such as I dare say you have seen described by no modern author. If you go back to Petronius, perhaps—but who these days writes about any men save those who are completely immune to the effects of fatigue, or wine, or age? Nevertheless, men are still but men. And Tom Johnson was dog-weary from a day of whipping the trout streams. Weariness sat upon him like a weight which suppressed all other feelings.

He responded to the invitation by kissing Lucy—and then he yawned. Playfully she pushed him away.

"Go to bed, sleepy," she smiled. "See what too much fresh air does to you?"

"Guess I am a little tired, at that," Tom muttered, regretfully. "Some other time, though—" He kissed her again, and again he yawned. And yawning, he went to bed. He fell immediately into a profound slumber. Lucy, however, remained awake for many hours, curled up catlike before the fire, staring into the flames and seeing there pictures whose nature no man can guess.

In the morning, Tom arose refreshed. There were twinges in his legs and back, however, to remind him of a dozen hours along the trout streams the day before.

He dressed and found breakfast waiting for him. Lucy served him, charmingly affectionate, and brought him his hat when he had finished. Before leaving to go down the mountainside to town, Tom put an arm around her and grinned without self-consciousness.

"Sorry about last night, old girl," he chuckled. "You were beautiful—but a full day's fishing just caught up with me, I guess. Couldn't keep my eyes open."

LUCY, who had been about to speak first, caught her breath.

"I understand, Tom," she said sweetly. "It's perfectly all right. After all, you're not a young man any more. You're 48."

"What's that got to do with it?" Some of the good nature left Tom's voice. "An all-day fishing binge would tire practically anybody."

"Of course it would, Tom," Lucy answered. "And I shouldn't have let you overdo it that way. After a man reaches middle age, he has to take care of himself."

"For Pete's sake!" Tom scowled a little. "I'm not middle-aged because I'm 48. Never felt better in my life."

"Of *course,* darling," Lucy's tone was firm. "Just the same, the doctors say a man reaches middle age when he passes 40. And he can't expect to —well, do the things he did when he was younger. A woman understands that, and he doesn't need to feel guilty or ashamed."

"What the dickens are you talking about?" Tom exploded. "I didn't know I had anything to feel guilty about!"

"You don't, darling," Lucy said patiently. "That's what I'm saying. I understand. About last night and everything."

"What do you mean 'everything'?" Tom demanded angrily. "If you're saying that I'm not still as good a man as I ever—"

"Sssh." Lucy put her finger to his lips. "I'm not saying anything except that I love you very much, and I understand perfectly, and you mustn't give it another thought. Now we won't say another word about it. You'll be late for that appointment with the Governor."

Tom jammed on his hat and grabbed up his briefcase. He wanted to say something more, but he couldn't quite think what. He stalked out the door toward the garage. Lucy followed a few steps.

"Oh, Tom," she called then. "Just one more thing."

"Well?" he growled, turning.

"Please, darling, don't drive quite so fast down the road," she said, very graciously. "I've been worried about how fast you take those turns. Remember, when you reach middle age your reactions do slow down a little and—"

He cut her off by turning on his heel and stalking into the garage. A moment later the powerful car backed out with an unaccustomed roar of the motor, the wheels spinning gravel. Tom Johnson swung the car around and stepped on the throttle, lunging out into the road down the mountainside.

There is, my friend, one point upon which a man, *any* man, is sensitive above all others. Impugn his honesty, his veracity or his honor, and in these degenerate days he may but laugh. But derogate his masculinity and immediately he is angry, humiliated, on the defensive.

What does a man do when he is furious at another man? He hits him. But when he is furious at a woman, and can neither answer her nor retaliate against her? He takes his fury out on something else. Sometimes, being unable to punish his wife, he punishes his car. He jams it into gear, starts too abruptly, stops too abruptly, steps on the throttle too hard.

Seething now with wounded pride and anger, Tom Johnson had no outlet for his emotions except the car he was driving. When you drive fast normally, you can obtain an emotional satisfaction only by driving even faster. He whipped the fine vehicle around the curves, taking a savage satisfaction in the scream of the tires as the car, perforce, did what he, its master, demanded of it.

So he was 48? What of it? What the devil did Lucy mean by suddenly reminding him of his age? He hadn't noted any previous dissatisfaction on her part. Just because one night of the year he happened to be bone-tired after spending a whole day—

Then his attention came back to his driving and he realized that he was going into that first deadly curve much too fast. He swung the wheel, stepped on the brakes savagely and the willing mechanical slave tried to obey. But it could not. The forces of momentum which Tom Johnson's hurt pride and anger had generated still held it, and they carried it with a rending crash through the flimsy guard rail and out into space beyond.

Tom Johnson lived for approximately five seconds more, and died without even dreaming that he had been murdered.

BARON DE HIRSCH held up his brandy glass. It was empty. It had been filled and emptied three times during his narration. Now I filled it again to the brim.

"Is that all?" I asked.

"All?" He looked at me pityingly. "You wish me to pretty the story up for you? Perhaps I should have Tom Johnson saved by a passing helicopter, or grasp a tree limb and cling to it in the best tradition of the cinema serials. Yes, my friend, that is all.

"I have given you a situation from real life. I have given you a murder method such as you have never seen used in fiction, and a weapon quite unique. For in this case the weapon was the victim himself. With a few words Lucy turned him into the creature of his own destruction, and thus committed a crime that the most critical could not dream had been committed."

"And did she marry this other politician, this Ferdinand Relling?"

"She did. He is now Governor of his State. She is the Governor's lady. In twelve years or so he will be President. Lest you are too worried, I may add that he will be a much better President than poor Tom ever could have been. He is a rascal, but by then he will have stolen enough so that he will feel able to reform. A reformed rascal, who seeks respectability, can often govern better than an honest man. You see, he knows what tricks to guard against."

DE HIRSCH tossed off his brandy and rose. He took up his hat, a flamboyant creation of black velvet.

"One more question," I said. "How do you know this story—so intimate, so impossible to guess at?"

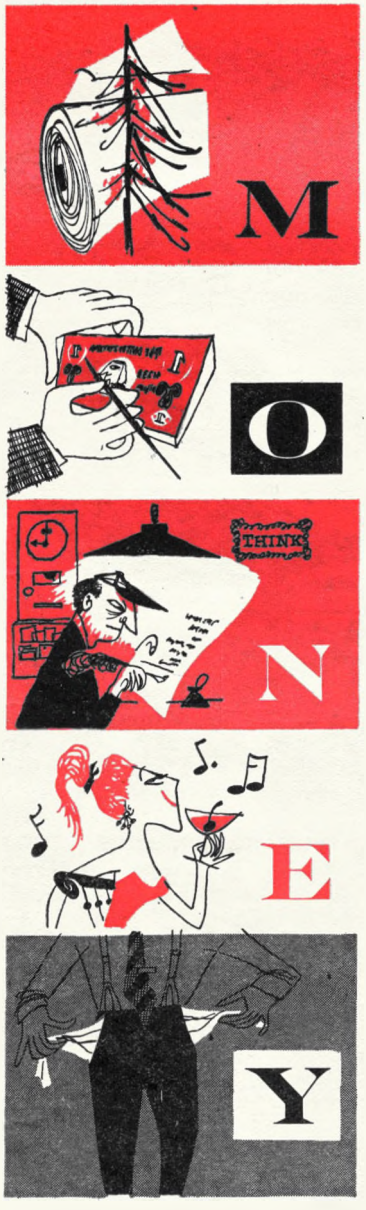
De Hirsch favored me with a glance as he lit a slender *cigarillo.*

"We all have our weaknesses," he remarked. "Did I not say the lady in her younger years was a writer? Once a writer, always a writer. Recently she wrote a novel under an assumed name. In it just such a situation occurred, though the scenes were somewhat changed.

"I am doing a bit of reading for an agent now, and he sent me the manuscript to report on. I am no fool, my friend. I deduced the source of the story. I sent the manuscript back to her with a note suggesting she burn it—that the situation was 'too unbelievable.'"

He paused at my door and fingered his mustache.

"She has written, asking me to have cocktails with her Sunday. I wonder—" His beaked nose flared with inner laughter. His deep black eyes gleamed. "I wonder if she will try to bribe me? Or to kill me? Whichever it is, I know it will be subtle. And subtlety is a trait in a woman that I have always admired." •



• JOHN T. DUNLAVY

It's nice to have,

and here are

a few things you

should know about it.

Cattle, sea shells, fish, knives, blankets, salt and even five-foot wheels of stone have been used as money at one time or another. In America pelts, tobacco, wheat, wool, corn, flax and musket balls have been considered legal tender. When the Continental Currency collapsed in 1780, giving rise to the phrase "Not worth a continental," whisky was used in many sections of the country for money.

Money in banks is highest on Mondays, lowest on Fridays. The total money supply in the U.S. is around 175 billion; however, the turnover is such that the Federal Reserve Bank estimated total dollar volume of checks written annually to be 1¾ trillion dollars a year.

The average life of paper money is as follows: Ones—6 months; Twos—11 months; Fives—13 months; Tens—18 months; Twenties—30 months. Worn-out paper money is burned under careful supervision by the Federal Reserve Banks and the U.S. Treasury. There is no Federal law against mutilation of money providing there is no attempt made to pass it afterward. There is no law prohibiting a person from totally destroying money which is his. Burned or mutilated bills are not worthless. If you have 3/5ths or more of a bill the Treasury will redeem it for full value; less than 3/5ths but more than 2/5ths for half value.

Pennies are legal tender only up to 25 cents and a creditor cannot be forced to accept more than 25 in payment of a debt. They are the most popular U.S. coin minted—some 2 billion of them annually. . . . More than 500 million silver coins are made yearly and 200 million nickels.

Gold and silver coins contain less gold or silver than the face value of the coin. An alloy is needed for wearability and also to prevent melting down the coins for the precious metal. For silver the alloy is copper; for gold both copper and silver. The silver dollar contains 371.25 grains of pure silver and 41.25 grains of alloy. The half dollar contains 173.61 grains of silver and 19.29 of alloy. The quarter contains 86.805 silver and 9.645 alloy; the dime 34.722 silver and 3.858 alloy. The nickel does not contain any silver. Both the nickel and the penny are mixtures of copper and other metals.

The "pieces of eight" of pirate song and story were large Spanish coins first minted in the 16th Century. The sign $ is believed to come from the figure 8 appearing on these coins. Spanish dollars of the 19th Century, divisible by eight and equaling approximately an American dollar, created the phrases "two bits, four bits" and so on.

Many persons believe they have let a fortune slip through their fingers by passing a 1913 Liberty Head nickel. Actually there were only 6 of these coins minted and all six are in private collections and worth many thousands of dollars each. Yet there are many clever fakes extant made by counterfeiters altering the dates on 1903 or 1910 nickels. . . . A coin swindle unintentionally encouraged by the U.S. Mint came about when the 1883 nickel was minted with the Roman numeral V but without the word "cents." The coin was quickly withdrawn when it was discovered that counterfeiters were giving these nickels a thin plating of gold and selling them for five-dollar gold pieces.

There have been a total of 3000 different coins minted in America since Colonial times. There is only one complete set of them in existence and it is in the hands of a private collector. The only American coin which cannot be honored for full face value at the Mint is the American Trade Dollar, minted in 1873 with low silver content to compete with Mexican dollars in trading with China.

Engraving on American currency is considered the world's finest and specimens of the work of the U.S. Bureau of Engraving have won highest prizes at all world's fairs and exhibitions since 1872. American currency is printed on the best paper made. It is against the law to manufacture, without Government permission, paper of the same specifications as currency. . . . Rubbing a bill against a piece of blotting paper will not prove whether or not it is counterfeit, as many believe, because ink rubs off good bills as well as bad. The best test of a suspected counterfeit bill is to fold the bill in half and compare it with a similarly folded bill known to be genuine.

Gold bricks are not just a figure of speech. A gold brick weighs about 27 pounds, contains 99.5 percent pure gold and is worth about $14,000. . . . The silver supply of the United States, amounting to 963 million fine ounces, is buried on the military reservation at West Point, N.Y. . . . The small letters on coins reveal the mint at which the coin was made, D for Denver and S for San Francisco. If there is no letter the coin was made at the Philadelphia mint.

Privately printed coins were accepted as legal tender during a coin shortage in America in the 1860's. Such coins contained advertising and political slogans and are believed to be the forerunner of the present-day campaign buttons. . . . One of the rarer of American colonial coins and one which inspired a story, novel and motion picture is the Brasher Doubloon, only a few copies of which still exist. The last time this 1787 gold coin was sold was in 1907 and it brought $6200. . . . Coins were originated by the Chinese who minted the first silver coins in 700 B.C. They also issued the first paper currency in the 13th Century when Kubla Khan had bills printed on mulberry paper, each larger than this page.

Despite the fact that there are only four coins involved there are 49 ways to make change from a half dollar. . . . There is no Federal law controlling usury. Legal interest rates are set by State laws and vary from a low of 5% to a high of 12% per year. . . . Coin collecting is called numismatics. There are about 400,000 coin collectors in the United States. . . . Nero is said to have been the world's first counterfeiter. . . . In an average year the Secret Service captures about $750,000 in phony money, almost all of it before it is passed. Largest haul in the Secret Service's 83-year history occurred in 1949 when over 3 million in bills and coin were seized and an international counterfeiting ring broken up.

BLOWDOWN

The sky was black with wind and rain. The Ferris wheel teetered, and canvas tore away, and we were in for a real blowdown.

By WILLIAM LINDSAY GRESHAM

A DUST DEVIL OF WIND was whirling along the midway, picking up shavings; when it got to where Gussie Laird was standing, it twisted her dirndl up around her waist. She let out a little screech and started frantically pulling at her skirt.

Jed Milks, who was a rope-spinner with my show, called out to her, "What you yelling for? You show more skin than that every time you get up on the bally platform."

Gussie walked over to where we were driving in long cedar stakes, the kind you use to guy a circus top. "It ain't that," she said. "There, it's show business."

Jed lifted his sledge and gave the top of the stake a lick with it. "Well, what d'ye know! She just ain't givin' away *nothing!*"

Irv Lesser, the knife-thrower, lowered his hammer. "You lay off Gussie, Milks."

"I ain't said nothing."

"I don't like your attitude. In fact, I don't like nothing about you except your act. You got a good rope act, but I don't like your attitude."

Milks dropped his sledge and his long, horse face got as blank as an unwritten letter. "Well now, ain't that just too bad! What you fixin' to do about it?"

Gussie had slipped around behind me and was picking at the sleeve of my shirt. "Mac, don't let 'em fight. Please don't let 'em."


Bob Fink

I shook her off and said, "Here, you roosters—you going to drive in these storm stakes or are you going to use up all your jism blacking each other's eyes? Now lay on them sledges. Do your arguing at the end of the season."

The two lads faced each other, silent and watchful for several seconds, and then both went back to work. Gussie was trembling. She was biting her lower lip and I could see that something was really eating the kid.

"Relax, Gussie," I told her out of the side of my mouth. "What are you scared of?"

"Gee, Mac—I'm silly. I know that. But somebody might get hurt."

NEITHER of the boys was a heavyweight and aside from cutting each other's faces I didn't figure they could do much damage. But I didn't try arguing with the girl—I saved my breath for stake-driving. I had a new top for my show that season and the weather report said a low-pressure area was moving in from the south west. Ordinarily you stake out a carnival top with short iron rods cut from old Ford axles and the way a carnival midway is laid out with everything crowded together the stakes are not more than a few feet from your sidewalls. I had special storm guys laced into the mid-sections of my new top and I'd brought along some big-circus stakes just in case. I had a feeling a blowdown there on the old fair grounds at Parkersburg would really flatten us.

Parkersburg lies in a valley and the fair grounds are up above the town on a flat-topped hill. It's fine for display—the folks can see the light towers and the Ferris wheels' fluorescents glowing for miles away. But if it really came up a heavy wind, there was no shelter anywhere.

We got the stake in and the guy rope snubbed on and then I turned to Gussie Laird. "Go take Annabelle out of her box and put her in the pit," I told her. "We might want to open early."

Annabelle was an eight-foot Indian rock python, very tame and easy to handle, that Gussie used working the bally. I didn't care about Annabelle, I just wanted to keep the girl busy and get her off the minds of my two temperamental stake-drivers.

She said, "Sure, Mac," and ducked inside the top.

Jed Milks watched her go. I said to Irv, "Bring a couple of spikes. We'll double-stake it at the corners."

He went over to the pile of iron stakes and started picking them up. Then he saw a couple of feet of old rope lying on the ground. He called out, "Watch it, Milks," and as Jed turned, Irv Lesser threw the rope at him.

I couldn't see the boy's arm move but his hand flew to his hip pocket and came out with a seven-inch switch-blade knife, grabbing it at the button. The blade snicked open and Jed slashed down with it, cutting the rope in two.

Then he stood there, looking at the pieces of rope on the ground, his face a sickly white.

"What the hell goes on, here?" I bellowed. "What's got you so touchy, Jed? What are you scared of?"

He let out his breath with a whistle. "I thought that little squirt had throwed a snake at me."

I glanced over to where Irv was dumping the iron spikes. Irv wasn't looking at them, he was watching the open blade in Jed's hand. And he was as white as a ghost himself.

Jed Milks pressed the button of his knife and the blade pivoted back into the handle. He put it away in his pocket and said to Irv, "Don't you ever throw nothing like that at me again. D'you hear?"

He turned then and set off down the midway with his loping walk, his elbows pressed close to his sides.

IRV LESSER was worried.

"Mac," he said seriously, "that guy is definitely a social menace. Nobody that quick with a switch-knife has any business hanging around with law-abiding people."

I thought I got more out of his tone than his words. "And he's making a play for Gussie. Is that it?"

Irv fished a pack of cigarettes out of the pocket of his work-shirt and handed me one. "Mac, the guy ain't real carny. He blows his top. Well, yeah, he does burn me, always making a play for the kid. Mac, that girl's got no business knocking around show business. She'll do anything a guy tells her to do, honest. Like the time she got fired out of the Posing Show, before she come with us. She'll fight like a wildcat if another girl starts picking on her. But she's got no resistance for guys. Look what happened then. Louis Cappozoli fires her out of the show and tells her to get off the midway. And she takes her stuff and is sitting by the entrance top, waiting for a lift into town and crying. She don't want to quit the carny, but Louis, he tells her to get off the lot so she gets off the lot. I tell her to come along with us, I can use a girl in the impalement act, and she comes. That girl should never have left the ranch or the hick town or wherever it is she comes from. She needs a mother or something."

I looked into his serious, dark-tanned face. Irv was a good kid but a little on the Boy Scout side. Babes like this Gussie are a dime a dozen around any midway and I didn't want to see Irv get torchy about her. Anyhow I just shook my head and kept my mouth shut. I wanted to keep both Irv and his knife act, and Jed and his ropes in the show because it was getting close to fair season and it's hard to book good acts late in the summer; if they're any good at all they're working by that time.

To change the subject I asked him, "What got the wind up your neck, kid, when Jed cut the rope with his toad stabber?"

He frowned deeper. "I got a phobia, Mac. Honest. It's about sharp knives. You notice—the throwing knives I use ain't sharp. They're just turned over four ways at the point so they'll stick good. That's how I come to do an impalement act in the first place. My pop, he has a hardware store. So he wants to work me into the business but I can't stand handling sharp knives. So what does he do but teach me to play mumblety-peg, thinking to get me over it. I got to be the neighborhood champ at mumblety-peg. Only I had the knife blades dulled with a file. After a while I got to sticking the knife in the wall or in a fence post and from there to throwing it come easy. But I never could get used to sharp knives. Just like this guy Milks is about snakes. It's an irrational phobia."

I took a look down the midway toward the southwest. There didn't seem to be any dark clouds in the sky but I still wasn't easy in my mind. "Let's not worry about phobias," I said. "Let's just get this top pegged as tight as we can. You can stay away from sharp knives, Jed can stay away from snakes and Gussie can stay away from men. That way I can stay away from red ink in the ledger at the end of the season."

WE opened before sundown, in case any of the townies decided to have an early dinner and the midway began to fill up. As long as there was a chance of pulling in a few shekels I got up on the platform and started my bally:

"Here it is, folks, MacKinnon's Museum of Marvels, the only show of its kind on the Grand Gaiety Monster Midway. Presenting for your entertainment—Señor Cuchillo, Master of Cold Steel!" Irv Lesser, in a big sombrero and a *charro* suit embroidered in silver, raced up the steps and began juggling three of his throwing knives. "The Mesquite Kid, virtuoso of the lariat!" Jed Milks, in a black silk shirt with big red flowers worked on it, gave a whoop and bounded up, spinning a slim maguey rope in a couple of butterfly loops, back and forth, over his head. "Madame Medusa, the little lady who exerts a strange power over the most deadly

Often, when I spotted a guy and gal standing close, I'd give Jed the office and he'd rope them together. It was good for a laugh and the couple seemed to enjoy wrassling. But this time the guy's face went black and I realized he was drunk and the gal was someone else's wife.

reptiles ever encountered on the face of the earth." This was Gussie in a pale blue playsuit with a big blue bow on a clip like a hair-ribbon to make her look like a small kid.

When Gussie walked up the steps Jed Milks edged away to the far end of the platform for she had Annabelle draped over her shoulders and along her arms. The sight of the snake really began to draw the crowd into a tip in front of our top and I began to beat it out:

"Now some of you folks may think that this line of banners you see above the platform misrepresent the acts you will see inside but let me assure you, ladies, gents and young people, that each and every act portrayed in those pictures is exactly as you will see it in just a few more minutes."

Gussie ducked back with Annabelle. Then when she was inside she peeled off the playsuit, shucked the hair ribbon and slipped on a half-mask covered with silver sequins. She was now wearing a Bikini-type bathing suit. She grabbed up a heart-shaped piece of wood the size of a saucer and skipped back up to the platform. I kept on bellowing into the mike:

"Here she is! And for this time only, we will give you a chance, absolutely free, to observe one of the most phenomenal daredevil acts in show business. Take it, Señor!"

Irv drew back one of his throwing-knives while Gussie held the red wooden heart over her own. The crowd pressed in a little closer and Irv stalled, seeming to be taking careful aim. Actually, Gussie was standing in a small circle painted on the platform and Irv had a painted stripe so that his distance was marked out for him and that's what counts in knife throwing.

When I felt that the pause had reached its peak, I yelled "Go!" Irv's arm came forward, the knife left his fingers and traveled end over end, striking point-first in the wooden heart with the impact of a baseball in a catcher's mitt. Gussie staggered back a little from the force of it and I took the knife and heart from her as Irv swept off his sombrero. Just then Jed whipped up his lariat and sent a loop dropping over Gussie. She made like she was trying to throw it off but Jed kept throwing half-hitches down the rope and they caught her hands and held her fast. Then Jed ran down the steps and back into our top, seeming to drag Gussie after him.

Irv waved his knives and dashed in, as if he were going to cut out Jed's gizzard and I began trying to turn the tip: "Hurry, hurry, hurry! You have three more minutes before the first act of the Museum of Marvels begins. And for this, our first performance in Parkersburg, I'm going to make a special concession. The price is not sixty-five cents as marked on the ticket box but for this performance only it will be twenty-five cents, one quarter of a dollar, for the first fifty people. Hurry, hurry, hurry!"

We got twenty-three, which was good for that size crowd and six bucks is six bucks. One guy forgot his change.

We worked on through the evening, sometimes giving three or four ballys before we had a big enough crowd inside to start the show. And on the last bally I thought we were really heading for trouble. What happened was this:

Sometimes when I spotted a fellow and a girl standing close together, holding hands maybe, I'd give Jed Milks the office and he would drop a

loop of his lariat over them, tying them together. This was always good for a laugh and the people who got roped never seemed to mind a bit, in fact they seemed to enjoy wrassling to get loose. But this time I saw a couple standing on the edge of the crowd with that look in their eyes and I signaled Jed and the loop sailed out, over the heads of the tip and settled around them.

The young fellow's face got as black as thunder and he started to cuss out Jed. The crowd was looking uneasy and a little scared. In a flash I realized two things: the townie Jed had roped was drunk. And the girl wasn't his sweetheart or his wife—she was someone else's wife.

I whispered to Gussie, who was ready for the knife-throwing part of the bally, "Get out there and con him, kid."

She pulled off the mask and hopped down; the crowd parted to let her through. I knew no man in the world could argue with Gussie in that Bikini outfit and I was right. But for some reason she didn't say a word. She just stood there, dumb. I could see Jed, coiling up his lariat as he came near the couple and then he flipped the loop off them. I noticed that he kept his right hand ready and close to his hip pocket. But the guy just gave Gussie the up-and-down a couple of times and then his girl grabbed him by the arm and dragged him away and down the midway. All this took place while I was grinding away into the mike.

Irv Lesser gave Gussie a hand and she jumped back up on the platform and we went on with the bally but I could feel my shirt plastered to my ribs with cold sweat. And I noticed that Gussie was looking sick, so sick I was afraid she was going to pass out, but she didn't.

I BEGAN putting two and two together about her and when she turned to take her bow I saw in the beam of our floodlights something I hadn't noticed before. Across Gussie's back and thighs there were many faint white threads of scars—somebody had worked over that girl with a buggy whip once and maybe a lot of times. Stepfather, maybe. It was none of my business but I began to understand her fear of men, especially when they were in a high temper. The kid had been beaten into obedience when she was small, most likely.

It had all happened so quick that the crowd hadn't got wise anything was sour and I managed to turn quite a few. The midway was thinning out and I decided to call it a day.

I was taking the dough from the ticket box over to the office wagon when I saw Jed Milks prowling across the lot. And as I was climbing up the steps of the office wagon, carrying the canvas bag of change, I saw Jed shift his course. A girl in a polka-dot dirndl was walking down toward the cookhouse and her walk had an unconscious wiggle in it. It was Gussie. Jed started after her. Then I saw Irv Lesser, who had got out of his *charro* suit and back into his denims, cut across between the Ferris wheels and get to her first. It was none of my business, long as they kept it quiet.

THE next day was a scorcher. It started off hot. When I got to our top I noticed that the new canvas and ropes had stretched some, so I went around taking up slack but not enough to strain the canvas.

The air was sultry and in the southwest there were dark clouds massed as if the sky was frowning at us.

I saw Annabelle slither out of the door and down the steps of the wagon behind our top and I figured she had worked her way out of her box but Gussie was right behind her and let her flow over her hands, then picked her up.

"Don't let Annabelle get a coil around you, kid," I said, coming up to them. "In weather like this she's kind of skittish. And don't forget—a snake has got no brains whatever."

The girl nodded and went on into our top to put Annabelle into the canvas pit where she stayed during the day. I went on down the back wall, snubbing the guy ropes up a little. Then from behind the canvas I heard Gussie's voice in a hoarse whisper:

"Please, don't! Please don't, Jed."

I stopped to listen. The girl was whimpering. Then her voice came again, "Please, Jed! Not any more. Somebody might see us—"

There was a growl that might have been Jed Milks' voice and then a sound that you couldn't mistake—the crack of a fist on a jaw or cheekbone.

Jed's voice muttered a couple of cuss words and then the girl gave a little scream, "No! No, please! Irv, don't—"

I wasn't figuring on mixing into anything but I thought I ought to see what made, anyhow. I side-walled my way under the canvas and stood up in time to see Irv Lesser duck neatly under Jed's right and smack the roper in the belly. Blood was running down Milks' chin from a cut lip and his hair was hanging in his eyes. He was taller than Irv and heavier but I saw the little knife-thrower could take care of himself all right; he was a boxer. Milks was just a fighter and he was taking a lacing.

Gussie was backed up against the side of Annabelle's pit and she looked sort of crumpled. Her lipstick was smeared and the top button was gone from her blouse. She was biting the fleshy part of her thumb and looking terrified.

The two kids fought without a word. Irv cut another gash in Milks' face, over his eye, but didn't seem to have steam enough to knock him out. Once Jed did connect with Irv and the knife artist went sprawling, but was up again like a cat. He lashed Jed Milks' face again and Jed wiped his forearm over his eyes. When he saw the blood on the sleeve of his shirt he let out a growl and crouched. He seemed to go all animal. His hand dropped to his hip pocket and then he had the switch-knife out and was stepping in toward Irv, planting his feet slow and careful, the knife held close in to his right hip.

Gussie let out a real yell this time and Irv backed up.

He said thickly, "Drop that thing, Milks. We aren't trying to kill each other."

The roper kept on coming.

Irv Lesser turned around and ran. The sensible thing for him to do would be to run clear off the lot and let me or anybody else calm down that crazy kid Milks. But the girl was watching and when he got to the canvas pit Irv put on his brakes. He slid around behind it and then reached over into it.

In the pit Annabelle had been whipping around, restless, and stretching herself up the canvas as far as she could reach. With a swoop Irv grabbed her and lifted her out.

This time it was Jed who put on the brakes.

I FIGURED it was time to step in. Annabelle was worth fifteen dollars a foot and I didn't want her carved up. But I didn't get a chance to step between them. Milks turned and started in the other direction. He saw me and I could tell by the look in his eyes that he wasn't calculating. He was clean out of his head. He seemed to think that I was trying to stop him and he made a swipe at me with the switch-blade.

Now one of the mistakes a few fellows have made is to think that because I weigh a little over two hundred that I'm slow. You can't be a real wrestler and be slow; and that was how I got into the carny—through a wrestling show. I figured this crazy kid would make a swipe at my belly and I jumped back just in time. As his knife hand swept past me I latched on to the wrist. I twisted him around and up over my shoulder until I had his feet off the ground.

I didn't try to make him drop the switch but I started talking to him, trying to turn his brains back on. After a while I felt him go loose and

he dropped the knife and I let him go and picked it up.

I heard the girl's voice scream again and when I looked her way I saw that Irv was in trouble. He was down on his knees and his face was purple; Annabelle had thrown two coils around his neck and his chest and was tightening them up every time he breathed out.

I folded the switch-blade knife and handed it to Gussie; then I took Annabelle by the head and started to unwind her. She was frightened and hung on. Ordinarily she was tame enough but getting snatched up quick had put her in a panic; you can't treat pythons that way. "Grab her tail, kid," I told Gussie. We had quite a wrassle with Irv helping before we got her stretched out and eased into the pit. Irv wasn't hurt, just winded. He was sitting, shaking his head, when Gussie dropped to her knees beside him and slipped her arm around his shoulders.

Jed Milks had vanished.

It was the first chance I had to catch my breath. I began figuring who I could sign on by wire to take Jed's place after firing him—when I heard the sound of wind. It was whistling over our top, bellying in the side wall.

At that moment Jed stuck his head in and shouted, "Hey, Mac, she's blowing up." The boy's senses had come back to him and he didn't even sound excited.

I sprinted out front. The sky was black; the air was full of shavings and dust streamed past us. I stood and watched it come. Somebody took the knife from Gussie's hand beside me. It was Irv; he bolted for the line that held the banners. He didn't bother to untie it, he cut it and the banners dropped and began whipping wildly.

"Hold 'em and hang on!" he yelled. The girl caught one of them and then Irv pulled the line loose from its pole and the two of them fought the banner line, dragging it inside the top.

Looking down the midway I saw the forty-foot entrance front of steel pipe and canvas rocking back and forth. The wind seemed to be blowing from all directions at once. Across the midway from us the Ferris wheels were rocking, ripping loose from their guys with the iron stakes pulling out of the ground.

The canvas top of some small joint came sailing up the midway and caught itself on the corner of our bally platform, flapping with a noise like a whip cracking. Then the wind shifted again and it tore loose and flew off, up over our top and away. It was black as night directly overhead and you couldn't hear your own voice over the howl of the wind. Behind me I could feel my own top bucking and straining at its guys. I didn't even turn to look at it. I just stood there beside the platform and watched the light towers go down, one of them knifing through the carousel top. People were fighting the wind, some of them trying to hang on to the tops of their joints, some crawling under the wagons which were drawn up in the center of the midway.

The Ferris wheel across from us teetered back and then the wind tore at it and slanted it over toward us. Still I didn't move. Then I saw Jed Milks. He had hauled out one of the heavy lines they use to warp the wagons up the ramps and on to the train and was trying to throw an end of it through the Ferris-wheel frame. The wind slammed it back at him. He twisted a knot into the end of the rope for weight, and when the wind shifted again, he sent it up and over, catching it and dragging it back where he drew it through the bull ring on one side of the wagon. I could see what he had in mind—if the wheel went over the wagon might act as a drag and turn it down the midway, keeping it from smashing us.

The wind leaped up howling and I could make out through the darkness the aluminum front of the girl show pivoting out across the midway on the other side with a big red-haired roustabout, the husband of one of the strippers with the show, hanging on to it.

The Ferris wheel down toward the entrance slanted and then crashed in a tangle of steel bars.

Milks was still out there. He had thrown another heavy line and was trying to pull it through the wheel's frame when I saw the thing starting to go. It rocked, rocked again and with one of the iron stakes whipping out of the ground it tilted our way, paused in balance and then swung a little and settled down at an angle across the wagon, its slim steel frame crumpling and snapping.

There was a sudden torrent of rain as if it had been dumped out of a giant bucket. Then the wind died down as if it had been turned off by the throw of a switch.

The midway was wrecked. Only one top was left and that was MacKinnon's Museum of Marvels. The big circus stakes we had sweated over had paid off.

But the Ferris wheel had caught something—it was lying crushed underneath. I knew it was the rope-spinning kid. Suddenly I was able to move and I crawled in between the twisted steel to get him. One of the spokes was lying across his head. I got on my hands and knees, bracing myself, and heaved. You can lift a lot that way, using all your muscles. I felt the steel move and shouted to Irv Lesser to drag over the steps of our bally platform and block it up. He did it and when I eased it down I realized that I had cut a gash across my back but it didn't amount to anything.

The kid was dead by the time the ambulance got there. . . .

A big crowd had gathered around the lot, gaping at the smashed carnival, so the boss opened up one of the ticket boxes and they began to pour in, while a truck went ahead of them spreading shavings to soak up the wet.

Irv Lesser came up to me, his face somber. "I was a fool, Mac. But I caught him trying to—"

"Forget it," I said. "That boy was crazy as a loon. But he was a dandy rope act."

"Yeah," Irv said, watching the blue flares of torches cutting up the twisted Ferris wheels. "With ropes Jed was good."

We stood quiet for a moment. Then he said, "I'm going to marry Gussie. I finally got wise. I didn't ask her; I *told* her."

Many a man in love with a dimple makes the mistake of marrying the whole girl.

—Stephen Leacock

The girl came out of our top and joined us. "Annabelle's okay." She took Irv's arm. "Gee, she got scared, hon, when you grabbed her. Annabelle is scared of quick motions."

"Everybody's scared of something," he muttered, trying to keep his eyes off the spot in front of our platform where the kid had cashed in his chips. "All except Mac, here. Mac's real carny. He ain't scared of nothing."

"The hell I ain't," I exploded at him. "Why do you suppose I just stood here, watching the kid guying off that wheel with them heavy warps? There's two things I'm scared of—wind is one of them. And the other is red ink. Go on, kids, fall into your clothes. If the amplifier is shorted out I'll have to leather-lung it. But that crowd is piling in to see a wrecked carnival and we're one of the few outfits in any shape to open."

They ducked inside and I tested the mike. It was dead; the show's generators were off. I twisted a piece of soaked cardboard to make a megaphone and got up on the platform.

"Right this way, folks, right this way! The Museum of Marvels, only show of its kind on the Grand Gaiety Monster Midway and the only show that is likely to open for one hell of a long time. Hurry, hurry, hurry!" •

By JACKSON BURKE

MATADORS DIE RICH

A good matador makes fantastic money and lives like a king—until he's killed. I tried bullfighting, and came close to fame and fortune. And death.

ON JANUARY 2 the news services carried the story of Marie Tamara Louwe, the beautiful twenty-four-year-old model in Johannesburg, South Africa, who announced she was turning her back on a successful career—as well as an offer of the leading rôle in an English movie—to go to Lisbon to become a female bullfighter.

The charming Marie has my wishes for all the luck in the world. She'll need it, every ounce she can get. The number of women aspiring to this honor has increased within the past few years. Several have had fair success, which is about as good a percentage as for the men. It was just about a year ago that I went to Mexico City for the same purpose. I dreamed of fame and adventure and glory, and I came close. I learned to my sorrow that a man can be very old at thirty-six. And not very smart.

As matadors start training in their mid-teens, or

even sooner, Marie may have the same age problem. You can be sure if she doesn't have this handicap, she'll find plenty of others. It would be difficult to give the exact odds against becoming a successful bullfighter, but a two-dollar ticket on a hundred-to-one shot at Belmont is a conservative bet in comparison.

But if you do hit the big time down there—well, here are some figures to ponder over. Luis Miguel Dominguin, the top Spanish matador, had four engagements this spring in Plaza México in Mexico City and received for each one-hour effort $22,800. When you consider he had been fighting bulls for twelve years, getting as many engagements as he wishes and not having sleuths from any Bureau of Internal Revenue on his heels, it isn't hard to understand why he owns big coffee plantations all over South America, castles in Spain, apartment houses in New York City, and a bank balance at the National City Bank that would make most millionaires turn green with envy.

Carlos Arruza, the Mexican Cyclone, as popular in Spain as in Mexico, had 178 fights in one year, averaging $7,000 an engagement.

One American, Sidney Franklin, netted millions in the bull-ring, and is the oldest fighting matador. He started in 1922 and was still at it last year, drawing great crowds in Spain.

There are about two dozen top-flight matadors—second only to Dominguin and Arruza—who gather in anywhere from a hundred thousand to two hundred thousand dollars yearly, and while it may be inaccurate to say that bullfighting is the biggest big-money sport today, it does rank well up near the top. Close enough, at least, to lure a pretty and successful model from a promising career, and a writer (myself being that unlucky person) from his typewriter and a career not quite so promising.

It was my misfortune to have waited until I was thirty-six before witnessing a bullfight. Late in 1951 I was living in Santa Fe, New Mexico, turning out stories and writing radio scripts. During the Christmas holidays some friends and I drove down to Juárez, the Mexican city across the Rio Grande from El Paso, for a Saturday night celebration which lasted until the early hours of Sunday morning, and when we awoke around noon the only thing to do in Juárez was to see a bullfight.

The idea left me cold. I knew little about bullfights except what I had read, and that hadn't been very encouraging.

I am probably laying myself open to charges of brutality, sadism, and other epithets when I say that nothing I had ever seen before thrilled and fascinated me as did the spectacle I witnessed that afternoon. The English name, bullfight, is a misnomer. The Spanish have a better one for it—*fiesta brava*. At no time does the matador "fight" the bull. He challenges and taunts the animal to kill him, and as the huge beast lunges for him the matador guides the bull's charge with graceful movements of the cape, letting the bull's horns almost scrape his body. When the final end comes, and the matador plunges the sword between the shoulders of the animal, it is not a fight but an execution.

The pageantry preceding the fight—the parade of the matadors, the stirring strains of the march called the Virgin of the Macarena, the flamboyant colors and solemn dignity—all had a medieval flavor and were strangely moving. The ring was filled with the different actors in the drama of death, but to me there were only two characters—the black bull, weighing around half a ton, and the matador, who looked frail and very small in front of the animal.

What followed was a battle to death between a man and a beast, with the man pitting his brains, his nimbleness of foot, and his supreme confidence against the brawn, the brute force, and insane fury of the great animal. I knew none of the famous "passes" the matador made, yet I could sense a rhythmic beauty, a perfect coordination of mind and body in his slightest movement.

No bulls were allowed to gore helpless horses as was the practice some years ago and which gave the sport a bad name among Anglo-Saxons. The truth is, I saw far less brutality that afternoon than I have seen in prize-fights and wrestling matches. Many readers may disagree with me, pointing out that the bull is doomed to die the minute it steps in the ring. This is partially true, as there are times when the bull is taken from the ring alive, but in this battle the bull has a chance to kill the matador. The list of casualties among matadors is long and impressive. A hunter stalking a deer with a long-range rifle never dies, and often, far too often, the deer is wounded and left to die in pitiful agony.

The thought of becoming a matador didn't occur to me that afternoon, but it did when I returned to Mexico in February.

The day following my arrival in Mexico City was Sunday. A gala occasion was scheduled for the Plaza México, the bull-ring seating 50,000 fans. Six leading matadors, Spanish and Mexican, were to vie for the grand prize—the Golden Ear. José María Martorell, the Spaniard, won and as I watched him, I compared his slim quick body with mine. His footwork and the manner of moving his body were similar to maneuvers which I had learned in fencing.

When I left Plaza México that afternoon, my mind was made up to become a matador.

Making that decision and carrying it out were two different things. There have been rare cases such as Sidney Franklin where a well-known matador takes a novice in hand, but I didn't know any matadors and had to go on my own.

There is a saying in Mexico that every baby boy is born clutching the horns of a bull tightly in his tiny fists. When he is old enough to run out and play, he and his companions have only one game—the matador and the bull. And as he gets into his early teens he goes to the practice ring and takes bullfighting seriously. All of them hope against hope that they will be the next Carlos Arruza or Dominguin—as American kids hope to be a Babe Ruth or a Lou Gehrig. In Mexico the fond parents do a lot of hoping also, and if junior shows any signs of promise, they are ready to sell or mortgage all their property to help him along. And they may have to, because getting a matador started is incredibly expensive.

After several attempts to make contacts with matadors, and meeting with no success, I started looking for a practice field—determined to start at the bottom—and found one near the overpass on the Juárez highway running north out of Mexico City. It was smaller than the regulation arena—a circular area of sand surrounded by a shoulder-high barrier with the four escape-slots where a man can get away from the bull if necessary.

But there were no bulls in that ring and no bleachers and no spectators. Just several youths—*novilleros*, as the novices are called.

I watched them for maybe half an hour without speaking. They were lean with poverty and hard training. All were stripped to the waist, sweat-streaked from the dust and the hot glare of the sun. Some wore bull's horns and would charge the others with the ferocity of an enraged beast while the others, playing the part of matador, would execute the different passes.

Finally I asked, "When does your teacher arrive?"

He looked at me, smiled broadly, and answered: "We have no teacher, *amigo*. One does not have to be taught how to use a cape. We learn those things ourselves."

Illustrated by ANTHONY

He was pleasant-looking, his face sharp and intelligent and friendly. "I am Manolo Aceves," he said, giving me his hand, which was small but tough as wire.

He and the others had some trouble getting the proper pronunciation of my name. One of the boys asked if I wanted to learn to kill bulls. I answered, "Yes. I'm a writer, and I want to learn so I can write about it."

Manolo said, "Will you write about me?"

"Sure, if there's anything to write."

He laughed. "I'll give you plenty to write about. And I'll teach you what I know in return."

Suddenly we were all friends.

"Come inside the arena and we will begin with the *verónica*."

This is the fundamental pass, the simplest and yet the most difficult. It is a movement of the body, left hand holding the cape close to your hip and the right arm extended forming a top bar for the cape. Your arm and body move in unison, bringing the cape around on the split-second the bull charges it.

My first lesson could not be called a great success. I stripped down to the waist. Manolo did several of the passes and then handed me the bright scarlet and gold cloth, which was heavy and solid, weighing around ten pounds.

At the end of an hour I was sure it weighed forty pounds. My back ached and my head ached from the hot sun. Every muscle in my body was limp with exhaustion and screaming with pain.

But I was there again the next morning at ten. Manolo kept me on the *verónica*, making me do it over and over. The next day it was the same, and the day after. "Learn the *verónica* first," Manolo would say. "The bullfighter who does a poor one is only a peasant."

For two weeks I did nothing else. My body became accustomed to the strenuous exercise and it no longer ached. Yet I was getting impatient, tired of doing that one pass. Manolo never relented and made me do it over and over, and slowly it began to come easier, a natural movement of my body. Manolo seemed pleased.

Every Sunday afternoon he and I had ringside seats at the Plaza México. Carlos Arruza, believed by the Mexicans to be the greatest living matador, didn't fight that season because of the death of his daughter. This was a serious blow to the gate receipts, but for Manolo and me there was an array of Spanish and Mexican matadors to study.

There are two bullfight seasons—the *temporada de oro* (season of gold) is in the winter in Mexico, and the *temporada de novilladas* (season of novices) is in the summer. Because of the difference in climate, the two seasons are reversed in Spain, and the two countries are able to exchange matadors.

A bullfight is divided into three acts, called *tercios*. The first act begins with the entrance of the bull into the ring. The matador and his assistants greet the charging beast with their capes and put him through the different passes. When this is over, the picadors ride in on their horses. They have long lances and prod the shoulder muscle of the bull.

The purpose of this is two-fold: first, it is a traditional part of the show, and it gives the crowd an idea of the fighting qualities of the animal. A bull that continues to fight a horse, even when the picador's lance is in the bull's shoulders, assures the crowd that a good fight is in the offing when the matador steps into the ring. Second, the picadors increase the bull's anger so he'll fight harder, something very necessary for the success of the matador. For if the bull is very angry, furiously angry, he will charge harder and faster and will therefore run straighter, thus giving the matador a better chance to display his skill with the cape and the *muleta*.

This *tercio* of the picadors is an interesting phase of the fight, as it has its background in the origin of the sport. In ancient times the wild bulls of Spain were hunted as a source of food by men on horseback. When the wild bulls were no longer an important food supply, the hunt continued as a sport. And out of this came the bullfight as it is known today. In fact, in Portugal the bullfight is conducted entirely from horseback. It is only in Spanish-customs countries that the matador fights on foot.

In the second act the *banderilleros* take over. Their job is to plant their small and many-colored lances into the shoulder muscle of the bull. After this, in the third *tercio*, the matador carries only the *muleta*—a small, all-red cape—and a sword. He prepares the bull for the kill. Six bulls, two for each of three matadors, are killed in the usual Sunday afternoon program. The matador's assistants stand ready to lure the bull away with their capes if anything happens to their man.

Manolo drew my attention to the different passes the matadors executed, which are the basis of bullfighting. Many of them are simply variations of the *verónica*, which I had been practicing so patiently. For example, the *gaonera* (named for Rodolfo Gaona, who taught Sidney Franklin) is usually begun with a *verónica*.

Many of the passes are known by the names of the matadors who invented them. The *fregolina* was worked out by Freg; the *manoletina*, which is done with the *muleta*, is the brain child of the immortal Manolete; the *arrucina* was invented by Carlos Arruza; the *chicuelina* by Chicuelo. There are countless different passes, many of them seldom used, as a matador usually perfects only a handful and limits his action to these.

After watching the matadors, I realized why Manolo kept me on the *verónica* so persistently. This is the basic pass, and once mastered, the others come quickly. One pass in particular intrigued me. This was the *farol de rodillas*, executed from a kneeling position. The cape is whirled out to one side, then up and over your head and behind the body. If it is done perfectly, and if the bull reacts as he should, the matador has the bull hurtling at the cape in a spectacular and dazzling effect.

I would practice this alone in my hotel room. One day I tried it out in the ring. Manolo shouted: "No! No! Not that! The *verónica*, always the *verónica*. Think of nothing else." And for two more months he saw that I did just that. Working under the hot sun hardened me, but I enjoyed it immensely. The cape was no longer heavy, and I could handle it with an ease that surprised me.

Then one day Manolo said: "We're going to visit a ranch. El Bache" (one of the boys training in the ring) "has to buy a bull to fight in the Plaza de la Morena. While at the ranch you will be given your first real test. You won't be fighting boys carrying horns."

I didn't know exactly what he meant, but I was ready for anything. At least I thought I was.

The superintendent of the ranch took us across several pastures to one where a herd of young bulls were grazing. They were two-year-olds, about the size of a yearling steer ready for market. A fighting bull is never given full feeds, so these were lean with broad shoulders and a body that tapered off to the rear like the waist and hips of a trained prizefighter.

The regular fighting bulls sent to the large arenas are between four and seven years old—the older they are, the wiser and more dangerous. The fighting bulls are kept in separate pastures from the cows and remain virgins.

El Bache looked the bulls over, picked one that met his fancy, and then we returned to the ranch house, where the bargaining started. The superintendent set a price of 650 pesos, about $75 in American money. To a Mexican youth it is a large sum, a month's salary. El Bache argued long and hard, but the ranch superintendent was adamant.

For two weeks I practiced the *verónica*, nothing else. This is the fundamental pass, the simplest and yet the most difficult. "Learn the *verónica* first," Manolo would say. "The bullfighter who does a poor one is a peasant." So for two weeks I did nothing else.

He was a good salesman, and this young bull suddenly took on a splendor that few ever attain. His brother had fought the immortal Manolete. Another brother had gored the great Arruza. By this time El Bache was trembling with excitement and admiration. The deal was made and El Bache shelled out his hard- and painfully-earned 650 pesos.

Then Manolo said to the superintendent: "We have a friend here, an American, who gives great promise as a matador. Would it be possible for him to try his skill with a cape against a cow?"

I NOTICED a twinkle in Manolo's eyes and an answering one in the eyes of the superintendent. But the thought that I was about to really try my skill against flesh and blood excited me too much to bother about twinkles in anybody's eyes.

The superintendent looked me up and down, a little amazed at my age. He said: "So you want to kill bulls?"

"I am willing to try," I answered.

"*Está bien!* You shall have your chance against a cow." He went to the door and called a herdsman. Then he turned back to me. "If you can keep a cow away from you, you will be a great matador."

An Indian herdsman cut a young cow out of the herd and sent her scampering over to the low flat area where we were waiting. Manolo had unwrapped his cape. He stepped out and started a *verónica*. This pass was never completed. The cow came charging at him, hit the cape, stopped short, whirled, hooked one horn under his leg, and sent him flying up in the air.

El Bache and I drew her away with our capes. She took after El Bache. He managed to complete one pass before she knocked him down. It was my turn. I was gripping the cape, but my arms felt stiff as iron. She came after me. In terror I dropped my cape and grabbed her horns, hoping to bulldog her. She spun me in the air like a helicopter. I came down with a thud in the soft grass. The cow had one horn in my hip pocket, and my trousers were ripped out and I was sent rolling over the ground.

Manolo tossed his cape over the cow's head and I managed to crawl to my cape, pick it up, and get to my feet weakly.

El Bache and Manolo were at it again with the cow. Sometimes they were on the ground and sometimes in the air. I took part in it, and it seemed that most of the time I was on the ground. Then finally, much to my relief, the herdsman drove the cow back to the herd.

We three lay on the grass and tried to catch our breath. El Bache asked me: "Why did you drop your cape?"

"Scared," I admitted.

"At least you didn't run," Manolo said. "I ran the first time I fought a cow, and she was only a little heifer."

"You were afraid, too?" I questioned.

"Of course, *amigo*," Manolo answered. "We are all afraid. Manolete was afraid and so is Arruza. There is no shame in being afraid. Only God has no fear."

"But this cow, this little cow—" I said. "If I can't handle it, what chance have I against a bull?"

Manolo and El Bache laughed. "A cow that has been fought before is very smart. Look at those bulls in that far pasture. Nobody with a cape is ever allowed near them. If anybody should try to fight them, he would be arrested. I'll tell you why. A cow or a bull learns quickly, sometimes too quickly. Once they have been fought, they know the cape is not their enemy but the matador. So they lunge for the matador. That's what this cow did. That's what the great bulls sometimes do when they are in the

ring too long. They learn their real enemy, and then—puff!—just like that, a matador is gored."

El Bache said to me, "You didn't run. You will be a great matador. Would you like to help in my *corrida* with the bull?"

I hadn't expected anything like that. Helping a matador in the ring requires some skill with the cape, even if you aren't required to kill the bull. I had been practicing only a few months. My encounter with the cow hadn't convinced me I had learned a great deal.

Manolo settled the question for me. "There are many things you will have to learn before the *corrida*. I will teach you all you must know, but we haven't much time."

There was about a month before El Bache was to try his skill with his first bull and start the long difficult road to being a recognized matador. The obstacles are so great on this road that only the golden rainbow of fame and glory and fantastic wealth at the end drives such Mexican youths as Manolo and El Bache on and on. Not only must they buy their bulls to fight, but they have to bribe the newspaper critics to come and see them. These critics are all-powerful with the reputation of a *novillero*. One favorable word from them about his first fight and he can leap into fame, while one derogatory word can dash forever his hopes of success.

KILLING the first bull is only a start. He may have to buy many others until he is able to attract attention. And then, even if he is highly skilled, he may never do this. Of the thousands of Mexican youths working feverishly in the practice ring, not more than twenty of them will ever become full-fledged matadors in the Plaza México. There are several ways one can achieve success. If he shows great skill with his second or third bull, he may attract the attention of an impresario—a manager. What the critics have to say about him determines this to a great extent. But there is a limit to what any manager can do. The one and certain road to success is to have a well-known matador take him under his wing, and then at the Plaza México dedicate a bull to the youth, which means that the matador is stepping aside to let this novice kill his bull. It is rare when a matador does this, as these highly temperamental gentlemen don't like to encourage competition.

Manolo expressed the stubborn determination of these kids when he said, "I have had four bulls at the Plaza de la Morena—two good ones and two bad ones. I will have more bulls. I do not know whether I will ever be a good matador. Perhaps I will be a bad one. But I will be a matador!"

And he will. I have seen him in the ring. He has great skill, high style, and magnificent courage. This youth, who so generously taught me all he could, will make his name in bullfighting history. I shouldn't be surprised if you start reading about him within the year. . . .

The next three weeks was work, work, and more work. We started at ten every morning, took a little time off for lunch, and kept at it until five o'clock. There were many things Manolo had to teach me. One was leaping the barrier, which may not seem romantic but is a matter of life or death in the bull-ring if you get caught by a charging bull.

We had cows to work with. I didn't know where Manolo and El Bache got them. Sometimes we would only have them for fifteen or twenty minutes and then they would be rushed back. I suppose some of them came from a slaughter-house nearby, where for a bribe an attendant would let a young man sneak a cow or an old bull away for practice. Naturally, this violent exercise just before butchering isn't the best thing for the meat, but it goes on all over Mexico—wherever there are any young bullfighters.

Manolo taught me the other passes. I didn't find them so difficult because of the long time spent with the *verónica*. Then Manolo gave me the sword and *muleta*. Not that I was expected to use them in the bull-ring. It was just a precaution.

I never expected to have to know how to actually kill a bull, but I practiced it anyway. Of course, there's only one way to learn to kill bulls, and that's by actually doing it. But in training we had what is called a *penca* to practice on. This *penca* comes from the *maguey*—a cactus-like plant that also gives us *pulque* and *tequila*. The *maguey* looks like a huge, opened artichoke, and its long broad-based, sharp-tipped spears are called *pencas*. The thick base of this *penca* closely resembles the humped shoulder muscle of an angry bull. And if you mount a *penca* on a stand, you can use it to practice on with a sword. Manolo kept me at this until I could place the sword properly every time.

ON the afternoon of June 8, 1952, at four o'clock, the band in the Plaza de la Morena struck up the *Macarena*, the march that starts all bullfights. The parade of matadors began—El Bache and two others, with their *cuadrillas* behind them. Manolo and I were behind El Bache as we marched across the arena to the President's box. This being a *novillero* fight, there would only be three bulls. El Bache's was the last on the list.

Manolo and I waited behind the wooden barrier until the first two were killed. Before I knew it the second bull was being dragged out of the ring and ours was in the arena, charging the barrier, snorting and pawing the ground, looking for something to kill.

I heard El Bache yell to Manolo. "All right, Manolo, give him a few passes!"

Manolo walked out coolly and confidently. He executed three of the most beautiful *verónicas* I have ever witnessed, whirling into a series of *gaoneras*, and finishing with a *rebolera* that spun the gold and crimson cape in a dazzling circle. He stopped the bull in its tracks.

Manolo walked away, his back to the baffled animal; he was confident and proud, swaggering a little.

THEN it was my turn. My mouth was as dry as the Gobi Desert and my heart was pounding against my ribs. I had the overwhelming fear that seizes every novice. Would I run away from the bull? Hundreds do, and their careers stop there.

I don't know how I got out in the middle of the ring. The bull was there, looking at me, pawing the sand and making a snuffling noise. I could smell him, hot and rank. I had laid my plans carefully. I wasn't going to use the *verónica* at all. I was going to be original, a little different. I was greeting this animal with the *farol de rodillas*, one of the most difficult and treacherous passes. I cited the bull, stamped my foot, calling, *"Eh, toro! Ven acá!"* He charged. I dropped to my knees. I remember hearing Manolo screaming, "No! . . . No! . . . Not that!" It was too late to change. I held the cape out and to one side, and as the bull hit it I whirled it up, sending him into the air after it.

It was perfect. I was on my feet. I could hear the cheering of the crowd. The bull was coming at me again. I did two quick *gaoneras*, and then I heard Manolo yell, *"Rebolera!"* I took his advice and finished with a whirling movement of the red-and-yellow cape that again stopped the bull in its tracks.

I was weak and a little sick at my stomach when I got back to the barrier. El Bache was out in the ring with the bull. He was magnificent, performing passes that brought the crowd to its feet. Presently Manolo and I took turns placing the *banderillas* in the bull's shoulders. I was nervous about this, but it went off without mishap.

Manolo and I went back to the barrier. El Bache had received permission from the President to kill the

bull, and he tossed his hat to me, dedicating the bull to me. Manolo was pleased by this gesture.

Then it happened. Neither Manolo nor I was watching El Bache. We heard El Bache's scream, and then saw him up in the air. He had been too cocky and careless for one fraction of a second, and the bull had gored him. Manolo and I drew the bull away from him while two other matadors carried little El Bache to the barrier. We ran over to him. He raised up a little, pointed to me, and said, "*Amigo,* I give this bull to you."

I was too stunned even to think, yet I knew too well what that meant. In a *novillero* bullfight the usual rule of one of the other matadors killing the bull didn't hold. El Bache had given this bull to me, which meant I had to kill it.

The whole thing was absurd. I knew little or nothing about killing a bull, but I had been chosen and I had no choice. Manolo clapped me on the shoulder and said, "You can do it.

Man weeps to think that he will die soon; woman, that she was born so long ago.

—*H. L. Mencken*

High heels were invented by a woman who had been kissed on the forehead.

—*Christopher Morley*

Don't be afraid, and don't be in a hurry. I showed you how to work with the *muleta* and sword. Make only a few passes. Kill him quickly. He's mad, very mad. Don't waste any time."

Somebody handed me the sword and the little red *muleta;* then I was walking out toward the President's box. I stopped, slipped the sword and *muleta* under my arm, took off my cap and asked permission of the President to kill the bull.

The crowd knew I was a *gringo,* and they gave me cheers, perhaps thinking of the great Sidney Franklin. I was not thinking about Franklin or anybody. I thought how nice it would be if I were back in Santa Fe with my typewriter. Then the bull charged. I did several simple passes and noted the bull was charging without hooking, a good sign.

I felt better. The greatest danger when the moment for the kill comes is that the bull isn't mad enough. If furiously mad, he keeps his head down; if not, he is liable to toss his head up. This is how many matadors get gored. I knew it was do or die. I followed Manolo's advice and didn't waste time on fancy passes, I stamped my foot and called to the bull to charge. He did and I was waiting for him, my sword aimed at the hump of muscle above the animal's right shoulder.

This thousand pounds of deadly flesh and bone came for me. The point of the sword hit the spot and the sword went deep into the flesh, up to the hilt. The bull shuddered, stopped, and then went down on his knees and rolled over.

I didn't wait to make sure he was dead. I ran for the infirmary, where I found Manolo leaning over El Bache. The little novice was grinning. The doctor had told him that the goring was deep but not fatal.

Manolo turned to me and asked, "Did you kill that bull?"

"Did I!" I slapped him on the back. "Go out there and see for yourself."

El Bache let out a whoop of joy, and Manolo grinned. "I wasn't sure you could do it," he said. "I'm glad."

"What do you mean by that?" I asked.

"You did good work this afternoon," he said. "I'm proud of you. But you were lucky. One thing was wrong. Your reflexes. You can tell if a matador's reflexes are working well. Yours were a split-second too slow. Sometimes a few years make that difference."

He was, I knew, trying to be kind. "But tomorrow you will be famous. You will have to kill your own bull. What you did this afternoon might make you a great matador overnight—if you can get those reflexes working a little faster."

I had noticed the same thing when I was in the ring. My first reaction was that fear had caused it. I was still certain this was the reason and it wouldn't happen when I faced my own bull.

On July 6 I was again at the Plaza de la Morena. Again the cornet sounded the signal for the *Macarena* and the band took up the stirring march. This time I was one of the three matadors marching up to the President's box. Manolo and El Bache were my *cuadrilla.*

Then the big gates opened and the black bull I had purchased came charging out, his horns moving to right and left as he looked for an object to attack. Manolo had the first try at him and did a good job. El Bache had barely recovered from his goring. Manolo and I had tried to dissuade him from entering the ring, but it was no use. He got by with his part quickly, and I took over.

I felt elated and yet there was the lurking fear somewhere in the back of my brain. Manolo's words about my reflexes were there to taunt me. The bull came at me, and I did *verónicas* with such ease that my full confidence returned. I was going all out for the big chance. Everything went so smoothly that when I walked back to the barrier where Manolo stood, I said, "I'm going to do it, Manolo. I have no fears of any kind now."

"That is bad," he answered. "One without fear is sometimes without sense. But do things quickly, and don't try difficult passes."

I forgot his advice when I walked to the President's box to ask permission to kill the bull. When I turned away from the box I tossed my hat to Manolo, dedicating the bull to him. He caught the hat and gave me a happy wave of his hand.

The bull charged, a thundering mass of flesh that scraped my thigh when I did *verónicas.* Waves of cheers greeted this. I dropped to my knees, facing the bull.

It was a crazy, insane idea. Executing the *farol de rodillas* with the small red *muleta* might be all right for a Dominguin or an Arruza, but for a novice with only four months' training it was a sure form of suicide. I had done it once, but—

I heard Manolo screaming at me. The bull was charging. My *muleta* was over my sword, and I brought it around, bending my body slightly to the right as I did.

And the next thing I knew a million stars were darting in front of my eyes, and then total and complete blackness.

I came to slowly, with stinging pains in my head. I opened my eyes and the light blinded me at first. Manolo was standing over me, and El Bache was at his side.

Neither of my friends was smiling. Manolo said gravely, "You were crazy, *amigo,* completely crazy. You missed death by a very small fraction of an inch. If the bull's horn had been that much lower, you wouldn't have any brains now."

I didn't say anything for a long moment. It was all clear to me. I remembered the bull coming at me, and its sharp horn. I had moved to miss it—but not fast enough.

Finally I said, "Tell me, Manolo, would that horn have caught a younger man in the head as it did me?"

"No," he answered soberly. "It would have caught him in the seat of the pants."

His humor was juvenile, but I understood.

There was that little matter of age.

So I took the hint, and went back to the typewriter. There is a scar on my forehead, and I prize it very highly. •

Illustrated by STAN DRAKE

Another Day, Another Corpse

But that was the point—it wasn't just another corpse. On its identity—and on the reason for the murder—rests one of the most sensational and daring stories ever published.

A BLUEBOOK NOVELETTE By RUTH HUME

"GOT ANYBODY ON ICE?" I asked, sweeping two empty coffee cartons off my desk.

The night sergeant said, "Not so you'd notice. Anyway, it's all yours." He handed me a carbon of his report and yawned. "One old bum dragged out of six inches of water in Memorial Park lagoon."

"Somebody give him a shove?"

"Who knows? He just checked in downstairs at five this morning. Doc's probably working on him now."

The night sergeant went home to bed.

I walked down the two flights that led to the police morgue. The dead man was lying on the table, and Doc was peering into his mouth with a small flashlight. "Lieutenant Callan, on his morning rounds, no doubt," the pathologist said, without turning his head.

"Who's your friend?"

"He didn't have his driver's license on him." He jerked his thumb toward a pile of clothes. "There's what he had on him."

I looked them over and shrugged. "These will be a big help!" The man had worn blue jeans, slightly green with age, a torn shirt with two buttons on it, and a moth-eaten lumber jacket. "Death by accidental drowning?"

"Nope."

I sat down in the corner, resigned. Not even the police commissioner could have made Doc talk any faster than Doc wanted to talk. After a few minutes he said, "Dead first—then shoved or fell into water."

"Heart attack?" I suggested helpfully. "Malnutrition? Acute alcoholic poisoning? Slugged? Shot?" I prodded the man's clothes with my toe. "Poor old bum probably wasn't even worth a bullet to anyone."

"Old bum, hell!" Doc threw down his flashlight and swung his swivel chair around to face me. "Look at him, Callan. Take a good look!"

I went over to the table and took a look.

"Clean shave," the doctor said. "Nice new haircut, the kind you pay a buck-fifty for. Look at his hands! And look at this." He turned on his light and directed a beam into the mouth.

I saw a flash of gold on a back tooth. "Could be he's seen better days and just tries to keep up appearances," I said. These identification cases are a damned nuisance.

"The dental work," Doc explained patiently, in a voice reserved for expressing his low opinion of homicide detectives, "is new. One gold filling in. One temporary filling next to it. I can just see him walking into one of our fancier denture factories in those clothes and saying, 'Fill 'em up, boys. Gold will do fine.'"

I took another look at the dead man's face. "You're right. . . . I guess this will take a little time." I stifled a yawn, oppressed as usual by the aura of formaldehyde and death. "Oh, well, another day, another corpse."

"He was killed somewhere else," I said to the Captain, "dressed in the old clothes, and then dumped in the park. Motive could be robbery, although most robbers don't fit out their victims with a new set of clothes—even old ones."

"The idea, I suppose, is that we'd pass him off as just one more dead vagrant and make no investigation," the Captain said.

"And make no identification either, probably."

The Captain stood up. "O.K., Callan. It's your baby. Take Cooley to help you. Find out who the guy is."

I leered. "That'll be a cinch. Before I find out who he is, I want to know what killed him."

The Captain picked up the phone and said, "Morgue . . . Doc? What the hell are you doing down there, playing canasta with the stiffs? . . .Oh. . . . What? . . . Oh, he was . . . O.K. How long will it take you to figure out which one? . . . Yeah . . . Yeah, O.K." He hung up. "The man was poisoned," he announced. "Doc said his guts smell like a bottle of almond extract."

That, I knew, was Doc's quaint little way of saying that someone had slipped our corpse a dose of cyanide.

It's a long-winded process, identifying a man after someone has fed him poison, dressed him in completely anonymous clothes, and left him in the park at dawn. A lot of people have to get working on it. Our best photographer and our best retouch artist had a creditable glossy turned out by noon: the dead man's face alive. According to their picture it was an intelligent face. It was a face you might remember if you had seen it before. Apparently no one in town ever had. At least we weren't swamped with phone calls the minute the picture and description made the afternoon papers. No grieving relatives turned up to claim the body. No helpful gossip called in to say that the picture looked just like her next-door neighbor, the one whose wife was always threatening to kill him. Nor had our man's fingerprints ever made the grade. They weren't on file, either in our office, or in the State capital, or in Washington.

All of this negative information trickled in during the next forty-eight hours, but, in the meantime, Sergeant Cooley and I were working on another lead. As so often happened, it was Doc who pointed it out to us. A few hours after our morning's discussion, he came ambling into my office, a pair of mud-covered shoes in his hand. "Here—" he said, dropping them on my desk. "Let those jerks upstairs in Chemical and Technical get to work on these. They're his own. Left one has a special arch support. Corpse has a weak left arch. Shoe fits it."

"Whoever provided the masquerade clothes," I told the chief chemist, "must have forgotten to get shoes."

"Yes. They rubbed these over with mud, but actually they're of good

quality and in good condition. Almost new, too. See the heels? They haven't had two weeks' wear."

The shoes, according to their inside label, were called Rite-Fit. Cooley called the buyer of our largest department store. Did all local stores carry this brand? The buyer simplified life considerably by saying that *no* local stores carried them. The name belonged to a Boston manufacturing house. The general manager of the company, whom we had on the phone ten minutes later, told us that Rite-Fit shoes were sold in better stores between Portland, Maine, and Washington, D. C., and that the franchise had not yet been extended west of Syracuse. Our friend on ice was a stranger in town.

We went to work on the hotels. Lists of all guests registered from the East Coast within the last three weeks. There were hundreds of them. Any still registered but unaccounted for? Only one. A deadbeat named Mrs. Lulu Henderson. She was no help. Names of East Coast guests checked out within the last few days? Reservations made on airlines or railroads but not picked up? Unclaimed automobiles parked around town?

Meantime our teletype was clacking away hopefully to every city on the East Coast, north of Washington. Any elderly male citizen (picture on the way) misplaced this week?

THURSDAY morning there was a memo on my desk from the Captain. The D.A., the mayor, and the Citizens' Progressive Committee for Good Government would be pleased to hear from me any time I found it convenient. Cooley came in at ten o'clock and presented me with a handful of typewritten papers. "Here are the dope sheets, all assembled," he said. "See what, exactly, you can make out of them."

They made fascinating reading. All my life I had wanted to know how many people make reservations on the Southern Railroad and then don't pick them up. It seemed to be a widespread vice. "I'm sick of this guy," I said, looking up from the lists. "Why did he have to pick this town to do his extorting in?"

Cooley chuckled. "Extorting, huh? You don't even know who he is, but already you've got the motive."

I shrugged. "He must have been up to something slimy," I said, too irritated to be logical. "Probably running heroin or trying to muscle in on the numbers."

"Oh, *nice* people never get killed, of course. What's—"

Our teletype started clicking. Cooley strolled over and followed the long message, his face growing more solemn by the word. He tore out the sheet and said, "Let's see those lists I gave you."

"What's—"

"From the Chief of Police in Danbury, Connecticut. Man was reported missing, answering our description. Known to have left for here last week. His friends got worried about him."

"Did they get a copy of the—"

"Yes, yes—his friends identified him from the picture. But they're sending out a report on dental work, with X-rays, for further identification."

I jumped up and went over to his desk.

"Um-hmm," said Cooley, pointing to the lists. "Here he is—and here he is. Checked out of the Regent Hotel at 4 P.M. Monday. Had a reservation on the 7:10 train, with a ticket through to Danbury. But he didn't pick it up." He pointed to both lists and then to the name on the teletype sheet. "Well how are you betting? Muscling in on the numbers or buying up heroin?"

Our corpse had been a professor of sociology at St. Sebastian College. His name was Father Charles A. Warren.

I MADE a reservation on the two o'clock plane. It was just past twelve when Cooley and I entered the lobby of the Regent Hotel and began working our way through employees. Now I understood why no one in the hotel had answered our newspaper queries. The retouch artist had dressed our man in a dark business suit and a semi-conservative tie. Nine out of ten people who see a priest, in the casual goings and comings of a hotel, will be unable to identify his face later if they see it without a Roman collar. When we asked about him by name quite a few people remembered him. He had registered on Saturday night and had checked out Monday afternoon. The management proper could give us no more help than this, but we turned up a talkative bellboy, always a good find in cases like this.

Sure, he told us, he remembered the priest. "He was a nice old fellow. . . . Said he was a stranger in town and didn't know a soul here. . . . Didn't know one street from the other. He was always joking about how he couldn't remember his way around the block if I didn't show him." When pressed for details, however, the boy had to admit that the priest had asked him for only three directions: to the church where he went to say Mass in the morning, to the railroad station, and to the public library.

"When did he ask you about the station?" I asked.

"When he checked out. I was carrying his bag to the door. Station's so near he decided to walk over."

"Did you get the impression he was going straight there?"

"That's what I thought."

"How about the library? When did he go there?"

"Sunday. Early afternoon. I remember because we talked about how it didn't open until one o'clock."

"O.K. Thanks, bud. Where do you keep the telephone operators around here?"

He directed us to the back of the lobby.

WE had the same luck with the operator as we had had with the bellboy. She was a girl who took a keen interest in her work. "Sure, Father Warren had phone calls. But all from the same person. I remember because it was a woman with a funny voice who kept calling and calling trying to catch him. . . . No, they didn't leave any message or number for him to call. Finally they found him in."

"Do you remember what day this was?" I asked.

"Sure, it was Monday morning. I remember because Gertrude was on with me that day and we talked about it and she isn't on except on—"

"O.K. Thanks." I started to leave, but went back to ask her, "What do you mean exactly by a funny voice?"

"Well—you know—like Tallulah Bankhead? Deep," she explained. . . .

The old librarian seemed more annoyed than awed by the sight of my badge. She pointed to the SILENCE sign on her desk and put a finger to her lips. I lowered my voice to a hoarse whisper. Had she been on duty Sunday afternoon? She nodded. Did she remember seeing a priest around one o'clock? I produced the picture and held a finger over the collar and tie.

She nodded vigorously.

"Do you know what he wanted here? Did he read something? Or meet someone?"

She shook her head and then, forced to speak, whispered, "He was just here a few minutes. I only remember him because he had such a nice face. All he wanted was the City Directory."

"Any idea who he was looking up?"

"Good heavens, man! Of course not! Look at the size of it."

"Did he find what he was looking for?"

"Yes, because he wrote down an address and asked me how to get to it."

Cooley whipped out his notebook and said, "Yes?" in an excited whisper twice his normal volume.

"Shhhh! I don't remember the address because I didn't know where it was. It was the name of a tree, the street was. I told him I thought the tree names were mostly in Langley

Park and that he'd better ask a policeman or a taxi driver how to get there."

Langley Park made sense. It's where we keep our millionaires. You don't live there unless you can afford to gold-plate the cockroaches. The residents of Langley Park were exactly the people who had unlisted phone numbers and would have to be located in the city directory.

FURTHER prodding failed to produce the name of the street.

"Nice lead while it lasted," Cooley muttered, as we headed out the airport road. "I'll go back tomorrow and see whether it's come to her. She'll probably brood about it all night."

"Let me see that list of uncollected reservations again," I said. Reaching into his pocket, he produced the data. "Look—" I pointed to the entry marked Rev. C. A. Warren. "His train didn't leave until 7:10. But he checked out, lugging a suitcase, at four."

"I wonder what he planned to do around the station for three hours."

"That's a good question," I said. "You just put your mind to it and tell me all about it when I get back!" I slapped him on the shoulder and was safely inside the airport when the urgently-nasal voice announced, "Positively last call. . . . Northbound Flight 671. Chicago, Washington, New York, Hartford, Boston." . . .

"He was so reticent about his work," Father Randolph said. "He could never quite believe that people were interested in what he was doing. I'm quite sure, though, that his visit must have had something to do with his latest book or paper. He always spent his vacations working. He had no family, and he had a fairly good private income, all of which he spent on his research projects." He smiled, not bitterly but not very happily. "Except what he spent subsidizing various hard-up students, paying the back fuel bill for the Little Sisters of the Poor, and other items calculated to make himself enemies all over the country!"

"You think he was on some kind of research project in our neck of the woods?"

"I don't know for sure, but I think so. I've never known a man so devoted to his work. Look at those publications. I have to reserve a whole shelf just for him." I walked over to the bookcase he had pointed out and looked over the collected works of the dead man. Many of the papers were offsets from the sociological journals. The latest volume was his doctor's dissertation. It had a typically long-winded title: *A Study of Segregation Patterns in Two Borderline Cities, with Special Reference to Laws Governing Education, etc., etc., etc.* I glanced over some of the other papers and articles, and repeated the president's line: "Other items calculated to make himself enemies all over the country." These were *A Study of the Growth of New York State Institutions for the Care of Orphans; New Methods in the Care of Old People; A National Responsibility; The Work of the Nursing Orders of Sisters During the Civil War; The Development of the Indian Missions since 1900.*

"I don't think I've been much help to you," Father Randolph said. "I'm not the man you want to see, though. Father Harrison is. He's our professor of Greek and Latin. He and Father Warren were friends. They played chess together." He stood up. "Ask the girl at the switchboard to locate Father Harrison for you."

We shook hands. I wanted to say a few things to him but I couldn't. I hate cases that get in below the skin. It's a hell of a way to make a living. I settled for, "We'll find out who did it."

"*Who* did it?" the president repeated, smiling. "You know, that's probably the angle that would have interested Father Warren least of all. He'd want to know all about early patterns in the murderer's life that made him a murderer, economic conditions, whether his father loved him, and how much vitamin C he had as a child."

"He would? I'm just a dumb cop. All I want to know is *who*."

"IT was because he didn't return for the first day of class that I became worried. He hasn't missed a class in twenty-two years," Father Harrison told me. He was an older man than his friend. He rambled a little as we talked, slightly absent-minded in the best traditions of his profession. He interrupted himself frequently to ask, with variations, the question that was first in his mind. "Why did such a thing happen? It must have been robbery!" I reminded him that very few robbers use cyanide as a means of immobilizing their victims.

"What I came to find out is exactly what he was doing around our town in the first place," I said.

"Oh—why, research," Father Harrison said vaguely, "on his new book."

"But he didn't seem to do any research. He just went into the library once, to get the City Directory. He went to see someone. We don't know who—"

"That's research, of course," the priest explained indulgently. "He was looking for relatives. Looking for relatives is quite a big part of modern biography."

"What relatives? Whose biography?" I almost snapped.

Father Harrison blinked. "He usually never talked much about his work, but he did tell me something about this book because he was enjoying it so much. Said he was finally writing something people, as opposed to scholars, would enjoy reading. It was a biography of Monsignor Leon Simpson."

"Of who? I'm afraid I'm not up on all the fine points."

"WHY should you be? Monsignor Simpson, according to Charlie, has always been too obscure a figure in the history of the Church in this country." He sighed. "He still is obscure, as far as I'm concerned. Charlie again. He always thought anything that happened after 500 A.D. would bore me. But I gather that this man Simpson was a priest who worked in the slum districts of Baltimore and New York. He apparently was years ahead of his time in matters like medical care, sewage, housing, responsibility of the community toward the poor, and what have you. Built orphanages and old people's homes. He must have been quite a powerhouse, for the Simpsons were a poor Southern family, and back in 1850 it was quite unusual for a poor family to educate a son for the priesthood—much less have him end up a Monsignor."

"Simpson—there are people in town named— No, it couldn't be. How about these relatives? Know anything definite about who they are?"

"No. Quite recently Charlie found some old records of the Archdiocese of Baltimore that turned up a brother of Monsignor Simpson. He had gone out West and struck it rich somehow. He had sent his brother some money once, to rescue some bankrupt project. That's how he got into the records. Anyway Charlie tracked him down and found out that he had married and that he seemed to have some grandsons around. The possibility was that, since the two had been close—as witness the money—they must have written each other. And maybe the letters are still in the family."

I frowned. "People have got in trouble before, writing biographies of people who haven't been dead long enough. But—this Father Leon Simpson doesn't sound like a skeleton in anyone's closet!"

"No. I wish I knew more about him. I *do* remember that Charlie once hinted around that the best was yet to come *re* the good Monsignor."

"How do you mean?"

"As though there was something really spectacular that I could just wait to read about."

"Something good?"

"From the nature of the hinting, something wonderful. As you said, the man is hardly the skeleton-in-the-closet type."

"How much of the book was done?"

"A rough draft of the whole thing. Charlie had already sent it to a publisher, I think some friend of his—to see if it had possibilities as a popular biography."

"What publisher?"

"I don't know. But I know he mailed it last week."

I stared out the window for a few seconds, trying to get all the facts jelled in my mind. "You know what I'm a sensation at?" I told him. "Finding out which thug took a lead pipe to which other thug in a Saturday-night brawl. Or tracking down the car with which one snow salesman—excuse me, that's cocaine—hit and run another snow salesman who was muscling in on his clientele. Or digging people out of concrete slabs in the river and— Oh, what the hell." I stood up.

He nodded thoughtfully. "I know. Old sociology professors and biographies of Nineteenth-Century Monsignors—they don't really come under the heading of routine police work, do they?"

"Is there a post office on the campus, or do you go to town to mail packages?"

"Oh, no, we always use the campus post office."

"Thanks. You've been a big help. I'll keep in touch with you. If I hear—" I stopped, struck by something I saw across the room. "Is that—was he—" I began, nodding at the chess board, still occupied by half a game.

"Yes," he said. "I think I had him too."

THE lady who ran the campus post office had a decided recollection of the package mailed by Father Warren two days before he left town, because she had commiserated with him on having to send manuscripts first class instead of parcel post. She did not remember the name of the publisher to whom the package had been sent, but she distinctly remembered that it had gone to Chicago.

I stopped by the local police station to pick up, as per arrangement, any messages for me. There was only one —a teletype from Cooley. It read: "Dear Granny, please come home. Let me know time of arrival. I did just like what you said to do."

The best connections I could make got me in at eleven the next morning —Friday. Cooley was waiting at the gate, and he hurried me out to the squad car before I had time to say two words. "Langley Park," he told the driver. "And never mind the speed limit. I have a friend in the police department."

"Look, chum," I said, "decode the cryptic remarks. You did like what I told you?"

"When you left," he reminded me,

She was a sultry-looking female, in a fortyish, slightly overweight way. She was preceded at least three feet by a heavy, expensive perfume that seemed to exude from every pore. "I'm Mrs. Simpson," she said. "Mrs. James Simpson." I got my badge out. "I'm from Homicide," I said.

"you said find out why he left the hotel so early to go to the station, didn't you? Well, I did."

"Aren't you smart!"

"He went to the station to check his suitcase so he wouldn't have to lug it around."

"That makes sense. He obviously had an appointment somewhere else between four and seven. How did you—"

"I found the suitcase," he interrupted, looking pleased with himself. "I figured that might have been the reason he went to the station, so I checked with the baggage-room and with the twenty-four-hours-for-a-dime people. And there was the suitcase, sitting with the unclaimed stuff they clear out after the dime runs out."

"Positive identification?"

"Positive. His breviary was in the suitcase, name and address. Plus some clothes. Plus this."

He handed me a small manila envelope. I pulled out a handful of papers and looked through them. They were notes for his opening classes, I gathered. He must have been writing them on the train. "This," Cooley said, reaching into the envelope, "is the jackpot." He pulled out a little slip of blue paper. It was a call slip from the public library. There was just one address written on it. "18 S. Maple Street."

"The old lady was right," I said. "It *was* the name of a tree and it *was* in Langley Park. The question now is—who lives there?"

He grinned. "You're a nice guy, Callan. It's been nice having you with us too. I sort of hate to tell you who lives there."

"I'll try to bear up."

"The Messrs. James and Eric Simpson live there," he announced bleakly.

I let the news sink in slowly before muttering, "Oh, no!"

THE Messrs. James and Eric Simpson were professional Influential Citizens. James, or Simpson-the-lesser, was the town's most affluent banker. He would have qualified without competition in a contest to pick the man most likely to be the guest speaker at the Rotary Club luncheon. Brother Eric was the real menace. He was chairman of something innocuously called the Citizens' Progressive Committee for Good Government, *i.e.*, the political machine of the town. He wasn't the mayor, of course, or the police commissioner. He was the guy who said, "Out!" to the mayor or the police commissioner and next day we had a new mayor or police commissioner. Police officials, even simple detective lieutenants, who had somehow irritated the brothers Simpson in the past either had left town in search of greener fields or were now patrolling school crossings at 9 A.M. and 3 P.M.

"The Simpson brothers," I said. "You won't believe this, Cooley. But they have an ancestor who was kind to old ladies and little children."

"They have? The Simpson brothers?" He snorted. "Must have been a very distant relation!"

BY the time we rang the doorbell he had been briefed on my trip East. While we were waiting, a Cadillac drove to the door and disgorged one adolescent girl, wearing a school uniform. She looked us over briefly and said, "Well, hello," with an inflection that would have done credit to Lauren Bacall. At this point the butler opened the door, said, "Good afternoon, Miss Eleanor," to her, and "May I help you, gentlemen?" to us.

We all surged into the foyer together. I said, "Is Mr. Simpson at home? Mr. James Simpson?"

"Have you an appointment, sir?"

"No." I reached into my pocket, but before I could pull out any official documents the man said, "One moment, please," and left us.

The girl Eleanor looked me over critically. "You're cute," she decided. "What are you selling?"

"Black-market chinchilla. Anyone around here use the stuff?"

She wrinkled up her nose and grinned. Her teeth were too large and too prominent for the shape of her sallow little face. "I like men with shoulders like those," she said. "I'm sorry you caught me without my face on. The sisters won't let us wear make-up at school. Can you imagine? I hate that place. Nothing but girls! I don't see why I have to go there. We're not even Catholics."

"The sisters are good at making ladies out of people," I suggested helpfully.

"Oh, God!" She raised her eyes eloquently. "*Who* wants to be a lady?"

Before I could pursue this interesting train of thought, a woman came down the winding stairs and said, "Can I help you?"

It was a deep, magnolia-coated voice. She herself was a sultry-looking female, in a fortyish, slightly-overweight way. She was preceded at least three feet by a heavy, expensive perfume that seemed to exude from every pore. "I'm Mrs. Simpson," she added. "Mrs. James Simpson."

This time I managed to get the badge out. "My name is Callan, Mrs. Simpson. Homicide division. I'm making a routine check on a case on our books and I wonder whether you can help us. Have you ever seen this man before? We think he may have visited this house on Sunday." I produced a picture of Father Warren, to whom the artist had by this time restored his Roman collar.

She glanced at the picture and frowned. "Why—no—I have no recollection of—you must be mistaken. I was here all day Sunday and I don't remember—"

"Oh, it's that priest who was here. *I* saw him when he was leaving. Didn't you, Aunt Leona?" This item was contributed with a rather malicious smile by my adolescent friend, who was still hovering on the premises.

The woman's face hardened as though every line on it had suddenly been filled with cement. "I see so many people in a week that—" She shrugged. "Perhaps my husband can help you. Go into the study." She turned to the girl. "Eleanor! Get upstairs. Your lunch is ready."

"Why don't I just stay and keep the boys company until—"

"Eleanor!" The voice somehow managed to get even deeper. "If you don't get upstairs this very minute—"

"All right! *All* right!" She moseyed off, glancing back at me between half-closed eyes. "People get treated like a child around here."

When we were alone in the Simpson study, Cooley whistled softly. "What a pair! The kid gives me the creeps. I'd drown one like that."

"She was a big help, though, for reasons known only to her nasty little mind," I told him.

JAMES SIMPSON entered the study quickly, inundating us with his best Chamber of Commerce smile. "Good morning," he said briskly. "I'm glad you stopped by, gentlemen. I just now saw the paper. The identification of that body has come as a great shock! That poor man was sitting right in that chair only Sunday!" He shook his head. "What a tragedy!"

I nodded. He looked at his watch. "How can I help you, Lieutenant? I'm due at the Board of Trade luncheon in about fifteen minutes, but, of course, I'm at your service."

"Then I'll make it short, Mr. Simpson. This Father Warren called on you Sunday afternoon?"

"Yes."

"That was the first time you had seen him?"

"Yes."

"And the last time?"

"Yes."

An idea—which almost worked—came to me. "I'm glad he called on someone," I said. "Our biggest problem has been figuring out what he was doing here in the first place. When he visited you did he give any indication of what he had come to town for, or was it just a formal friend-of-a-friend visit?" I tried to look earnest and puzzled—dumb cop asking help of prominent citizen.

Something like relief flickered across the Simpson face. I am dead certain he would have fallen into the trap without a minute's hesitation, if his brother Eric had not come hustling through the door.

J. Simpson said, "Oh, Eric—this is—uh—"

"Lieutenant Callan. And Sergeant Cooley."

Eric Simpson inclined his bullet-shaped head by two degrees.

"These gentlemen are investigating the death of that poor priest from the East Coast."

Eric said, "Oh? That was very sad. Let's hope some day the police in this city will be able to prevent crimes like that instead of bumbling around with them after they happen, Lieutenant."

I RESERVED comment.

"They were checking to see why Father Warren had come to town in the first place," Brother James said carefully, drawing a diagram for Brother Eric, who was a lot smarter than Brother James and played it straight.

"He came looking for some information for some book he's writing. About some last-century Simpson. He seemed to think we might have some letters or something."

"And did you?"

"Of course not. Hardly knew the man ever lived. He must be about ten times removed, if he's related to us at all."

"Who was it, by the way?" I inquired blandly.

"Oh, some priest who did social work in the East, in the late 1800s. I didn't follow very closely. It's not in my line."

"Social work—East—Simpson—" I said, closing my eyes as though trying to dredge up some old, familiar knowledge. "Why, that must be Monsignor Leon Simpson. The one who—introduced the debt-collection reform bill into the Maryland State Legislature in 1872," I improvised happily.

James Simpson looked surprised, and Eric looked annoyed.

"Now let's see," I went on. "His brother was the pioneer Simpson who struck oil out here and started the town. He's your grandfather, I believe—the one whose statue is in the park. That makes Monsignor Simpson some kind of great-uncle. I can never keep those things straight. Anyway,"—I grinned—"he's not so far removed at that."

"I had no idea you were such a scholar, Lieutenant," Eric remarked dryly.

I lowered my eyes modestly. "I subscribe to the Book of Knowledge Supplement. Well, gentlemen, you're probably busy and so are we. I understand the Citizens' Committee for Good Government wants an arrest on this case fast."

We left the study before either Simpson could say a word. When we were out the door, Cooley said, "Look, chum, living on a sergeant's pay is no fun. Take it easy!"

I shrugged. "I don't like him."

"No? It's so mutual by now!" We got in the car. "Do you really think the Simpsons have any connection with all this?"

"I don't know. Let's get back to the office. I have a few telegrams to send."

There aren't as many publishers in Chicago as I had thought. By that afternoon, they all had been contacted by wire, with instructions to respond at once if the Warren-Simpson manuscript was in their possession.

At five that afternoon a Western Union boy ambled into the office. He was not bringing me a telegram. He was one of the we-deliver-anything corps, and he handed me a pale orchid envelope.

I sniffed the note, coughed, and opened it. It read: "Lieutenant, I have something very important to tell you about Father Warren. Meet me tonight at eight sharp at the corner of Bradley Lane and Langley Avenue. I will be in a cab parked on the corner nearest the park. This is urgent!"

Our office gets a hundred crackpot offers of information per case, but this one struck a responsive chord—probably because the notepaper reeked of Madam Leona Simpson's twenty-dollars-a-sniff perfume.

I reached the spot at five of eight, parked just around the corner, and walked to the intersection of Langley and Bradley. A taxi was parked on the appointed corner. As I strolled past it a gloved female hand beckoned me. I opened the door of the cab, got in, and said, "Oh, for the luvva Pete!"

The passenger, dimly visible in the twilight, was the moon-faced kid Eleanor, dressed like a TV comic's conception of Mata Hari. Through the rakish veil I could see solid layers of powder, rouge, and mascara, applied with more enthusiasm than accuracy.

"I'm glad you came," she began nervously.

"Look, honey," I said, "I'm a busy man. I'd just love to play international spy ring with you some time but—"

"You don't understand. I *must* talk to you!"

"How did you get out?"

She sniffed. "I *walked*, out the side door. No one would notice if I dropped dead tonight. They're all down in the study and *soooo* upset! Of course, *I'm* not supposed to notice what goes on under my nose! *Much!* I dropped the note off at Western Union after school. I'm so glad to see you."

"I'm touched. And now what's on your mind, if the term applies."

"That priest. What did my uncle tell you about him?"

"Which is your uncle and which is your father? Or stepfather?"

"They're both my uncles. Stepfather! Lord, no. Thank God, I'm no relation to Aunt Leona. She's only been married to Uncle Jim for two years. The house was at least bearable until *she* moved in. Oh, what the hell—I didn't drag you out here to tell you about my sordid existence! What did they say about that priest?"

"Just that he came to see them, talked for half an hour, and asked about letters or family stories about some ancient relative."

She laughed. "They didn't mention that after he left Aunt Leona had hysterics all afternoon? And that they were locked up in the study together for hours that night, yakking in low whispers?"

"They didn't mention it, no."

"Well, *I* thought you ought to know it!"

"Listen, Eleanor—I don't know why you're telling me all this, or even whether it's true. But if you're just cooking up a little excitement—"

"Oh, so *that's* what you think of me," she screeched, and then glanced fearfully at the glass partition between the front and back of the cab. "You think I'd obstruct justice and commit perjury just for excitement?"

"No, no, it isn't that. It's just that I can't go after your uncles unless I can make something stick. They're pretty big men in this town, you know."

She sniffed. "They're jerks!"

"ELEANOR—do you think Father Warren's visit to them on Sunday was really the last time he was at your house?"

"That was the only time I *saw* him. But that doesn't prove a thing. .I still think it's very funny about that movie I was practically forced to go to!"

"When was that?"

"Well, ordinarily if I even breathe too loud on a school afternoon, someone comes yipping about why don't I shut up and start studying, and why are they paying for me to go to expensive schools, yak, yak. But all of a sudden, on Monday afternoon, comes this big all-out drive to get Eleanor to the movies! Boy, they must think I'm dumb. All of a sudden, for the first time in fifteen years, I can go to the movies! With Aunt Leona! Was *she* ever great company! So nervous she couldn't sit through the picture, leaving every half hour or so."

"What time was all this?"

"We left the house around four-thirty and we got back at seven."

"Were your uncles home when you got back?"

"Yeah. Snarling and yapping at each other. Uncle Jim was as nervous as Venus de Milo with poison ivy."

I studied her tense face for a few seconds, then said, "You don't miss much that goes on around there, do you?"

"I don't miss a thing!" She leaned her head back against the seat. "If they ever bothered to notice I was breathing, they'd know it too!"

"Now look, Callan," the Captain roared, in fine voice for 9 A.M., "you are under Simpson's skin already. See this?" He brandished an office memo. "Police Commissioner asks when am I getting a new man on this case. See this?" He shoved the Simpson-controlled morning paper under my nose, opened to the editorial page. The first editorial was a blast at the police department for its handling of the Warren case. Why had there been no roundup of local thugs and gangsters who were undoubtedly responsible for the murder, the writer inquired sullenly.

"Simpson's furious because you tied the man up with them in the first place," the Captain went on. "Now suppose he finds out you had his niece in a taxi last night, pumping her about—"

"I didn't have *her* in a taxi. She had *me* in a taxi. And I didn't have to pump. The information poured out."

"That doesn't matter. Simpson would say you were contributing to the delinquency of a minor."

"The point is—"

"The point is that, even if the kid is on the level and not just playing a big joke on her relatives, what can you prove? Where's your motive?"

"We know that the priest had some sort of appointment somewhere between four and seven," I insisted. "And someone with a deep voice kept trying to get him all morning—to make the appointment, I should think. And Leona Simpson has a voice—"

"I *said*," the Captain interrupted, "where's your motive? Look at it sensibly, Callan. People like the Simpsons don't go around murdering visiting clergy. Not that I don't think they have what it takes to murder a dozen visiting clerics, and a few nuns and orphans to boot. But it's too dangerous. They stand to lose everything by committing a murder. Now what danger could this Father Warren have been to them—big enough to make them take a chance like murder?"

"I'm beginning to think it was the great-uncle Simpson who was the danger."

"See? There you go again. You don't make sense. If this Monsignor Simpson had been the founder of the family fortune and it developed that he had got his start stealing Government silver or something—" He shrugged. "Even then it probably wouldn't matter. If he had been a horse thief or a bank robber—so what? People nowadays love having ancestors like that. They brag about 'em. Nothing *anybody* did a hundred years ago would make it worth-while to commit murder."

It was because what he said was so logical and so convincing that I suddenly got the idea. It came all at once, all ready to go, and once I had it, nothing else made much sense. I stood up. "You're right," I said. "Nothing anybody did a hundred years ago would make it worth-while to commit murder. You're absolutely right."

He looked surprised. "Then get yourself a new angle quick, before I take the Commissioner's advice."

I was already half out the door. "I've got one, Captain," I called back to him.

I hurried back to my office. It was just past nine o'clock. Cooley was at his desk, reading the morning mail. "Any word from Chicago?" I asked.

"No—but it's pretty early. Sizzle down."

I sizzled down to the extent of walking the floor for half an hour while emptying three cartons of coffee. I didn't feel like talking, and I ignored Cooley's questions about my talk with the Captain. At ten o'clock, I called the girl outside for an airlines timetable to Chicago. At ten-thirty, the phone rang and the operator announced that Chicago was calling Lieutenant Callan, person-to-person.

The man on the other end was so upset by having read about the murder in the Chicago paper that it was hard to pin him down to the facts. They were really very simple. He was with a large Chicago publisher which handled a high percentage of religious books. He was an old student and friend of Father Warren. He had been after him for some time to do a book suited to general publication. This one was it. He had been away since last week and had not yet read the manuscript. It was on his desk now. Yes, he would allow it to be called for by the Chicago police and taken to the airport. Did I really think there was any connection between the book and Father Warren's death? Because if I did, I had better see the letter which Father Warren had written him about the book. He would enclose it with the manuscript. I grudgingly used another half a minute to thank him, and then cleared the line to call the homicide bureau in Chicago, where I had a friend who didn't waste time asking questions about anything but plane connections.

Plane connections were more than usually bad that day, and the manuscript didn't get to town until nearly four o'clock. I met the plane myself and got the package from the stewardess. I tore off the wrapper in the car and read the letter. It had been written on Regent Hotel stationery, and was postmarked Monday noon.

It read: "Dear Bob: I know how valuable your time is, so I want to warn you about something right away before you get too much reading done! The manuscript as you have it is a snare and a delusion. Chapter Three, and most of Chapter Seven, will have to go! In fact, every reference to our friend's pioneer brother is out. This is too bad because he certainly gave the proceedings a dash of color that would have appealed to the reader. It seems the direct descendants are anything but happy. I must respect their scruples to the extent of removing any links between them and the Monsignor. Too bad—but to coin a phrase, life is like that. The overall loss to the book won't be great, but I don't want you thinking you can have covered wagons and oil wells and a dice-rattling pioneer when you can't." The rest was queries about the publisher's wife and children. When I got back to my office, I locked the door and sat down with the manuscript. By the time I reached page 77 I had read far enough.

I SAT at my desk for nearly an hour, thinking. The manuscript was in my safe now and I had typed a copy of one page. But I had no idea what to do with it. At six o'clock, the inter-office phone rang and the captain's voice said, "Callan? The Commissioner wants to see you. I'll meet you at his office, and in case I don't get a chance to talk there, let me give you a piece of advice. Tell him you want to get taken off the case—as soon as you get in his office."

"I'll think about it all the way down the hall," I said, folding the copy and putting it into my pocket. He was absolutely right, of course. It wasn't smart, wrecking a sort of career and a sort of a future just because you don't want to let go of a case, you probably can't prove, just because you've finally come across a crime that was pure, undiluted evil from start to finish. "Hey, Captain," I added, "do me a favor, will you? Get Cooley off this case—officially, you know. As of a few days ago or something."

"I can't. Commissioner wants to see him too. He's with me now."

"Hell! O.K. I'll be right up."

The Commissioner's office was on the third floor. I walked up the stairs slowly, not because I wanted time to work on the script but because I didn't have much energy left. The Captain was in the outer office.

The Commissioner's secretary said, "Go right in." She sounded nervous. As she opened the door for us, I could see why. I caught the Captain's eye. He gave me an almost imperceptible it's-news-to-me-too shrug.

Around the Commissioner's desk, reading from left to right, sat the Commissioner, E. Simpson, and J. Simpson. It was as nasty-looking a reception committee as Daniel Webster's embalmed jury. The Commissioner said, "You may go home now, Miss Edwards. Sit down, Captain. Sit down, Callan—Cooley. These gentlemen are due at the Board of Trade banquet soon, so we won't waste any time. Have you seen this, Callan?"

He shoved the afternoon *Sun* at me. I didn't know the Commissioner ever allowed his hands to be soiled by our town's anti-Simpson gazette. He would rather have been caught dead than breathing at any speed not approved by the brothers. What had upset the trio was the *Sun's* front-page story tying the Simpsons in with the murdered priest. The paper had reported nothing but the facts: Father Warren had come to town to visit the family in connection with a book he was writing; police were asking questions. Nothing anyone could start a libel suit over. I said, "So?" and put the paper back on the desk.

"I want to know by whose authority that story was released to the papers, Callan," the Commissioner growled.

"Released?" I said. "Who has to release a story like that to a newspaper? Once they had the victim's name they probably contacted his school, same as I did, and found out—"

"I don't care *how* they got the story, Callan." This time Eric Simpson had the floor. "The point is that they have it. And this is no time for anything like this to be in the papers—even though it's all a miserable coincidence, his calling on us the day before he was killed."

"No time for anything like this" meant election year.

"I hold your bungling around with this case entirely responsible for the whole mess, Callan," he went on, "and I didn't want anyone to deprive me of the pleasure of telling you personally—you're through—on this case and on this police force."

"Really?" My eyes widened. "Good. Now I can go to Mexico and raise pimientos. It's been my secret dream."

The Captain broke in, "Don't you think— Isn't everybody being pretty quick about all this? When it blows over—"

"Things like this don't blow over. They—they—" The proper words failed to present themselves and Eric ended on a low sputter.

J. Simpson filled in the silence with one of the endearing lines of all times. He said pettishly, "My wife is very upset by all this!"

I looked at him sharply—the weak, petulant face, the lips twitching with nervousness. If they knew how much I knew, as they obviously did not, it would take so little to make him crack. He was my best bet.

"You people are making quite a fuss over one little visit from the police," I said. "After all, nobody's accused you of murder,"—I stood up—"yet!"

J. Simpson started forward, but his brother snapped, "Sit down, Callan.

The sentence was lost in the mild riot that followed, as he flung himself at me with a scream, and Cooley executed a flying tackle on Eric.

I have a few more things to say to you."

"Well, have fun saying them. I really have to run though. Now that I'm washed up here, I want to dash around to the *Sun* office and see about some folding money. That's one nice thing about not being on the force. You can get paid for what you know."

By walking slowly I managed to be only halfway to the door before J. Simpson shouted, "Wait a minute! Don't let him—" And Eric Simpson snarled, "Callan! Come back here!"

"Yes?" I said, turning around. James's face was an encouraging shade of purple.

Eric said calmly, "Better check the libel laws of this State before you start running around to newspapers. In fact, I'm not sure what you've already said in the presence of witnesses doesn't come under the heading of libel." He glanced at the Police Commissioner. That worthy official, not knowing that he was doing business with desperate men, looked confused by the sudden wild legalisms.

I said pleasantly, "O.K., Simpson. Take it easy. You're right—it'd not be true to the old *esprit de corps* to talk to the papers yet. I'd better just pass along my information to my successor on the case, and then quietly fade away, faithful to the end." I leaned on the back of my chair. "It *would* be mean to hold out on the Department. Captain was saying just this morning that what we need is a motive, and I just happen to have one on me. Had it flown in from Chicago on ice this afternoon." I glanced at James and winked. "From a Chicago publisher, that is."

James Simpson leaped to his feet and started to shout something. His brother grabbed him by the arm and said, "Sit down, James! Shut up, Callan!" He took a deep breath. "Nobody's making very good sense around here," he said. "You were right, Captain. We *are* being too hot over all this. I don't blame Callan for flying off the handle." He spoke in a pleasant, conciliatory manner.

Now, I thought, the last-ditch bribe!

Eric said, "This is no place to talk it over either. Look, Callan. I've got it! Why don't you come to this dinner with us? If we're all seen together, in a friendly way, it would take care of any talk, any silly newspaper gossip. How about it?" He stood up and ambled toward the door.

I looked after him, but made no attempt to follow.

"All things considered, Callan," he went on, talking more rapidly, "I *do* think you'd be better off and a more useful man in another line of work. There's a vice-presidency opening up at the refinery. Needs a man with spunk and guts. You won't hold it against me that I wanted to see how much you had, will you?" He motioned to his brother. "I move we all adjourn to the bar nearest the banquet hall and talk it over. Over a drink, that is!"

It was a disgusting performance, and judging from the expressions on the faces of the other three men, mystifying. I studied the Simpsons briefly, then said to the Captain, "As I was saying before the feeble attempt to bribe a policeman, I had your motive flown in from Chicago today. Father Warren's book. It's in my safe. I brought you a copy of page 77, though, to save you the walk." I handed him the paper. He opened it, nervously.

"I'll take that, Captain. Just throw it on the floor." Eric Simpson's tone of voice was, oddly enough, fairly polite. Take away the gun he had removed from his pocket, and he would have sounded almost pleasant.

James Simpson was shaking like unset junket. I could see two large tears begin to trickle down his purple cheeks. I said, "Brother! This will go down in quiz-show history. 'For sixty-four dollars, who was the famous priest-murderer who pulled a gun in the Police Commissioner's office and thought he could get away with it?'"

"I'll get away with it," Eric said. "I'll be out of the State before anyone even begins to wonder where you three are. Nice that this part of the building is empty by now. Nobody will hear a thing."

"Eric!" the Commissioner sputtered. "For God's sake, what's this all about? Put that gun away! What can you—what can *he* prove, even if—" He was, if possible, more purple than James.

Cooley spoke up for the first time. His easy-going, absolutely unruffled drawl was probably as unnerving to Eric as anything he could have heard. "Hey, Lieutenant," he said, "if this joker's gonna shoot us anyway, don't let me die in ignorance! What in hell *did* the poor old priest do to him?"

"Oh, it's just that he was writing a book about old Monsignor Simpson," I said quickly, but in a voice equally unconcerned. "This son-of-a-bitch's great-uncle. And Monsignor Simpson used to go around bragging about his mother, and saying wasn't it wonderful she could give him such an education even though she was born a Negro slave girl. And Father Warren thought it was pretty hot too. But the Simpsons here don't seem to—"

The end of the sentence was lost in the mild riot which followed. As I had expected, James Simpson chose that opportune moment to break under the strain which had become unbearable the minute I said the word. He flung himself at me with a scream. Cooley had executed a neat flying tackle on Eric, even before I had immobilized James with a short right to the solar plexus. The Commissioner was on the telephone before the shot, which Eric bounced off the ceiling, had completely smoked away.

The Captain said to me, "I want to know everything that happened. I want something on paper before they start pulling lawyers and habeas corpuses out of their pockets."

"Let's get out of here," I answered. "I know where we can get it. . . .

There was nothing left of her magnolia-and-mint-julep charm any more. Her face was red and swollen, and her eyes were heavy. She wandered up

"Let him run another couple of blocks—it'll teach him to get that bucket out on time."

and down the room, unable to sit still. And she wanted to talk. More than anything she wanted to tell someone about it.

"Eric—it was Eric. He made us—he made James help him. I had nothing to do with it! *Nothing. They* did it. Eric did it. He—"

"Try to answer the questions, Mrs. Simpson," I said. "That's the best way to help your husband. What can you tell us about Father Warren's visit? What happened?"

Cooley's pencil was moving as quickly as anyone could talk.

"I didn't know! I *didn't* know about them—about their—their family. And James didn't either. Eric knew, though. He should have told me—told James. Before—"

"How about Father Warren?" I said.

"That priest—he came to see James. I was in the room with them. He talked to us for awhile about the family, and asked did we have any letters or stories or anything, and everything was all right. But then he mentioned—this thing. I don't remember how. I think he said something stupid about how this man Leon Simpson, this uncle of theirs, could be such an inspiration today and encourage Negro vocations—whatever *that* means—and how it was all proof of the Church's advanced social thinking, even in those days." Her lip curled on the phrase. "God, as if I haven't always *hated* that Church because of the fancy ideas it tries to give *them!*"

"What happened next?" I interrupted. I had heard it all before, but it sounded so ugly, boiling out of her. Cooley's pencil faltered, then got it all on paper.

"Then James stopped him and asked what was he talking about—that of course we knew the early Simpsons were Catholics but that—" She swallowed hard. "Then the priest was very embarrassed and said he was so sorry, he thought surely we knew. And then James sent for Eric, and Eric came right home. And he *did* know. And he talked very calmly to the priest and said, of course there couldn't be any question of going on with the book—or at least of putting *that* in it. And the priest said that was one reason for writing the book in the first place. And Eric asked what was his favorite charity, and wouldn't he take a check for five thousand for it."

I smiled, in spite of the way I felt. Good old Eric. Always the simple, direct approach!

"And then the priest said he had to leave and that we shouldn't worry. He said he'd take out the parts about Grandfather Simpson that might tie us up with it. And he left. And then I ran upstairs and packed my bags. I didn't know what I was going to do." She sobbed. "But I wanted to get out."

"Were you going to leave your husband?"

"Of course! How could I live here knowing—that?"

"That your husband was one-thirty-second Negro?" I murmured, hardly knowing that I was speaking out loud. "Wasn't that awful!"

She looked at me with no comprehension. She said, "But—but do you suppose it's really *true?* Even now I can't believe it. My *husband!* How did the priest find out about it? How could—" She stopped.

"He found out by reading old archives—old sermons of Monsignor Simpson. He was always bragging about his parents, particularly in sermons to upper-crust congregations." I don't know why I felt like answering her question straight, but I did. "His father was an Irish immigrant who fell in love with a New Orleans quadroon—a young slave girl. Only she had been given the same education as the daughter of the household that owned her. After they were married, they went to New York. They were always poor, but she educated her sons herself, and the older one got into the seminary on the strength of what she could teach him. And he liked to tell people about her. That's how Father Warren found out."

But she had not been listening. Her lips were twisting noiselessly over one word which she finally forced out. "Disgusting!"

I said, "Then what happened, Mrs. Simpson? Why didn't you leave?"

"James begged me not to," she said. "He asked me didn't I love him at all for himself, and he said it would never get out, never! He said they wouldn't let it, that Eric would think of something, that they wouldn't take any chances on ruining what they'd built up here. And I said I'd stay; it wasn't that I felt so different about James. It was just that—what would happen if people ever found out?" She sobbed into a damp handkerchief. "After that Eric and James talked for hours, and I took some sleeping pills and went to bed. Next morning they told me to keep calling the hotel. They wanted a woman's voice to call. I don't know why." I could imagine why. "I finally got him and I said—what they told me to say."

"What was that?"

"That they had talked it over and decided that, if he was really going to take out Grandfather Simpson, it would be all right and that they had some letters he could see. Of course there weren't really any letters. Eric told us his grandmother had destroyed every possible trace of the East-Coast family, after Grandfather Simpson died. Eric said to tell the priest that they'd pick him up anywhere he said. That was so no taxi driver would remember bringing him to the house. He said he was going to vespers at 4:30, and that we could pick him up at the church at 5:30. Eric went to get him in a little car no one would notice. I *didn't* know what they were planning!" she added, her voice rising. "They told me to get the child—their niece—out of the house, so I took her to the movies. When I came back he—the priest—wasn't here. James told me that night. Eric had put poison in his tea, and then they took the body to the basement and burned his clothes and dressed him in old rags. James said the police never would be able to identify him." She sobbed, finally beyond speech.

"And then they took him to the park that night," I finished. "But Mrs. Simpson—he had promised not to connect you up with the Monsignor. Why did they do it?"

She stopped sobbing and looked at me as though I had asked her why she breathed. "He *knew*," she said slowly. "He was the only one who did. And he was going to put it in a book!"

She sank into a chair, exhausted. "Please help me! I have to get out of town—before the trial! How can I get out?"

"Before the trial!" the Captain said. "That's impossible! Why, you—" He stopped, not sure how to break the news that she herself probably would be on trial as an accessory.

"I have to get out before this all gets into the papers! Do you realize what people will say when they find out? My friends—and all the people who hate us—and the whole town? Can't you imagine what they'll say when they find out that the Simpsons—" She stopped.

"Killed a man?" I finished.

"No—no—" She brushed aside the fact of the murder impatiently. "Not about that."

She was right, of course. The people who hated and envied the Simpsons would find the fact that they were murderers the least scandalous of the two news stories about them in the morning papers. I wondered about it while I was writing up my report of the case that night. If it was true, and I knew it was, then it wasn't really accurate to talk about "two or possibly three murderers" who had killed the priest. There were millions of them—all over the country, and lots of them had never even heard of the man who was dead. But they had all made their little contribution to the murder. Probably I had too.

Of course you can't put stuff like that in a police report. •

The RAREST SEX-CONVERSION CASE of all

By Doctor LOUIS W. MARAVENTANO

One of the most remarkable cases in all medical history is described exclusively for Bluebook *in the following article by the noted surgeon who handled it. It was a sex-conversion operation on a true hermaphrodite—the creation of one person from an individual who was physically* both a man and a woman.

There have been only about 30 authenticated cases of true hermaphroditism in the entire range of medical literature!

These strange persons are rarer than pseudo, or false, hermaphrodites —individuals in whom nature has developed a mixture of both male and female organs but who possess the reproductive glands of only one sex. They have the rudimentary external genitals of one sex and the internal organs of another. Some doctors believe that this blunder by nature, not fully explained, occurs in about one in 1,000 births, with accurate figures impossible to obtain because of ignorance, family reticence, or both.

A true hermaphrodite, however, possesses both testes and ovaries, and the external genitals of both man and woman.

Fairly common among certain types of plants and animals, such as earthworms and mollusks, they are so scarce in humans that the discovery of one, and especially the surgical treatment of the defect, is accounted a medical phenomenon.

This is the incredible story of such a phenomenon, made public in full for the first time by the doctor who treated the patient.

The author, Dr. Louis W. Maraventano, is a noted anatomist and embryologist of Yonkers, N. Y.; he is one of the country's foremost experts on sex-conversion. He has performed a number of successful transformations in the past and is now preparing his report on this amazing case for the medical profession.

Apart from its medical significance, the case presents a heart-tugging human document, and it is from both points of view that the story is presented here. It is a story of a tragically-bewildered human being—whose name is known to the editors but which is being withheld—who had been dealt fate's cruelest blow: placed neither among women nor in the ranks of men, but in the shadowy limbo between.—The Editors.

The true hermaphrodite—an individual who is physically both a man and a woman—has appeared only about thirty times in all medical history. Here, for the first time in a general magazine, is the amazing story of one such case, told by the doctor who treated it.

THE letter bore the postmark of a small city near the Firth of Clyde, on the Scottish west coast. In a neat, prim script, the writer said he was coming to the United States aboard the *Queen Mary* later that month, and would call at my office the day it docked.

On the morning of August 24th, a hot, sticky day, the *Mary* elbowed into her berth in New York Harbor. It was a Thursday, a day on which I generally do not schedule appointments. That afternoon, I left my home and strolled to the corner to buy some cigarettes.

I returned just as a sleek, dark Cadillac slid to a halt in front of my rambling old house, on a tree-shaded street in Yonkers, N. Y. Two men alighted—one, a tall, spare gentleman in clerical garb; the other short, rotund, pink-cheeked. The short man looked at me and inclined his head in a stiff little bow.

"Dr. Maraventano?" he asked in crisp, beautifully-enunciated tones.

I greeted him and his companion, shook hands and we went inside.

Alone in my office, I began the consultation slowly and carefully. The patient—for such he was—brought with him a serious problem; that much I had gathered from his letter. Exactly how serious I was to learn shortly.

He was a small, chubby man, impeccably dressed in a dark suit. From the bowler hat he balanced on his knees, to the shiny patent leather shoes he wore, he looked like the typical British gentleman—stolid, conservative, reserved.

That reserve was difficult to penetrate. I exchanged a few pleasantries, asked about his trip and tried to put him at his ease.

And slowly the story came out.

A few months before I had performed a sex-conversion operation on a 23-year-old patient who had been raised as a girl. This person had gone through high school, had taken a secretarial course and was living her life as a female. But strange things had been happening, mentally as well as physically, and they had left her confused and unhappy.

By the time I saw her, she was shaving regularly, forced to do so not long after puberty. Feminine development had not proceeded as it should—she did not menstruate, and her body was angular instead of rounded. She wore chest pads because her breasts were abnormally small and undeveloped.

Preliminary examination indicated that this individual—despite what her parents and she herself had thought—was primarily a male, and an operation which followed proved it. It was discovered that the person had a true testicle in the left side of the groin, but no uterus or ovarian tissue. She was the classic example of a pseudo-hermaphrodite.

Prior to the operation, the patient had told me, flatly and without reservation, that she wanted to become a man. Thus the concealed male organs were brought forward and undeveloped female ones removed or obliterated. A male appendage was created by freeing the enlarged clitoris and making a canal in it. The testicle was moved into a scrotal sac formed by plastic surgery from another part of the patient's body.

Administrations of testosterone, a male sex hormone, followed surgery, in order to stimulate further the development of secondary male characteristics such as body hair, a lower voice and masculine muscles.

When the treatments were completed, the individual, who had spent 23 years of life in the wrong sex, joined the one to which he rightfully belonged.

News of this case, reported in the medical journals, had spread to Scotland, and it was this that had prompted my visitor to write to me of his problem.

There, in the shaded coolness of my office that August afternoon in 1949, the problem emerged.

He knew he was different physically from other men. He had known for a long time. But timidity, and his entirely conservative training and background, had prevented him from asking guidance.

Exactly how different he was he did not

"It is difficult, if not impossible, for the average person to grasp the colossal importance of the question when a doctor asks a true hermaphrodite, 'Which sex do you want to be?' "

know, but this much was acutely, painfully clear:

As far back as he could remember, and he was now in his early forties, a great loneliness had constantly engulfed him. It was not just a physical loneliness that lack of social companionship brings; it was a deep, troubled loneliness of spirit, a feeling that he belonged nowhere.

Despite the advantages of excellent schooling, wide travel and comfortable circumstances—his parents were wealthy owners of several Scottish hotels—he was tormented by these vague, undefined fears, by strange feelings of bewilderment.

At school he seldom had joined the other boys in athletics, horseplay or the British Isles counterpart of our American bull session. Afterward, he tried mixing with people his own age, but his few attempts were pathetic social failures. He soon gave up trying and gradually withdrew more and more into himself.

I listened intently, because the pattern was beginning to form. I asked a few questions.

Had he ever felt himself attracted to girls?

He wasn't sure. Sometimes he thought he did, but at other times he did not. It was not just the normal ebb and flow of physical emotion toward the opposite sex. It was a definite confusion. He just did not know.

Had he ever felt himself attracted to men?

He wasn't sure.

In other words, he had never had sex relations in his life?

He had not.

I asked other questions about his thoughts and feelings, and the same reply came to most of them: He wasn't sure; he was mixed up, lonely, sad. To make matters worse, in his earlier years he had been the butt of cruel gibes by boys because of his introverted nature and peculiar behavior. They had left him embittered and more confused.

It was the key.

Not long before I had delivered a talk on the subject of hermaphroditism. Let me quote a brief passage:

"The despair of the hermaphrodite is engendered primarily by an overwhelming sense of loneliness, augmented by the inherent ignorance and cruelty of mankind. . . . The hermaphrodite, like the crippled and the maimed, should be looked upon as a human being, temporarily incapacitated, but possessing the inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

My patient's mental attitude fitted this picture of despair.

"I feel that I am drifting, and have been drifting all of my life, between two worlds," was the way he expressed it. "I can't seem to find a place to plant my feet."

For some years, therefore, he had sought solace in religion for his torment—"the one bulwark against the buffeting, the one thing in which I can place my faith." His parents had died, and he was managing the family properties, but he planned to give them up and enter the Church of England. In fact, the prelate who had accompanied him to my home was a representative of that church.

But first, he wanted to end his confusion—to know, once and for all, in which of the two worlds he belonged.

I now proceeded with a physical examination.

The examination was a thorough one, from a study of cranial nerves and distribution of hairs on the scalp, to general features and anatomical construction. *Coupled with the observations made during subsequent surgery, that study revealed the fact that this balding little individual from Scotland, who was sitting in my office telling his pathetic tale of despair, was a true hermaphrodite.*

There were two sets of sex organs which were intact, and, with treatment, the patient could have had relations with persons of either sex!

The subject, moreover, could, after treatment, possibly become a mother and more probably become a father.

This discovery was made following an operation performed the first week in September, 1949, at St. Joseph's Hospital in

On the patient's answer can depend a well-adjusted and lasting happiness—or heartbreak, criminality, or even suicide. And, of course, there can be no turning back . . . ever.

Yonkers, at which I was assisted by Dr. Frank McCarthy. It was done just a week after the man from Scotland appeared at my office.

In the abdomen, Dr. McCarthy and I discovered an infantile uterus, ovaries and Fallopian tubes, as well as a left testicle.

If he wished, the patient could have been transformed into either a man or a woman by surgical procedure and hormone administrations. He could have become a man by obliteration of the vagina which was present and removal of other female organs. He could, on the other hand, have become a woman by dilation of the vagina to normal proportions and other procedures.

The decision, probably the most crucial ever to be faced by human beings, was put to the patient as he lay in the hospital bed. Which sex did he want for himself?

It is difficult, if not impossible, for the average person to grasp the colossal importance of this question when a doctor asks it of a true hermaphrodite. There have been many cases on record where the choices have been wisely made, and a happy, well-adjusted life followed. But there also have been unwise decisions, resulting in breakdowns of varying degrees of severity, criminality and even suicide.

You see, there is a mental wrench which rocks the patient to the very roots of his being. Picture a person brought up as a member of one sex, inculcated with that sex's outlook toward living, suddenly plunged into the world of the opposite. It takes a strong mind to steer away from the jagged shoals of mental imbalance.

My patient looked squarely at me when I asked the question, and his voice was steady as he replied:

"A man."

"You are certain? There can be no turning back! Your entire future happiness, your peace of mind, *everything* is at stake."

"I know, and I am certain."

I rose. "The operation will be done tomorrow," I told him, and left.

In mid-morning, the next day, he was wheeled into the operating room. A general anesthetic was administered. The nurses were at their posts. I stepped forward.

It was a dramatic moment, not because of the unusual surgical procedure itself—because after all the various phases of the operative procedure were well known. But because *a new human being was going to be created!* A person, who up to this moment had been tortured almost beyond belief by conflicting emotions, doubts and fears, was going to be reborn.

The operation lasted three hours. All female signs were either obliterated or removed. The introitus, or vaginal opening, was scarred and sewn, the ovaries and uterus were amputated. The Fallopian tubes, actually of no consequence in a case such as this, were allowed to remain. Surgery then corrected existing defects in the male organ.

The operation was followed by injections of testosterone, the hormone which alters the characteristic bodily features in the direction of the male sex. It was given to stabilize his personality and submerge feminine tendencies.

Recovery was rapid. The patient remained at St. Joseph's Hospital for two and a half weeks. When he was admitted, he belonged to neither sex but in the mystery land that lies somewhere between the two. He left as a man.

Did my patient make the right choice? Were his fearful doubts and nightmarish tortures over at last?

I have every reason to believe that the answers are yes. After his discharge, he went to Boston, where he entered a seminary and studied religion for six months. Then he returned to Scotland, where he was accepted into the clergy, his dearest wish.

He is living there now, as a man, loved and respected by his fellow clergymen and laymen alike.

Shortly after the operation, he sent my son a fine volume as a gift. In the inscription on the flyleaf he referred to my "heroic" work in his behalf.

He couldn't be more wrong.

He was the hero. •

A SHORT-SHORT STORY COMPLETE ON THESE TWO PAGES

The fake accident was perfect—until it exploded in his face like a:

BACKFIRE

By DON SOBOL

THE SIXTEENTH was a treacherous hole: to the right lay the rough, a darkening line of trees stretching nearly to the green. To the left was the Atlantic. The evening sun, a red bubble at the horizon, was already wetted when the two men teed off.

The drives followed one another into the burning dusk, falling and bouncing and dribbling. The two men started down the fairway. They carried their own golf bags. The older man, Adam Hanson, enjoyed the additional exercise and hoped to trim off a roll of flabbiness. The other man, Bruce Motley, was Hanson's business partner. At forty-three, Motley was athletically lean. And for his purpose the absence of caddies was essential.

Hanson stopped by his ball. "Keep your eye on the pin," he called jovially to Motley. After preliminary wiggling and jouncing, he swung. The ball veered into the woods and disappeared close by a tall elm. He fell back on his heels, squinting into the sun. "Did you see it?"

"Sliced it," Motley informed him.

Illustration by BOB RIGER

"Too bad. About fifty yards ahead of the tall elm."

Hanson wagged his club in disgust. "Play out, and I'll meet you on the green," he said. He waddled toward the woods. "The good wife's expecting us for dinner at eight, you know."

"He'll probably try out his latest trick glass or rubber potato," Jane had warned with a hostess' exasperation. Then her lips had brushed Motley's ear, the anticipated contretemps of the dinner put aside. "It's easy for you, darling. But I have to live with him. You've got to think of something."

Motley had thought of something. Something safer than an ingenious new meeting place. Hanson was a notorious slicer, but for five agonizing rounds of golf he had avoided slicing on this hole.

Motley watched until Hanson vanished into the trees. He was sure the course was deserted except for the two of them. Just the same, he took out a four iron and studied his lie. He swung awkwardly. His head moved with the imaginary flight of the ball as it curved into the woods. He slammed down his club. Then he bent over, picked up his club and ball, slung the bag over his shoulder, and went after Hanson.

Hanson was searching half-heartedly. "You're farther up," Motley said, setting down his bag.

"Never mind it. No sense in wasting time," Hanson replied and started for the fairway.

"No, wait. Isn't that it? Off to the right. A yard or so."

Hanson turned. Motley took a small mallet from his windbreaker. He had fixed a golf ball to one face.

"I don't see it," Hanson complained.

"In the bush there. There—you can't miss it."

Hanson peered into the bush. Motley brought the mallet down on the bald head. From his own bag, Motley quickly removed a yellow package of Burst-O-Flights, tore the cellophane and lifted out one.

Motley pressed the new ball carefully into Hanson's crushed skull and rolled it into the soft, loamy undergrowth, where it could easily be found. He pocketed the mallet, surveyed his handiwork briefly, and hurried to the clubhouse to report the tragic accident.

On the porch Motley hesitated. Inside lurked the real danger. Hanson, in his blind devotion to Jane, had been guilelessly pleased that his young wife and his business partner should hit it off so harmoniously. In the club were many of their closest mutual friends. Friends saw beyond harmony long before a doting husband did.

Motley pushed open the screen door and shouted for a doctor. Three rushed out from the dining-room.

By the time they had returned from inspecting Hanson's body, Motley's mind was eased. He paced the lobby, wringing his hands in an apt display of grief. He shrugged off the fury of sympathy, the arguments absolving him of blame.

That night he slept soundly. . . .

AT the office he halted before the door marked: ADAM HANSON, *President.* "Don't let anyone in today. . . . Y-you understand," he said huskily to Miss Brandwin, Hanson's secretary.

He proceeded into Hanson's office via the connecting doorway from his own. He settled himself behind the huge desk. It would soon belong to him. He smiled at the large picture of Jane. She had really believed the accident. She had wept a little. He put a cigarette in his lips and flicked the desk lighter. Instead of flame, a paper snake leaped out.

Motley grunted. He had forgotten about the lighter. For all his business acumen, Hanson's brand of levity had never developed beyond the need for props and devices. Motley was stuffing the snake back when the telephone rang.

It was the police. Motley had realized, of course, that a statement was necessary. A formality. He assured the mild voice at the other end of his fullest co-operation. Yes, he'd be in all morning.

Twenty-five minutes later a wispish little man with gray hair and meek brown eyes entered Motley's office. He introduced himself as Detective Godfrey Perkins, and apologized for having to prolong Motley's suffering.

"I'm afraid there is nothing much I can tell you," Motley said. "After I hit my ball, I walked into the woods to retrieve it. I found poor Hanson."

Perkins said, "In the undergrowth was a ball smudged with blood, pulpish flesh and hair. The lab boys tell me the hair and blood match that of the deceased." The detective leaned forward. "Isn't it possible that someone else—an enemy of Hanson's—killed him between the time he entered the woods and you followed, and then faked the ball to make it look like a golfing accident?"

"I doubt it, though it is possible. I'd have probably seen anyone else. Beside, Adam had no enemies."

"The country-club's manager, Ned Thompson, said he was always full of fun," Perkins agreed heavily. "It was just a theory."

"Is that all?" Motley inquired.

"Yes, if you can tell me the name of the ball you used."

For a moment Motley felt the chill of the unexpected. "Why is that important?"

Perkins regarded him benevolently. "Suppose you hit a Blue Dot into the woods and the ball with the blood is another make? I can hardly call death an accident, can I now?"

"Oh, I see." Relief swept Motley. "It was a Burst-O-Flight. Hanson gave it to me. We always played for something. I generally won."

The detective drew from his pocket the yellow package with the two remaining Burst-O-Flights. "I found these in your bag. The pro says Hanson didn't buy them at the golf shop."

Motley moved to usher Perkins out the door, not getting the point at all.

The detective stood. "I checked around, and no sporting-goods store handles them, either. Only the novelty shops do—the kind that sell mechanical mice and leaky drinking glasses."

Motley's hand froze on the doorknob. He waited, his eyes on the casual little detective.

Perkins lifted one of the golf balls between thumb and forefinger and lobbed it against the wall. "Unfortunately for your alibi," he said grimly. "You couldn't have hit this ball seven inches."

Motley scarcely heard the last remark. He stood staring at the shattered fragments of clay.

"Are you ready to give us a statement?" Perkins asked. •

The Blue Water Clan

By JAMES CHARLES LYNCH

Yacht racing was serious business to these people. For Pete, this race was the opportunity of a lifetime. Girl, career, pride—

FOR LACK OF SOMETHING MORE PROFITABLE to do, Mr. Peter Hannigan, a lean, dark, good-looking young man, propped his feet on his desk and peered into the future. What he saw seemed utterly impossible, but would probably happen anyway, if Miss Maggie McGuire had her way—and the advantage was all on her side.

Last night Miss McGuire had mixed lethal perfume, moonlight, luxurious black hair, green eyes, intoxicating lips—and a figure the National Safety Council considered a traffic hazard—into a brew so potent it scrambled Mr. Hannigan's brains. In that state he had kissed Miss McGuire and said things no penniless young man had any right to say to a woman whose father was referred to around East Bay and in yatching circles as Mr. United States Mint.

Pete was abruptly startled by the creak of his office door, which bore no legend to identify the occupant, and Miss McGuire's lovely voice.

"Hi, darling!" sang Miss McGuire. "Remember last night and the poor, helpless wench you tormented until she promised to marry you?"

Pete swung around and tried to rise, but Miss McGuire, dressed this morning in will-shattering white shorts and cozily-fitting white sweater, dropped into his lap and put her arms around his neck.

"Maggie!" Pete protested, and managed, by brute strength, to keep her lips about an inch from his own. "About last night—I must have lost my head."

"Tell it to get lost again," Maggie begged. "And stop shoving."

"You'll just have to forgive me," urged Pete.

Maggie reared back and laughed at him. "Forgive you for saying you loved me and wanted me to be your wife? After all the dirty tricks I used to get you to admit it? Not on your life, Mr. Hannigan." She frowned ferociously. "But, if you didn't mean what you said, I'll sue you for every thumbtack you own!"

"And that," muttered Pete, "is all you'd get, besides my other suit."

"I KNOW," cooed Maggie, kissing him. "You're a poor man, you poor man, who's going to be a designer of fast sailing yachts—or bust something. Only nobody even knows it but you and me and Pops, and no one's going to know it until the sloop you designed for Pops wins him back that rusty old McGuire Cup from the West Haven Yacht Club."

"And if *Tar Baby* doesn't win the McGuire Cup," Pete pointed out, "I—"

"*We*, darling," Maggie murmured. "*We* have to do it the hard way: We earn our reputation by designing a lot of fast sailboats. Then—"

"Only," Pete argued, "before anyone comes around wanting us to design—"

"We have to design a lot of fast sailboats," Miss McGuire continued. "Like which came first, the chicken or the egg; which doesn't make sense, darling, because there had to be love before there was either and we already have that. Now stop worrying. *Tar Baby* will make you famous enough."

"If it wins! Just because you blackjacked your father into letting me design his new challenger, is no sign—"

"Yes, it is!" declared Maggie. "A Hannigan-designed boat with Johnny Parker at the helm couldn't possibly be beaten! Luckily, Johnny returned from Europe last night, and this morning I talked him into sailing *Tar Baby* for Pops."

"And if you think," said a man with a deep, easy voice, "that I win boat races so a guy can get famous enough to marry my girl, you're crazy!"

Maggie managed to land on her feet as Pete reared up to face a big, blond, remarkably handsome young man whom Pete recognized instantly as Johnny Parker, fabulously wealthy and one of the crack racing skippers in America. But still worse, beside Mr. Parker stood a lean man of fifty, Miss McGuire's father.

"Mr. McGuire!" Pete managed. "When did you— How long—" He stopped and stared accusingly at Maggie, who seemed not to care who had heard what.

Johnny Parker cocked his head, examined Pete and said, "Look, Tom, his face has turned so red you can't even tell where the lipstick was."

"So I notice," said Tom McGuire. "Remarkable camouflage job! Quick thinking, too."

"Stop that!" ordered Maggie. "And stop telling anyone I'm your girl, Johnny Parker. I'm not, and Pete's altar-shy enough as it is."

"Well, *I'm* not," stated Mr. Parker. "And I can't see what he's got that—"

"He's just a nice, wonderful man," said Maggie. "That's all."

"May I interrupt?" asked Mr. McGuire quietly.

"Please do!" begged Pete.

"Mr. Parker and I," said Mr. McGuire, "have been down looking over *Tar Baby* and, in spite of the way Johnny's been carrying on here, he likes her."

"That's right, Hannigan," said Parker, turning serious. "I thought Tom had lost his mind letting someone we had never heard about design a boat for him for such an important race. But since looking at *Tar Baby* I take it all back. She's a sweet job. Naturally, I'll keep your part in this business under my hat, the way Tom wants it to be, until we win. Congratulations!"

Coming from a man of Parker's stature and experience as a sailor, those words constituted a real compliment. Pete thanked him, meanwhile wondering why he could not completely like this big man.

"Well," said Maggie happily, "that's all settled. If you gentlemen will excuse Mr. Hannigan and me, now, we'll get back to more serious business."

"I'm sorry, my dear," her father murmured, "but Mr. Hannigan has something even more important to do. He's leaving for West Haven this afternoon."

"West Haven?" protested Maggie. "Why? That's three hundred miles away!"

"Because," McGuire said, "we want Pete to get a look at the lines of the boat McKay's designed for the West Haven crowd, before they launch. That way, Johnny might be able to devise ways to overcome her strong points."

"But that's spying!" declared Maggie. "Pete won't do it."

Illustrated by CHARLES LUNDGREN

"Yesterday," Mr. McGuire pointed out, "they caught a West Haven man taking pictures of *Tar Baby*. Now they know all about her, except who designed her."

Maggie folded her arms. "All those pictures will do is scare them to death. And I don't see why we have to keep Pete's work on *Tar Baby* a secret any longer. We're going to win; if we don't, I'll chop a hole in *Tar Baby's* hull and plug the leak with Johnny's head. I'm quite serious."

"So are we," Parker put in. "That's why we're sending Pete to West Haven. Neither Tom nor I can go; we're too well known down there, but Pete isn't. And as for making Pete's name public property, I think your father is right in wanting to hold it back. This way, if we should lose by some fluke, Pete won't have a strike against him if he decides to open an office and hang out his shingle. Of course, if we win, Pete will be famous overnight—and we want to win, don't we?"

"Of course," said Maggie.

"Maggie," her father said, a little heavily, "you and Johnny wait in my car. I want a moment alone with Pete."

Maggie's eyes flashed, but she kissed Pete, begged him to phone her every five minutes or so, then let Johnny Parker escort her out. When they were gone, Pete leaned back against his desk, looking defensive.

But McGuire said, "I don't want you to do anything at West Haven that might go against your conscience. This whole thing is Parker's idea, and though I don't like it too much, I'm humoring him."

AT nine next morning, Pete settled himself on a bollard on the outer end of a pier that paralleled a marine way serving the modest McKay Boat Works in West Haven. A high, tight board fence surrounded the place and all Pete could see of anything resembling a boat was a bright new spar, stayed with stainless-steel wire rigging, that towered above the fence. Pete felt sure it was the mast of the boat he and Tom McGuire wanted so much to beat, the boat against which neither of them would ever have a chance. The slatting of wind-whipped canvas finally roused him and he rose to his feet to look around.

A smart little day sailer rounded up beside the pier. The lone girl in the cockpit deftly made fast the mooring lines, lowered and furled the sails and climbed the pier ladder to where Pete stood. She was a slender, lithe girl, her reddish-brown hair sun-streaked, her blue eyes warm and shining.

"Nice little boat you have there," Pete said.

"A Robby McKay boat," she said, as if there wasn't any other kind.

"Did you," said Pete, startled, "say *Robby* McKay?"

"Yes. Do you know Robby?"

Her voice faded, drowned by the scream of racing engines Pete heard in his mind, engines driving a PT boat, afire from stem to stern, away from an enemy destroyer that sank slowly into the night-shrouded sea off Guadalcanal. And Lieutenant Robby McKay, at the controls on the little bridge, his words strangely formal in this crisis: "Abandon ship, Mr. Hannigan. See that every man gets away. That's an order!" And overside they went, leaving Robby McKay there alone. Shortly afterward the PT buckled in a tower of flame, far enough away so that her burning gasoline, spreading across the water, did not reach the men who had once made her go for Robby McKay.

"I knew a Robby McKay, once," said Pete. "But he's dead."

Obviously not hearing him, she stared with eager wistfulness at something behind Pete and he turned to see what it was. A big, tousled man, dressed in blue slacks and shirt, groped cautiously toward them, peering hard through thick-lensed spectacles as he tried to see the pier floor beneath his feet.

"That you, Mickey?" he called. "How'd she go?"

"Yes, Robby!" she cried breathlessly. "She goes like a dream."

Pete finally forced his tight throat open, still not believing his eyes. "Robby!" he shouted. "Skipper! It's me —Pete Hannigan!"

McKay took a quick step forward, his scarred blue eyes straining behind those thick lenses. Then he grabbed Pete. "Pete! You son-of-a-gun! Look, Mickey, it's Pete! I've told you about him. Ol' Pete Hannigan—the ninety-day boot ensign who really turned out to be a wonder!" Robby paused and caught his breath, then: "Pete, this is Mickey: my wife—also my Seeing-Eye dog."

Pete winced at those last bitter words and held back the questions he wanted to ask. Maybe, sometime, Robby would tell him about that night. Maybe he might even explain why he so thoughtlessly hurt this lovely girl who was his wife. She adored Robby; even a totally blind man could have seen that.

THEY moved slowly back along the pier, Robby between Pete and Mickey, asking a thousand questions. Pete answered them all, telling the truth. He was glad they didn't ask him exactly what boat he had been designing and he didn't tell them.

"Son-of-a-gun!" Robby exclaimed again. "So you want to get into this business, too. You're crazy, Pete—it's too chancy."

"If you love it, though," Mickey put in, "it can be happy work."

"A two-bit business," Robby went on, "at least for a guy in my shape."

Pete saw tears well up and glisten in Mickey's fine eyes. "Nobody," she declared, "could design a better boat than *Warrior*."

"*Warrior*," Robby explained, "is a raft I designed to defend the McGuire Cup this year—and that's a laugh. Jack had a man sneak some pictures of McGuire's new boat, and he's got something. He's keeping the name of her designer a secret—trying to worry us—but you can bet he hired the best brains in the country."

"You'll beat them, anyway," Mickey said, stoutly.

Robby tried to make it sound like a joke. "Mickey," he said, "just won't believe there hasn't been a miracle since they finished writing the Bible."

"That's no sign one can't happen," said Pete. "McGuire hasn't had a look-in for nearly ten years, which proves this West Haven gang must know what they're doing. They picked you to design a defender, didn't they?"

"This West Haven gang," said Robby, "is mostly a bunch of sentimental fools. They just got tired of tossing nickels into a blind man's cup, so they made up a jackpot and gave it to me all at once, to get me out of their hair."

"That's not so!" cried Mickey.

"Jack thinks so," Robby asserted. "And a lot of folks agree with Jack."

"Who's Jack?" Pete wanted to know. "Not Jack Langford?"

"Yes, that's him," assented Robby. "One of the best racing sailboat skippers in the country. The only one I know of who has consistently beat that fellow Parker. Jack's skippered our last four defenders, and he's slated to sail my boat, only he doesn't like it—either the boat or his chances of winning."

They came to a gate in the yard fence then, and walked on in, with Robby saying, "Well, Pete, there she is. Look her over good for me, will you, and tell me what you think. I can't see the whole of her, myself, except on paper. My eyes got burned pretty bad that night."

Pete walked on ahead and slowly circled the tall sparred sloop he had come to spy upon. She was narrower than *Tar Baby*, with a look of slicing power in her long, clean lines.

"Well?" Robby called, impatiently.

"She looks tender," Pete said reluctantly.

"If the weather's light,"—Robby's tone was defensive—"she'll fly. If it blows hard, like it's blowing today, her drive will overcome her tenderness—if her skipper has the guts to sail her hard. I could see it plain on paper, and in my calculations, but—" His voice trailed off and his shoulders slumped. "But I can't see it now in the hull. You're probably right, Pete. What you say jibes with Langford's opinion, exactly."

Mickey looked down at the ground and Pete shook his head. "And what do we know about it?" he asked. "There's only one way to find out about a boat, Robby. Sail her. Can you borrow any sails that have been worked out, and sail her today?"

"Yes," cried Mickey. "Dr. Sutherland's been using the *Warrior's* sails."

It was obvious, from his long silence, that Robby McKay had been putting that off, afraid of the truth. But now he turned to face the hardening wind and came to a decision. "Mickey, get on the phone. Call Jack and the Committee. Tell them we're launching at noon, so we can try her out in this weather."

"Hurrah!" cried Mickey, running for the office. "In we go—and damn the torpedoes!"

"You have a wonderful wife there, Robby," said Pete.

"That I have," agreed Robby. "She only has one fault: She loves me. She knocks herself out trying to help me and make me believe I'm the greatest guy in the world."

"That's bad?"

"WHAT she doesn't realize," Robby went on, "is how hard it is to try to live up to what she thinks I am. Just between you and me, Pete—Mickey doesn't know this—West Haven didn't hand me this job on a silver platter. I fought for it, hoping for one of those miracles so I could prove to myself that Mickey's right about me. I was a damned fool. Now, when we lose, both of us will be convinced."

"I don't think so," argued Pete. "And I think what Mickey means, is that you're the greatest guy on earth for her. I don't think winning or losing a race will change that, Robby. If you let it, then I agree with you: You are a damned fool."

"Can you spare a few hours to lend me a hand here, Pete?" Robby said curtly. "I had to let most of my yard crew go."

Pete wanted to tell Robby that the big race was already in the bag for West Haven, that there wasn't a thing to worry about; but he could not say it, so he pitched in with Mickey and Robby's two remaining men. Soon the members of the Committee began to straggle in to help—men from all walks and stations of life, drawn together by the common bond of blue water. Only Jack Langford proved the exception. He was good and he knew it, and he made no effort to hide his dislike for this ship he was to sail or the man who had designed and built her.

Around noontime, Dr. Sutherland smashed a bottle of champagne on the *Warrior's* bow and the graceful hull moved down the ways to take the restless water and float free—a white, gleaming thing, all at once alive, beautiful to look at, but still of doubtful character.

"I want Pete Hannigan to come along," announced Robby. "And Mickey, too. Doc, you'll come, and any two you want to name."

They climbed down into the boat and Pete followed them, wanting to go yet not wanting to. A launch came around to tow them out and up into the wind and they got the canvas on her, a tall, narrow mainsail and a big overlapping jib. When this was done, Langford motioned the launch clear and sent the *Warrior* downwind. She picked up her heels and flew, leaving a clean white wake.

"By George!" roared Dr. Sutherland. "Robby, we've got something!"

"Let's prove it, first," said Langford. "Anything will run downhill in this breeze. Let's strap her down and see what happens. In with that mainsheet, McKay. Jib in! Lively!"

Robby brought in the mainsheet and Mickey flattened the jib. Langford swung the tiller over fast, throwing the *Warrior* broadside to the driving wind.

As if she had run aground, the *Warrior* died—and over she went. The lee rail disappeared under green water, then the cockpit coaming.

"Let go!" yelled Jack Langford, white-faced. "Let go everything!"

Mickey freed the jib and Robby let the mainsheet run, dumping the press of wind from the big sail. Slowly the *Warrior* came up, shaking the water off her decks. Langford let her hang there and turned on Robby McKay.

"You!" Langford shouted. "Who told you you could design a boat? You've got a death-trap here. A pig! She won't stand up even to a thirty-knot breeze!"

Robby sat numbly shaking his head, moving his hand away quickly when Mickey reached out to comfort him.

"Why didn't you give her a chance, Langford?" Pete barked at the sullen young man at the tiller. "That's no way to treat a boat."

"You trying to tell me how to sail, Hannigan?" fumed Langford.

Pete shook his head. "No! But I'm going to show you how to sail this one!"

Langford laughed, and motioned the launch in close. "Do that," he said. "But wait until I bail out, will you? I want no part of this crate." He leaped aboard the launch when it swept in close, and called back to Dr. Sutherland, "You and your friends better come with me, Doc."

"You go with him, too, Mickey," ordered Robby McKay.

"No one's going anywhere," said Mickey calmly. "The only thing wrong with this boat just jumped off—and even Jack isn't afraid of the boat. He's just afraid of losing. Take over, Pete."

Pete moved back to the tiller and looked at Dr. Sutherland.

Sutherland shrugged his big shoulders. "We might as well find out what we have here, Hannigan, though there's nothing we can do about it now."

Pete nodded and ordered the sheets eased in. Gently, he got the *Warrior* underway, then duplicated Langford's almost disastrous order. But instead of kicking the *Warrior* around, as Langford had done, Pete kept her footing fast, sailing her up into the wind in an easy, sweeping rush. And instead of heeling over and dying, as Langford had made her do, the slim hull went down no farther than her rail and roared along, the forward drive making her stand up, just as Robby had figured she would.

"A real lady," Pete said, smiling at the astonished Committee. "She'll do all right." . . .

Three nights later, Pete paced West Haven's tree-lined streets, his mind too much at loose ends to let him rest. At last he tired, and turned back to the ancient hotel. And where the light from the hotel door reached the street Mickey McKay caught up with him.

"Pete," she said, softly, her voice not carrying beyond him, "I had to talk to you, alone. I want a favor. Could you possibly stay, for Robby's sake?"

"Would it do any good?"

"You don't know how much good, Pete. It's a horrible thing to watch the man you love get so discouraged, and not be able to do anything. But you've turned the tide, Pete. If you could only see your way clear to do what he's asking you to do! If you think you owe him anything, and you've shown in a hundred little ways that you do, pay him back now."

Pete looked down into her upturned face, sensing her fierce need of help in this project of hers, that of bringing a man completely back to life. "All I owe the guy is my life," he said. "I guess I should be willing to pay off one installment now. We'll talk about it in the morning, Mickey."

"Bless you, Pete!" she whispered. Her hands came up to his cheeks, she kissed him gently, then moved quickly away into the dark.

Pete climbed the veranda steps, feeling better, but still undecided. Actually he had promised Mickey nothing, and he stopped in his tracks as Maggie McGuire's troubled voice came to him from the shadows.

"Pete, darling! Remember me—Maggie McGuire?"

He went to her and she rose from a deep chair, almost stumbling over the night-case at her feet. "Maggie!" said Pete. "What are you doing here?"

"I know I shouldn't have come," she said, trying to keep her tone gay. "But you didn't call and I got worried, so I drove down here to see how you were doing. I see you're doing all right, all right."

"Yes," Pete said. "I've done all right. I've not only seen the West Haven boat on the ways, but I've sailed her myself."

"Good!" cried Maggie hopefully. "Then you can drive back with me, tonight. There's no reason to stay any longer, is there?"

Looking at her, Pete suddenly had an inkling of what must have passed through Robby's mind that night off Guadalcanal—the indecision at first, the mental rebellion against reality, the growing calm as resolve shaped up and then the clean decision that helps a man pack his personal hopes away for good.

"Yes, there is, Maggie," he said. "I'm staying here. You can tell your father that McKay's boat can beat *Tar Baby* on every point of sailing. And tell Johnny Parker he'd better pull out now, if he's afraid of a licking."

"You can't mean that, Pete!" Maggie gasped.

"Yes, I can," Pete muttered. "Every word of it."

Maggie looked up at him, searching his stiff-held features; finally she said, "Then I'm sorry for your sake, Pete. Pops told me how you feel about things—what this race means to you. If I told you that winning or losing makes no difference to me, would it make any difference to you?"

"No," said Pete. "It would not."

Maggie kept fighting. "Look, Pete, I'm not one to give up easily, just because a little competition sets in. Is there anything else you want me to remember to tell Pops, before I roll up my sleeves and go to work on you?"

"Yes," said Pete. "Tell him Langford is not going to sail the defender this year. He's been replaced by a fellow named Pete Hannigan. Me."

That did it. "Oh," said Maggie, slowly bending and picking up her overnight bag. "All right, I'll tell him. And thanks for the buggy-ride!" Her lips trembling, she brushed past him, moved swiftly down the veranda steps, and then she was running. . . .

The West Haven Club welcomed Pete enthusiastically and let him pick his own crew for the *Warrior*. With the middle-aged Scot, Sam Timbrell, to handle the headsails, young Terry Moore on the jibsheets and backstay runners, and Robby McKay at the

mainsheet, Pete found the right combination and they worked together, hard and often, until men and boat blended into a harmonious whole. Then, when *Tar Baby* arrived, two days before the race, with Johnny Parker sailing her, Pete called it quits and holed up in Robby's living quarters at the yard, refusing to attend any of the pre-race functions at the club, and praying for light, clear weather for the race.

RACE day dawned with a cold rain slanting in on a hard north wind and, as the morning wore on, it grew worse. Sam and Terry showed up at ten-thirty and Mickey returned from the club where she had gone to pick up last-minute instructions from the Race Committee. She seemed unusually subdued and thoughtful; as they huddled over a chart of the bay, discussing last-minute strategy, she said, "I've got a message for you, Pete."

Pete looked up sharply at her and said, "Yes?"

"Maggie says to give you her love, and to tell you she hopes you win!"

"Maggie?" said Robby, looking up, grinning. "Who's Maggie, Pete?"

"Tom McGuire's daughter," said Mickey, quickly. "That wonderful, lovely girl you met last night at the dance."

"Well, I'll be darned!" exclaimed Robby, his smile broadening. "Imagine that dreamboat sending this guy her love! Pete, you do all right for yourself."

"Yeah," muttered Pete. "Don't I, though!" And they let it go at that to pull on foul-weather gear, hoist the canvas on *Warrior,* and shove off. Mickey, wishing them luck over and over again, waved them away, then ran for her car and headed back for the West Haven Club.

A solid line of cruisers and sailing craft rolled and pitched at anchor off the yacht-club float, marking the outer limits of the start and finish line, and *Warrior* drew a rousing welcome from this fleet. *Tar Baby* was already out and underway, and Parker sailed down and looked them over, deliberate and grim and unsmiling. Neither he nor the two younger men in his crew spoke, but Tom McGuire raised a hand and called, "Good luck, *Warrior!*" Pete was glad when the two boats parted company to work into position for the start.

The five-minute warning gun sounded, and Pete brought *Warrior* around, slanting for the starting line. But try as he might, he could not maneuver *Tar Baby* out of the windward position. Parker was leveling and doing his best. They crossed the line, rails down, white water roaring along the decks, barely two seconds apart, Pete with those two seconds in his favor, but *Tar Baby* in the better position.

The first five-mile leg of the triangular course lay dead into the wind and Pete laid a long tack out into the bay, Parker trying desperately to get past, and failing, but not losing an inch. *Tar Baby* was fast and Pete felt proud of her. She lifted lightly over the choppy seas and tossed spray disdainfully away from her plunging bow.

"How we doing, Skipper?" Robby asked.

"Not too good," Pete admitted. "I can't gain an overlap and, if I don't, Parker will ride us wide at the turn and we'll lose ground."

"You'll gain it back reaching down the next leg," Robby predicted confidently. "That *Tar Baby* must be some boat, though!"

Pete's prediction came true at the first turn, but Robby proved to be a prophet, too, though it took Pete almost that whole five-mile reach on the second leg to catch *Tar Baby,* blanket her and leave her wallowing for a moment as they flew on by.

Sam Timbrell was ready when Pete swung for the downwind run to the finish line. In an explosion of effort he swung out the spinnaker pole, let the jib halliard run and smothered the headsail all at once. And Terry made the winches whir, cracking the balloon spinnaker open, the big bellying sail fairly lifting *Warrior* over the tumbling seas.

That clean, efficient handling of headsails paid off and when Pete found time to look astern he saw *Tar Baby* two hundred yards back, but bearing downwind on what he knew in his heart would be *Tar Baby's* fastest point of sailing.

Warrior flew, but inch by inch, *Tar Baby* crept up—Parker trying every trick he knew to blanket *Warrior,* and Pete just as desperately sliding up and down, making Parker waste time trying to catch him. Then, with the line but a quarter-mile away, Parker evidently figured he had it made. He bore straight off for the finish.

Side by side, barely twenty yards apart, *Tar Baby* and *Warrior* boiled down toward that narrow space off the yacht-club float, both crews straining forward. Pete heard the cannon boom, marking the first boat over, and still could not tell whether he had won or lost, until he looked ashore and saw the wildly applauding crowd on the veranda of the club. Then, with Parker edging *Tar Baby* closer, and with Tom McGuire standing, shouting congratulations, something came loose in Pete and he yelled at Robby McKay.

"All right, you big, fat-headed hero!" he yelled. "We won! And now you haven't an excuse left in the world not to believe Mickey when she tells you what kind of guy she thinks you are. And when we get ashore, if you don't tell her you can see things a lot better, I'm going to saw the blade off an oar and beat your brains out with the handle!"

Robby sat there a moment, stunned; then his face lit up. "If I don't do that," he said, "you do just that! And thanks, Pete."

Pete worked *Warrior* into the club float ahead of *Tar Baby,* and leaped ashore. The whole crowd, Mickey among them, tried to grab him at once, but he shook them off and ran, looking neither right nor left.

Back in Robby's quarters he was almost packed when the door opened and they came in, trapping him—Johnny Parker, Tom McGuire, and Maggie, with Robby and Mickey, clinging to each other, bringing up the rear. For once, Maggie seemed subdued and uncertain, emotionally exhausted. Parker shook hands first.

"Pete," he said sincerely, "don't ever think you won because you sailed a better boat. You won because you're a better man than I am—all around."

"Thanks, Johnny," Pete managed and, all of a sudden, he liked this man.

Tom McGuire said, "Don't worry about anything, Pete. It's all over. We're all glad you won."

"Beating your own boat," growled Robby McKay, "to help a fool like me! And then calling me a big, fat-headed hero, and telling me to open my eyes. You better take a good look around yourself, Mr. Hannigan, and that's an order. What are *you* using for a head these days?"

"Whatever it is," murmured Maggie McGuire, "it's awfully nice. Especially when he loses it. Then he *really* begins to make sense!"

Pete looked at her and looked at the others and then he said, "Would you folks excuse us a moment? There are a few things I'd like to say to Miss McGuire."

They nodded and went out—and Pete started toward Miss McGuire.

"Why didn't you tell me about Mickey and Robby?" Maggie chided, the first chance she had. "Then I could have nailed a washtub to *Tar Baby's* keel and there wouldn't have been any doubts about anything!"

AND Johnny Parker, walking off with Tom McGuire, said, "A couple of good men, Hannigan and McKay. I wish I were in their class."

"And what makes you think you aren't?" Tom McGuire inquired.

"Tom," murmured Johnny Parker, "I could have beat Pete Hannigan by ten long minutes. But I didn't."

"Hell, I know that," said Tom McGuire. "But don't think you lost anything, Johnny. You never won a better race!" •

A BLUEBOOK TRUE ADVENTURE

RED STAR OVER JAVA

Sent on a secret mission to Java to find quinine, Colonel Weston tells of his narrow escape from death at the hands of the Communists.

By L. A. WESTON with A. W. PEZET

"YOU'LL NEVER GET BACK ALIVE," said Han Thong Yak. The clipped English he had learned at the University of Hong Kong rose clear and crisp above the muted whine of rifle fire and the muffled rattle of machine guns—sounds that were seeping through the closed and shuttered window of the hotel room. "It's too risky."

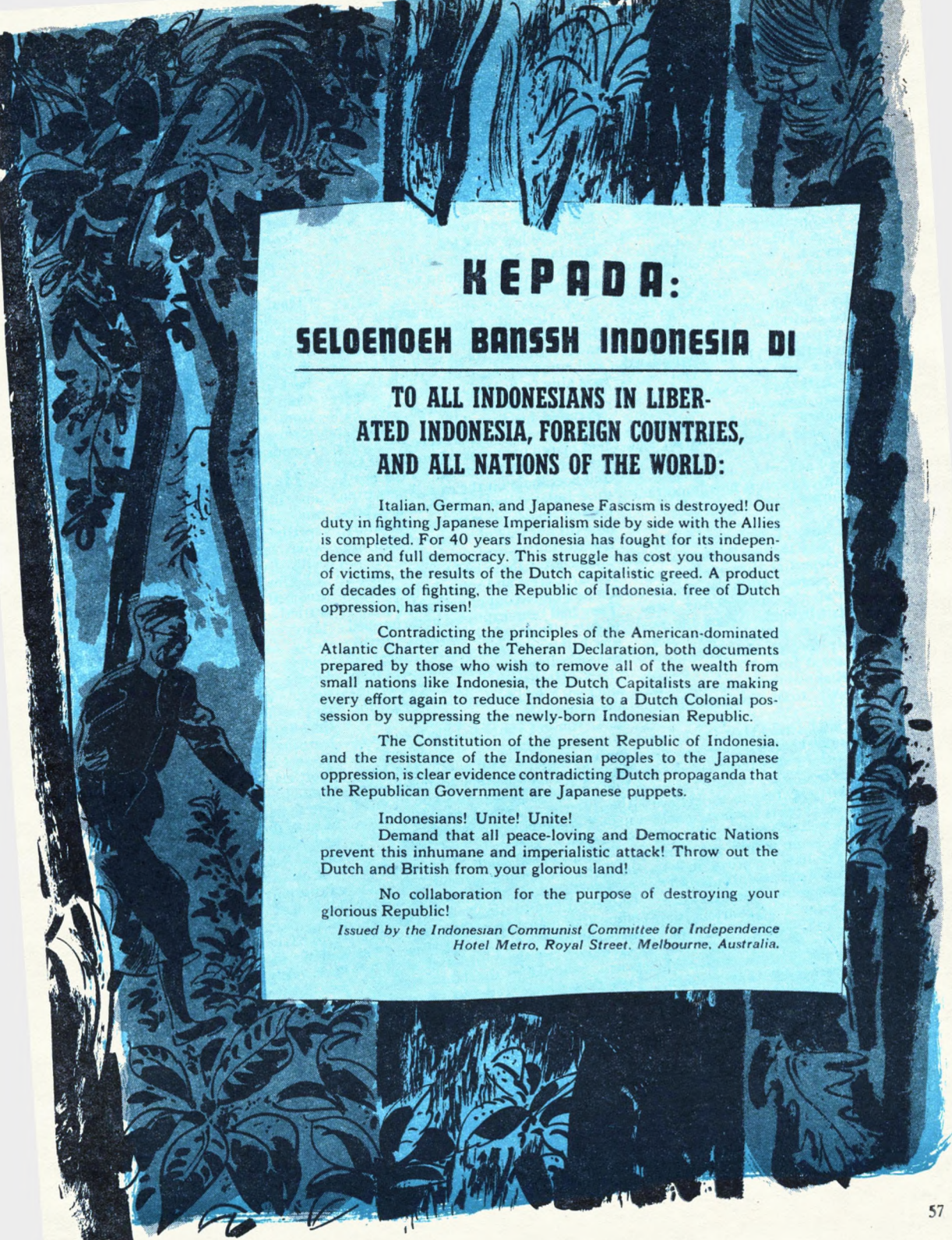
"I don't agree with you," I told him.

I had risked my neck already to come to Bandoeng, at the end of the shaky line the British had extended fifty miles inland from Batavia. I had come to my good friend Han for advice and help. I wasn't letting the advice stand in the way of the help.

"If I'm disguised and speak to no one," I began, raising my voice above the din of battle between an advance British patrol and the Indonesian guerrillas.

Han cut me short. "The trouble with your 'ifs' is that the second one is an impossibility. You can't spend weeks—you can't spend even a single day—in the interior of Java without having to speak to *someone*. And the moment you open your mouth, you'll be a dead one."

A stray bullet nicked the window ledge outside and spattered little pieces of cement against the shutter. Han turned his massive frame to glance toward the sound. The inadequate hotel chair creaked. He was several inches taller than my five-feet-eleven, and built like a wrestler, with powerful shoulders and large hands.



KEPADA:

SELOENOEH BANSSH INDONESIA DI

TO ALL INDONESIANS IN LIBERATED INDONESIA, FOREIGN COUNTRIES, AND ALL NATIONS OF THE WORLD:

Italian, German, and Japanese Fascism is destroyed! Our duty in fighting Japanese Imperialism side by side with the Allies is completed. For 40 years Indonesia has fought for its independence and full democracy. This struggle has cost you thousands of victims, the results of the Dutch capitalistic greed. A product of decades of fighting, the Republic of Indonesia, free of Dutch oppression, has risen!

Contradicting the principles of the American-dominated Atlantic Charter and the Teheran Declaration, both documents prepared by those who wish to remove all of the wealth from small nations like Indonesia, the Dutch Capitalists are making every effort again to reduce Indonesia to a Dutch Colonial possession by suppressing the newly-born Indonesian Republic.

The Constitution of the present Republic of Indonesia, and the resistance of the Indonesian peoples to the Japanese oppression, is clear evidence contradicting Dutch propaganda that the Republican Government are Japanese puppets.

Indonesians! Unite! Unite!
Demand that all peace-loving and Democratic Nations prevent this inhumane and imperialistic attack! Throw out the Dutch and British from your glorious land!

No collaboration for the purpose of destroying your glorious Republic!

Issued by the Indonesian Communist Committee for Independence
Hotel Metro, Royal Street, Melbourne, Australia.

I had been thinking fast. "What I need," I said, "is a good Chinese guide. I could talk to him in pidgin English. And the guide could do the necessary talking to others!"

Han Thong Yak crossed to the bureau and mixed himself another drink. The gurgling of soda into Scotch made me suddenly aware that the street was silent.

"Hey! Han, the skirmish is over."

He moved to the window, threw it open, and pushing back the shutters, looked out. When he turned back to me there was a wry smile on his face.

"Leonard, my friend, you have a positive genius for getting into trouble. The British have retired to their prepared positions. You are now in enemy territory."

"That settles it," I said, trying hard to suppress my relief. "You can't send me back now, so you'll *have* to help me go forward."

He laughed. "You know perfectly well you came here banking on this happening."

I grinned at him.

"Seriously, Len, just how important *is* this information?"

I TOLD him. I had been sent to Southeast Asia by the Pentagon and the State Department to make a survey of the postwar stocks of strategic raw materials the surrendering Japanese had left behind. When the war ended, America and its allies were dangerously low in the things normally obtained from Malaya and Indonesia, such as rubber, tin, and cinchona bark, from which quinine is made.

"It's my job," I told Han, "to locate these raw materials so they can be taken out before they're grabbed by the Communists."

"Have you any reason to believe there are Communists in Java now?"

"Just a hunch. They're like termites—boring from within a rotting structure. I'd like to prove it. It might help me escape court-martial."

Han looked at me with concern. "You really mean that court-martial business?"

"I do."

"But General Christison must realize the importance of your mission, not only to the States, but to Britain!"

"General Christison has his own mission in Java," I told Han, "and he made that very clear to me at my last audience with him."

General Philip Christison had been hustled from Australia to Java, by the Anglo-American Joint Chiefs of Staff, to fill the power vacuum left by the sudden Japanese surrender. There were no Dutch left to repossess Holland's rich colonies. They were dead or in Japanese prison camps, which the Indonesian Nationalists had taken over as they proclaimed their independence. But in Java, the new Nationalist Government held only Jogjakarta, near the center of the island. The rest of Java and its eighty million people (one of the most dense populations on earth) were at the mercy of roving guerrilla bands of "Young Extremists." These trigger-happy teenagers, and boys in their early twenties, lived on the land by pillage. They had been given guns by Japanese diehards. They were led by fanatics and criminals and they brutally butchered any white man, woman or child who fell into their hands.

To cope with this menacing situation, General Christison had only three British divisions, mostly Indian and Australian troops with light tanks and some air support. With this he was able to hold only Batavia and its surrounding area in force. He had extended his lines inland only as far as Bandoeng, where we now were. He had placed garrisons ashore at the two great seaports, Semarang on the north and Soerabaja on the east. Apart from these isolated spots, Java was a tightly-packed mass of starving humanity, hopeful but fearful, rumor-ridden and bandit-ridden—and explosive!

Inevitably there had been incidents. An RAF crew and some Indian Gurkhas had bailed out of a disabled plane. They had been captured and chopped to bits. In reprisal, General Christison had razed the entire village of Bekasi, where the massacre had taken place. He lived now in dread of another such incident, and the need for more reprisals.

"If you get yourself killed, Colonel Weston, I'll have to send troops in again. I don't want that! I'm here to maintain peace, not to make war. I'm not going to ask you not to visit the interior, Colonel—as your commanding officer, I *forbid* you to leave our lines."

"Well," I told Han, "I haven't left his lines. They just left me."

"On the rim of a volcano," my Chinese friend cut in, "and you threatening like a fool to walk a tightrope across it."

I moved to the table and with a pencil, pointed to the large map of Java that was spread out on it. "I want to go in any way available to Buitenzorg, Chikampek, Loedrang, Indramayu, Karangampel, Semarang, Banjumas, to Surakarta. There I would turn west and south through Jogjakarta, and along the south coast back to Batavia."

Han studied the map in silence. He ran a large finger along the route and mumbled Chinese names to himself from time to time.

Then, abruptly, he left the table.

Illustrated by HOWARD WILLARD

"You couldn't possibly hire anyone to go with you on such a foolhardy trip," he said. I started to speak; he held up a hand. "Not anyone in his right mind who'd be any help to you. No white man has been into the interior since the Japanese occupation. If the extremists penetrated your disguise and found out what you were after, they wouldn't just kill you. They'd subject you to every conceivable torture. They've learned a lot from the Japanese."

"That's a chance I'll have to take."

He said nothing for a moment. Then he came and placed a hand on my shoulder. "I will go with you," he volunteered.

I started to protest, but he silenced me. "It is the only way you can come back alive," he went on. "As my new Chinese assistant, you will be safe from suspicion. In every city and town you mentioned, I have Chinese friends who will lodge us and help us."

HE was right. Han Thong Yak was one of the most successful Chinese merchants in Java. Honored and respected by British, Dutch, and natives alike, he could cross military lines at will. I would never have presumed to ask him such a favor, but I was deeply touched by this proof of friendship. I tried to express my gratitude, but he brushed it off.

"Time enough for all that, when and if we get back. It isn't going to be any picnic." He moved toward the door. "It will take five days to contact my friends. You can spend that time in perfecting your disguise and learning to walk, talk—and *think*—like a Chinese." He threw open the door, clapped his hands and shouted, "Lee Sing!"

A little bespectacled Chinese came in at a dogtrot. With many glances and gestures toward me, Han went into a long singsong. . . .

It was dark night, two weeks later, as two pajama-clad Chinese—Han and I—shuffled along one of the darkest side streets of Karangampel. We stopped before one of several dirty-looking shops. Han knocked on the door. Any Indonesian happening to pass at the moment would have heard a burst of singsong greetings and concluded that two Chinese were paying a friendly call upon a third.

When the door had been closed behind us, I found myself in a small tailor-shop—as disorderly as most tailor-shops the world over. I had no time for detailed inspection. Han signaled me to follow our host, who led us through a curtained doorway to his living quarters. Liang Nguan Chiap acknowledged Han's introduction of me in perfect English. He bowed us to chairs in a small room that was surprisingly attractive.

Han stretched his big frame in a chair that was not too small for him. "So far, so good," he said and tapped his yawning mouth. We were both weary from traveling for days in the small, crowded, evil-smelling cars of the Javanese railroads, sandwiched between ragged and sweating natives, and subsequently by equally-crowded and uncomfortable busses and trucks. At night I had been escorted through dark godowns—the native warehouses—and through silent factories, and, by the light of flashlights, shown vast stocks of tin, rubber, cinchona bark, and other raw materials.

Half our itinerary had been accomplished without mishap. We had suffered nothing more serious than discomfort. Good luck was beginning to bore me. My thoughts were interrupted by our host. "Something has happened since you first contacted me. It is no longer safe for you here in Karangampel. We Chinese have been repeatedly accused of being too friendly with the Dutch."

"That is nothing new," said Han. "It is inevitable—because we try to keep the friendship of both sides."

"You don't understand," said the tailor. "A few days ago, a Chinese, whom you do not know, was arrested and accused of spying for the Dutch; it is possible that the charges are true. Anyway, his house was burned: last night the houses of two other Chinese were burned and the occupants were beaten."

"Unauthorized riots, of course," said Han.

"Yes," our host replied, "but we are momentarily expecting drastic official measures against all Chinese in the area. I must advise you to alter your plans and get as far away from here by dawn as you can."

WHAT a twist! I thought. The safe disguise Han had made possible had now backfired. Han was looking at me.

"We are here now, so let's look at what we've come to see," I told my host. "After we've inspected the godowns we'll get away as best we can."

"All right," said Liang Nguan Chiap, rising, "although I advise against it; if you insist, then let us go at once. I have a key that will admit us to the Indonesian Government warehouse, but I must warn you both—if we are caught, it will not be pleasant."

With that abrupt understatement lingering in our ears we followed him to the dark and empty street. In single file we picked our way through the filth, along the center of the street. We were taking no chances with lurking assailants in darker doorways. Far down at the end of the street loomed a large formless mass of black where no stars shone. It was the godown.

When we stood at the base of it, I realized it was one of the largest I had ever seen. A faint light seeped around the far corner of the building. At a signal from our guide, we stopped and listened. Subdued sounds came from the same direction as the light. While Liang Nguan Chiap went ahead to reconnoiter, Han and I stood silently in the lee of a small shed.

In five minutes the little tailor was back. In a nervous whisper he said, "It isn't safe to go farther. They are unloading bullock carts heaped with sacks and boxes of something." He started toward the street. I stopped him. "We must get away quickly," he insisted. "They have armed guards. At any moment one will come this way and we'll be killed!"

Han Thong Yak was facing me—a brooding mass of black against the dimness of the night. I could feel, though I couldn't see, the inquiring look in his eyes. My thoughts were racing. I didn't want to turn back. I wanted to know what was in this godown. According to rumor, it held some of the major stocks of cinchona bark on the island. This source of quinine hadn't been too plentiful elsewhere. I looked at Liang Nguan Chiap, twitching nervously as he edged toward the street. He had men-

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tioned boxes. What could they possibly be storing in boxes? The products I was surveying all were packed in bags or bundles.

"Did anyone see you?" I asked.

"No, no! I was behind the sentry. But he may walk around the building and find us here."

"We are well hidden behind this shed," I said.

"But it will take them hours to unload those three bullock carts. They were just starting. Please, let's get away from here."

I grasped Han Thong Yak by the arm and pointed to the fidgety tailor. "You and your friend get back to the house. I have a plan, but you mustn't be involved. If I'm not back by six in the morning, notify General Christison."

I slipped away as if I hadn't heard their frantic protests. I crept forward cautiously, hugging the dark, towering wall of the godown, toward the dimly lighted corner at the far end.

From the time it took me to reach that corner, I realized the godown was

A middling sort of mind may be known by its giving none but faint praise.

How many women would laugh, at the funerals of their husbands, were it not the custom to weep?

—*Anon*

immense. It was made of bamboo frame, covered with split, laced bamboo matting and palm fronds. It could hold hundreds of tons of merchandise and must have been put up by the Japanese.

I peered around the corner. Far down toward the next corner was the entrance. Dark figures stood there holding flares shoulder-high. By the flickering orange light I could see other dark figures unloading three bullock carts and carrying bags and boxes into the godown. The bags were the right size and shape for cinchona bark. But those boxes were about the size of a case of whisky or small-arms ammunition. Was *that* what they were? I was determined to find out.

I stripped to the waist, glad that my body was stained all over. As I stuffed my clothes into the lattice work of the godown, a sixth sense telegraphed a warning. I dropped to the ground, hugging the earth and the building. I was only just in time to escape being seen by the Indonesian sentry as he rounded the corner. Fortunately for me, he walked a few feet away from the godown or he would have stumbled over me. I held my breath for seconds that seemed like minutes. When I was sure he was out of hearing, I scrambled to my feet and followed him. I saw him pause at the entrance to speak to someone, then move on around the next corner. I was getting the breaks.

I left the dark safety of the shadows beside the wall, and crawled on my belly through the high grass to the nearest of the bullock carts. I waited in the grass until one of the *kulis* removed a box, shouldered it, and walked toward the entrance with his back to me. Then I got to my feet, boldly lifted a box from the cart, shouldered it, and—bent under its weight, my face partly hidden—followed the *kuli* through the entrance into the godown.

This was my big moment. It would mean certain death if, stripped to the waist, my skin stained, and wearing Javanese headgear, I didn't pass unnoticed as just another *kuli*. Three Indonesian armed guards lounged about the entrance watching the two streams of *kulis* unload and stack the bags and boxes.

Without glancing in any direction, so as not to arouse the least suspicion, I followed my *kuli*, and, seeing him place his box upon a certain stack, did likewise. One of the three Indonesians was a checker, who made an entry in a book as I placed my box on the stack. He didn't look up. Like the *kuli* ahead, I turned and walked back toward the entrance, keeping close to a row of towering stacks of bags. At the doorway, I took a quick look backward. I noticed now that the flares were not held by anyone but stuck in the earthen floor of the warehouse. They shed no light beyond the stacking area. The rest of the vast godown was filled with huge towering stacks of flickering shadows that merged in gloom. As none of the guards seemed to be looking my way, I took my second big chance. I dropped to the ground and crawled between two high stacks of bags. I waited for several minutes to make sure I had not been noticed.

With a sharp knife, the only weapon I dared to carry, I slit open the nearest bag. A powder flowed into my hand. I knew by the smell and the feel of it, even though I couldn't see its brown color, that it was the pulverized cinchona bark from which quinine is made. I took off my sandals and stuffed them into my waistband; then, digging in with fingers and toes, pulling myself upward inch by inch, I climbed to the summit of the stack. Now I crawled along the tops of the stacks, counting them as I crawled; First to the nearest side wall, and then to the far end of the godown, to the wall against which the shed rested, where I had stood with Han and his friend, the tailor. There, in complete darkness, I rested and did some mental arithmetic.

I figured there were at least 600 tons of cinchona bark in this godown. I had two jobs left to do: Find out what was in those mysterious boxes—and get back alive. I started the long crawl back toward the entrance, checking my figures as I went.

By the time I got back, the *kulis* were stacking those boxes close to the height of the bags of cinchona on which I lay and watched. I waited patiently in the dark shadows for an interminable length of time. At last they had several stacks up to the height of the cinchona stacks. The *kulis* moved down to the ground and started a new series of stacks from ground level. This was the break I'd waited for.

I leaned forward from my position on top of the stacks of cinchona and began to work one of the boxes from the top of its stack onto the cinchona stack beside me. It was the slowest, most nerve-racking job that I've ever tackled. The least scraping sound or falling dust would have sent those guards up after me. When I had a box on the stack beside me, I still had to drag it and lift it back inch by inch to a safer spot nearer the wall before I dared try to open it.

Actually, to open it was out of the question. The screech of the nails pulling out of the box would have been heard all over the godown. Using my sharp knife, I cut a hole in the side of it and slipped my hand in. To my amazement the box was filled, not with cartridges, as I had expected, but with packages of bound papers. I grabbed a bundle and stuffed it into my waistband, from which I removed my sandals.

Cautiously I climbed down to the ground, put on my sandals, and crept out to the door. In a moment I had my chance to walk boldly out toward the nearest bullock cart. Once safely around the screen offered by the carts, I fell to the ground and crawled through the grass to the darkness near the wall. On my feet again, hugging the wall of the godown, I returned toward the corner where I had left my clothes. I put them on and rounded the corner without bothering to see what was there first.

It was my first careless moment, and very nearly my last moment—for I ran full tilt into the Indonesian sentry standing there stealing a quiet smoke!

I don't know which of us was the more surprised. Before he could find wit or breath to question me, I struck him as hard as I could, squarely in the pit of the stomach. That knocked the remaining wind out of him with a

gasp. As he doubled up, I brought my knee hard against his chin. He went over backward and lay still. I jumped over him and ran.

As I ran I began to hear the sound of many voices raised in outcry. For a moment I thought I was already being chased. But the sounds grew louder as I approached the far end of the godown. I was running *toward* the sounds! Now a glow appeared in the sky ahead of me. As I slackened, and cautiously rounded the corner of the godown, I could see up the street on which the tailor lived. It was a mass of milling and shouting natives, some carrying torches, with which they had obviously set fire to a house. It was already burning briskly.

I didn't have to be told what had happened. They had fired the house of Liang Nguan Chiap.

To think out my next move, I sought the safety of the shed. And there, reaching out to grab me, were big Han and the little tailor. It was a wonderful reunion. When I had left them so hurriedly, Han had decided to wait for me in the shed and the little tailor had conquered his fears and stayed too. That decision had saved their lives, for the mob that had fired Liang's house was in a killing mood.

My own explanations were cut short by events. Over the clamor of the mob at the fire, we were suddenly aware of the sound of running feet and shouting voices from around the corner of the godown. A second later three armed Indonesians dashed past the shed and up the street toward the fire. My assault on the sentry evidently had been discovered. In another moment all of Karangampel would be on a manhunt for Chinese spies.

Han said something to the tailor in Chinese. He nodded in agreement.

"It is unsafe for us here," the tailor said to me then. "We must put miles between us and Karangampel. Follow me."

He took off like a rocket. Lithe and wiry, carrying little weight, he ran like an Olympic champion. I had difficulty keeping up with him. I ran until my sides ached and my breath tore at my chest and throat. Big lumbering Han was right behind me.

My head had begun to swim by the time we reached the outskirts of town and the dark safety of a grove of cinchona trees. We tumbled into the tea bushes that grew in their shade and rested. All was silent except for the pounding of our hearts and our heavy breathing. Far away, beyond the open country we had crossed, there was a small red glow in the sky.

"That is the last I shall see of my house," said Liang Nguan Chiap.

When we had rested, we continued through the cinchona grove at a walk. Liang followed the winding paths between the tea bushes. The tall slender cinchona trees, their gray-white bark visible even in the darkness, were like ghostly sentinels to guide us.

Beyond the grove were rice paddies, and beyond them another cluster of trees—and a faint flickering light showing through a small window.

"That is the house of Tomang Poelo, a native of the Bandjarnegara district," said Han. "He is a long-time friend of mine and his sympathies are with the Dutch. He is still an officer in a Dutch colonial regiment and, even more important for us now, he is a member of the British Intelligence. He will help us get back to Batavia."

We entered a thick grove of bamboo, and I saw the light again. A moment later we could perceive a house.

Han knocked on the door. It was opened by an intelligent-looking young Indonesian, who peered at us a moment; then, quickly recognizing Han and Liang, he opened the door wide for us to enter.

It was a typical Javanese farmer's house, with its dirt floor, a small circle of stones in one corner of the large room for family cooking, and the far section of the room—the sleeping-quarters—partitioned off with bamboo matting. The single light which had guided us came from a homemade wick inserted in a bowl of coconut oil. Close by this light was a table with such untypical objects as a portable typewriter and some books. These, as much as his appearance, set Tomang Poelo apart from the average Javanese farmer. He was obviously from an upper-class family.

He turned to me now, speaking in Malay, and asked me about the discovery I had made in the godown, which I had started to tell Han and Liang about when events had intervened.

With a sudden surge of excitement, I remembered the package of papers from the wooden box, and drew it from my waistband. The three men gathered around me and we looked at the papers in the light. There were more than a dozen copies of a single item—a one-page proclamation addressed to the Indonesian people by the Indonesian Communist Committee for Independence! The text was in Malay. It had been printed in Melbourne, Australia, within the month.

Han, Liang, and I looked at each other in utter amazement. Our host was not surprised. He told us that similar Communist propaganda already had been circulated in Borneo. Moreover, it had been taken there by Australian Communists in the Australian army.

"Are there Communists among the Indonesians?" I asked him.

He nodded. "Quite a number. A very few are highly placed Indonesians who have learned their Communism in Russia. There are also a few Russians who have been here throughout the Japanese occupation. Then there are the few converts that these two groups have made. Altogether their influence so far has been negligible. But what you have discovered tonight makes it serious. It shows an organized assistance from the outside! It increases the strength of the extremists to continue the war against the British and the Dutch. It is also a vital danger to any Indonesian Government that might be established as the result of negotiations now going on with the Dutch."

He broke off, and for several minutes examined the leaflet again.

"The thing that worries me most is the obvious repetition of the Borneo pattern here in Java," he continued. "This thing was printed in Melbourne on October 17th. You found it in a wooden box—undoubtedly an ammunition box consigned to the British Occupation Forces in Java. This is a very serious matter which must be reported to General Christison at once. So let's get some sleep; we must be on our way before dawn. Liang, you are lucky. You can sleep late. I think it best that you hide away here until this anti-Chinese feeling blows over, as it will." He led the way behind the partition to the sleeping-quarters. "I have a plan," he said, "to get Colonel Weston and you, Han, safely back to Batavia."

His plan was a dilly. . . .

We were awakened at six. After a sketchy breakfast, Tomang led us out to a near-by lean-to. Two bullocks were harnessed to a large Javanese-ornamented cart. It looked something like an American circus calliope only with two big wheels and no calliope, but just as fancy.

In the early light of dawn we could see that our host had been very busy

DELUSION

Small girls think boys are made of snails.
Of lizards and of puppy dog tails.

When girls grow up—and this part's funny—
They think that men are made of money.

D. L. W.

while we slept. At the dead center of the cart was a partitioned-off space with a ceiling and a floor. Han and I were directed to crawl into this space. Our host explained that it wouldn't exactly be a comfortable place to spend four or five hours, but it would be reasonably safe. We wouldn't suffocate—though the air might grow a bit foul—because the material of which the partitions were made was porous; and he believed this material would be resistant to even a hard poke by a bayonet which already had penetrated several feet of rice straw. Rice straw, en route to be threshed, was piled on top and both sides of our hiding-place.

His last words before we started were, "Go to sleep, but if you snore, I shall have to wake you up."

I thought the suggestion absurd, but the dimness of our cubbyhole, and the rhythmic jogging of the bullock cart, soon put me fast asleep. I awoke to find the bullock cart halted, my head on Han's ample chest and our legs entwined in cramped and sweaty discomfort. It immediately became evident that we were at a military roadblock and were being poked at with bayonets. For one horribly long minute we expected to feel the sudden jab of a bayonet into our flesh—but none quite reached us.

Then came much talk in the local dialect. Later, when we were on our way again, Han translated it. They were looking for a tall Chinese who had just escaped from a prison camp near Karangampel, and who had dared nearly to kill a soldier of the glorious republic. "He is getting credit for your assault on the sentry," Han whispered. I must have laughed loud enough to be heard by Tomang Poelo for he told me to shut up and go back to sleep.

But this time I didn't, and neither did Han. A great sleepless weariness crept over both of us as the long monotonously jogging hours went slowly by.

At last the cart stopped again and this time Tomang called us from our hiding-place. We emerged cramped and weary, and with headaches. Tomang removed our hiding-place from the cart, broke it up, and threw it into the bushes beside the road. From somewhere he had obtained a native hat for me. He selected suitable bamboo rods from a near-by thicket and gave them to us. Then Han and I trudged along beside the cart as it lumbered into the market town of Indramayu, a railhead of some 18,000 population.

When we reached the military roadblock at the entrance to Indramayu, we were not challenged; we were now one of a procession of many rice-bearing bullock carts that had converged here from many roads. At the entrance to the market, Tomang left us briefly. He returned with a ragged Indonesian who led the cart away to its customary parking-space, and we headed for the railroad station, where, after an hour's wait, we boarded a crowded little train for Tjikampek. It was a slow and jerky ride packed among a composite mass of sweating, smelly humanity and baggage that included chickens, in and out of crates. Eventually we got there, feeling more starved than alive. There would be a wait of four hours before we could entrain on the next leg of our journey to Chikarang.

Tomang told us to wait and vanished for about half an hour. When he reappeared he handed us each a military permit to travel from Tjikampek, where we now were, to Jakarta (the native name for Batavia), where we desperately wanted to be. Mine was made out in the name of one Aik Mel Praja. Tomang told me to memorize it. Who he had seen to obtain such miraculous documents I never did find out.

We rattled along with the usual discomfort but without mishap until we reached Meester Cornelis, a suburb of Batavia. Here we and all the other passengers were thrown off the train by the military. Regardless of permits, this was the end of the line. From here on into Jakarta we would have to obtain whatever conveyances we could or go afoot. There were no conveyances of any kind.

I was practically dead on my feet. The streets became more and more deserted, until we seemed to have them quite to ourselves. Han and Tomang were confident that we had left the last of our difficulties behind us. For over an hour we moved as swiftly as our weary feet would carry us.

"Nanti, ka-mana pigi!" The Malay words suddenly smote our ears with the harsh knowledge that we had been ordered to stop. We did, for eight figures suddenly blocked our way. Tomang very nonchalantly produced his military permit and motioned for each of us to do the same. The Indonesian who had challenged us took the three papers and, while another held a flashlight, he examined them. Then the light was turned upon each of us, and in its blinding glare each of us was carefully scrutinized. It was an ordeal, especially for me. I found myself wondering if my dark pigment was cracking or peeling off.

"Why are you going to Jakarta?" the leader asked us, looking at us suspiciously.

"We are workers at the repairing shops at Manggaray," Tomang replied without the slightest hesitation.

The Indonesian stood staring at us in silence for several nerve-racking moments. Then he gave us the nod to go ahead, as he and his men stepped aside to let us pass.

It was over; we were safe now, or so we thought.

We continued hurriedly toward the center of Batavia. There was a song of relief in our hearts if not on our lips. But we had gone only about 200 yards when we heard shouted commands to stop. We pretended to imagine the commands were intended for someone else. Then we heard the sound of many running feet behind us. We too broke into a run. But our pursuers were much fresher and better able to run than we were; they gained on us rapidly. We reached a side street and turned into it. It led toward the hospital at Plantenen Dierentuin. If we could reach that—

A shot—a bullet whined past us. Then others spattered the ground too close for comfort. Han spotted a doorway and we raced for its safety. Men cried out behind us and more bullets spattered as we struggled with the door, got it open, and almost fell inside. I kicked the door shut and Tomang slid the bolt just as the door rocked from the weight of the men throwing themselves against it. It held. I sucked in a deep breath and

turned to study the place. A small oil lamp stood on a table at the center of the room, throwing a flickering light in all directions. Seated in a wheel-chair was an elderly, crippled Indonesian, too frightened even to scream. He just looked at us with horror in his eyes.

The blows upon the outside of the door continued.

While Han rushed to the back of the house and I followed, I heard Tomang assuring his crippled countryman that no harm would befall him. We found a back door—but the Indonesians had found it too. Fortunately, it was locked.

I returned to the front of the house in time to hear the leader of the soldiers order us out with arms upraised or he would have his men set fire to the house.

The wretched old cripple in the wheel-chair found his voice with a piercing scream. He began to propel his chair frantically around the room, praying loudly to Allah not to permit one of the faithful to be roasted to death with infidel dogs. His aimless movements reminded me of a cockroach caught by a sudden light.

Then I smelled smoke.

Almost at once, smoke was billowing from the bamboo walls to sting my eyes and sandpaper my throat and lungs. Little serpent-tongues of flame licked out toward me. Suddenly I felt very angry at having to die stupidly like this.

Then I heard the rattle of machine-gun fire! The dismayed cries of the Indonesians told me that a British patrol was driving them off.

THE general was very angry. He stormed up and down his office reaching for words with twitching jaws that made his brush-mustache move grotesquely on his normally handsome face. I let him blow himself out. The gist of it was that I must face a court-martial for deliberate disobedience.

When he had simmered down, I suggested that certain papers I had found contained the line of defense I would take before the court. Perhaps he would like to see them? He said neither "yes" nor "no"—he stared at me, the thunder gone out of him, and, when I handed him a copy of the Communist leaflet, he took it and stared at it in turn.

"I have typed the English translation on the back of it, sir," I said.

He turned it over. He read, and his eyes bulged.

"Good God, Weston! Where did you find this?"

I told him. I pointed out that it had been printed in Melbourne. I showed him the date and drew the inference. He was silent for a time; then he spoke more calmly.

"There will be no court-martial, Colonel Weston. Your discovery is of the utmost importance. No doubt you had some foreknowledge of this matter?"

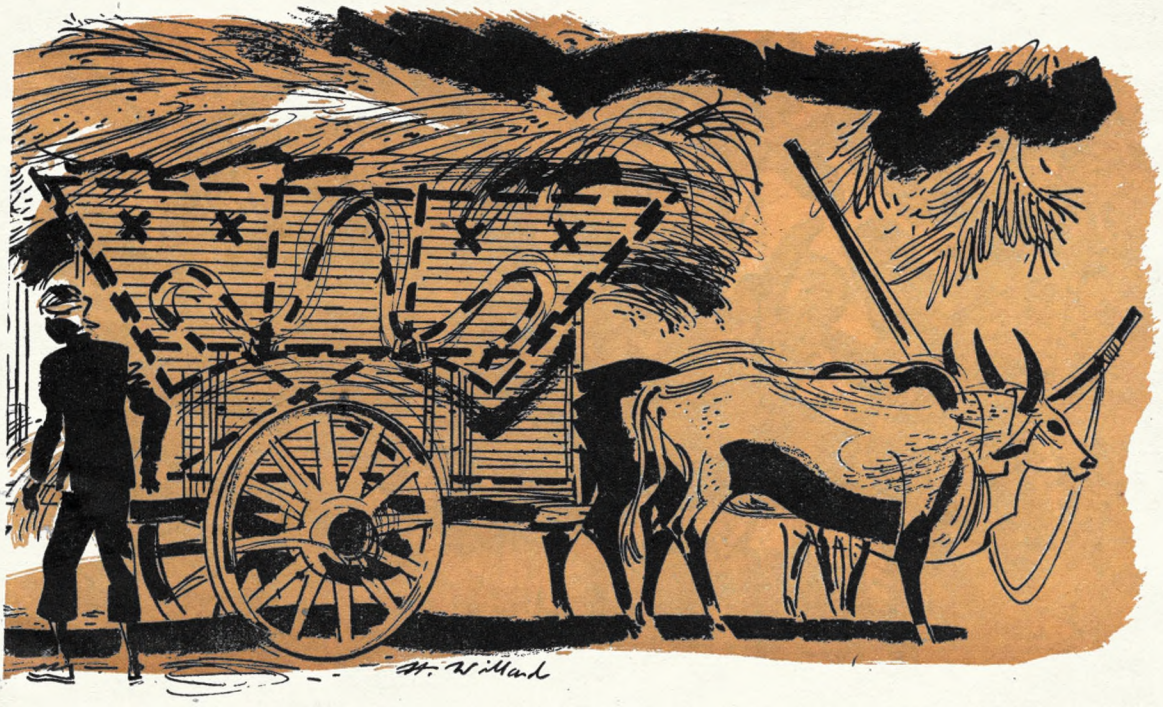
"I had a hunch, sir."

"A hunch? Oh, yes, that's what you Americans call an intuition, isn't it? Well, we shall assume foreknowledge, and say that I granted you permission to investigate—with these results. That straightens out the record."

"That's very generous of you, sir," I said. He brushed it off. I added, "There is an Indonesian member of British Intelligence, one Tomang Poelo, who should be highly commended for his part in this. His report will be added to mine. There are two friendly Chinese—Han Thong Yak, the merchant from Singapore, and his friend Liang Nguan Chiap, a tailor from Karangampel, whose house was burned by the rebels. Without their help I would have accomplished nothing."

He assured me that the gratitude of His Majesty's Armed Forces would be properly expressed. Then, with a broad smile, he extended his hand and shook mine vigorously.

And that was that. •



At the dead-center of the cart was a partitioned-off space with a ceiling and a floor. Han and I crawled into this space. It wouldn't exactly be comfortable, but it would be safe, and even a bayonet, thrust through the straw, wouldn't penetrate to our hiding-place inside.

THE COCOON

By SIDNEY ROGERSON

It was a harmless hobby, crossbreeding foreign moths. But when he produced giant hybrids, with cocoons like steel, and began feeding them flesh—

I SHALL ALWAYS FEEL A RESPONSIBILITY for the tragedy of Armigel Vesey. It was through me that he met his sister again after many years, and it was from this reunion that there flowed the strange events which led to his decline and mysterious death.

New people had come to take the farmhouse next to mine. I called on them, and discovered that the wife was Vesey's sister, Anita. I should have known her, for she had the same black hair, dark Oriental eyes, and dead-white face as Vesey. She was overjoyed at hearing that I knew her brother, and she begged me that one day when I was going up to London I should take her with me and call on him. She had been in Ireland all the war, and had not seen him for some years.

Of course, I was only too happy to agree.

During this first meeting with Anita, I remembered a strange occurrence in Vesey's second year at Cambridge. Suddenly, for no accountable reason, he was one day seized in my presence with a violent pain in his shoulder and was obviously in such acute agony that I begged him to see a doctor.

"It will pass," he replied calmly, though sweating with pain. "It's not me, it's Anita. I'm worried about her. Something has happened."

He asked me to telegraph home for him and, sure enough, next day a reply came from Ireland that Anita had been thrown from a pony and broken her collarbone, at the same time as Vesey had been afflicted in Cambridge.

He made no claim to read his sister's thoughts, or she his, but he left me with the clear impression that if brother and sister were passing through any phase of distress or emotion, the fact would be known and sometimes the sensations shared by the other.

I hadn't seen Armigel Vesey since our days at Cambridge, where we had rooms on the same staircase in Chapel Court, and I was his only friend. A senior mathematics scholar, he led the life of a recluse. With his early Edwardian clothes, his sloe-dark eyes set at a Tartar slant in his dead-white face, his glossy black hair parted in the middle and brushed back so that it usually overhung his collar, he looked a Beardsley, a Baudelaire to the rest of us—looked, in short what the College had written him off as being, suspiciously alien and slightly unsavory.

Yet, when some of the Rugger hearties tried to raid his rooms one night after a boat supper, they speedily found that he had not only guts but was strong as a bull. He met the invaders with violence, and turned their attack into a complete rout with blows and oaths. Thereafter he was left alone to live his life as he thought fit.

Because I was always interested in the odd man out, I set out to get to know him, and finally, when he did open up to me, the barriers he had so patiently erected against the world came down with a run, and with an almost pathetic eagerness he launched a flood of detail about himself, his home life and his boyhood.

His father came of an old West of Ireland family. On one of his frequent jaunts abroad, he had married a beautiful Jewish girl from Beirut. He brought his young bride back to the ancestral home among the mists and mountains of Galway, where she bore him two children, Armigel and his younger sister, Anita, before she died.

The father then set off again on his travels, and the two children were left to bring themselves up, and to find their own occupation in a wild, twilight world of banshees, leprechauns, and all manner of monsters and little people.

As can be imagined, they became deeply attached to one another. Together they followed the hounds, learned the mysteries of the gamekeeper's craft, made collections of birds' eggs and fossils, ferns and pressed flowers. They learned to catch trout in the river, snare hares, and particularly to catch and breed butterflies and moths.

Of all their pursuits, this, I gathered, was the most enduring and absorbing because it could be followed almost all the year round, and was one in which the younger girl could join her brother on equal terms. If he was more active in pursuit of a Clouded Yellow, or readier to brave the powers of darkness to catch the fat-bodied night-flying moths, her woman's skill was needed for rearing and feeding the caterpillars, as her fingers were more nimble and gentle in handling and setting the moths.

Yet I noticed a curious reluctance in him to discuss this one hobby I could share with him—the breeding of butterflies and moths. I myself had dabbled with it as a boy, and it was about the only interest we had in common. Time and again I would steer the conversation round to it, only to find him dodge and go off on another tack.

On the very few occasions when he allowed himself to be trapped into alluding to it, it was clear the subject held a special fascination for him, and I reasoned he did not care to talk about it because it was something he had shared so intimately with

the sister whose companionship he missed so much. Yet their letters were not frequent, and he saw her only when he went back to Ireland on vacations. She remained a shadow in the background of his conversation.

He was still a mystery to the College at the end of my university career, when I took my modest degree and went down. There followed a period of some years in which I neither saw Vesey nor heard much of him. During the war, I heard, he had done remarkable work in a key job in a Government research department. Word also reached me that he had married and was living in a flat in Victoria.

And then I met Anita.

When I finally brought about a reunion between these two odd people, it was rigidly unemotional. Vesey, I found, had changed scarcely at all, a little thicker possibly, but still slim and wiry, still clad in a dark, outmoded suit, his hair as long and his face as white as ever. His wife, Renée, was a neat, nondescript little woman, who patently adored him. Anita seemed so determined to get on well with her that I was conscious of an impression that it was overdone, to cover her resentment that another woman was sharing her brother's confidence and affections.

ON the homeward journey Anita frequently expressed her delight at finding Vesey so well and happily married, and was emphatic—again a shade too emphatic perhaps—in her praise of her sister-in-law. "Oh, and isn't it wonderful that Armigel has promised me he will take up moths again after all these years, and I am going to help him when he wants me."

Still interested in moth-collecting myself, the news that Vesey was going to take up his old hobby again was a stimulus to me to visit him a few months later. I took Anita, of course, and what a change met our eyes. The rather over-neat, well-furnished flat had been turned into a sort of moth-farm. The little entrance hall had been cleared of furniture and now held nothing but large transparent containers with gauze tops, full of branches of greenery on which caterpillars of various large varieties were gorging with grim determination.

In the bathroom I found the shelves full of similar containers in which were still bigger green caterpillars, each about six to eight inches long, and as thick as one of the more opulent cigars. Some of these were already fully fed and had started to spin their cocoons. These cocoons, when spun, were taken by Vesey and pinned to the curtains in the sitting-room where, in a few months, the warmth of the room would cause the moths to hatch out.

There was also in the sitting-room a contraption like a clotheshorse, over which was stretched a coarse linen cloth on which several large foreign moths with velvety brown wings and hot, rhubarb-red bodies were clinging as they laid their eggs.

I had expected to be enraptured, but found instead I was vaguely nauseated. In contrast to the British moths of a size and appearance with which I was familiar, these huge, fat-bodied foreign females and the monstrous, hairless caterpillars whose bodies rippled in fleshy convolutions as they munched, were an offense to the eye—and, I might add, to the nose.

Vesey, I fancy, detected my reaction because he embarked on a lengthy explanation that he was interested only in foreign species and especially those of a "respectable size." He was experimenting particularly with a South American species from the foothills of the Southern Andes and explained that he was rearing them in the temperature of a normal English home—instead of in the steam-heated cages of insect houses which attempted to reproduce tropical or sub-tropical conditions—in the hope that he would eventually succeed in acclimatizing them sufficiently to turn them loose in the summer to breed in the English countryside. That was why they occupied so large a part of his flat. Already, he announced with pride, he had found English shrubs which the caterpillars would not eat with relish but on which they could thrive as well as on the food-plants of their native habitat.

His explanation did not entirely reassure me. I imagined what the ordinary housewife would say were one of those huge insects to flap into her room one summer evening. Renée appeared uncomplaining and puzzled rather than angry at the strange uses to which her brilliant husband put her home. Anita was full of enthusiasm and engaged with Vesey in a lengthy discussion on the technicalities of feeding caterpillars, pairing the moths and hatching the chrysalises, which was above my head.

Though I had looked forward to this final revelation of Vesey's character, I was deeply disappointed. It was not my idea of moth-breeding at all. Why this concentration on gross exotics to the exclusion of all the smaller but beautiful British species? For the matter of that, why the concentration on creatures of the darkness and not on those of the sunlight? Why only moths and not butterflies, too? Nevertheless, I left promising to come again, while Anita bore away with her a shoe box full of cocoons which she promised Vesey she would

Illustrated by DAVE STONE

hatch and let him know the result. Her parting words to him were "I hope you succeed, and that Renée will approve."

Thereafter, a difficult farming year with a dry spring, followed by a harvest beset by thunderstorms, occupied my energies and my thoughts sufficiently to put the mystery of Vesey and his moths out of my mind. Anita also seemed to have gone into retreat and did not come round to pay us a neighborly call nor was seen pottering about her garden or tending her poultry. It was, therefore, almost a shock when, in October, I received a postcard from Vesey bearing an address in North Kensington—9 Alysson Grove--and the message, *Have something thrilling to show you. Do come. A. Vesey.* Instead of his usual fastidiously neat hand it was an ugly scrawl and the signature almost illegible.

I had to go to London for the Dairy Show, so I wrote saying I would call on him on a given date, and went round to Anita to ask her if she wished to come, too.

It must have been ten months at least since I had seen her to speak to, and in that time she seemed to have blossomed from an undeveloped girl into full womanhood. I remember wondering if she was with child; she had that radiant plumpness which is typical of the thinner type of young woman when they are carrying a child. Her face, too, had more color and she looked happier than I had ever seen her. I showed her Vesey's card.. She took it, read it, and then smiled, as if reflecting on a pleasurable thought.

"Yes, you must go," she said. "He wants you. I don't think I will come. You see, he doesn't want me—yet. But tell him I hatched nothing but females from those cocoons, so I've not been able to breed."

A curious and unsatisfactory answer, but with such odd people I had learned not to be easily surprised.

STILL, I was puzzled when, after a day spent in the homely farmyard atmosphere of the Dairy Show, I found that Alysson Grove was one of those drab, decaying thoroughfares which are hidden away to the north of Notting Hill. When I drew up in the gloom of late afternoon outside No. 9 I was frankly disturbed. Of all the paintless, uncared-for habitations in that uncared-for street, this was the worst. The wooden gate hung rottenly on one hinge, the windows stared like sightless eyes, unlit and uncurtained, and under the depressing dampness of a soft autumn drizzle the flaking stucco and the fallen plane leaves completed the forlorn and sorrowful picture. No smoke curled from the chimney, and the place looked to be untenanted. I had to

make a conscious effort to mount the four stone steps and knock on the door. Vesey must surely have given me the wrong address. But no, though my knock echoed hollowly away into what sounded like an empty house, within a few seconds a key squeaked in the lock, a bolt was drawn, the door opened, and Vesey said, "My dear man, come in. I'm so glad to see you!"

I was shocked. The figure before me was Vesey, but changed so that he was barely recognizable. His once-slim figure had grossened into fleshiness. His cheeks were puffy and ill-shaven. His abundant hair had thinned to near-baldness and hung in dank wisps about a white and shiny skull.

Without ceremony he slammed the door behind me, and bundled me eagerly along a dark, tiled passage and into a room which had obviously once been the best parlor, but which he was now apparently using as a work-room.

It was piled high with caterpillar containers like boxes in a men's hat shop, and the air was heavy with the sickly-sweet caterpillar smell I had noticed in the flat in Victoria. My eye fell on the nearest container. In it I could see two caterpillars, hairless and shiny, each about the size and color of an average cucumber, only fatter. They had almost outgrown the container, large though it was, and their droppings were as big as those of rabbits. On their hard, shiny heads were two large black spots which made them look as if they were staring through dark glasses. They chewed remorselessly.

I shuddered. "Vesey, what's all this? What *are* these brutes?"

He chuckled. "Brutes? Beauties, you mean! They're what I wanted to show you. I've had a success with this South Andean species that will startle the world. You understand, and you were a friend to me at Cambridge, so I'm giving you the privilege of seeing it first. Look here."

He picked up from the table a short plank of soft wood, in which he had been chiseling a deep, wide groove. "I'm even forced to make my own setting boards now. The biggest ones the naturalist shops make are far too small for my beauties. I tell you, I've bred them already twice as large as life—and that's saying something. Those caterpillars," he waved a hand at the stacked containers, "are not yet fully fed, yet already they're twice as big as any known to science! You ask me how I've done it. Ha! That's my secret. I've found English plants that they feed on to perfection. Anita grows them for me, and sends me a fresh lot every other day. The best of it is that they are evergreens, so I can go on breeding all the year. And another thing: The professional experts—poor fish!—tried for years to breed this particular species in England. They never brought it off, for all their heated cages and tropical gadgets. Well, I've not only bred them bigger than in nature, but I've bred them in the ordinary heat of an English house. Talk about the Atlas moth! That was the world's largest up to the Vesey era, but now it's small fry. And I've only begun. Do you hear? I've only begun! I'm only on the threshold of still greater developments—still bigger caterpillars and better moths."

He rattled on in a queer, breathless manner and it was clear he was laboring under a severe nervous tension. Several times I tried to interrupt his rapid monologue, but when I did succeed in asking "But where is Renée? Have you left the flat in Victoria?" I was answered curtly with, "Renée's gone. Walked out and left me. And I sold the flat. It was too small for these beasts. This house is far better. Room to let them loose without a woman fussing about tidiness, and screaming when she trod on one! Now come with me."

Gripping me by the forearm, he led me into another room, which bore some resemblance to being furnished, though it, too, was given over to the experiment. There were more of the huge caterpillars, this time at large on greenery stuck into big white jugs, and the same clotheshorse arrangement I had seen before and heavy with egg-laying females. Vesey led me to a writing desk covered with cocoons each the size of a man's fist. He pulled out a chair. "Sit down," he said, "I wanted you to see these. You know how hard a cocoon even the common Puss Moth spins. It is too strong to be broken by hand. You need a hammer at least. Well, these hearties of mine leave the old Puss Moth standing. Feel this. Even with their natural silk, they spin a cocoon so strong that it would take an axe to break it. An axe, at least."

I was frightened. As a child I had been told strange tales of the dangers of keeping animals in unnatural circumstances and especially of ill-advised cross-breeding leading to abnormality and giantism. The development of a new species has been known to give results which were quite unforeseen. Harmless species have, by selective breeding, been forced out of the course of nature, taking on unpredictable and sinister habits and appetites. Vesey's experiments seemed tending toward dark and dangerous developments. There was no knowing where they might end and where, in consequence, they would lead him. Some of these vague fears I blurted out to him.

"Don't worry, my dear chap," he said reassuringly, patting me on the back. "You're too academic. I *understand* insects; they're a legacy of my childhood. I know what they feel. Besides," he went on, "there'd be no point in all this work if it weren't leading to something exciting."

As I handled the cocoons I confess I was momentarily interested enough to inquire how it was that the insects managed to emerge from such living tombs, and this started him off again on a rapid dissertation on the methods nature had designed to enable them to do so, with observations on how kindred species did the trick; how one species emitted a fluid which softened the cocoon, and another one was equipped with special mandibles with which it cut a neat hole in the end where the fabric had been weakly woven.

On he gabbled, breathless with excitement. "And they are so strong themselves! The other morning when I came down, one of them had cornered a mouse. It was on the floor. I might not have noticed anything but I heard a squeaking. There was one of my biggest, rolled round a mouse like a boa constrictor, busy eating its head off! Whether it ate the lot I don't know. The next time I looked, what was left of the mouse was being wrapped up in a cocoon. Silken shrouds for rodents!" He laughed nervously. "I wonder," he went on slowly, "if I couldn't persuade them to adopt a diet of flesh. There might be endless possibilities in that direction, endless. . . ." His voice trailed away.

I watched him with a growing sense of horror. In the gathering gloom of that comfortless, evil-smelling room his eyes glowed like coals—or was it like those of a large moth glowing in the dark? As he gestured, his fat body made creases in his tightly-stretched silk gown. My eyes wandered to the huge, green caterpillars whose bodies rippled as they munched the greenery in the jugs. My God! On the instant a wave of revulsion flooded over me. I felt physically sick, and, jumping to my feet, I pushed past him into the passage and out into the street and my waiting car, without farewell, apology or explanation.

Out in the October evening air I felt better and, as I drove home, I tried to straighten out my thoughts and what I was going to tell Anita on the morrow. I was not very successful and when, after a disturbed night, I sought her out next morning, I could do no better than tell her the worst. She listened, apparently more interested than perturbed, as I con-

fessed that, in my view, her brother was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, if not something worse, that his career had been broken and his marriage ruined by the unhealthy mania which had grown out of their childhood hobby. I urged her, as eloquently as I could, to do something, to stop the supplies of green food for the fattening of the monster caterpillars and, above all, to go up to him and try and set him to rights with himself and the world, before it was too late.

She seemed anything but surprised. As for Renée having left him, "I knew that would happen," she said almost triumphantly. "It could not be otherwise. Renée had nothing at all for him; he had to come back to me." She listened to my talk with an air of complacency where I should have expected active concern, and then begged me to remain his friend. "He trusts you, you know. You are the only man he has ever confided in. My responsibility is different. He will let me know when he wants me to help."

I left her with a chill at my heart.

Between then and Christmas, work on the farm kept me busy. I heard no news of Vesey and saw Anita only once, when she came over to leave a bag of walnuts she had picked for us. To my inquiries after his health she replied he was well and very happy. I believed neither to be true, but made no comment.

Early one morning in mid-January when the countryside stood silent and shrouded in a blanket of mist, and the dry branches of tree and hedgerow were picked out in white, as if they had been dipped in icing sugar, there was a sharp and decisive knocking on our front door. Looking out of the bathroom window from my shaving, I saw it was Anita, hatless, her black hair jeweled with moisture and her face flushed with running. "It's Armigel," she said. "He needs my help. I think he needed it last night, but I couldn't be sure. Now I am sure. I must go to him at once. Will you be his friend and take me to him?"

Little though I relished the drive to London in weather which looked likely to thicken into smog as we neared the soot-drenched air of the metropolis, I could not refuse, and after a hurried breakfast we were on the road. The mist lifted and we made a good run into town. We pulled up outside 9 Alysson Grove shortly after 10:00 A.M. In the pale, winter sunlight the street stood starkly revealed in all its indecent unloveliness. The day being Sunday it was deserted.

On the way up Anita had been silent and uncommunicative, but her silence had passed on to me a sense of foreboding more surely than if she had confessed to it in so many words. It was with dread that I ran up the four steps and knocked loudly. No answer came to this and subsequent knocks, and indeed the house looked and sounded so deserted and neglected that I was all for leaving without further ado.

Anita was vehement in her refusal. "Armigel is in there," she cried. "I know he is and he wants my help. I must be beside him. Do you hear?" Thus impelled, I gave a heave at the door, but it was firmly fixed. I then took a look toward the back of the house, where I noted two-half-pint bottles of milk beside the back door. I found also a small, ground-floor window ajar. At Anita's insistence, and with her help, I managed to hoist myself up and through this, and then to drag her after me. We found ourselves in what must have been the kitchen, a dank and gloomy room, on the table of which a shabby cloth and unwashed crockery was evidence of a recent meal.

For a second or two, we both stood rooted to the spot by the brooding atmosphere of the silent house. Yet silent is not the right word. There was a deathly stillness. As our senses became alert to our surroundings we were conscious that the stillness was accentuated by a faint rhythmical drone as of a distant threshing engine. I opened the kitchen door and the sound was at once louder and recognizable—the ordered chewing of a multitude of caterpillars.

Anita ran past me up the basement stairs calling, "Armigel, Armigel!"

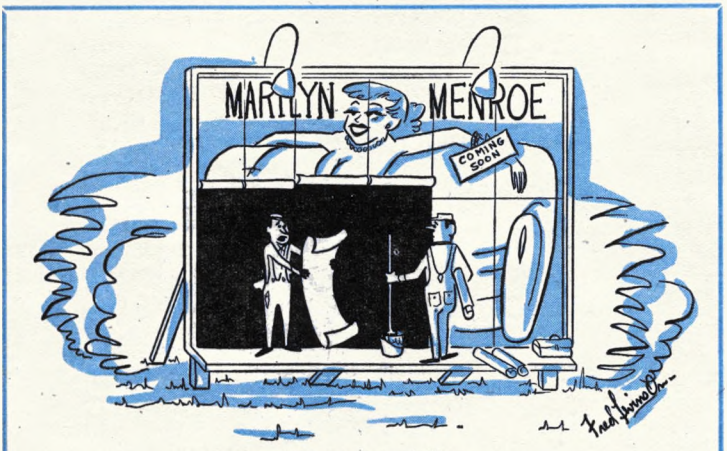
On the ground floor I passed the two rooms I had seen before. The caterpillars had taken complete possession and the rooms were crawling with the black-goggled, swollen brutes. Most of them were repulsively gorging on the branches of greenery stuck into washbasin jugs, but not a few were rippling obesely across the floor.

Anita darted from one room to another, then toward the stairs leading to the bedroom floor. Unaccountably, I jumped to bar her way. "Anita, you're not to go upstairs," I said. I might have saved my breath or have tried to stop a bat out of hell, for she turned on me like a fury, and hurled herself past me and up the stairs. I followed. She slammed open the door at the head of the stairs, only to reveal a room empty save for racks of setting boards on which moths were pinned. She sped on to the next. As she opened it I was at her shoulder.

It was the room we sought, and I had feared to find—Vesey's bedroom. Here, too, the caterpillars were in possession, as my nose had registered the instant the door was opened. I noted, too, that the jug on the marble-topped washstand was stuffed with branches of the food plant, though these had been stripped of their leaves.

But it was to the bed that my eyes traveled at once, and to the figure that lay half-on, half-off it. Vesey was past all mortal aid. He must have been asleep when they had started and had not awakened till it was too late . The frantic disarray of the bedclothes, the rigid, arching-back of the toes, the pajamas torn at neck and shoulder by his fingernails as he clawed at the Thing that held him—these were eloquent evidence of the fight he had made for his life. Mercifully, we were unable to judge from his features the agony in which he died. His face and head were entirely encased in what looked like a monstrous gray football anchored to the massive mahogany bedstead by silken ropes.

And they had to break it with an axe. •



"No such luck!"

FIRST SERGEANTS RUN THE ARMY

The author is a Regular Army officer who assures us that this is *not* a story of garrison life in the U.S. Army, but instead a fantasy about the Royal House Guards of Pimbucland, an ancient kingdom east of Atlantis.

• By JOHN ALISON

THE PHONE RANG.

First Sergeant Dymczenski leaned across the desk, pushing aside the daily strength report he was working on, and answered.

His forehead began to wrinkle, eyebrows almost touching. He finally squashed out his cigarette in the already crowded ashtray. "No kidding, Charlie? Lemme get a pad and pencil and write this all down—no, wait a minute. Can you hang on, Charlie?"

He cupped his hand over the receiver and set his teeth. Never in his thirty-seven years in the Army would First Sergeant Michael Dymczenski get used to this, though it happened every year. "Captain Harris, sir," he said, turning to the long reclining figure of somnolent young manhood, feet propped comfortably on the desk next to him.

"Yes?" The captain looked up from the latest copy of the *Army Times*, and raised an eyebrow at the grizzle-topped sergeant more than twice his age. "What is it, Sergeant?"

"The I.G., sir."

The feet hit the floor in a hurry. The captain ran a quick hand through his somewhat touseled hair, and reached for his tie. "Where is he? We haven't even started—I mean, he's not due here

for another week." His face had suddenly taken on the shade of a frog's underbelly.

"Take it easy, Captain. He's still in the First Battalion. But he's giving them hell. Just finished off A Company. Three pages of gigs. The colonel has just restricted the whole damn' company."

EVERYONE knows an I.G. inspection is rough, but this particular Inspector General was a special case. In the first place, he was only a lieutenant colonel. He had just got the job and already was bucking for his eagles. In the second place, not even the Division Commander could calm the guy down, for he took his orders direct from Army Headquarters, and that was a comfortable two hundred miles away.

Colonel Cramshaw, the regimental commander, who still hadn't given up hope of climbing up to brigadier general, had already said that anybody who failed to pass the I.G. inspection would be restricted to the company area until further orders.

Sergeant Dymczenski's paper was rapidly being covered with the curious hieroglyphics he called writing.

"Yeah, Charlie," he was saying. "No kidding? Yeah. Yeah. No kidding? Yeah?"

His curiosity aroused, the captain leaned over to read the notes, which of course were legible only to the sergeant himself. Finally, after about two pages and a half, the sergeant dropped the receiver back on the hook. "Got a list of the gigs, sir," he said. "Gives us something to look for."

"What are they?" The captain had put his feet back on the desk. After all, since a plan of action had to be formulated, one had to be relaxed and alert.

"Stuff you'd never dream of, sir. A Company's a spoony company. But the Inspector General got them for dirty floors, and they'd just waxed them. The whole company was gigged for unshined shoes, and you know how Captain Terelli's a bug on shoeshines."

Captain Harris glanced unhappily at his own shoes, which hadn't been touched for two weeks. "What else, Sergeant?"

"Lots of stuff. Clothing illegibly marked. Helmets not shined. No name tags. Shabby footlockers. And so on."

Captain Harris groaned.

He pulled himself out of his chair, ran his hand along the back of his neck. Hadn't had his hair cut for about a month, Dymczenski noticed. And the I.G. was even gigging for shabby footlockers, when everybody knew that those footlockers had been issued and reissued from Quartermaster since the time of George Washington and Valley Forge.

"Sergeant."

"Yes, sir."

"Remember that fellow from Post Engineers—the guy whose truck we pulled out of the ditch?"

"Yes, sir."

"What do you suppose would have happened, if we hadn't been there and got him out right away before his C.O. heard about it?"

The sergeant felt the stubble of beard on his jaw. "Well, sir, something like that, you know—carelessness in handling Government property—he probably would have got busted."

"Lots of paint over at Post Engineers, isn't there?"

"Yes, sir."

"How much paint do you think we'd need to paint two hundred shabby footlockers.... No, wait just a minute." The captain was silent a moment, but his face twitched like that of a man plotting a nefarious plot indeed. "How much paint do you think we'd need to paint the whole damn' company—the footlockers, barracks, latrines, and all?"

The sergeant's eyes bugged. The barracks hadn't been painted since before World War II, and to get paint was to go right in the face of the Department of Defense, the President, and both Houses of Congress. Supply economy. "Including the orderly room, sir?" he quavered.

The captain nodded vigorously. "Including the orderly room, supply room, and mess hall. After all, running a Government vehicle into a ditch is a mighty serious offense, Sergeant."

Sergeant Dymczenski nodded sadly.

"And we did him a big favor, didn't we?"

"Yes, sir," the sergeant agreed reluctantly.

"Do you suppose—"

"Yes, sir." Sergeant Dymczenski remembered that there had been some paint reserved for the Officers' Club. He'd seen it. And if the club received only two coats of paint instead of three—

The captain was drumming his fingers on his desk. "Most of that stuff the platoon sergeants can take care of. But the unshined shoes and the unwaxed floors have me worried. It would take us a week to get our field boots to look as good as Terelli's—and he got gigged."

Sergeant Dymczenski thought a moment. "Saw some stuff over at Training Aids Section, Captain. Gallons and gallons of shellac. I'm sure that they've got lots more than they need."

Illustrated by BOB GREENHALGH

The captain's face brightened. "Know anybody at Training Aids, Sergeant?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you suppose—"

"Yes, sir."

Captain Harris was thinking. Finally he turned to the sergeant, who had in the meantime decided upon the proper method of approach, the where, when, and how of the two illicit deals he was planning, and the storage-place, well hidden, for the paint and shellac.

"Shellac will make the floors shine all right, Sergeant, but what about the shoes? You can't shellac them."

The sergeant shook his head. "No, sir. I mean, yes, sir. That's what we used to do in the Old Army"—here Sergeant Dymczenski allowed himself a short nostalgic yearning for those good old days—"and it looks good, if you do it right."

"But shellac—it'll ruin the shoes."

Sergeant Dymczenski shook his head. "No, sir. Of course, you can't use the shoes for walking after they've been shellacked, but they sure look good under the bed."

Captain Harris gulped, and an indescribable expression crept over his face.

But Sergeant Dymczenski had interpreted Captain Harris's expression. "You know, sir," he ventured. "The I.G. comes only once a year, and when he's gone, we'll just dump the shoes into a pot of solvent to get rid of the shellac. When we work a little saddle soap into them, they'll be as good as new."

SLOWLY Captain Harris's face cleared. That was a problem quickly solved. He started clearing the decks for action—the desk, that is. Reports in the left-hand middle drawer. Files in the lower right. Miscellaneous (including crossword puzzles, *Army Times*, ash trays and coke bottles) in the bottom left, carefully concealed behind a couple of thick tomes describing infantry tactics in the Boer War. Get all the papers in the "In" basket and put them in the "Out" basket. Go through the "Hold" basket, get rid of last month's copy of *Bluebook* that was underneath a couple of "expedite" orders from regiment. Hmm. Those "expedite" orders were a couple of weeks old, already. Well, better put them into the "Out" basket. Let Dymczenski worry about them.

"We'll save the day, Sergeant," he said confidently. He rose to his feet, started toward the door. "Going over by Regiment," he nodded to Dymczenski. The sergeant understood perfectly. The Officers' Club was right next to regimental headquarters. Besides, maybe the captain would stop

by the barber shop and get a haircut, and that surely would be all to the good.

"Yes, sir." Dymczenski nodded, and reached for the phone. Use finesse for that shellac and paint. He needed plenty. Enough for four platoon barracks and three smaller buildings housing the company orderly room, supply room, and kitchens.

THE required materials arrived within the hour, testifying to the fact that sergeants are perfectionists when it comes to diplomacy, and further, that when it comes to sergeants dealing with sergeants, there is no such thing as red tape.

Already Dymczenski had thrown the training schedule out the window. Figuratively, that is. It was really just where it always was, tacked neatly on the bulletin board, because the I.G. might well inspect for that. He might ask questions about it, too, so perhaps it would be a good idea to rehearse the platoon sergeants on what to say. Two hundred soldiers were busy policing the area, and for once anyway there wasn't a single murmur of discontent. The honor of F Company was at stake.

Floors were now being scrubbed to perfection, with a special concoction prepared upon Dymczenski's orders. Two pounds of lye to a hundred gallons of water, plus twenty-five gallons of a mysterious colorless liquid, source and identity unknown, although Dymczenski had uttered dire threats awaiting anybody caught drinking the stuff. The floors began to gleam.

Dymczenski borrowed a sprayer from his friend at Post Engineers, and while they were waiting for the barracks floors to dry, the stalwarts of F Company lined up their shoes and boots behind the latrine, keeping out only the wooden shower-clogs, which would serve as footwear until after the inspection was over.

Following Dymczenski's instructions, Clausewitz, the supply sergeant, had prepared another curious mixture, using ten gallons of shellac, four gallons of brown paint, and one of red. This stuff he sprayed carefully over the shoes, always under the steely eyes of the first sergeant. But when he had finished, all Dymczenski had was praise, and in fact, he slapped Clausewitz on the back once or twice.

Now that Clausewitz had done with the shoes, he and a party of stocking-footed GI's started into the barracks, spraying the floors, which were now dry, with clear shellac.

Sergeant Dymczenski stood outside the door of the orderly room, looking with deep satisfaction at the gleaming floor. A little shellac on a floor looked better than ten pounds of wax, although of course it wouldn't last long. Which was why he issued the order, in the captain's name, of course, requiring all persons to remove their wooden clogs—now the only authorized footwear for F Company—before entering any of the buildings in the company area. These clogs, incidentally, would be concealed inside the furnaces when the I.G. started to inspect. If the I.G. showed an interest in furnaces, Dymczenski would signal Clausewitz by scratching his ear, delay the I.G. slightly, and all the I.G. would see in the furnace was a nice roaring fire. . . .

Captain Harris had been gone nearly three hours. He should be nearly through his coffee-visit to regimental headquarters, Dymczenski reflected. Then he noticed a truck that had stopped outside the orderly room, and the two GI's from Post Engineers, who had clambered out the back, carrying the last load of paint.

"Where do you want this stuff, Sarge?" one of them asked. The sergeant pointed to the rear of the buildings. This apparently did not please them, for it meant at least fifty steps more, either way. But it wouldn't be good to leave that stuff outside the orderly room, where anybody could see it, and some dirty rat with no scruples would probably steal it.

Sergeant Dymczenski turned as he heard footsteps. About time the captain got back, he thought. He eyed Captain Harris critically as he approached, saluting smartly when he was within a few feet. Shoes, well, they had been shined after a fashion. Maybe he'd get away with it, although they looked dingy compared to the shellac job. Hair cut, too. His eye took in the brass belt-buckle, which had a slight greenish tinge on the edges.

Captain Harris returned Dymczenski's salute, then turned and stared at the activity going on at the barracks. Dymczenski briefed him on what had gone on during his absence. Then he glanced at his watch. "It's been over an hour since we finished with the First Platoon's building, sir. The floor's dry now. Would you like to take a look?" And without waiting for the captain's assent, he started toward it. He kicked off his clogs, then suddenly shouted in anguish, for Captain Harris had mounted the steps and was opening the door. "Hey, there—take off your shoes, you—I mean sir!" And as Captain Harris paused bewilderedly, hand on knob of door, left foot upraised, shoe poised threateningly over the gleaming white marble of the floor, Dymczenski explained. "Nobody can go into the barracks wearing shoes, sir, by order of the company commander—I mean, I made the order out," he amended lamely.

Captain Harris put his left foot back on the step, and Dymczenski continued, "We don't want any marks on the floor, sir, and shoes will ruin them." Captain Harris bent down and undid the laces. He stepped inside, glanced at the mirrorlike floor, took in the cavernous emptiness of the building, for there wasn't a thing in it. He turned back to Dymczenski. "Where are the beds, and the rest of the stuff?"

Dymczenski pointed. "Outside, in the rear of the buildings, sir. We're just about ready to paint the beds and footlockers—they'll be dry by tonight. Then we'll move them inside. Tomorrow we're painting the walls and ceilings."

The captain took several short breaths, then pushed his feet into the shoes and tied the laces. "I think you've made a fine start, Sergeant," he said slowly. He started down the steps. "Carry on, and I'll—" Words no longer came forth, although the mouth moved. Harris had suddenly taken the stance of a frozen fish.

Dymczenski turned, and saw the long sleek sedan, its red flag with two stars affixed waving gently in the breeze. A heavy-set individual had stepped out, and was slowly looking at the piles of beds, footlockers, et cetera, stacked in rear of the barracks. It was General Ironer himself, Division Commander, and terror of all junior officers—old Ironpants in the flesh.

FEET clicking smartly, Captain Harris saluted, and so did Dymczenski. General Ironer returned the salute with a flick of his swagger stick.

The general was a hard-bitten man who had served in every major campaign since Pershing was chasing Villa all over Mexico. He was tough as they come, and junior officers quaked when they came within fifty feet of him. Captain Harris was within ten feet, and the radiation was intense, but Dymczenski was glad to see that whatever quaking Captain Harris was doing was internal, and didn't show. The general spoke.

"I noticed pup tents pitched out in back. On closer inspection, I see beds, footlockers, shoes, and every other damn' thing that should be on the inside. Would you kindly explain what sort of maneuver is involved?"

His eyes pierced the captain. Dymczenski felt that at this point he was emotionally better able to cope with generals than Captain Harris, who was making no sign of talking although obviously some sort of an answer was needed.

"Excuse me, sir, I can explain the whole thing," Dymczenski said and felt the relief that came over Captain Harris. "Sir, we're getting ready for

the Inspector General." He told of the experience of A Company, and how anxious Captain Harris was that his company would be a credit to the post and to the division. He assured General Ironer that by nightfall all debris would be removed, with the exception of the pup tents, where the men would sleep until the I.G. was through and it was safe to move back into the barracks.

The general listened attentively, and somehow, without a single muscle moving, his face had taken a mellower aspect. Upon completion of the explanation, he almost smiled; but suddenly the look of Ironpants was back on his face, and the interview was over. He muttered something about "Operation I.G.," said good afternoon, returned their salutes with a smart flick of his swagger stick, wheeled, and walked stiffly back to his vehicle.

The captain turned and looked beyond the buildings where Clausewitz had lined up the beds in one line, and the footlockers in the other. Already crews of GI's had started spraying. He turned back to Dymczenski, a little reflectively. "You know," he murmured, "if we pass this inspection without a gig, old Ironp—General Ironer will really take notice."

Sergeant Dymczenski gave a quick glance over to see if the two silver captain's bars hadn't suddenly changed to major's leaves—for that was obviously what Captain Harris had in mind—and involuntarily, he felt a wave of pity. Officers have a lot to worry about. Now look at himself. In the Army for thirty-seven years, a first sergeant for twenty-one, and he was happy.

He looked at his watch. "Begging your pardon, sir."

"What is it, Sergeant?"

"Sir, I would like to excuse myself a minute. I told the B Company first sergeant I'd give him a ring—the I.G. must be through there now."

"Wait a minute, I'll go with you," said Captain Harris.

"Excuse me, sir, but I wouldn't be wanting to waste the captain's time. Besides, it's past quitting-time."

And Captain Harris, when he had been dismissed, turned instead toward his car. "Well," he said hesitantly, "Carry on. I'll see you in the morning."

Sergeant Dymczenski watched the car drive off, then turned back to the building that housed the orderly room. Instead of going to the front door, however, he swung around to the rear of the building, where he had set up a field-company command post, in the best traditions of the infantry.

He dialed the number, propping a pad of paper on the side of the building (to be painted tomorrow), pencil poised. "Hello—Steve? This is Mike. The I.G. done over there? Yeah? No kidding?" The pencil began to speed over the paper. "Yeah. Yeah. What! No kidding? Yeah. Yeah."

After that and similar observations which took up about half an hour, Dymczenski put the phone back on the cradle, stared moodily at the three-and-a-half pages he had written. Gigs. There were the usual things, of course, but those Dymczenski was getting ready for. But this guy was an inventive genius. He'd gone into the supply room, for one thing, and asked to see the supply records. Picking out a particular item, he'd noticed that B Company had been charged with two hundred thirteen web belts. So he counted them, and B Company only had two hundred five. Eight web belts were missing. So, not only a gig for the company, but Captain Jones, the company commander, had to dig into his own pocket and reimburse the Government for losing eight web belts, which were probably over in some other company, as things in the supply room do have a tendency to disappear only to reappear as an overage somewhere else. Matter of fact, the I.G. had also checked up on bayonets. B Company was charged with two hundred twenty-four, and had two hundred thirty-six. Did Captain Jones get credit for the extra bayonets to reimburse him for the missing web belts? Hell, no. The I.G. confiscated the extra bayonets, and gave Captain Jones another gig.

Dymczenski was tapping the pencil against his teeth. Better get Clausewitz on the ball. Hide the overages, and borrow the shortages. He was a little disappointed in those guys in B Company, letting their Old Man down like that. He glanced over the sheafs of gigs, making mental jottings to be carried out on the morrow.

One thing before he left for town. Talk to Wilson, regimental sergeant major. Get him to give Captain Harris a few jobs to do for the next couple of days, enough to keep him away from the company most of the time. For Captain Harris's own good, he shouldn't become too familiar with the activities Dymczenski planned.

Next morning in the temporary command post back of the company headquarters building, Dymczenski was busy arranging the stuff that had just come in from Message Center when Captain Harris arrived. The sergeant noted sadly that he still hadn't shined his belt, and the trousers were a little baggy at the knee.

Harris seated himself behind his desk, grabbed the papers Dymczenski had dropped into his "In" basket, glanced idly, then suddenly cursed loudly. "Look at that, Sergeant!" He tossed the paper over to Dymczenski. "I've been picked as inventory officer for the P.X. And I've got to be over there today, ten minutes from now!" Harris was fuming. "And I was inventory officer for that damn' thing only three months ago!"

"Yes, sir."

"Somebody's plenty off the ball over at Regiment! I'm not due for that again until next year!"

"Yes, sir," answered the sergeant, sorrowfully looking at the green edging on Captain Harris's brass belt-buckle.

"Here we're almost due for the I.G., and they pull a deal like that! How can I get the company ready for inspection if they give me a job like that? Answer me that, Sergeant."

"No, sir—I mean, I don't know how," the sergeant murmured. Better pull out the polishing cloth, he was thinking. Then he could hand it to the captain, and suggest he touch up the buckle a bit. His hand reached for the lower drawer where he kept such appurtenances, then paused. No. Better wait until just before the inspection for that.

The captain was going through the rest of the orders, muttering angrily. Suddenly he stopped, and became explosive. He jerked another mimeographed sheet from the pile.

"Look at this, Dymczenski!" he spluttered. "I'm on as Officer of the Day this evening and tomorrow morning! And over two-thirds of the officers in this damn' regiment haven't pulled it since I had the job last!" He reached for the phone. "I'm going to call up those screwballs over there and—"

"Excuse me, sir," Sergeant Dymczenski interrupted. "Sir, I don't want to tell you what to do, but do you think it wise? After all, the regimental commander's ready to blow his top any day now with the way the I.G. is treating the regiment, and if you call up—"

Captain Harris put the telephone back on the hook.

Dymczenski reached for the phone. "Maybe I can do something, sir. I have a friend over at Regiment." But Captain Harris was shaking his head.

"No use getting you involved, Sergeant. Might as well take it, even if I don't like it." He pulled himself to his feet. "You think you can handle things?"

"Yes, sir," Dymczenski answered dubiously. "Just you go ahead, Captain. I'll try my best."

Dymczenski watched Captain Harris round the corner of the building and disappear from view. Then he pulled out the notes he'd made on B Company's inspection.

At noon that day he put in a call to C Company, for their report on the I.G. They had received the worst beating of all so far. Four-and-a-half pages of gigs. Even the company commander had been gigged—frayed collar. And Dymczenski cursed silently. Captain Cruzak was a good guy, and he had nine kids. It's a wonder he had any shirts at all, raising nine kids. And the I.G., he knew from the grapevine, had been married twelve years and didn't have any kids. And this gig—"obsolete identification tags." He'd gotten half the company on that one. Seems the old buzzard had obtained hold of everybody's immunization records from the hospital, and checked the date of their last tetanus shot, and if it wasn't on the dog tag it was a gig. And much other stuff, which Dymczenski digested, then decided what to do. Dog tags, for instance, were easy. Just send the company clerk over to get two hundred new sets from the office of issue.

All this time the men of F Company kept busy. Barracks painted inside and out. Beds made beautifully, and, of course, not disturbed, everybody sleeping outside.

Everybody had memorized the training schedule, which was what they were supposed to be doing this week, but weren't. Plus a few key words concerning each phase of training they should have been following, just in case the I.G. were to ask a few questions.

By the time evening rolled along, Dymczenski had to admit he was satisfied. He'd personally checked and rechecked everything, and the barracks looked good. The I.G. wouldn't find a damn' thing wrong. Of that he was certain.

That was before he called up D Company.

He dropped the phone, looked bitterly at the stuff the D Company first sergeant had told him. The I.G. hadn't been satisfied with the appearance of the web belts. This was really somewhat unreasonable, Dymczenski thought, since they had been issued by the Quartermaster, and you had to take what they gave you. But still the gig read "unsightly web equipment." Also, he'd gone over all the weapons in the supply room—gigged about half of them for "dirty bore" and the like. Well, he didn't have to worry about that. Clausewitz had used steel wool and silver polish on the rifle barrels, and they gleamed like mirrors.

He looked up suddenly, for Captain Harris had appeared, sinking into a chair. "Boy, I'm bushed," he exclaimed. He glanced at the notes Dymczenski had made from his call to D Company. "How are you doing, Sergeant?"

Dymczenski shook his head. "I don't know, sir. This is what the I.G. did to D Company."

"What's the trouble, Sergeant? I've got a few minutes. Maybe I can work it out."

"There isn't much we can do, sir. The gig that's worrying me most right now is one they got on their web belts. The I.G. gigged D Company for having lousy-looking belts, and that's the way they got them from Quartermaster."

The captain thought a minute. "Let's have a look at our web equipment. Where do you have them?"

No doubt about it, the belts were crummy. And, what made matters worse, they were every conceivable shade of green. "There's only one thing we can do, Captain," Dymczenski said. "Bleach them, and then redye them. At least, they'll all be the same color, and that won't be so bad."

Captain Harris nodded. "Anything else?"

"Yes, sir. There are lots of things we still have to do, and the I.G. will be here tomorrow afternoon. But I think I'll be able to work things out."

The captain had moved over to the rifle rack, and picked up one of the rifles, looked down the barrel, whistled. "What did you do to this, Clausewitz?"

"Steel wool and silver polish, sir," Clausewitz answered, looking ruefully at Dymczenski.

"My heavens!" The captain was getting excited. "But—but— Who told you to use it?"

"Sergeant Dymczenski, sir."

Harris turned to Dymczenski. "Dymczenski, don't you know you just can't do that to a barrel? In fact, if you get caught using it, you'll have people on your neck all the way up to the chairman of the Military Affairs Committee in Washington. You'll never be able to shoot straight out of that gun—you've worn down the barrel, and you'll never know where the bullet's going to land."

"Yes, sir. But the barrels are shiny, and the I.G.'s—"

The captain raised a hand. "Say no more. The I.G.'s inspecting rifle barrels, not score cards."

"Yes, sir."

Harris stepped out of the door, put on his shoes. "Well, you seem to be doing all right, Dymczenski. Sorry I can't be here to help you."

"That's all right, sir."

"Sure wish I knew who was responsible for putting me on guard."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I have to go check the guard house now. Then I've got to go on a tour of the post. I'll be busy until late tonight."

"Yes, sir."

"Those guys at Regiment sure messed things up—putting me on guard just before the I.G. inspection."

"Yes, sir."

"Are you sure you can get along all right?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well,"—and the captain turned toward his car—"good night."

"Good night, sir." And Dymczenski started toward the company headquarters. He had to make a few phone calls. To get some dye, for one thing.

The I.G. was due at E Company tomorrow morning, and would be here in the afternoon. That meant everybody worked late tonight.

Tomorrow morning everybody would get up an hour before reveille, pull their pup tents down, and make bedrolls. This would have to be supervised by Dymczenski himself, to be sure there weren't any sloppy jobs. Then the rolls would be fastened on the beds. The rest of the morning could be spent on odds and ends, and at eleven o'clock he'd call up E Company and see how the I.G. was doing over there.

But now—the dye. He'd call up one of the WAC sergeants. Women were always dyeing something or other. She'd have an idea where he could get some. Then tonight he'd get some guys to move the desks and other stuff outside back into the orderly room. The files didn't worry him. He knew them by heart, and could in fact tell the I.G. what was on Line Seven, Page 112, of any book in the files. Or any other line on any other page for that matter.

Let the I.G. come. Dymczenski was ready for him. He reached for the telephone, dialed the number of the WAC barracks.

At eleven the next day every conceivable thing had been done, checked and rechecked, and Dymczenski was completely satisfied. The I.G. would be ready to inspect F Company at about one-thirty. That meant everybody had to stay out of the buildings until one o'clock. Then take off these damn' wooden clogs—he reflected ruefully that that hadn't been such a good idea after all—and dump them into the furnace. Go into the barracks, step into shoes, tie laces—carefully. And woe betide the man who moved his feet, for the shoes would split wide open.

But the minute the I.G. was out of the company area, Dymczenski and Clausewitz would jump into the company truck, drive down to the A Company supply room, where they had stored gallons of shellac remover, and bring it back to F Company. They'd use the coffee pots—hundred-gallon variety—from the kitchen. Dissolve

the shellac, let the shoes dry, and they'd be all right again, with a couple of coats of saddle soap.

The coffee from those coffee pots would taste mighty peculiar for several weeks, Dymczenski had to admit, but he'd solved that problem too. He had finagled a key to the Officers' Club kitchen, and last night had made a little visit.

What the club manager didn't know wouldn't hurt him much, but that morning coffee at the Officers' Club came from F Company pots, and vice versa at F Company. There was a good reason for this. Those guys at the club were sharp, and if something was wrong with the coffee they would be able to tell that somebody had made a switch, on account of identifying dents and scratches. But they'd probably not look this morning, and the exchange would be reversed tonight. Tomorrow they wouldn't be able to understand why their coffee pots had suddenly commenced to produce such horrible coffee.

CAPTAIN HARRIS was due back now. His job as Officer of the Day was over. So Dymczenski reached into his drawer for the polishing cloth.

He looked up when the captain entered, eyes straying toward the belt buckle. His jaw dropped. It was shined.

Captain Harris saw his glance. "It was a little tarnished, so I shined it up. You know," he went on in an aggrieved tone, "I wish you'd noticed it. It was the colonel who saw it."

"Did he say anything, sir?"

The captain shook his head. "He was more interested in when the I.G. was coming. He was waiting to go over with him to E Company, and was plenty worried about that. So all I got was a comment that I ought to shine up my buckle before the I.G. comes over here."

Dymczenski reached for the telephone. "The I.G. should be finished with E Company by now, sir. I was ready to give them a ring." He dialed the number, sat back a minute. "Hello, that you, Smoky? This is Mike Dymczenski over at F Company —the I.G. finished? Yeah? *He did?* Oh, my great jumping catfish! Yeah. Yeah. Well, I don't know what we can do about it now—" He put the receiver down, and his face felt cold and his hands clammy.

"What's the trouble, Sergeant?" Harris asked.

And Dymczenski put his head in his hands a minute before speaking.

"Big trouble, sir. The I.G. wasn't satisfied just to look for gigs on the floor. No, sir. He saw a trapdoor in the ceiling of one of the barracks and demanded a ladder. He climbed up and opened the trapdoor. He called for a flashlight, and then spent about five minutes prowling around up there. Finally he came down, and he had a big smile on his face, and he turned to his stooge who takes down the gigs. 'Attic in disorder.' And then he went to each of the other barracks and gigged each of them for disorder in the attic. The colonel's mad, the captain's mad, and the sergeants are all mad. Because nobody's looked behind those damn' trapdoors since they were first built, I guess. In fact, Smoky—I mean, sir, First Sergeant O'Brien—took a look in one of them after the I.G. had left, and found old bottles, clothes, and newspapers. The latest one was dated 1925, which shows how long it's been up there."

Captain Harris sank wearily into his chair. "I don't suppose you cleaned up our attics?" he asked hopefully.

"No, sir." The sergeant shook his head. "I didn't even think about those damn' trapdoors."

Captain Harris groaned. "Then we're sunk. We can't possibly clean up the attics before he gets here!"

Dymczenski didn't answer, for an idea was struggling to get through. Suddenly he jumped up. "Leave it to me, sir. We can lick him yet." And he dashed out the door, trotting toward the company truck. Now if his friend at Training Aids would help him— He glanced at his watch. Already past twelve. If he could catch him before he went to chow, he could get what he wanted, and he still had more than an hour before the I.G. was due.

AT one-thirty the I.G. arrived; he parked his car in front of the company headquarters. He got out, followed by two others. One was Colonel Cramshaw, the regimental commander; the other man, a tall thin fellow, carried a pad and pencil.

Dymczenski studied the man wearing a lieutenant-colonel's leaf on his collar. He was about five-feet-two in height, weight about a hundred sixty pounds, and had a face that reminded Dymczenski of his mother-in-law.

"ATTENTION!" shouted the captain, and both he and Dymczenski popped to their feet. Captain Harris stepped forward, executed a snappy salute. "Sir, Captain Harris reporting. F Company is ready for inspection."

The Inspector General, for all his five-foot-two, had an air of someone with a definite purpose in life. He exuded grim confidence.

Behind him stood his assistant, a warrant officer six feet, three inches tall, weighing a hundred thirty pounds, with an air of determination in the performance of his mission, ready to put into execution the tasks assigned him. He was standing ready,

At one-thirty, the I.G. arrived, followed by Dymczenski and Captain Harris were waiting

pencil sharpened and poised over a pad of paper.

Behind him stood Colonel Cramshaw, brows lowered, lips tight. His was an air of controlled fury.

The I.G. stepped forward. "We'll start with your records," he said grimly.

Dymczenski ran out from behind his desk. "Right here, sir. All ready for your inspection, sir." He indicated a neat array of books and papers on a large table near the end of the room. The I.G. stepped over, followed by his assistant, pencil poised, followed by Colonel Cramshaw, jaw outthrust.

The I.G. picked up the sick-book "You've got three men in the hospital," he observed.

"Yes, sir," said Sergeant Dymczenski. "One has the grippe, one a broken ankle—right ankle, sir. The third is recovering from a case of chickenpox."

The I.G.'s eyebrows lifted slightly. Dymczenski went on: "We expect the first one—Jason, Private First Class, RA35738965, back in two or three days. The man with the broken ankle, Coulter, Corporal, RA45732—"

"Never mind all that," growled the I.G. He tossed the book back on the table. He picked up a book on Army Regulations, glanced at Dymczenski, thought better of it, dropped it. He glanced for a minute at the gleaming floor, walked over to a window, ran a finger along the top part of the sill.

two others. One was Colonel Cramshaw, the regimental commander; the other man carried a pencil and paper. First Sergeant in the incredibly spotless orderly room, not walking any more than they had to so the varnished floors would not be scratched.

He looked chagrined when the finger remained clean.

He walked behind the captain's desk, pulled out the bottom left drawer, studied the titles of the two books on the Boer War, closed it regretfully. Dymczenski noticed that the assistant's pencil had drooped a little over the pad, and that Colonel Cramshaw's expression, while still dark and glowering, seemed a little bit less so than before. And the I.G. himself wasn't looking too happy.

He walked out of the orderly room toward the supply room, followed by his assistant, pencil held uncertainly over the pad, followed by Colonel Cramshaw, who still looked angry, but maybe not quite as angry. And followed, of course, by Captain Harris, apprehensive, and by First Sergeant Michael Dymczenski, who was wondering if perhaps he shouldn't have retired seven years ago.

The I.G. mounted the steps, entered the supply room. Instantly Sergeant Clausewitz was on his feet, saluting smartly. "Sir, Sergeant Clausewitz, supply sergeant, reporting to the Inspector General."

The I.G. answered with a snappy salute himself. "Let me see your supply records, please."

He ran his finger down the list of items, stopped at one. "You have charged to this company one hundred sixty-seven shovels. Where are they?"

"Right here, sir." Clausewitz indicated a neat stack.

The I.G. turned to his aide. "Let's count 'em." The shovels added up to exactly one hundred sixty-seven. The I.G. didn't look too happy about it, Dymczenski thought. But he turned back to the property-record book. "Two hundred twelve steel helmets. Where are they?" he asked Clausewitz.

"We've issued out a hundred ninety-eight of them to the men in the company. The rest are here." He indicated a small stack on a shelf.

The I.G. went over, and counted. "Fourteen." He turned back to Clausewitz. "Let's see the individual property records you carry for the men in this company."

"Yes, sir." Clausewitz pulled out the top drawer of the steel filing cabinet. "Here they are, sir. One hundred ninety-eight helmets signed for. I also have some other records I keep on each item. It's not part of regulations, but that way I can tell where every single item is that I'm charged with. Would you like to see them, sir?"

"No, I guess not," the I.G. muttered, and his face did not seem as purposeful as before. He walked over to the shelves where supply items were kept, ran a finger on the shelf boards. No dust. He walked over to the rifle rack, picked up one, squinted down the barrel. Dymczenski thought he heard an involuntary exclamation. The I.G. put the rifle down, picked up another one at random. He peered down the barrel, put it down. He walked over to some boxes holding 60-millimeter mortars. "You've got these packed in cosmoline?" he asked Captain Harris.

Captain Harris nodded. "Division commander's orders, sir."

"All right." The I.G. turned to the door. He started toward the First Platoon's barrack, followed by his assistant, pencil still out, no longer poised above pad, but rather three degrees to the left and four down. The face of the assistant was of a man who was failing in his mission. Colonel Cramshaw strode out behind the I.G.'s assistant, and his face was gradually assuming normal proportions. This trio was followed by Captain Harris and Sergeant Dymczenski.

"ATTENTION!" shouted the platoon sergeant as the I.G. entered the room, which was ridiculous because they were already at attention, and hadn't moved in the past half hour for fear of cracking their shoes.

THE I.G. strode up to one of the beds. Clothing neatly arranged, neatly marked. "Let me see your identification tags," the I.G. said to the man standing beside the bed. The soldier reached into his shirt, pulled them out. Dymczenski noted with satisfaction that they had been shined. The I.G. looked at the man's shoes. They looked like red-brown mirrors. He pulled out the man's messkit from the gear on the bed. This too had

been shined. The I.G. went through every single item on the bed. He examined the clothing hanging in the wardrobe behind the bed. He inspected for dust on top of the wardrobe. He picked up a shoe from under the bed, ran his handkerchief over the sole. The handkerchief remained clean.

The I.G. went back to the soldier. He examined the press of the trousers. They were perfect. He examined the belt buckle. The brass had been shined on both sides until it looked more silver than gold. He examined the shirt. It still showed the creases from the cleaners. He examined the man's face. Perfectly shaved. His eyes. Bloodshot, perhaps, but still passable. His hair. Perfectly combed, and not one strand longer than the prescribed length.

In short, the man was absolutely perfect.

The I.G. left this soldier, going to the next one, but Dymczenski noticed he moved somewhat uncertainly, like a man who was experiencing deep disappointment. But this man was also perfection.

So on down the line, although after the fourth man the I.G. stopped checking each man, and instead moved slowly from man to man, looking disconsolately at glasslike shoes.

The I.G.'s air was of frustration, Dymczenski noticed with satisfaction. Not a single gig yet.

He mounted the steps to the second floor, followed by his assistant, pad in pocket, pencil held in nerveless fingers, followed by Colonel Cramshaw, chest out, eyes sharp and alert, lips slightly quivering on the outer edges, followed by Captain Harris, silent, with the air of impending victory, followed by Sergeant Dymczenski, whose feet were beginning to hurt.

"Fetch me a ladder!" roared the I.G. By a curious coincidence there was already a ladder leaning against the wall, so Dymczenski silently pointed it out, reminding himself to have a talk with the platoon sergeant when the inspection was over.

The little man grabbed the ladder, looked for the trapdoor—but there was no trapdoor. He looked in amazement at the smooth expanse of ceiling above him. "Where's the trapdoor?" he spluttered.

"Trapdoor, sir?" said Dymczenski.

"Trapdoor, sir?" said Harris.

"Yes—trapdoor!" roared the I.G. "These barracks are supposed to have trapdoors, dammit—how else can you get to the attic?"

"Attic, sir?" said Dymczenski.

"Attic, sir?" said Captain Harris.

The I.G.'s face purpled. "Yes, attic. Don't tell me you haven't got those either!"

"Well, sir," ventured Dymczenski. "There might be an attic up there, and I suppose it's possible that there's a trapdoor hidden behind that ceiling"—and here Dymczenski distinctly heard a gurgling sound coming from the vicinity of Captain Harris—"but of course, well, we can't go around chopping holes in ceilings looking for trapdoors, sir."

The I.G. grunted and let go of the ladder. "No-o, suppose not. Are the other barracks like this?"

"Yes, sir," said Dymczenski. And if there were any other ladders left on the second floor—there would be mayhem that evening.

Particularly since the I.G. might get the idea to touch the ceiling where the trapdoor ought to be—and find out the ceiling had just been painted.

"No trapdoors?"

"None visible, sir."

"Seems peculiar that out of the entire military reservation the only buildings without trapdoors should all belong to F Company, doesn't it?"

Sergeant Dymczenski nodded. "It does seem rather unusual, sir."

"Well. . . ." The I.G. was looking dubiously at the ceiling. "The contractor might have run out of trapdoors when he put these buildings up."

"Possibly so, sir," Dymczenski agreed.

The I.G. made a quick inspection of the second floor, which was identical with the first. Then he went out of the building into the Second Platoon's barrack, but this time instead of inspecting each man, he merely circled about the room, staring at glasslike shoes and glasslike floor.

He went upstairs, stared for a minute at the ceiling where the trapdoor ought to be. No ladder, Dymczenski saw with satisfaction. He waited until the I.G. turned back to the stairway before he dared to look up. It was a damned good job, he thought. The paint had covered all trace of the cardboard fitted exactly into the trapdoor recess, edges covered with masking tape.

The I.G. strode down the stairs, leaving the building, followed by a bedraggled-looking assistant, and reliant, confident regimental commander. The I.G. started for the Third Platoon's barrack, thought better of it, stopped. "The other two barrack buildings, are they just like the ones I've looked at?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Captain Harris.

The I.G. started toward his car. "Well, I guess that does it," he muttered bleakly. He jumped into his car, followed by his assistant, started the motor, and drove off.

Colonel Cramshaw turned to Harris, face beaming. "You're a wonder, Harris!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir," said Captain Harris.

"You've shown great initiative, young man."

"Yes, sir."

"And leadership."

"Yes, sir."

"Your efforts should be rewarded, Harris."

"Yes, sir."

"Know what I am going to do?"

"No, sir."

"Next week I'll be making out your efficiency report."

"Yes, sir."

"Never in my military career have I given anyone an efficiency rating of better than 'Satisfactory'."

"No, sir."

"But this time I'm breaking my own rule."

"Yes, sir."

"You know what rating I'm giving you, Harris?"

"No, sir."

"I'm giving you a rating of 'Superior'."

"Yes, sir."

"Anyone who can put out the effort you did deserves the highest rating I can bestow."

"Yes, sir."

"You are a credit to the regiment."

"Yes, sir."

"We need more young officers like you."

"Yes, sir."

"Excuse me, sir," interrupted Sergeant Dymczenski. "But I believe the Inspector General is coming back."

All eyes turned to the sedan that had just pulled in. Apparently the I.G. had just driven around the block. He stepped out of the car, followed by his assistant who had once more pulled pad and pencil out of his pocket.

Dymczenski noticed with sudden dismay that the I.G. was approaching them confidently and purposefully. And the assistant had lost his look of frustration and was once more a man with a mission. Obviously some new thought had caused their return.

"The supply room, Captain. Come with me."

Captain and sergeant exchanged fearful looks. Colonel Cramshaw stood silent. But they all followed the I.G. who was practically running to the supply room.

Inside, he pointed to the mortar boxes. "Open them," he commanded Clausewitz. Clausewitz grabbed a screwdriver and opened a crate. The I.G. bent down slowly, carefully examining the contents of the box.

When he had straightened up, it was with the air of a man who had regained his purpose in life.

He turned to his assistant, who was alert and ready, and spoke in a tone both vibrant and triumphant:

"Dust on cosmoline." •

SALVAGE!

Literally billions of dollars' worth of treasure lie within man's reach on the ocean floor. And the ceaseless struggle to reclaim it is one of the world's toughest jobs.

By LESTER DAVID

THE DEAD MAN ROSE SLOWLY from his berth. He stood up, lifted his arms wide, and walked in a half-crouch toward the horrified figure at the door.

No, this is not a ghost story. It actually happened. Let's start at the beginning.

The Danish vessel *Horta* was steaming across the Caribbean when a hurricane struck. The crew was no match for the sudden, violent storm, as it lashed and pummeled the ship

unmercifully, finally driving it to the bottom.

There it lay until the vessel's owners commissioned a salvage expert to tackle the job of raising her.

Down went a diver into eleven fathoms of water to scout the situation. Slowly he circled the sunken hulk, determining how she lay and how to proceed. He went onto the main deck, came to a cabin and pried open the door.

Then he saw it:

A man was lying on a lower berth, a dead man. Seconds after the door was opened, the figure rose, stood upright and walked! It came directly toward the diver, arms outstretched. The helmeted salvage man was transfixed, his eyes bulging in terror behind the glass.

The dead man now was a yard away; suddenly he seemed to sway, then leap forward. The diver felt arms around his neck, felt powerful hands forcing him down. He came to his senses at last, struggled to free himself, and finally fought off the figure. He managed to shut the cabin door, then signaled for the ascent to the surface.

Back in the fresh air, he told his story breathlessly. Up on deck, the others scoffed. A dead man? Certainly, because a number of passengers had gone down with the ship. But walking? Come, now!

Still the diver stuck to his tale. When another diver volunteered to go down with him, he took up the bid, and over they went, and into the water. They came to the cabin, side by side, and forced it open. There was the figure—but this time the explanation was forthcoming.

THE weird phantom-that-walked was a corpse all right, and good and dead. He was a passenger who had been trapped in his cabin when the vessel sank. Around his waist was a heavy money-belt that acted as ballast, pinning him to his bunk. When the diver opened the door of the cabin for the first time, the water forced the dead man upright, forced him straight toward the door.

The incident is but one of thousands of incredible adventures experienced by salvage divers, that unique band of men who wink at death under the seas and get flirted at right back. They ply one of the most dangerous trades in the world.

How dangerous?

There is a little leather-bound book published by the New York Life Insurance Company. It is an occupational rating manual, carried by insurance salesmen who whip it out to look up the premiums persons in various job categories must pay to insure their lives.

On page 22 is the listing for the merchant marine service. Find the word diver, and next to it, instead of the premium, you read the ominous words:

"Not Accepted."

And for good reason. What insurance company, for example, would care to bet a nickel on the life of a man in the following predicament:

The scene is the Black Sea—or rather, under it. There are a score or more balloons bobbing and weaving in the water, anchored by slender cables. These aren't toys, however—they are deadly mines, filled with TNT, lying in ambush for vessels to ride over them.

But one of the balloons looks a bit different from the others. This one isn't a mine; it's a diving suit, dangling helplessly in the sea, inflated to monstrous size. Inside that suit is a man.

He drifts close to a mine, almost brushes it, then floats lazily away. The mine on the other side moves slowly toward him, then veers away. A touch—then a roar, a geyser, and swift obliteration would follow.

The diver had gone down to clear a minefield laid by the Germans during the first World War. The deadly floaters were secured to a sunken barge. Hardly had the diver touched bottom when something on the back of his helmet became entangled with one of the cables which anchored a mine. He didn't dare budge; he didn't dare even to press the escape valve which would let out excess air.

As a result, the air being pumped down to him from the surface accumulated inside his diving suit. And there he hung, swelling by the second, swaying within a whisper of the deadly mine.

Suddenly the man turned upside-down and shot to the surface, feet first. Miraculously, he missed all mines in his ascent, and quickly was rescued by his crew.

There are many other perils which are evidence that the insurance companies aren't being unduly rough on the diving boys. There is, for example, the company one meets on the job.

Capt. Arthur W. Ellis, a noted salvage master, who has worked on sunken ships from the African coast to Manila Bay, tells of sharks "thirty feet long, with mouths like the open luggage-trunk of an automobile." And there is the octopus, sometimes a full twenty-four feet long; there is the killer whale and the moray eel, a ten-foot snaky creature which infests holes in the coral.

These underwater residents who kibitz on a diver's task can do mischief three ways—they can attack the man himself, ripping with rows of razor teeth or clutching him in an embrace of death; they can tear or foul up his equipment, or they can battle one another, with the diver an unwilling onlooker.

The latter can be a gruesome experience. A diver went down not long ago in the West Indies to try to recover a cargo from a Brazilian freighter which sank during a storm. On ascending, he reported that he had been a ringsider at a battle to the death between two man-eating sharks. They flashed and darted all around him, ripping huge chunks of flesh from each other's bodies with their teeth. But apparently they were too occupied with their brawl to take notice of him.

"It was like finding yourself right in the middle of one of those glass-heaving, fist-swinging brannigans between two beefy gents in Joe's Place on Saturday night," he said.

SALVAGE men have to worry about the big inhabitants of the sea even before they get under the water. Once when Captain Ellis and a crew were rowing out to the site of a job off Southern California, the ocean seemed to open up directly under them. Their little craft was hurled high in the air, scattering the men inside it like confetti.

Everyone scrambled back safely, and then the answer came. They had rowed squarely over a whale, who resented the intrusion and reared upward.

One of the ghastliest experiences with an underwater denizen ever encountered by a diver is told by Lt. Harry E. Rieseberg, in his book, "Treasure Hunter." Rieseberg was scouting a wreck off Malpelo Island, about 300 miles west of Buenaventura, Colombia, when an uncanny feeling swept over him. He felt he was being watched. And he was—because as he turned, he came face to face with a monstrous octopus, staring malevolently at him. The creature was fifteen feet across and had a body the size of a small barrel.

Rieseberg had spotted two gleaming skulls and some white bones in the wreckage, and now he knew why. But he wasn't going to be taken without a fight.

Backing off, the lieutenant drew his foot-long shark knife and waited. He didn't have to wait long—a huge tentacle swept across his helmet. Rieseberg struck, and the arm was neatly severed from the body of the octopus. Again the thing lashed out and again Rieseberg sliced off an arm.

Infuriated, the monster hurled himself on the diver. The knife was wrested from Rieseberg's hand, and he felt himself being dragged in circles across the floor of the ocean. Then,

miraculously, his fingers found the blade once again. He raised his hand, swung wildly in the direction of the creature's one vulnerable spot, the jugular vein; then something seemed to explode in his brain, and he knew no more.

He opened his eyes in the decompression chamber and learned how he had been snatched from death. When the crew failed to hear from him, two native divers were sent down to investigate. They found Rieseberg with his lines fouled, clutched in the remaining tentacles of a huge but dead octopus.

Want to know about other perils? Let's take the job itself. If you're complaining about how tough it is for you to get to work in the morning and come home at night, what with the rush-hour crushes and the traffic, consider the problem of the diver. He faces worse crushes, going as well as coming.

Let's take *going*. He's lowered into the water and starts his journey to the depths. He must not go faster than fifteen inches per second, or seventy-five feet a minute. He may suddenly be conscious of sharp pains in his ears. It's a warning he cannot neglect, because rupture of the eardrums is threatened. He must stop, yawn, swallow or press his nose against the wall of his helmet to block his nostrils, and make a strong effort to exhale. He may try going up a few feet; it usually helps.

Now he's on his way again. Infinite care must be taken that air is supplied to him in the correct volume, at the pressure corresponding to his increase in depth. Suppose he goes down too fast? The air from above can't be pumped rapidly enough to counteract the increasing pressure of the water. What happens?

This: The water begins to squeeze him, tightly and inexorably, like a giant vise, crushing the breath and the life from his body.

Suppose he falls? There is a sudden increase in external pressure without a corresponding increase in the internal pressure. Comes the squeeze once again. Incidentally, falls in shallow depths are much more dangerous than in deeper water. In falling from the surface to a depth of thirty-three feet, the pressure on the body is doubled and the volume is reduced by one-half, while in a fall from 166 feet to 200 feet, the pressure is increased only by one-sixth and the volume reduced by one-seventh.

That's for going. Coming up is studded with another peril, the peril of the dreaded bends, known variously as compressed-air illness, decompression sickness or caisson disease. It comes from inadequate decompression following an exposure to pressure. Bubbles of nitrogen form in the tissues and bloodstream following a too-rapid rising. These can clog blood-vessels in the joints, brain, spinal cord or heart.

The symptoms attack shortly after a diver comes to the surface. In fact, if he comes up quickly without any stops, he may be suffering from the bends by the time his spun-copper helmet breaks water.

The typical case starts with itching and burning in one localized area. Sometimes a man may have the sensation of ants crawling over him. Most frequently, however, there is a boring, excruciating pain which divers have described as the worst ever endured by man.

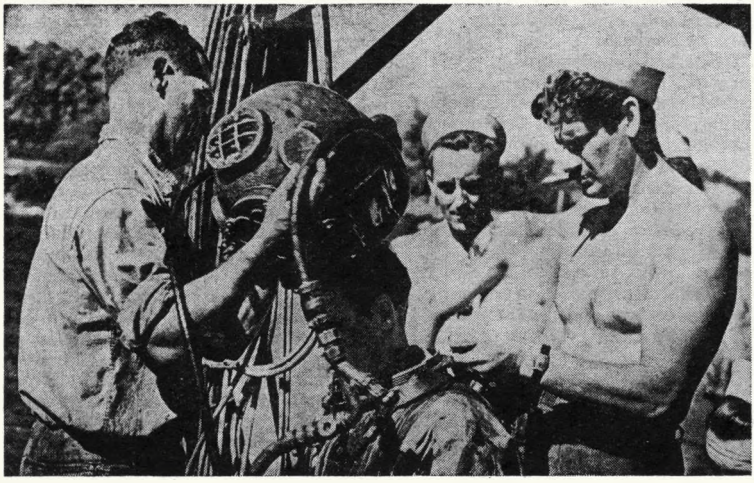
Paralysis, even death, could follow unless the diver is rushed to a decompression chamber where he can become accustomed gradually to the lighter atmospheric pressure. The diving manual issued by the Navy says succinctly: "Serious cases of bends often begin as a slight itch or pain. All too often men fail to report their symptoms early, and as a result their treatment is much more prolonged and their chances of suffering permanent damage greatly increased."

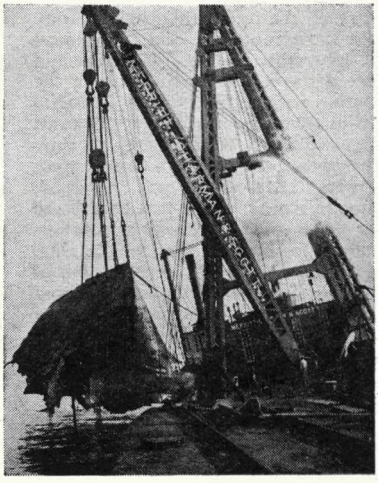
BUT it's all in a day's work for the diver, who fully appreciates the hazards of his profession but has time to have fun out of it nonetheless. Such as the two divers who whiled away some spare time at the bottom with a game of checkers.

The two, who were laying the foundations for a sea wall, got word from above that they had run short of building material: "Wait there a bit," they were told by telephone communication. The first tugged at the arm of the second and led him to a flat stone in the foundation. Grabbing a nail, he scratched out the lines and squares of a checkerboard. Then he knelt and picked up handfuls of small stones, a dozen white and a dozen speckled. He placed them properly and the game began.

It seems that water at port bottom is still, and the stones moved no more than actual checkers would on a dining-room table. Halfway through the game, the signal came from above that the building materials had arrived. Sighing, the players returned to work. . . .

Fun, however, is rare. Most of the time, the salvage diver stacks his courage against the might of the sea.





The New York Life Insurance Company has a little book which gives the occupational ratings and the premiums men in virtually every job category must pay if they want insurance. Alongside of the word "diver" is the legend, *"Not Accepted."* And for good reason! A man who must spend his working hours on the ocean floor, fighting his way through abandoned hulks, is hardly a candidate for social security.

Storms, jagged rocks, wartime mines and torpedoes take their toll of the vessels that ply the sea lanes. Precious cargoes of machinery, manufactured products, vital defense materials, even gold and silver, are dragged to the bottom, and the tug of war begins. The diver tries to wrest them back, the ocean tries to hold onto its prize. Sometimes the men in the diving suits win the titanic struggle—sometimes they lose.

They lost, heavily and tragically, that dark day during a hunt for $5,000,000 in gold and silver which lay in the strongroom of the British vessel *Egypt*. Only one day out from London, the *Egypt*, heading for India, collided with a French steamer in a soupy fog, not far from the coast of Brittany. Mortally wounded, the treasure ship sank in less than a half hour.

THE hunt began. Year after year, salvage vessels scoured the seas in a vain search for the wreckage. Much was at stake. Under the salvage laws, it's not a case of finders keepers; rather the finder receives a sizable percentage of the recovered property from the courts, depending on how much is involved, the risk run, the ingenuity involved in retrieving, the effects of the services rendered. The prize-money is divided by the courts among the owners of the salvage ship and the men who worked on her.

And then came pay dirt. An Italian ship, the *Artiglio*, finally located the remains of the *Egypt* in her ocean graveyard. And no wonder no one else had been able to spot her—she had settled at twice the depth anyone had figured, twice the depth at which divers could operate successfully. Special gear had to be devised.

It took many weeks for the divers to reach the room where the treasure was stored and the goal was almost in sight, when a fierce storm arose and forced the salvers to discontinue the battle temporarily. The *Artiglio* withdrew to the nearest port to await calm weather. While there, the skipper was approached by a Government representative—there was a wreck close to the harbor, it had been there for some time and was a constant menace to ships entering and leaving. Would the *Artiglio* accept the job of blasting it away? The skipper leaped at the chance. The agonizingly slow work of inching toward the *Egypt's* gold and silver was draining his available capital. This extra fee would keep him going.

When the storm abated, the *Artiglio* headed for the site of the wreck. Down went divers, who planted dynamite at strategic spots. The *Artiglio* withdrew to a safe distance, a mile away. Chief diver Albert Gianni brought together the two ends of the electric wire controlling the charge. The blast came. Down the divers went again, to set more dynamite. Again the blast, this time with the *Artiglio* much closer, since the skipper had observed that it was safe to approach.

Down went the men a third time. Only one more charge was needed to eliminate the hazard of the wreck. Gianni watched until the divers were safely on board; then, with the ship scarcely 100 yards from the scene, he set off the blast.

A mighty explosion came from the sea floor. A churning geyser leaped from the ocean, accompanied by a wall of flame and smoke that billowed hundreds of feet into the air. The *Artiglio* was tossed into the air like a matchbox, splintered to bits by the blast.

All fourteen men on board perished.

The reason? Unknown to the divers, and apparently to everyone else, there had been 500 tons of high explosive aboard that splintered wreckage, which had been detonated by the third charge. The *Egypt's* gold, incidentally, was subsequently recovered, but the shadow of the tragedy still lingers in the minds of the men who battle the depths.

But there is victory over the sea, too, and a more glorious one than the hunt in the South Pacific during the last war would be hard to match. It was a year-long struggle against overwhelming odds, with danger, disappointments and narrow escapes bristling right down the line to the last moment.

The 13,000-ton *Niagara* had been steaming along in calm waters just out of Auckland, New Zealand, on her way to Vancouver, British Columbia. There were 250 passengers and crewmen aboard, and in her hold was a gleaming treasure—fully $12,500,000 worth of gold ingots belonging to the Bank of England!

Dawn had not yet broken. Without warning, a blast came from beneath the ship; she shuddered in every beam, and began to list dangerously. Passengers and crew took to the lifeboats, and almost all soon were picked up by rescue vessels.

But the *Niagara* went to the bottom, and with her the $12,500,000. She had struck a mine.

That was in June of 1940. Shortly after, a salvage expedition set out on the long search, and almost immediately the first big problem presented itself.

The *Niagara* had settled to the bottom in many hundreds of feet of water, far too deep for a diver with ordinary gear to descend. A diving bell was needed. The job was given to an engineering firm which constructed a massive, three-ton chamber powerful enough to withstand the pressures encountered at a thousand feet. The ten-foot ball was equipped with a windowed dome through which the diver entered and left, gadgets which registered pressure, emergency tools, and telephone connections to the surface.

And then, with the diving bell, blocks and tackle, endless reels of wire and cable, explosives, water-tank and other equipment on board, a salvage ship started her search.

For weeks she dragged the area where the *Niagara* had gone down, scouring literally every inch of some sixteen square miles. No luck. They knew where she sank, all right, but tides and currents had pulled her off, making the game of hide-and-seek that much tougher.

Suddenly, a hint of something—a cable which the salvage vessel had been dragging behind it in its operations tightened. Something was underneath. The diving bell was put overboard and John Johnstone, an expert diver, went down inside it.

He found what it was—a large rock. But he also found something else: a large, seaweed-covered floating mine!

Johnstone took a boathook and began pecking at the cable that anchored the explosive ball. He couldn't dislodge it. Up he went and the salvage ship squirmed away from the danger spot, headed for port and returned, a minesweeper accompanying her.

The mine was destroyed and the hunt started all over again. And then the jackpot—the *Niagara* was discovered early on a February morning, lying in 438 feet of water.

BUT it was only the start of another and even more ticklish job. The treasure had been stored deep in the bowels of the ship, to keep it as safe as possible, and the salvers had to hack their way through the wreckage to reach the room. There is only one effective way to hack your way underwater: blast a path with explosives.

The whole thing was like trying to open a china shop by setting off a charge of TNT at the door. You'll open the door, sure, but there's no guaranteeing the condition of the chinaware inside. Similarly, the blasters had to make sure they didn't smash everything and scatter the gold bars all over the floor of the ocean, thus losing them forever.

Johnstone tackled the job scientifically. First, he studied the sunken ship from every possible angle. Then he pored for endless hours over diagrams and plans, finding out the weak spots and the strong. Lastly, he constructed a cardboard replica of the *Niagara* and studied her all over again. And then he was ready.

He and his brother William spelled each other in the blasting operations.

Slowly, carefully, with infinite patience, they sheared off bits and pieces of the *Niagara* with small charges of blasting gelatine. Little by little, chunk by chunk was blown away, and at last Johnstone stood before the locked door of the room where the gold was stored.

The most delicate job of all now remained.

As gingerly as a watchmaker affixing his tiny jewels, Johnstone stacked tiny gelatine charges at strategic spots around the door—not to blast it away, just to loosen the rivets that held it. He withdrew.

Then came the $12,500,000 explosion.

Holding his breath, Johnstone approached the doorway once more. It was still in place and so was the gold behind it; only now the rivets could be pulled away.

And now box after box was hauled to the surface, each containing precious bars of gleaming metal. The *Niagara's* treasure finally was torn away from the sea that had cradled it, and salvage divers had won one of their greatest victories.

TREASURE, however, isn't the only thing that divers bring back to the surface. Many work in harbors on more prosaic tasks such as helping to right vessels which have turned turtle, freeing the ones that have run aground, lifting those that have collapsed, trouble-shooting in general beneath the surface.

In New York Harbor alone, divers have come up with submachine guns tossed overboard during rum-running days, sets of plates for making phony money, knives, revolvers and, of course, dozens of sets of false teeth.

Recently a diver came to the surface clutching a strong box. Visions of gold and jewels danced in his head, but when he pried it open, he found it contained the following "treasures": (a) a canceled bankbook, (b) a snuff box, (c) some mustache wax, and (d) a book with a metal cover marked "Addresses." Carved on it was the date: 1918.

There is another breed of diver, the ones who spend lifetimes roaming the global seas in ceaseless hunts for the fabulous wealth that lies within the rotted hulls of Spanish galleons, pirate ships and old windjammers on the ocean floor. Commander Kenneth D. I. Murray, an expert on pirate lore, estimates that there is more than two billion dollars' worth of gold, silver and gems hidden beneath land and sea. But the bulk of it lies in the ocean, and that's the tantalizing come-on.

For the cost of an expedition to recover it is terrific. Trained crews, divers, deep-sea dredges, grapples and other expensive equipment is needed. Commander Murray figures the odds for any kind of success are about one in 10,000.

Few salvage men, therefore, are inclined to take the chance. But there is another kind of treasure under the water, there for the taking, and few persons realize just how immense the hoard actually is. It is this kind of treasure that attracts the salvage man and his divers much more than legendary pirate gold.

During the war, you see, many hundreds of vessels were blasted to the bottom by enemy action. On board were—and still are—vital cargoes worth immense sums of money. There are guns, tanks, planes, metals of every description, products of every kind, all salvageable.

Right now, for example, the U. S. Maritime Administration is in the middle of a vast program to salvage the cargoes, and perhaps the hulls, of about 125 ships which were sunk by enemy torpedoes and by storms while plowing the perilous coastal waters. The Government is hopeful that this will greatly supplement the nationwide drive to salvage scrap steel, tin, copper and other much-needed materials.

Cargoes aboard these sunken ships include molybdenum, a valuable hardening agent urgently needed in our jet-propulsion and atomic-weapons programs; copper, tin and zinc concentrates, manganese and tin ore. All are U. S.-owned vessels and lie in less than 300 feet of water.

This is closer treasure, because, under the law, salvage men get a whopping percentage of what they recover.

So the men in the helmets and diving suits will continue to go down in treacherous waters, groping and exploring, fighting the centuries-old battle against the demanding seas, sometimes living through a skirmish, sometimes dying in one.

Danger? Sure, they know it's there, and they fear it, and respect it. But you couldn't bribe them to renounce it for a tamer job. A tamer job might kill them, too. They'd be bored to death. •

"Claire! That time we were over at the Olsens', did you tell them to come see us sometime?"

Cloud Jockey

A gamble, of course. Not much of a chance, but better than trying to ditch in the jungle. And if it didn't work, at least they'd never know what hit them.

■ By PETER DOLLAR

WE CAME IN OVER the windless blue of the Bismarck Sea, cruising at fifteen hundred feet, and ahead Port Wisdom was a tin-roofed oasis in the green monotony of the New Guinea shore. Heat mist rose from the sluggish tide flats; above the town the short, dusty airstrip stood out like a scar. We were testing.

Beside me in the copilot's seat Billy Christmas, the little mech, gave me the thumb. He was a small, leathery individual with a sly friendly grin and a face as wizened as a good-natured walnut. I'd known him only a couple of days and already he called me "Danny boy."

"Ready on Two, Danny boy?"

"Roger." I flipped the magneto switch, starting the check on the starboard engine. "Right mag."

"Okay."

I switched back. "Both—left—both."

"Well, what d'ya know?" Billy chortled in a gravelly baritone. "It works. I'm a genius. Let's try Number One."

"Say your prayers on this, Dad." I glued my eyes to the battered cowling on the left wing as he took over the switch.

He said, "Right!" The engine ran smoothly. "Both."

"Okay."

"Left!"

With a nerve-tingling *bang!* the engine backfired and immediately began trying to jump off the wing. Automatically, I reduced Number One throttle. Billy had it back on both mags. But the old DC-3 still shuddered, dipping drunkenly off on one wing while the instruments vibrated crazily in their mounts. I had my hand on the button, ready to feather the prop, when the commotion stopped. Gingerly, I fed back power. The engine took it and we straightened out, cruising in smoothly toward the shoreline.

"Oh, brother!" Billy wiped sweat from his cowcatcher chin. "Like I said, I'm a genius. Sometimes I think I should have stood in Hoboken."

"Great spot," I agreed, starting the letdown. I glanced at him absently. Hoboken, he'd said. In the State of New Jersey, U.S.A. For a moment I let my mind wander, remembering, and knew that I shouldn't.

It had been snowing that night, a blinding squall over Newark, when another engine had quit. That one hadn't come back. I never forgot the feeling of helplessness, that moment when the plane simply stopped flying, the last frantic seconds before it dropped in.

I was still in the hospital when they slipped me the word. Pilot error, they said. Failure to maintain assigned altitude. *With an engine out and the wings iced up!* But they had to pin it on someone. Fourteen people had died. So had I as far as airline flying went.

I shrugged impatiently, shaking the thought. Here, dim in the distance beyond flat miles of jungle, rose the ragged mountain backbone of central New Guinea. In the heat of late afternoon those peaks were crowned by incredible white giants, towering cumulo-nimbus clouds of the tropics topped by anvil-shaped ice caps at forty thousand feet. Somewhere up there, lost among the ridges a week's journey overland, was the McEwen Mine. There was another rock-garden airstrip there. There was this paint-starved DC-3 they'd brought in; and now there was me, the pilot—Dan Rafter, the perfect man for the job.

We were approaching the airport and I banked left, pushing the props up.

"Flap. Fifteen degrees."

"Fifteen." Billy still looked unhappy. "About that engine—a revoltin' development."

"Forget it; it's a test flight." I gave him a grin. "What's your diagnosis, Doctor?"

"Tired," Billy said. "It's a G-2, which dates it back practically to the Wright Brothers, and it's got twelve hundred hours on it since overhaul."

We were on the base leg. I nodded. "Gear down."

"Wheels are down. Pressure's okay. I might add that was nice, that engine-out procedure." He regarded me curiously. "You got a lot of command time in these clunks, huh?"

"Sure, Billy, all kinds of time." My hands felt tense, uncertain on the controls. Consciously I relaxed, easing off power.

"Full flap," I ordered.

"Flaps coming down."

We floated over the trees, I flared out, the ship settled gently, touched and rolled.

"Very tasty," Billy said thoughtfully. "A grease job, junior."

We were pulling off the runway in a cloud of dust when I spied the jeep parked next to the hangar. Taylor McEwen sat at the wheel, her yellow hair bright in the slanting sun.

"A dish, wot?" Billy craned out the window, grinning appreciatively, as I braked to a stop. "Greetings, boss," he shouted.

Tay waved and started across the strip. She had a man's name, which may be an old Australian custom, but there wasn't any question about her sex. Even in khaki trousers and shirt she moved with an unconscious feminine grace; a tall girl, full-bodied, with a lovely, fine-planed face and worry lurking behind her brown eyes.

"Nice landing, Dan." I liked that; the clear Aussie voice saying my name. "How's the plane?"

"Finest single-engine aircraft in the Western Pacific."

"Don't worry, Miss McEwen," Billy said consolingly. "There's nothing wrong with the machine a new engine won't cure."

"Oh." Tay's face clouded. "Scott wants to see you," she told me. "He came down overland."

That was interesting. Scott Monson, in charge of the mine since Tay's father had died, was shorthanded because of native desertions. He'd been waiting two weeks—ever since I'd arrived—for me to fly in replacements, and Monson was not known as a patient man.

I slipped out of my seat. "You button up; okay, Billy?"

Illustrated by MILLER POPE

"Yes, sir." The little man's customary grin faded. "If Monson would keep his boots off the fuzzy-tops' backsides," he observed darkly, "his help might last longer."

"I'll tell him," I said.

The hot copper sun dipped low in the west as we sped over the narrow road to town. With the quick tropical dusk came an offshore breeze, ruffling the glassy blue of the bay. We topped a rise and Tay slowed the jeep, taking in the view.

"Beautiful, isn't it?"

So was she with her sunstreaked hair blowing, her cheeks faintly rose stained beneath the smooth tan.

"Beautiful," I said.

She glanced up, suddenly aware of my gaze, and her eyes dropped in a characteristic gesture; half worry, half something else. I wondered.

"It's none of my business." I took a shot in the dark. "But whatever's bothering you, I've got a shoulder available."

"It's nothing, Dan, really," she murmured evasively. "The mine, I suppose. Dad hit a rich vein before he died, but he was deeply in debt. The syndicate, the men who backed him, sent Scott out to help, but we're not producing even now. It was Dad's whole life; I'd hate to lose it."

"And the mortgage," I quipped, "is coming due."

She failed to read my humor. "Something like that," she answered dully, and pulled up before a frame building on Port Wisdom's main street.

I sat where I was and looked at her. She was young, twenty-two or -three, and she'd spent those years in mining camps at the ends of the earth. I'd never even seen her in a dress. And yet she was a beautiful woman. On any man's terms.

I said, "That crack, it was stupid." Impulsively, I put my hand on her arm. It turned out to be more than a friendly gesture. The touch was electric.

Tay felt it, too. For a long moment her eyes met mine. Then she pulled away.

"Scott's waiting," she said.

In the office of McEwen Mines, Ltd., a single shaded bulb hung from a cord in the middle of the room. Beyond its yellow periphery Scott Monson stood at the window looking down on the street; broad, heavy-muscled, a huge figure in the gathering gloom.

"Mr. Rafter." He sounded displeased. "Good of you to spare me this time."

With a lithe movement he swung into a chair behind the desk and I saw his face in the light. He was younger than I had imagined—about thirty, lean, strong-jawed, handsome,

his powerful features topped by a neat cap of short, curly blond hair. Only his eyes were wrong. They were rather small, pale and guarded beneath heavy brows.

"I hope you've been enjoying your stay in Port Wisdom," he continued.

"I don't blame you for wondering." My voice sounded apologetic, but I blundered on. "But we've done everything we could. I'll have the ship flying as soon as the new engine arrives."

"And in the meantime? The mine may shut down. Something else may go wrong with the plane, eh, Rafter? But you'll still be getting your paycheck each week."

"Oh, no, you're mistaken," Tay objected, low-voiced. "I'm sure Dan and Billy have been doing their best."

"Perhaps." Monson spoke with the amused impatience of a tolerant parent, but his next words were a command. "Now why don't you go home, Taylor, and get ready for dinner? I'll be along when I can."

For a moment Tay gazed at him, flushed and unsure. Then she rose meekly. The door closed and I turned to find Monson towering over me, leaning lightly on the edge of the desk.

"A wonderful girl, Taylor. But unrealistic. All women are." Unexpectedly, he smiled. "All right, then. You'll take off in the morning. I have thirty boys rounded up. You can carry that many."

"Yes, but not tomorrow. The ship isn't ready."

He said pleasantly, "No, Rafter, you don't understand. We've a great deal at stake. Taylor's interest in the mine, in fact." The smile vanished and his voice rose. "So you'll make that flight. Not next week or the week after. You'll make it tomorrow!"

I stared at him and remembered what Billy had said. Monson was rough on his help. So they melted away, disappeared in the bush. Now he needed them. Well, that was his worry. The airplane was mine.

"Sorry," I insisted stubbornly. "I'd like to help."

"And you will. It seems you're not very realistic, either. Fortunately, I am. I took the trouble to look into your record. I found an interesting item you forgot to mention in your application to McEwen. I could use that information to prevent you from getting a flying job anywhere out here. But I'd hate to do that. Unless you're unreasonable."

I faced him, feeling the hot, futile anger rise in my throat. He could blacklist me, and if it served his purpose he would. There was no compassion in those pale, cold eyes.

"Is that all?" I said.

"Except for one thing. The girl—we're engaged. Stay away from her, Rafter."

That figured. If he had Tay he had the works. No split with the syndicate once the mine got going. I reached for the door.

Monson snapped, "You'll be at the airport in the morning?"

I turned, forcing a grin. "Maybe."

"Rafter!" His voice cracked out and his big shoulders tensed as he gripped the desk top. "Be there," he said ominously.

They served good Australian beer at the local hostelry. But tonight the suds were like dust on my tongue. I staked out a chair at the shadowy end of the veranda and watched the moon rise over the mud flats. Its tropical brilliance failed to inspire. Monson, I reflected, had me over a barrel. I'd make the flight tomorrow; that wasn't what depressed me. It was the thought of Tay—Tay and Scott Monson. I had decided to hit the sack and try a few nightmares on for size when Billy pranced in and pulled up a stool.

"What's cookin'? You look like you got a slight case of the vapors."

"Greetings," I responded gloomily.

"Give," Billy commanded. "What's the deal?"

"Monson," I told him, "thinks I should make like a bird."

"Well," Billy said, "you can't live forever."

"Not," I agreed, "with Muscles around."

"True, true. The character's a menace." The little mech grinned at me craftily. "And on that subject, seems like you just had a telephone call. She wanted to talk to you personally, but I told her I'd handle it."

"Look, Billy," I said, "you're quite a comedian—"

"Believe it or not," he ignored me, "I asked her to stop by for a cup of tea." He leaped to his feet, dragging me with him. "'Od's bodkins!" he cried. "If it ain't Miss McEwen!"

Tay walked up the steps and the low hum of male conversation on the veranda died with a sigh. The blonde hair was piled in a thick knot on top of her head; she wore a green summer dress and high heels, and in Port Wisdom, New Guinea, the effect was atomic. It would have been, anywhere.

She smiled brightly. "Good evening."

"Hi," I grunted.

"Hey," Billy said, "I just remembered. I gotta see a man about something—a Scotch and soda, I think."

He scuttled toward the bar, leaving an awkward silence in his wake. I wasn't in a conversational mood; I had an idea what Tay was doing here. Monson was worried about the flight tomorrow, so he'd sent along a little persuader. Looking at her I had to admit the move was effective, but I steeled myself, banishing the thought.

"What's on your mind?" I inquired unpleasantly.

"I've been talking to Billy—"

"And Billy talks too much."

"It's about the plane." Tay's smile wavered. "Do you think it's safe, Dan?"

"No," I retorted rudely. "And what gives you the idea I'm going to fly it?"

"I—I don't know." She flushed angrily. "I didn't mean to bother you."

"No bother," I said. "I'll take you home."

They folded the sidewalks early in Port Wisdom. There were a few scattered lights along the street, an occasional low voice from some shaded porch, and our footsteps ringing loud and lonely beneath the trees branches.

"You needn't come any farther." Tay stopped. "And I'm sorry you're angry. You shouldn't be."

"I'm not angry."

She hesitated, glancing up at me with a little smile. "Well, good night," she said.

I kissed her. She kissed me back. It was unrehearsed, but sensational. I took a deep breath and tried it again.

"Oh, dear." Tay's voice trembled. I felt a bit dizzy myself.

"In case you're wondering," I said shakily, "don't. I have a feeling this isn't just one of those little things."

"Nor do I." The words poured out breathlessly. "But, Dan, I'm afraid. I've been so stupid. There's Scott—and the mine. If only—"

"If only—" I echoed slowly, coming back to my senses. "You mean, if only I'd make that flight tomorrow?"

"Yes, that would help."

I got it. The idea clicked in my brain with the gentle concussion of a couple of trucks sideswiping on the highway outside of Altoona. *How stupid can you get, Rafter,* I wondered. I should have laughed, but I couldn't quite manage it.

I said, "Okay. It was a wonderful performance, but it wasn't really necessary. I was going to take the flight anyway."

"What? I don't understand." She played her part well. Her eyes were bewildered.

"You want me to draw you a diagram? Look, honey, just go home and tell your boy friend it worked. He sent you on an errand and you rang the bell."

I'd have liked it better if she'd slapped me. Instead she stood there, staring up at me unhappily.

"Oh, Dan!" she said. . . .

I had trouble sleeping, but I must have dozed off finally, because when I came to, Billy was shaking me.

"Wake up, chum," he advised, "and forget your worries."

It was a lovely morning, the dawn fresh and still cool and the sky all pink in the east. I felt terrible.

We had breakfast, changed into our working clothes and gassed the plane. Then we checked the plugs and mags on Number One engine and fired it up. It tested okay. By eleven o'clock, when I was ready to go, it looked like old home week at the airport.

MONSON herded thirty Papuans and their gear aboard, to the lamentations of their assembled relatives. I was getting set in the cockpit when the cabin door opened and Billy popped into the right-hand seat. He regarded me in an unfriendly manner.

"Miss McEwen," he rasped, "she don't look happy today."

"Too bad," I observed.

He glanced at me bleakly. "You may be brave, chum; I ain't made up my mind. But you sure ain't bright; not about her."

"No?"

I climbed out of my seat to check the exits, walking aft between bucket seats filled with curious Papuans. The rear door was closed and Tay sat beside it on a flour sack. She was engaged in conversation with a stylish fuzzy-top who wore practically nothing but an elegant pair of pig bones in his nose.

I reached for the door handle. "All ashore, Miss McEwen."

"Oh, I'm coming along." She surveyed me with the cool distaste of someone who had just smelled a dead flounder. "You seem to think I talked you into something. I might as well find out what."

I shrugged. "Suit yourself."

Back in the cockpit, I started the engines while Monson, wearing a big .45 slung on his hip, watched every move. We ran through the check list and I taxied out and lined up with the tail on the fence. The strip was short and it was a hot, windless day which made it even shorter. I wasn't about to waste any runway.

"Props are up. Mixtures rich." I gave the cockpit a last, careful inspection. "Controls free and clear."

"Let's go, Rafter." Monson was impatient.

I took my time.

I said, "Look, Billy, I'm going to get this clunk up to single-engine flying speed before I leave the ground. You watch the gauges and handle the throttles after thirty inches. Okay?"

"I'm with it."

I eased the throttles open. The engines muttered, picked up to a roar, and the air frame shook, straining, as I held it stationary with the brakes. I released them and the ship lurched, jerking forward in a rolling start.

"Thirty inches! You got 'em, Billy."

He continued the smooth forward movement of the throttles and I looked up, watching the trees at the other end come toward me across the runway; first slowly, then faster and faster.

"Forty inches. Wide open." Billy leaned forward, eyes glued to the instrument panel. "Airspeed is eighty. Operation normal."

The plane wanted to fly. I held forward pressure, keeping the tail up, the wheels on the ground, fighting for airspeed.

"Ninety, Dan."

Not enough. The jungle became a green blur, closing in with a rush.

"One-oh-five."

That was it. Gently, I eased back on the yoke. The wings lifted. With a great surge of power the ship rose, straining skyward, and soared out smoothly over the trees.

"Gear up."

Billy lifted the handle and the wheels banged into the wells.

"Rated power. Thirty-seven inches. Twenty-fifty rpm."

The engines stopped roaring and started to sing. I turned. Monson stood behind me clutching the bulkhead in a death grip. His eyes weren't as sure as usual.

"What are you trying to prove, Rafter?" he yelled.

I grinned. "Ever been up here on a takeoff before?"

"What's the difference?" Sulkily, he started back toward the cabin. "If you need any help with your navigation, call me. I know this country."

The door closed. "How about climb power, Billy?"

"Yeah." He jockeyed the boost back to thirty-two inches. "Not that you'd be interested, but Miss McEwen, she knows the country even a little better."

"Not that I'd be interested," I said.

Billy relapsed into an unfriendly silence while we continued the climb. It had felt good, getting into the air again. For a while it had taken my mind off Tay. I reached for the chart, trying to shut her image out of my mind.

The McEwen Mine was a tiny penciled circle a hundred ten air miles due west of Port Wisdom in the great, half-explored interior that was blocked out in yellow on the chart, *Caution—relief data incomplete.*

We leveled at five thousand feet and I pointed the nose of the plane northwest. I was taking the long way around, sticking to the charted terrain near the coast while I could. We flew above jungle. To the east the rocky pinnacles of the Finisterre Range shut out the sea.

On our left lay the high plateau and the clouds—the great cumulonimbus that billowed toward heaven over the trackless back country; scattered, gigantic, each a wild, turbulent air world of its own.

After half an hour the flat jungle narrowed, replaced by low, rolling hills; a sort of divide. Then it opened again, and through it a silver, serpentine watercourse wandered, the Ramu River. To the north I caught a glimpse of the sea at Madang. This was where we turned inland and started to climb.

"Better call Tay," I told Billy. "I may need some direction."

By the time they got back we were at seven thousand feet and the hills ahead were rising to meet us. This was jungle, too, but of a different kind. It was rugged up-and-down jungle ripped by ravines and rock slides, its canyons hidden in heat mist. We topped the Bismarck Range at eighty-five hundred, a bare five hundred feet above a chaotic jumble of moss-hung undergrowth. Running north and south a great valley opened, encircled by mountains. At its far end, thirty miles away, stood the high ramparts of the Waghi Divide. And pushed against those hills by the wind from the sea, rising to an incredible forty thousand feet, a line of towering cumulus reached for the sky.

"There's a pass here." Tay pointed to the chart. "At the south end of the valley. The mine is just beyond."

I took my eyes off the gauges to follow her finger. "How high?"

"About eleven thousand feet, I think."

We were at ten thousand five hundred, halfway across the valley, still climbing.

BEHIND Tay, Monson chuckled, "Still worried, Rafter?"

I started to answer—and stopped. They say things happen fast in an airplane. This one didn't. I saw it coming.

So did Billy. "Dan! The cylinder-head temperature on Number One!"

I was way ahead of him. I reduced Number One throttle and trimmed the ship, leveling out. Still the temperature rose. The engine ran normally at two hundred degrees centigrade. Now it jumped to two-twenty—two-twenty-five.

Monson yelled, "What's this?"

"We're going back." The mountains behind us were lower. It was our only chance. "We might make Madang."

"The hell you say!" With paralyzing strength his big hand reached out and gripped my shoulder. I twisted, trying vainly to escape the pain, and saw Tay leaning forward, her eyes wide and frightened. Then it happened.

With a jarring *boom* the cylinder blew and the left engine exploded in flame. The plane shuddered sickeningly, staggered, and dipped off to the left. My teeth rattled as I reached up and punched the feathering button. The instruments stopped trying to jump into my lap. I pulled the firewall shutoff and CO_2 bottle and hit right rudder while Billy cut the mixtures and fuel to Number One.

"Rated power on Two," I said.

He shoved the right throttle up and I looked around, taking a deep breath. The fire was out, but we'd turned in a half circle and were heading south under the looming heights of the Waghi Divide. We couldn't get over them. At ten thousand feet on one engine we were losing five hundred feet a minute. I lit a cigarette, watching my hands shake. We couldn't go back over the Bismarcks, either. We'd run out of altitude before we recrossed the valley. That left one thing. Ditch it. I looked at the matted jungle below and my heart sank. We wouldn't have a prayer.

THE sure knowledge of disaster sinks in slowly; desperately the mind fights to reject it. I flew the plane automatically while my brain raced miles ahead. There must be something—something. There wasn't. I turned and Billy's eyes met mine; his leathery features were grim. Monson rose from the deck beside me, and behind him Tay's face was set and pale. There was a fleck of blood on the big man's cheek where he'd banged the bulkhead and his eyes were wild. Scott Monson was scared. Well, who wasn't?

He gasped, "All right, go back. Let's get out of here."

The sound of my own voice surprised me. It said matter-of-factly, "We're not getting out. In about ten minutes I'm going to ditch this clunk."

He glared at me, mouth slack, uncomprehending. I turned back to the controls and heard Billy's warning shout, "Dan!"

Monson had the .45 in his fist. "Damn it, you're going back. Back to Madang."

"I'd like to." I faced him. "But there's a small technical difficulty. With this load we can't hold our altitude. We might make it if we were empty."

I watched his eyes shift and was sorry I'd spoken. He got the picture fast. "Then I'll dump the load."

After half an hour the flat jungle narrowed, replaced by low rolling hills. This was where we turned inland and started to climb. "Better call Tay," I said. "I'll need directions."

There weren't any parachutes.

"Scott, you can't!" Tay gripped his arm and he threw her off roughly.

"Don't look so holy, Rafter," he snarled. "You've got fourteen dead men to your credit already. What are thirty more fuzzy-tops?" He waved the gun in my face. "You just fly it, hear?"

He pushed Tay ahead of him. The cabin door slammed and I sat there, my hands clammy on the controls and his words ringing hot in my brain. Fourteen dead men, women and children. What were thirty more? That was Monson's reality; the law of the jungle. It wasn't mine. I ripped at my seat belt.

"Can you hold it, Billy?"

"I can try." He grinned at me for the first time that day. "Careful, Danny boy."

I heard the screams as I yanked the cabin door open. Revolver in hand, Monson was herding the wailing blacks toward the tail. Behind him Tay stooped, pulling a wrench from Billy's canvas tool bag. She saw me, opened her mouth and I leaped forward, snatched the wrench from her hand and heaved it. It moved through the air in a strange sort of slow motion, it seemed. Monson turned. With a dull thud the steel met his skull, and he dropped to the deck like a poled ox. At the same instant the plane careened violently sideways and I fell against the bulkhead. I scrambled to my feet and dashed for the cockpit.

"Sorry." Billy had barged into the edge of one of the clouds and was turning out. "How's Muscles?"

"Asleep." I grabbed the controls. We broke free and there was another tremendous cumulus ahead, a grandfather of clouds. It spread more than a mile across its base; its top towered a dizzy fifty thousand feet over the dwarfed Waghis. I started to turn again. The fierce vertical air currents in a cloud like that could tear the wings off a plane. They could—

"Billy," I said quietly.

"Huh?" He looked at me blankly.

"You a gambler?" I straightened the plane.

He shrugged.

"I'm going to fly into that cloud. We may not come out. We may come out at twenty thousand feet. I've heard of its happening."

"Okay." He grinned at me crookedly. "But let's come out, huh?"

The solid wall of white was rushing toward us. Like a hand, the shadow of its overhanging top touched us first. Then the plane shivered with the impact, lurched and spun crazily —upward.

I fought the controls. Airspeed—needle and ball—that was it. Let the rate of climb go; the indicator had already hit the top peg. Let everything go. But keep the nose level. Keep the airspeed at a hundred and twenty.

Hail pounded down like a load of bricks. The din on the thin shell of the fuselage was deafening. Carburetor heat—I'd almost forgotten. I couldn't let the engine freeze up. I gave it a full blast and some alcohol for good measure, then turned on the prop de-icer.

The plane fought the controls like an insane thing. It kicked, hesitated, then slammed, quivering, into the next invisible wall. I was afraid to look at the wings, and the instruments were vibrating too badly to read. I hung on blindly, flying by instinct.

It might have lasted five minutes—it seemed like a lifetime. The last bump was the worst. It shot us screaming out of the cloud, right wing down, into blinding sunlight. I blinked and looked out the window. Then I looked at Billy. He opened his mouth, tried to speak, and closed it again.

"'Od's bodkins," he croaked.

THE airport at the McEwen Mine was a beauty; a mile of firm, grassy runway. It was also easy to get into. Especially from eighteen thousand feet over the Waghi Divide.

The valley was nice, too; high, cool and verdant with the big wooden mine headquarters nestled against its slope. After supper I wandered down to the plane, checked the wheel chocks, and clambered aboard. Absently, I walked forward and settled into the cockpit.

I was through with flying. Monson would see to that, once he'd slept off the little hangover I'd handed him. I ran my fingers fondly over the controls. Once flying had been all there was. Now that had changed. Maybe because now the ledger balanced. Thirty against the old fourteen. I'd miss it, but I'd manage. And Tay—

"Going somewhere, flyboy?" she asked.

I glanced up at her, startled. Calmly, she seated herself on the arm of the copilot's chair and the clear evening light, slanting through the window, made a soft golden halo of her hair.

"I've been thinking I'll have to," I said. "As soon as Monson wakes up."

Tay's eyes were clear and smiling, the old worry gone. "We've just had a conference, Billy and Scott and I. We decided it would be best if Scott left the mine in our hands."

I said, "Huh? What did Billy do, hit him on the head again?"

"Oh, no, it was his own idea." She smiled at me shyly. "Of course, Billy did mention there might be certain penalties if it were known that he'd attempted to—uh—rub out thirty of His Majesty's loyal subjects."

"Blackmail!" I gasped.

Tay laughed. "Yes, blackmail, Mr. Rafter."

"But I don't get it," I insisted. "I thought that you and he—"

She leaned toward me. "You know, Billy warned me about this. You're a clever pilot, Dan, but you don't seem to be very—"

Tay failed to finish that sentence. But what can a girl say when she's being kissed? •

"Mother gave them to him. Why?"

Let's build a MAN'S car!

Illustrated by HANK BERGER

■ *By JOSEPH LAWRENCE*

Most American cars today are designed to please women—who pay the bills anyhow. But there are still a few males around with money to spend, and they have ideas of their own about car design.

THERE ARE NOW ALMOST 50,000,000 PASSENGER CARS in the United States, and as far as I'm concerned they can take all 50,000,000 and give them to the girls. American cars really belong to the women anyway, for with few exceptions there isn't a car on the road that was designed for a man.

Things were not always this way. Back in the days of the Noble Experiment and Aimée Semple McPherson, cars were designed for men. Those early efforts of the auto manufacturers had a good many failings, but at least cars were built from a male point of view; the designers were trying first and foremost to turn out a rugged, sensible, dependable vehicle of transportation.

Soon, though, someone made the startling discovery that women, not men, control the lion's share of the money in this country. The discovery was immediately followed by the Age of Appliances. The advertising business, then still an infant craft, began what has become the most profitable venture in its history. It switched its campaigns away from the wage-earner toward his spouse, the wage-spender.

Before long we got hopped-up vacuum cleaners, automatic stoves, self-defrosting refrigerators, garbage grinders, mixers, electric choppers, power polishers, and that *sine*

qua non of progress, the clock-radio. This last little gem not only does you the disservice of waking you up in the morning, but submits you besides to the torture of the early-morning disc jockey. And this is *progress?*

By and large, though, the appliance parade has hurt no one and has helped a great many. There have been some bad side effects, of course. For one, if the electric power were cut off for any length of time, a large share of the population might starve to death. But all things told, there have been pleasant results. Women can do the cooking, cleaning and washing faster, and now have more time to attend to their looks. Aided by the cosmetics industry, a multi-billion-dollar example of advertising directed to women, the girls have learned how to patch up many of nature's small oversights. A man can hardly complain about that.

Additionally, appliances leave women with more pep, more get-up-and-go. The only trouble is that they get-up-and-go in cars. When word of this filtered out to the Midwestern auto plants, men began to lose one of the last vestiges of male independence.

Seeing clearly which way the mechanized chariot was going, the auto men began to design cars for women. Interiors no longer were just the insides of a car. Overnight, they became a combination powder-room and living-room. Fabrics and colors were chosen to soothe jangled female nerves. Seat springs were designed to rest the weary posteriors of women, a good many of whom could do with less posterior. It has now reached the point where it wouldn't surprise me if next year's cars came out with interiors along the lines of the main ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria. (The wonder is that it hasn't already happened, and if the Waldorf will contribute its furnishings, I will contribute the idea—just as long as everybody promises not to try to sell me the finished product.)

To hold big insides, cars had to have big outsides. They got wider and longer, and fatter all over, and honesty compels me to report that some models of recent years bear a striking resemblance to a pregnant sow. It wouldn't be fair, of course, to say they all do, because some of them look quite different—like overgrown beetles, for instance.

Exteriors have become more and more loaded with chromium, which is distributed helter-skelter like tinsel on a Christmas tree. It looks very pretty sometimes, but it does nothing to make cars more durable, safer, or easier to drive. About all it does is hide some stamped metal parts which, in an accident, will crumple like wrapping-paper.

Color psychologists, a breed making an honest living by deciding such things as what color to paint the bathroom walls so you won't slip in the tub (they are right, two falls out of three) are called in to tell car makers what color Milady wants this year. The result has been everything from Acapulco blue to a fairly hideous pastel that looks like desert sand.

As the buyers, female, kept raising the minimum on inside space, a ticklish problem arose. Tires and springs had to be designed to hold extra road weight, and the ride that resulted was something less than comfortable. The ladies put up with it for a while, but eventually let it be known, in their own subtle way, that a little more comfort was wanted, please.

Supplying it was simple enough. Manufacturers simply put on softer springs, better shock absorbers, and wider, lower-pressure tires. In proving their ingenuity, though, they also proved the old adage that two wrongs don't make a right. If cars had been inherently uncomfortable before, as well as being too big, they now became inherently harder to drive.

At relatively high speeds, the softer tires had little influence on handling qualities. Softer springs did make them roll more on curves, and the extra tread-width burned up gas; but conditions weren't impossible. At slow speeds, it was another horse entirely. You could park one of these cars all right, if you happened to be put together like Charles Atlas. But only a handful of people are built like Atlas, and few of them are women. After pulling a few shoulder muscles trying to park their big cars, the women complained again.

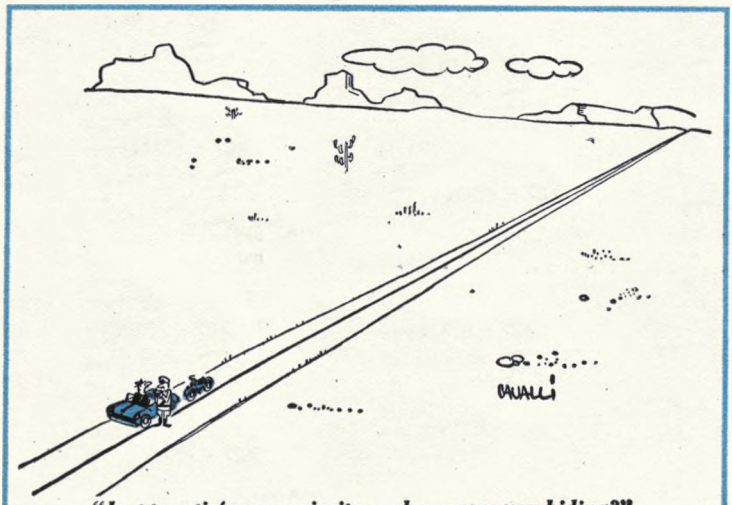
They liked big cars fine, and really couldn't do with a smaller one because Mrs. Jones (who also had a sprained shoulder) had a big car, and it just wouldn't do to have a car smaller than hers.

Instead of getting together and working out a sensible compromise, as men would have done, the women sent a trumpet call to Detroit. The auto men had no choice. Either they did something about it, or their kids went hungry. They did something about it.

They geared down the steering mechanism, making it easier to turn the wheel. There were two results: First, women got themselves into their usual scrapes, gave the wheel its allotted one twist, and waited for the telephone pole to slide harmlessly by. But the new gear ratios meant twice as many twists as before; and by the time women caught on, it was too late. The effect was not all bad—the telephone pole was reposing in the radiator's space, but at least a few cars got compressed to sensible length.

Women, of course, are just as smart as ordinary people, and the girls who survived the indoctrination period adjusted enough to miss the poles. The telephone company replaced the broken ones, and life would have returned to normal had there not been a second result of the new steering ratios.

The second result, though, was longer lasting and, from the feminine point of view, more important. We are speaking now of the Parking Problem. After making a few stabs and getting into position to park (lipstick even, hat on square), women cranked the wheel, cranked some more, closed



"Just to satisfy my curiosity—where were you hiding?"

their eyes, and worked the rear end into the parking space. Then they cranked the other way, shifted, and maybe, if the stars were in their favor, and they didn't have to stop to powder their nose, they got the front end into position.

All this took time, quite a lot of time, twice as much time as it had taken before. And the drivers lined up behind did not smile with favor upon the delay. They honked. Women do not like to be honked at; they get flustered.

The inevitable eventually happened. The command winged to the Midwest: Do something about it.

Mother Necessity had spoken, and inventors headed for the workshop on the double. They came up with power steering.

POWER steering is a simple and sound concept, but it costs more than mechanical steering. It costs, as a matter of fact, about $200 more. This is a lot of money to spend when you stop to think that if cars had remained at a reasonable size in the first place, power steering never would have been needed. And there will come a day, as it comes for all things motorized, when the power steerer will not work. Then people will have to pay money to have something fixed for which they paid more money in the first place. Do you follow me?

We come now to another paragon of Twentieth-Century living, the automatic shift. I'm sorry to say that, except for people who drive all day in heavy traffic, I don't see the point of no-shift driving. The last time I looked, practically all of my friends still had two legs.

But people tell me this clutchless contraption makes driving easier on the legs. What they mean is that it makes driving easier on the left leg. The right leg still gets tired from pushing the brake pedal. When they walk, I half expect them to list to starboard. I, for one, don't want the neighbors to see me walking with a list; they already hold a low enough opinion of me.

Not long ago I had the privilege, if that's the word, of borrowing a spanking new automatic-drive car to drive to a party. The party broke up early, but I still spent most of the night getting home.

While we had been inside, it had snowed. The parking area, wet before, had become a combination of mud and slush. The few "backward" people who had driven to the party in cars with manual shift simply hopped in and rolled homeward. They made it look so easy.

I hopped into my borrowed car, started the motor, and pushed the selector arm into "go-forward."

Now, as you know, in an automatic-drive car there is a little brain down by the motor that tells it what gear to get into. The brain-box told it to get into first. It was just tickled silly that it could be so smart. Only I didn't want to be in first. As anyone who has tried it knows, the primary rule for starting on a slippery surface is to get into a higher gear. In first gear the wheels may just spin, but in second or third you can ease the car along.

But that egotistical little think-box couldn't get the concept. It had been taught to start in first—always—and it was stubborn. Who is supposed to drive, anyway? The driver—or some wise little contraption that can't even tell when it's slippery underfoot?

I suppose I shouldn't complain about the time I spent getting out of there. I had lots of company, since most of the other guests had automatic shifts in their cars, too. We had a fine old time talking about the advantages of the modern car, while we pushed each other's cars through the mush.

My present car has a manual shift, and, thank you just the same, my next car will have a manual shift, unless by then all hand-shifted cars have been relegated to the Smithsonian Institute. My wife, bless her soul, agrees with me. She is scared to death of automatic transmissions. She has the notion that some day she will send out a signal for go-back, and the think-box will get confused and send her forward, probably into a parked police car. Women think she is crazy, but men instinctively understand her point of view.

But all this is somewhat beside the point. The point is that automatic transmissions also cost extra, anywhere from $150 to $250 extra. I can push a lot of clutches for that kind of money.

After women brought about the automatic shift, power steering, and woman suffrage, which I think they rate about in that order, they looked for other worlds to conquer. Their recent collaborations with Detroit have resulted in air-conditioning, wire wheels, a gadget you push to make the front seat go forward and back, or up and down, and push-button window elevators.

Taking them in order, air-conditioning is a new addition that makes you comfortable in summer as well as winter. Personally, I can remember only two occasions in my life when I was really suffering from heat while driving. One time was in Georgia when it was 103 degrees and raining; the other time I was crossing the Mojave Desert. These two occasions do not, I feel, warrant the expenditure of $600 to have my car air-conditioned. If some other man wants his car air-conditioned, or more likely, if his wife wants it, he or she can have it. As for me, I don't think I'd ever be comfortable again after spending $600 on an accessory.

Chrome-plated wire wheels are a carryover from the sports-car world. On sports cars there are reasons for genuine wire wheels. They are lighter than their solid counterparts, the car weight is carried on suspended spokes, rather than on the compressed lower part of the wheel, and wire wheels let more air into the brakes. In a sports car, designed to stop fast, heating of the brakes is a factor. The more cooling air they can scoop in, the better.

For ordinary passenger cars, I can't for the life of me imagine what purpose wire wheels serve—unless people like to get down and polish each spoke every time they wash the car. Presumably, they make a car look "sporty;" but I consider them a sign of retarded mental development.

With the third item, the motorized seat-adjuster, the car manufacturers move into a field formerly occupied only by Otis Elevator Company and its competitors. Proper seat adjustment makes a world of difference in fatigue-free, safe driving, and, ideally, seats should be installed so they can be tipped back, moved forward or back, and moved up and down. But the whole idea of putting in a motorized unit just to perform this operation—an operation a six-year-old moron could handle with ease—mystifies me. I'll tell you what. You buy one with your loose cash and tell me how you like it.

PUSH-BUTTON window control is another of those ideas that would be good, but—cranking windows by hand shouldn't be much of a chore, though it seems to distract some drivers and make them steer erratically. For such people, power window control is a safety factor.

The "but," of course, is that these, too, add expense and repair charges. One summer, several years ago, a relative of mine left his car in my care while he went to Europe. Care is right. I cared plenty before he returned.

It must be said in deference to this relative that he didn't particularly want this big, ostentatious car. (That particular model was one of the biggest cars on the road at that time.) He just happens to be six-feet six-and-one-half inches tall, and this was about the only car he could get into without bloodying his scalp.

One morning, however, the window putter-upper went *kaput*, and I drove to the authorized dealer to have it fixed. The only people around when I drove into the repair shop—a classy

emporium with chrome-plated grease guns—were two mechanics.

"Whassa trouble, boss?" one of them greeted me.

"Well, you see, this window gadget doesn't work right." I pushed a button to show him what I meant, and the left front obligingly went up.

"Huh," grunted the mechanic. "I don't see nothin' wrong. You push the button; the window goes up. What you want—an organ playing 'Dixie'?"

"Just stick around," I said, gloating over my still-secret knowledge. "You'll see."

He saw. A few seconds later the window descended halfway, unassisted by any push buttons. From there, it slowly sank the rest of the way, like a waterlogged swimmer going down for the last time.

Then I pushed another button, one theoretically designed to make the right front go up. As I remember it, the left rear went down.

The mechanic laughed and called to his co-worker, "Hey, Pete! Come get a load of this."

Pete came over, and I amused the boys for the next five minutes with the disappearing-window act. For the grand finale I pushed all the buttons at once. Motors whirred; the windows all climbed upward. Then they went into an up-and-down shuffle, and finally agreed on a common level—as far down as they could go.

As the show ended, the smile left Pete's face. "Quit trying to kid me, Mac. I know how these windows work, and what you're pulling just can't happen—not unless you've rigged up special motors or something."

So now it was my fault! I won't detail the next few minutes of conversation because occasionally a few women and children see copies of this magazine. Suffice it to say that we parted company as something less than buddies.

When I returned for the car the service manager greeted me with an expression of combined puzzlement and glee. He was puzzled at the fact that anyone wearing a suit as threadbare as mine could afford to drive such a car. The glee can be credited to the size of the bill he carried in one hand. I don't remember all of the things he said were wrong with the car, but I'll remember that bill for a long time.

The only moral I can draw from this story is that when the window putter-uppers don't work, leave them alone. Rain may come in and ruin the slipcovers, but be consoled by the fact that slipcovers cost less to replace than the window mechanism.

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Up to this point I have gone along happily in this world by adopting a live-and-let-live attitude. If women want these hippy, gadget-loaded, oversized cars, they can have them. And I'm not blaming the car makers for catering to female tastes. I sympathize with the poor guys.

What I *do* blame them for is their failure to build a man's car, in addition to all the cars for women.

The money ordinarily spent on automatic transmissions, push-button nonsense, and general gadgetry can be rerouted into a better frame, better suspension and balance, and a tougher, longer-lasting body and paint job, one that won't rust out after two or three years or start rattling at 10,000 miles.

If it can have chrome too, that's fine. I like a nice-looking car as much as the next fellow. But first I want a car that is designed for safety, good driving qualities, and durability.

It should be smaller than these road locomotives—certainly no larger than current Plymouths and Chevrolets—not only because small cars are less expensive, but because they are eminently more practical on today's crowded streets and highways.

When I state these qualifications, someone invariably pries a sports-car fan out of his car (they get them out with can-openers, I think), and brings him up to face me. If I want such a man's car, the sports-car driver asks, why don't I buy a foreign jobbie? I agree that some of the foreign models are a joy to behold, but let us be practical.

Foreign cars come in only two classes—too small and too expensive. The small ones contain about as much space as a large orange crate, and I haven't yet figured out a way of cramming myself, my wife, my two kids, and maybe more kids as yet unborn into a small sports car. Such a car would have to be a second car, and I confess, with some bitterness, that I am not in the two-car income bracket as yet.

The larger foreign cars will hold a family, but the price is prohibitive. No, the car I want will have to come from American manufacturers. They are the only ones who have the production facilities and skills needed to turn out a good, small car at a reasonable price.

There are some additional factors operating against sports cars. Built with an eye toward road racing, they have hard springs and very low centers of gravity. Taking a corner at high speed, they sit flat, a very com-

mendable trait to a racing driver. An American car, by contrast, will tend to roll more on curves. Its extra length gives the back end a nice long lever arm, and makes it want to go into a skid. But these factors become important only at high speeds on most roads, and my car isn't for racing; it's for transportation. Also, sports cars are hard on tires, and the hard springs make the ride unnecessarily uncomfortable. A car for men—excluding racing drivers—needn't be a bone-grinder. It should have reasonably soft springs.

WHAT else do men want in a car? Good handling qualities, for one thing. This is a vague term that really means a good combination of length, power and balance, the last being tied up with weight distribution.

Less length, naturally, means less trunk space and less passenger room, but if a man needs a lot of room for baggage, the answer is a station wagon, not an ordinary sedan. And, except for long trips with a full payload of passengers, a car the size of a Plymouth is plenty spacious.

Length alone means little in terms of handling qualities. The "feel" of a car also depends upon suspension and balance, and the latter, because of changes in weight distribution, is hard to come by. A sedan designed for six passengers may be beautifully balanced with a full load, but will be loaded by the nose when only two people are aboard, both in the front seat.

Sports cars have a distinct advantage here. Many of them have room for only two people, and the load thus cannot be varied more than a few hundred pounds. In a sedan, on the other hand, the load may vary as much as a half-ton. There is no simple solution to the balance problem, but at least one thing can and should be done:

At present, engineers designing an American car chassis do not know whether it will carry a coupé body, a sedan body, or a station wagon. It would cost something to do it, but the chassis should be designed to match the body so that cars would be balanced when carrying normal loads.

There are two developments in American cars that should be carried over to a man's car. They are increased power, and power brakes.

Today's traffic is so much heavier, and moves so much faster than it did some years ago, that reserve power is essential. Cars with 180 horsepower, or even 205 or 215, all of which are available in current stock models, have enough reserve at medium speed almost to snap-roll around an obstacle and get back into their own lane fast. That ability almost to jump forward can make the difference between a near-miss and a head-on collision.

Some people are quick to point out that higher horsepower also increases the dangers from speed maniacs, and puts a weapon of fantastic destructibility in the hands of people who shouldn't be allowed to drive a kiddie car. That is true to an extent, but you cannot have power at one speed range and not at another, and Detroit is hardly to be blamed for the criminal laxity in our laws. Driving tests in some States are a farce, and our roads are cluttered with cowboys and with people who have pitiful co-ordination, almost sightless eyes, or feebly-slow reactions. But let's put the blame where it belongs—on our own shoulders. We elect the legislators who pass the laws.

Probably the safest drivers in the world, and certainly the most skilled, are racing drivers. Yet the cars they drive have far more zip—in terms of horsepower per pound of car weight, the only real measure of power—than anything we encounter on the highways. Power itself is not dangerous; the danger lies in misuse of power.

Power brakes belong on every car. Their cost is not prohibitive ($35 to $50) and they have been used for years on trucks. They not only decrease the foot pressure needed to stop a car, but also bring the brake pedal down closer to the accelerator, making it easier for the driver to get his foot on the brake in an emergency.

Another thing that belongs on all cars is a safety belt. I have raised this argument at parties, backed up by cold statistics and even colder highballs, and listened to all my friends howl with delight. Maybe it does make you look like *Casper Milquetoast*, but I fail to see the humor of it.

Any racing driver should have his head examined if he drove without a safety belt, and some so-called drivers on the highways do things that a racing driver wouldn't see in a lifetime at Indianapolis. I like life, and have no intention of driving my own car seventy or eighty miles an hour, but some people do go that fast. And if one of them hits you, the crash is just as big as if *you* had been going at that speed. Other drivers take the attitude that since they have paid their taxes, they own the road. They fly out of side roads without warning, cut across traffic without signaling, and jam on the brakes to make a turn; and they pass on hills and wind up in your lane, headed straight for your hood ornament.

The best place to be, when and if you're involved in a major smash-up, is inside the car. Without a safety belt, you may not stay there.

I am, at heart, a kind man. When my laughing friends go hurtling through the windshield, I hope (1) that it is the pop-out type, since broken glass is not kind to the complexion, and (2) that there is, by coincidence, a pile of feathers for them to land on when they return to earth.

Should they return only in body, and not in spirit, I promise to restrain myself when we meet in the hereafter, and not say, "I told you so."

Now, if you don't mind, safety belts, please! I will risk the laughs, if only because my kids love me and want to have a daddy around to pay the bills as they grow up.

I would also like a padded dashboard, one without all the stamped-metal gimcracks sticking out all over the place. The human skull—yours, mine, and everybody else's—is built much like an egg, and is not a great deal more fracture-proof.

When I have listed these requirements in talks with people in the auto business, they often come back with a question like this: You men want a medium-sized car, with a body made of rustproofed, heavy-gauge metal, a powerful engine, and a stronger, specially-designed frame, but you would not want to pay anything extra for it, would you?

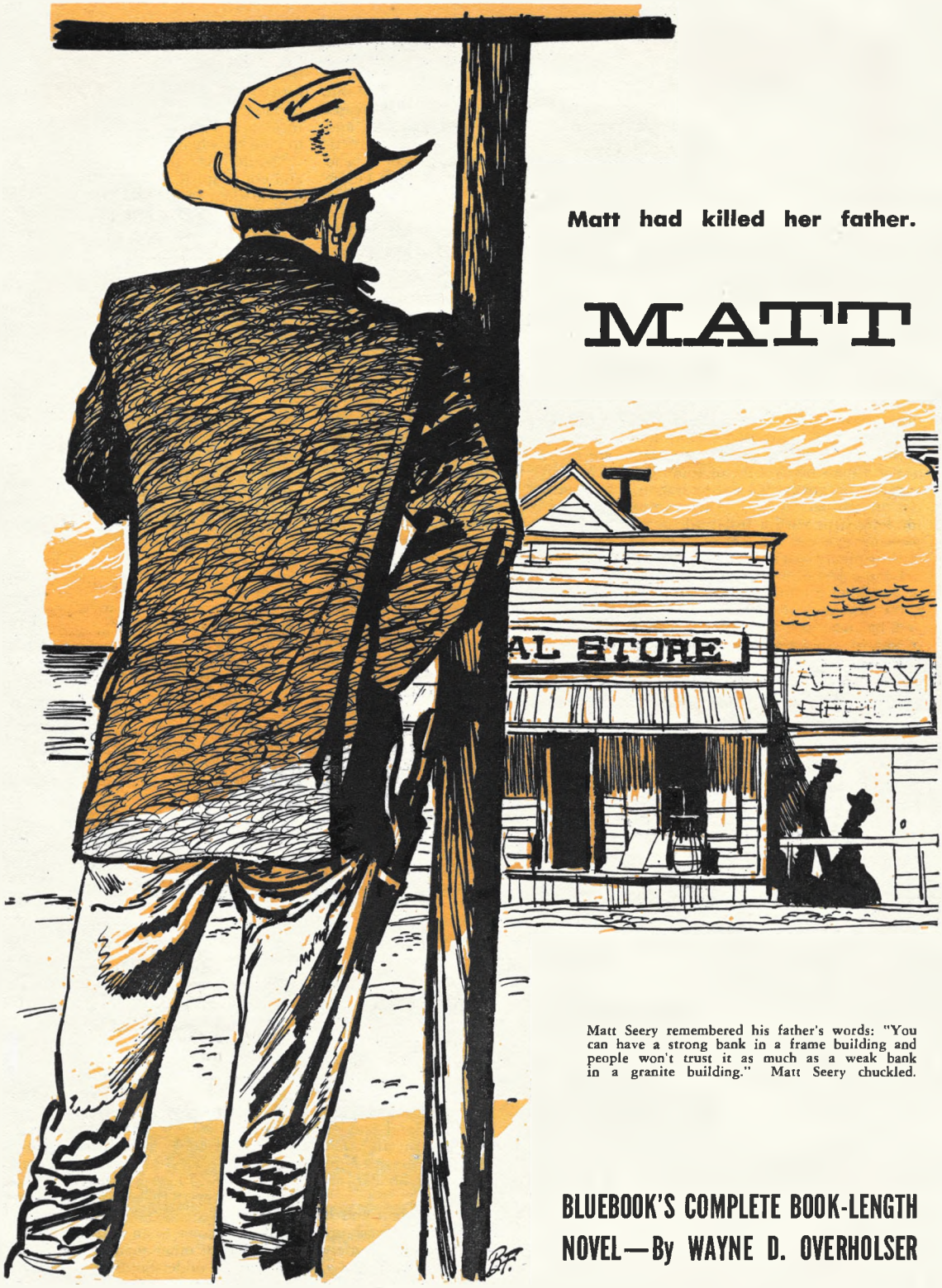
Of course we would. It is obvious that nobody could turn out such a car for a "steal" price. It would have to cost several hundred dollars more than the cars in the low-priced field today. But if power steering, automatic transmission, push-button windows, and such are left off, a man's car would still cost a whale of a lot less than the highway battleships being produced today. And I believe that men—a lot more men than the auto manufacturers realize—would be willing to pay the difference, because they would be getting a car that would last longer, drive better, and be safer.

BUT what about the "snob appeal" or "honorific value," or whatever you want to call it, of owning a big car? Don't I want to keep up with the Joneses?

Well, in the first place, I don't have any neighbors named Jones. And if I did have, they could drive up in a spanking, blue-and-silver Greyhound bus, complete with hot and cold running chambermaids. I couldn't care less.

Okay then, what about the other problem—the wife who controls the money? Well, sir, when and if a real man's car comes on the market, my wife and I will have a little talk. She may buy everything else for the family, but this time I'll do the buying. I think we'll come to an understanding.

As for you other men, if you can't come to an understanding with your wives, I can't do a thing for you. •



Matt had killed her father.

MATT

Matt Seery remembered his father's words: "You can have a strong bank in a frame building and people won't trust it as much as a weak bank in a granite building." Matt Seery chuckled.

BLUEBOOK'S COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL—By WAYNE D. OVERHOLSER

Now, nine years later, Troy Manders had returned for vengeance, with Jim Sullivan fighting for her and against her . . . for her own good.

SEERY'S TOWN

HER NAME WAS TROY MANDERS. She was twenty-five, her hair and eyes were black, her face as tanned as any cowhand's. She worked like a man, and there were few jobs that, given an equal start, she couldn't do as well as a man—or better.

She had, on occasion, blacked a man's eye or bloodied his nose, and cursed him because he didn't swing on her. She could draw her .38 and spill five slugs before you could figure out how she'd filled her hand so fast, and if she was showing off she'd make a tin can jump with every bullet. The only thing she couldn't do was break a wild horse. That was why she'd given Jim Sullivan a job. She'd fascinated him from the first time he'd heard about her. That was why he took the job.

She ruled a crew of nine men with an iron hand. Eight of them—from the cook, old Longhorn Flannigan, on down to the tough Dykens boys—followed her with a blind loyalty they would never have given to a man. The ninth was Jim who figured she had a soft side and he tagged along on the off chance that some day he'd get a look at it. He did, the night they camped on the Dolores River, two days' drive from Rampart Valley.

They had driven a cow-and-calf herd from the dry Cimarron across the range to the Dolores,

and nobody in the outfit except Troy Manders had known just where they were headed or why. She had ridden point most of the time since they had left the Cimarron, usually with Gabe Dykens who could find his way out of a cave blindfolded, but after they'd hit the Las Animas at Durango, she had ordered Jim to ride point and Gabe went back to eat the drag dust.

Now, with the herd bedded down and the moon showing above the San Juan range to the east, she was as nervous as a cat that had been running with a pack of hounds and suddenly discovered she was different.

She borrowed the makings from Jim and rolled a cigarette, her fingers awkward with the paper because she seldom smoked. Jim figured she needed the cigarette to prove she was equal to any man in the outfit. But she had never needed that assurance before.

She handed the makings back to Jim and lighted the cigarette with a cedar twig from the camp fire. She put her hands on her hips and said, "Come here." They obeyed, and all of them, even Moloch Dykens who was kill-crazy and not too bright, seemed to sense that something was up.

"Boys," Troy said, "I guess nobody ever had a better crew. We've been through a lot, but it isn't a patching to what's ahead if we stay together, so if any of you want your time, I'll pay you off and no questions asked. No hard feelings, either."

They looked at her, stunned. Jim was the first to recover. He said, "You're talking crazy, Troy. Nobody wants his time."

"That's right," Gabe Dykens said. "You say to put this herd on top of Pike's Peak and we'll sure as hell get 'em there."

Moloch Dykens bobbed his head. He wanted two things out of life: a full belly at mealtime and a chance to kill a man now and then. He'd been happy ever since he'd signed on with Troy.

"You want somebody shot, ma'am?" Moloch asked hopefully.

"No." Troy threw her cigarette into the fire as if suddenly realizing she didn't need it. "We're taking this herd to Rampart Valley and we're throwing it on a piece of grass that was stolen from my father nine years ago. A section of land with the buildings still belongs to me, but the minute we show up, we've got trouble. I want all of you to know what we're heading into."

Enoch Dykens, the middle brother who was the biggest of the three and always reminded Jim of a Labrador pup, said, "Ma'am, when we back off from trouble, I hope the good Lord strikes us dead, I sure do."

And Jim, "So we're going to have trouble. All right, Troy, just tell us what to do."

She gave Jim a grateful glance. No one felt any resentment toward Jim except Gabe Dykens who had some notions of his own about Troy but had never got around to mentioning them to her.

"It's going to take some scheming," Troy said, "because we're up against a two-headed proposition. One of them is a big-bellied range bully named Nate Pollock who has the largest spread in the valley. The other one's a smooth-talking banker named Matt Seery. Pollock can be handled, but Seery's going to be tough." She paused. "They call it Matt Seery's town."

"His hide ain't so tough it'll stop a .45," Moloch Dykens said, still hopeful.

"No killing unless we're shoved into it," Troy said sternly. "You understand that, Molly?"

"He was just talking," Gabe said.

"It's up to you to see that he is. Now then: We're two days' drive from Rampart Valley. We'll leave the river here and swing north so we'll come into the valley from the east. I aim to drive through town so everybody including Matt Seery will know Troy Manders is back. Gabe, I've got a job for you and Enoch and Moloch. You listening?"

Gabe grinned and nodded.

"You boys start out in the morning, but you won't come with the rest of us," Troy said. "You'll head straight for Bakeoven, the only town in Rampart Valley. I said head for it, not go there. When you get to Starlight Mesa just south of the valley, you'll start looking for Seery's cow camp. He'll have three or four hands up there, and this time of year he'll be rounding up his beef herd to drive them down to the valley. Be sure it's Seery's outfit. His iron is the Horseshoe Bar. Burn the cabin and scatter his gather and throw the fear of God into his men. Don't let them get a good look at you. I don't want the law on your tail."

Gabe nodded, frowning. "I thought this Seery *hombre* was a banker."

"He is, but he has a little spread just north of my place. He plays around with his ranch like he does some other things, but banking is his main business. Hide out two or three days, then hunt us up. My old iron was the Triangle M. My buildings are at the west end of the valley at the foot of Telescope Mountain. If you can't find it, ask."

"We'll find it," Gabe said.

She turned to Jim. "You'll ride with them for about ten miles, but when you reach the mesa, you'll leave them. Head north and go on into Bakeoven. Don't let on you have anything to do with us. If the rest of you boys see Jim when we get to town, pretend you don't know him." She dug into her pocket and gave Jim a handful of gold coins. "Buy a store suit. Get the best room in the hotel. You're going to be a promoter."

Old Longhorn Flannigan guffawed. "Promoter, is it? The only thing he ever promoted was a poker game."

"It's all right if he does that, too," Troy said quickly, "but that isn't all he'll promote. I'm gambling on Jim's brain. I think he can outsmart Seery any day in the week."

"Looks to me like you're playing more'n one string on your fiddle," Baldy Cronin said.

"That's right," Troy agreed. "I've been figuring how to play this fiddle ever since I left the valley nine years ago." She looked around the circle of men, confident now, her nervousness gone; then she fixed her gaze on Jim and jerked her head toward the river. "We are taking a walk."

She wheeled and strode away. Jim hesitated, and he saw the jealous hatred that was in Gabe's pale eyes. If Jim remained with Troy, he'd have to kill Gabe. Maybe his brothers, too. But this wasn't the day.

"Some other time, Gabe," Jim said, and followed Troy.

Illustrated by BILL FLEMING

Chapter Two

He overtook Troy before she reached the river and walked downstream with her, the moon a round, reddish ball behind them. Troy took his arm. It trembled a little, and he felt a tension in her again and he wondered. She had never touched him before.

Troy didn't stop until she reached a small, sandy beach between the screen of willows and the river. She released his arm, said, "Here," and sat down. He dropped onto the sand beside her. She bent toward him so he could feel the point of her shoulder touching him.

"You're wondering, aren't you?" she asked.

"A little."

"You've been with me one year, two months, two weeks, and three days. Remember how it started?"

This was a night of surprises. He had no idea she had counted the days since she had hired him. He said, "I remember, all right. I was breaking horses in Clayton. You happened to be in town and you watched me ride that black gelding they called Big Devil."

She laughed softly. "Ah, that was a ride, man! I bought the horse and

hired you. Why did you take my offer?"

Now that was a hard question to answer. He couldn't say he'd been curious because he'd heard about her the way you hear about fabulous people and the salty crew she held together and the way she'd run a ranch over there in No Man's Land where more than one tough cowman had been whipped by predatory neighbors. He'd fix things up fine if he told her he'd wanted to study her the way a scientist examines something that's unusual.

He said finally, "It was a good offer. More money than I was making."

"Don't lie to me, Jim," she said quietly.

"Well, I guess I wanted to see what you were like," he said. "I'd heard there wasn't anyone else in the world like Troy Manders."

TROY studied his words a moment. "I suppose that could be the truth," she said.

He was silent, a little uneasy about what she would do next. He had always thought she possessed a soft streak, and he wondered if she was going to show it now.

"I've got to tell you about me," she said, "so you can do what I want done in Bakeoven. There was just my father and me on the Triangle M. My mother died when I was small. My father wanted a boy, and I suppose he raised me like one, but I was just girl until it happened. Matt Seery wanted our place, but Dad wouldn't sell. Then Nate Pollock got ornery.

"Afterwards I figured out he belonged to Seery, but I don't suppose anyone else would believe that. Everybody things Seery is God or mighty near it. Anyhow, Pollock's bunch rode in one night and shot Dad. One of them knocked me out. When I came to, they were gone."

"Did you go to the sheriff?"

"The county seat's a long ways from Bakeoven, but we had a deputy. When I talked to him, he laughed in my face. Said it was outlaws who came down from Telescope Mountain. So I took Dad's money and left. It was quite a bit. He kept it buried in the cellar because he didn't trust Seery's bank. I used it to get a start and I've been lucky."

She lay back, staring up at the sky. "I used to wake up screaming, thinking about that night. Dad was a kind man. Read a lot. He used to say that vengeance was the Lord's and a man sinned if he tried to square up for something like this. I hope he was wrong because ever since then I've thought about how I would go back and destroy Pollock and Matt Seery. Now I'm going to do it."

Jim lay back, too, his hands under his head. So that was it. Nine years of hating and thinking about revenge had made Troy Manders the woman he knew, living like a man, thinking like a man, molding herself into the kind of woman who could do a man's job. For the first time in his life he was sorry for her, but he couldn't tell her that. Whatever she wanted from others, sympathy wasn't it.

"Your father wasn't wrong," he said. "You are. Don't go ahead with this."

"I didn't expect you to say that," she said in a low tone. "I've told you this because I want you to do a special thing. I thought you'd understand, but maybe I expected too much."

He raised himself on one shoulder and looked at her. She did not move her head. The moonlight fell on her face and the dark hair she wore pinned tightly at the back of her head. A perfectly shaped nose. A strong chin. A full-lipped mouth that on another woman's face would have indicated a great depth of passion. He was shocked because he had never really looked at her face before. Not the way he was looking now.

He said, "I'll do what you want done, but I still say you're wrong. You're a woman."

"Sure, I should get married," she said dully, "and have a lot of children. I'd like to, Jim, but this thing comes first."

"What do you want me to do?"

"I told you part of it a while ago. The rest of it is to get acquainted with Seery. Pretend you're an engineer and you represent a lot of money. You can fool him, all right. Tell him you've heard about Rampart Valley. A creek comes through my place. I have a natural reservoir site. Try to buy my place. See what he says."

Jim nodded. "If you get him interested in bringing in settlers and developing an irrigation project, you'll throw him against the rest of the valley. That what you're working for?"

"That's it. I have a great deal of money and I'll use all I need of it to suck him into the deal." She was silent a moment, her eyes on the stars, her hands in fists. Finally she said, "Jim, it makes me crazy mad when I think how the Seerys pretend to be such good people. Alexander Seery, that's Matt's father, founded the town of Bakeoven. And his mother, well, you'd think she was an angel flapping her wings in your face."

"Suppose he offers to buy your ranch for a good price?"

"I'd sell," she answered quickly, "but I'll still stay in the valley. I'll stay until Matt Seery crawls out of it on his belly."

Jim lay back again. "Why do you want his herd busted up?"

"Two reasons. One is to make him mad. The other is to make him listen to your proposition. He'll lose a month getting his beef herd to the railroad—maybe more, if we have an early storm. He'll miss the top price and his steers will be mighty lank by the time he gets them to Denver. I'm gambling he'll be so sick of the stock business he'll jump at your offer."

It was a good plan, Jim thought, about as cold-blooded as anything he had heard. He was silent for several minutes, considering what his part in this would be. The job didn't appeal to him, but he'd go along just to find out what happened to Troy.

Suddenly, without warning, she sat up and moved toward him. She put her hands palm down against the sand, his head between them. Then, with her body over his, she lowered her face and kissed him. His first reaction was shocked surprise, then he was stirred by her and his arms came around her and he held her hard against him.

She pulled away, one hand caressing his stubble-covered cheek. "You need a shave." She laughed shakily. "Jim, that was the first time I had kissed a man since I was sixteen and I didn't aim to now. I just got to thinking that it won't ever be the same again, having you around and seeing you every day. I wish I could look ahead."

"I'll be around," he said, and tried to draw her back to him, but she wrenched free from his arms and got to her feet.

"Let's go back to camp," she said.

Jim shared a night-herd shift with Gabe Dykens. Before they rode out of camp, Gabe said, "I didn't like you going off with Troy tonight."

"She gave me an order," Jim said.

"I heard," Gabe breathed. "Well, you're a smart *hombre*, but you ain't much man, not by my figuring. Maybe you've fooled her on account of she can't bust a bad horse and you can."

"Nobody fools Troy," Jim said. "Not even you."

"I'll make this plain." Gabe's voice was sharply honed by frustration. "She's mine. She don't know it yet, but she will."

"You ought to know I don't bluff," Jim said. "If you want me out of the way, you'd better have Moloch shoot me in the back."

"Good idea!" And Gabe rode away.

Chapter Three

JIM WONDERED whether Troy would be any different at breakfast than she had always been, but he soon found out that what had happened last night

might just as well not have happened at all. He had a feeling that if he said anything in front of the crew about kissing her, she'd hit him on the mouth and call him a damned liar.

Troy had only one thing to say before Jim left with the Dykens boys. "I expect to drive through Bakeoven about ten o'clock day after tomorrow. I want you to be on the street. If you can manage it, have Matt Seery with you."

"I'll see what I can do," Jim said, keeping his voice as impersonal as Troy's.

He rode northwest from camp, taking the lead until they topped a cedar-covered ridge, then he reined up and looked back. Moloch was staring at him with fixed intensity, his meaty lips parted, the tip of his tongue protruding through the gap in his front teeth.

Jim's right hand dropped to gun butt. He said, "Molly, if you're fixing to plug me, go ahead and get it over with."

Jim knew he couldn't beat all three of them if it came to a shoot-out, but he could get Gabe and maybe Moloch, and he thought Gabe knew it. Apparently Moloch had his orders, for now he threw Gabe a questioning glance.

"We'll wait," Gabe said.

"If I don't show up in Bakeoven, Troy's little scheme will be knocked in the head," Jim said. "How do you think she's going to like that?"

"What makes you think we're fixing to beef you?" Gabe asked, his lean face stirred by curiosity.

"It's written all over your ugly mug," Jim said. "You know I'm faster than you are and you don't want to die, so I figure you aim for Moloch to give it to me in the back."

"Naw, we'll give you an even break," Enoch laughed. "That good enough, Jim?"

"That's all I want," Jim said, "but I doubt that Gabe's as fair-minded as you are."

If it wasn't for Gabe's dominance, Jim thought, Enoch would be a run-of-the-mill, hard-working cowhand. The way it stood now, he was as dangerous as either of his brothers. For a moment neither of them moved, Gabe considering his chances and not liking them.

"No hurry," Gabe said finally.

"I figure there is," Jim said. "I can't always watch my back."

Gabe motioned with his left hand. "Start riding. We've got work to do."

Jim sat his saddle, doggedly stubborn. "I've only got one life and I like it. I'll eat your dust."

Gabe shrugged. "Suits me. I ain't one to eat another man's dust, anyhow."

Jim followed, keeping twenty feet or more behind them. They dropped down the north side of the ridge and climbed another, and then another. The spiny hogbacks were as much alike as .45 shells in a man's cartridge belt, dry and covered with red boulders. Not much vegetation, just cactus and yucca and a few runty cedars. Hard-scrabble range, for sure.

Somewhere near the middle of the morning they climbed a steep, rock-strewn hill and found themselves on a level mesa that apparently ran on for miles. Gabe pulled up and waited for Jim to reach him.

"You figure this is what Troy called Starlight Mesa?" Gabe asked.

"Looks like it," Jim answered.

Gabe nodded as if he had decided the same thing. "Reckon we've gone ten miles?"

"Just about."

"Then this is where you head for town," Gabe said. "We'll start looking for Seery's cow camp."

It was easier than Jim had thought. Gabe rode directly west along the edge of the mesa hill, Enoch and Moloch following. Jim waited until they disappeared into a forest of close-growing piñons. Suddenly it struck him that it was too easy. He cracked steel to his roan, swinging northward across an open area a mile or more in width. They might circle on him, but at least he had put some distance between him and them.

He crashed through a thicket of serviceberry bush and came into another grass-covered meadow, an annoying prickle along his spine. Ten minutes later he reached a dark wall of piñon and felt easier when it closed behind him.

Reining up, he sat his saddle for a minute or more, listening, but he heard nothing except the thin sound of the wind in the piñons. Boogery, he told himself, but he knew Moloch. The fellow might slip away to do a job he knew Gabe wanted done.

Moloch looked upon his older brother in much the way a lonesome hound looks upon his master. The cuffings Gabe gave him when he got out of line did not detract from the unswerving loyalty he gave his brother. It was different with Enoch. At times, Jim had the feeling Moloch hated Enoch.

The sun was noon-high when Jim reached the north rim of the mesa and looked down into Rampart Valley. It was five to eight miles wide and maybe forty miles long, he judged, running east and west, with the Dolores River cutting it in half. The river disappeared to the north, slashing another narrow gorge through the red sandstone, and rolling on to flow eventually into the Colorado.

The drop below Jim was sheer, five hundred feet or more. He could see the town of Bakeoven on the other side of the river, a huddle of buildings made hazy by distance. At this point it was hard to judge the number of miles, but it might as well have been a thousand if he didn't find a trail that led from the mesa to the valley floor.

Jim debated which way to go. If he turned east, he would be putting more miles between him and Bakeoven, and he had to be there before the stores closed if he was to buy the clothes Troy had told him to get. Besides, he would need a bath and a shave. He squinted at the sun, estimating his time, and decided to ride west. There must be a trail from the rim to the valley floor if Matt Seery summered his herd on the mesa.

It was hard going, fighting his way through jungles of scrub oak or picking a path across barren stretches of spiny, red sandstone ridges covered by grotesque obelisks and arches. Then, in midafternoon, he discovered a trail that followed a narrow break in the slick rock rim. Half an hour later he was on the valley floor, sparsely covered by grama grass and shad scale.

Time was running out, but he didn't press his tired horse. An hour later he reached the Dolores, a bridge spanning it near the south side of the valley. Bakeoven lay directly ahead of him on the west bank of the river.

He rode into town slowly, wanting to attract as little attention as possible. Main Street was covered with red dust hock-deep, the short business block flanked by the usual false fronts. There was one exception, and it was this exception that struck Jim at once, setting Bakeoven apart from any of a hundred similar cow towns.

A granite, two-story building stood in the middle of the frame structures on the north side of the street. As Jim rode past, he saw the tall letters:

BAKEOVEN STATE BANK
MATTHEW SEERY, PRES.

So it was Matt Seery's town, just as Troy had said. The grim strength and air of permanence of the stone building proved the point. Jim judged that it had been designed to stand as a symbol of Seery's strength and position.

For the first time Jim began to doubt Troy's wisdom in sending him on what could be a fool's errand. Probably Seery had everything he wanted right here in Bakeoven. If he did, he would have nothing to do with a fake irrigation scheme.

Jim found a livery stable at the end of the block. He stripped gear from his roan, rubbed him down, then told the stableman, "Grain him double."

The hostler looked at the gelding and nodded. The horse showed the hard ride that was behind him. As Jim left the stable, he felt the man's curious eyes on him. Strangers were probably not common in Bakeoven.

A general store was still open. Jim bought the best suit in the place, a brown broadcloth that fitted him as well as he could expect, although the coat was a little tight on his shoulders. The storekeeper, a bent-shouldered old man with a skimpy white beard, went into a long harangue that Jim would find no better material in the county seat.

Jim bought a white shirt, socks, underclothes, a string tie, and a black derby. He paid in gold, ignoring the curiosity which was obviously gnawing at the old man, and gathering up his purchases, he left the store. As he crossed the street to the barber shop, he saw two riders coming into town from the west. Otherwise the street was deserted.

Something was wrong. At this time of day, there should be people on the street, at least some of the townsmen who would be going home to supper. Jim glanced briefly at the horsemen who were about fifty feet from him and hurried on, afraid the barber shop would be closed before he got there.

He made the high step to the walk and crossed to the door of the barber shop. He asked, "You going to be open long enough for me to get a shave and a bath?"

The barber was alone, a small, pink-cheeked man who was absent-mindedly stropping a razor while he scowled and muttered to himself in an argumentative tone as if trying to convince himself of something which he didn't believe. Again Jim felt that trouble was expected.

"I want a bath and a shave," Jim shouted.

The barber jumped and looked up, the razor motionless in midair above the strap. "Sorry. Didn't know you were there." He glanced at the clothes in Jim's hands; his eyes swung to the gun on Jim's hip, and he hesitated, his gaze lingering on Jim's face. "Come in. I've got a fire going and there's a boiler of water heating now. Be a little while, though."

"You can give me a shave while it's heating," Jim said.

The barber nodded absently and went on stropping his razor. The door into the bathroom was open. Jim went through it, the heat from the big range rushing at him. He laid the clothes on a bench, stoked up the fire, and tested the water in the copper boiler. Lukewarm now, but it would be hot by the time he had his shave. The zinc tub had not been used for a few days and was covered with a layer of red dust. Jim dipped some of the water into the tub and started to wash it out.

Someone came in. Jim remained on his knees, his head turned to listen. A man said, "The stage won't leave for two, three hours. What are you going to do, Marshal?"

"Not a damned thing," the barber shouted defensively. "Bob Jarvis and the girl knew they couldn't make it."

"Your job is to keep the peace, Maylor," the other man said. "How long are you going to let Nate Pollock run roughshod over this town?"

"I don't know," the barber snapped. "But by God, I know one thing. You can have my star right now. I'm not a lawman. I'm a barber."

"You're all the lawman we've got," the other said, doggedly stubborn. "I don't want your star. I just want you to see that Pollock's toughs don't get out of hand."

Jim rose and stepped to the door in time to see the barber yank a drawer open, take out a star, and throw it at the man standing in the doorway. "I'm resigning as of now," the barber shouted.

The man in the doorway slipped the star into his pocket. There seemed to be nothing outstanding about him, an average tall, unassuming man with white hair and a closely-cropped mustache as white as his hair. A townsman, probably the owner of some business on Main Street.

"I'm just the mayor," the man in the doorway said, "but I wish I was the council. Then I'd see there was money enough in the treasury to hire a gun-fighting marshal and not a scissors snipper." He wheeled and walked away.

The barber was white-faced and trembling. He kept on stropping the razor as Jim sat down in the chair. It was a long moment before he turned, shook out a white cloth, and pinned it around Jim's neck. He asked, "Stranger?"

"You know I am," Jim said. "I don't cotton to having a shaky man shave me. My throat cuts easy."

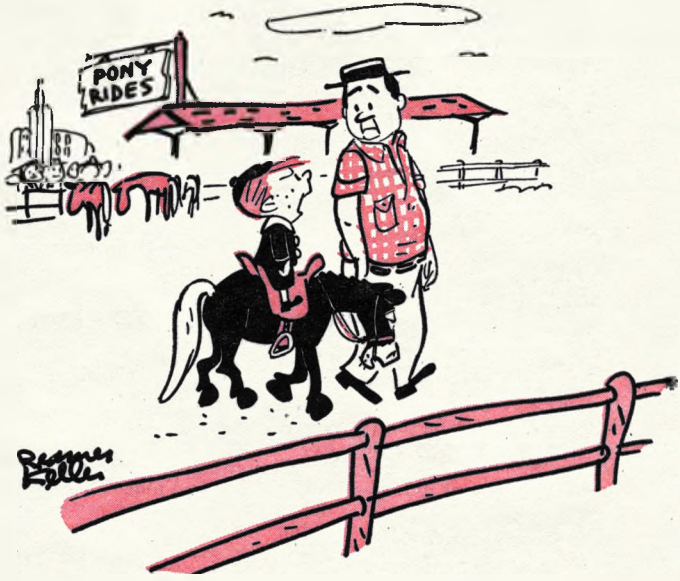
The barber gave him a sickly grin. "I'm not shaky, but you will be before you get that bath."

Turning, he picked up a mug and brush and immediately put them down. Jim said, "I don't savvy."

"You will. Just sit right there, friend. I'll get some hot water."

The barber hurried into the bathroom. Jim leaned back, weary from the long ride, grinning wryly as he considered his bad luck in hitting Bakeoven on this particular day when trouble was obviously coming into sharp and deadly focus.

His eyes idly ran along the shelves at the one end of the mirror. Here were the private shaving mugs belonging to the regular customers, the names printed on one side in ornate gold letters. He read "Jess Darket"



"I've ridden more spirited horses and had my hair cut at the same time!"

on the first mug on the top shelf, his gaze swinging on along the line of mugs until it came to "Matt Seery."

He laughed softly, for he was seeing exactly what he had thought he would see. Seery's mug was by far the biggest of the entire collection, the gold letters taller and more ornate than the others. On this range Seery must be quite a man, Jim thought, quite a man.

Chapter Four

THE BARBER was gone only a minute or two. When he returned, color had flowed back into his cheeks and he wasn't trembling. He had taken a drink. When he began lathering Jim's face, he was close enough for Jim to smell the whisky.

The barber worked fast, too fast, it seemed to Jim. He acted as if he wanted this over and done with. He finished and was rubbing cologne on Jim's face when the reason for his anxiety became plain. A man came in from the street. Jim heard the barber's quick intake of breath as he snatched the cloth away from the back of Jim's neck and gave it a vigorous shake.

"Howdy, Bert," the barber said affably.

The fellow was one of the two who had been riding into town when Jim had crossed the street. He was tall and rail-thin, with a long red neck and a droopy yellow mustache. His eyes were small and black and beady. He wasn't a handsome man by any standard except his own. His shiny, spike-heeled boots, expensive white Stetson, the pearl-handled Colt in the low-hung holster, the black-and-white calfskin vest all pointed to an exaggerated vanity.

"Got some hot water, Ed?"

"Why, yes," the barber said, "but this fellow here has already asked for the tub."

Jim rose and stepped away from the chair. He said, "Looks like you're next, mister."

He saw a slow grin crawl across the arrogant face. He knew how it was on a range like this where one spread carried all the weight. Every cowhand who rode for the outfit figured he was a little tougher than the next man, and maybe he was, or he didn't keep his job. But right now Jim held one advantage. He was a stranger, therefore he wasn't supposed to know that this fellow was something out of the ordinary.

"I'm Bert Knoll," the cowboy said, as if his name should mean something. "I never wait for a bath if the water's hot. The other gent waits."

"I'm Jim Sullivan," Jim said, his voice matching Knoll's tone. "It's some other gent who waits—it's not me."

Knoll began to swell like a pigeon, his neck redder than it had been. He said to the barber, "You know I ain't a patient man, Maylor. Get this huckleberry out of here."

"It's your chore, Bert," the barber said. "You tend to it."

"By God, I will," Knoll shouted. "This is the damnedest thing I ever heard of, trying to make me wait. I ain't got time. Me'n' Perkins came to town to do a job, and you know what it is, Maylor."

"I know," the barber murmured. "Two of you ought to be able to take care of young Jarvis."

"We figure we can," Knoll agreed. "You see how it is. I ain't had supper yet. By the time Perkins and me eat, the stage will be due out of town."

Knoll laughed and started toward the bathroom, swaggering a little. He had taken two steps when Jim drew his gun. He said, "Mister, you walk through that bathroom door and I'll have killed a man for a tub of hot water."

Knoll swung around, his right hand splayed over a gun butt, but didn't draw. He looked at the Colt in Jim's hands, obviously shocked by the fact that a stranger had the temerity to pull a gun on him. He said, "Looks like you're holding the big ace. All right, take your bath and be damned, but get one thing straight. You're leaving on the next stage."

"Not me," Jim said. "I have business here and I'll stay till I get done with it." He swung his gun to keep it on Knoll as the man walked out. Then he laughed, and asked, "Am I shaking, Mr. Maylor?"

Knoll went on into the street and disappeared. The barber said, "Take a good bath, friend. A clean corpse is nice to handle. I don't get many in this country."

"You the undertaker?"

"That's right."

"Then you'll be handling a dirty corpse."

"Two of 'em, if it ain't you."

"I'm generous. I'll see you get two of them."

Jim winked at the barber, and for a long time he lay in the zinc tub, eyes closed, finding relaxation for both nerves and tired muscles. But now, having time to think about what he had done, he wasn't sure it had been right. Getting into a gunfight with a couple of hired toughs wouldn't do the job Troy had sent him here to do.

Jim had no illusions about his faults. He was particularly aware of two of them. One was his driving curiosity, the other was his instinctive stubbornness when someone started pushing him. The first had kept him moving for years and then, strangely enough, had made him keep his job with Troy. The second had made him leave home. His folks had planned his future for him and he had wanted no part of it.

Well, he had got his nose caught in a mousetrap for sure this time. It wasn't so much that he was afraid of Knoll or his partner. The thing was that an outfit like Nate Pollock's built a reputation and then rode along. The chances were it had been years since one of Pollock's hands had been called. Now Jim would probably have the whole outfit on his neck just to keep its reputation untarnished.

Jim got out of the tub and dried on a rough towel he found hanging on a nail. No use getting wound up over a possibility as uncertain as that. He'd take things the way they came. If he couldn't do the job Troy had given him, he'd tell her and be on his way.

He grinned when he put on the new clothes he had bought. No use fooling himself on that. He wouldn't be on his way for a long time. Not until he'd explored that soft spot of Troy's. The kiss she'd given him had been bothering him all day.

He finished dressing, feeling a little uncomfortable in the store suit and white shirt. The collar and black tie choked him. He had always hated a tie. Troy was asking more of him than she realized. He buckled his gun belt around his waist, picked up his worn range clothes, and left the bathroom. Outside it, he paid for the bath and shave.

THE street was still deserted; the only horses in sight were the two racked in front of the saloon. Probably belonged to Pollock's men. It was dusk now, and Jim couldn't tell for sure about the horses. Not unless he walked across the street and had a close look, and it didn't seem important enough for that.

Jim went into the hotel and asked for a room. The clerk nodded and turned the register for Jim to sign. He gave Trinidad as his address which was as good as any for a man who didn't have an address. Bob Jarvis' name was directly above his—Room 10. The clerk gave Jim Room 12. If the even-numbered rooms were on the same side of the hall, 10 and 12 would be together with a single wall between them.

Curiosity was nagging at him again. Apparently Bob Jarvis and the girl weren't leaving town alive. You never knew all the angles on a deal like this, but if Jim was guessing right, he and Jarvis were caught in the same loop.

Jim picked up his clothes. "Where does Matt Seery live?"

The clerk blinked owlishly, hesitating.

"Don't you know him?" Jim asked.

"Sure, I know him." The clerk's Adam's apple bobbed experimentally, then he said, "Big, white house. Got a picket fence around it. Row of cottonwoods in front. A block south of Main Street."

"Thanks," Jim said, and climbed the stairs.

His room was next to Jarvis's as he had guessed. He went in as silently as he could, laid his range clothes on a chair, and moved to the wall between him and Room 10. The wall was thin as it was in most cowtown hotels, but Jim could hear nothing for a moment except the low sobbing of a woman. Then someone began walking around, boot-heels hammering against the floor.

Finally a man said, "You've got to stay here, Betty."

And the woman, "If they kill you, they might as well kill me. I'm going, Bob."

SILENCE for a time. Even the sobbing stopped. Suddenly the man shouted, "I won't take the stage. I'll wait till it's dark and I'll go after Seery. I'll kill him, Betty."

"They'll hang you," the woman said, "or Knoll and Perkins will shoot you. You shouldn't have brought me here. Why didn't you just leave me alone?"

"You know why. I love you. I couldn't leave you out there for Seery to—to—"

His voice faded away. Jim had heard enough. Seery was tied into this thing, too. It bore out what Troy had said. Seery and Pollock were together. Maybe this was as good a place to start as any.

Jim left the room and knocked on Jarvis's door, calling, "Jarvis, I want to talk to you."

The door opened a crack and Jim was looking into the muzzle of a cocked Colt. The pale, twitching face above it belonged to a young fellow who was more boy than man. He was panicky, and therefore dangerous.

"What do you want?" Jarvis whispered.

A peach-fuzz mustache sprouted from the boy's upper lip. Trying to be a man, Jim thought, but he was reaching for something that the years hadn't yet given him. Jim said, "My name's Sullivan. I'd like to help you."

"Nobody in this God-damned town would help me. Go away. Let me alone."

"I can help you," Jim said.

"I never saw you before." Sweat ran down the boy's face and dripped from the point of his chin. "Pollock probably sent you here. Get out now before I shoot you."

Jarvis's finger was tight on the trigger. Jim swung around and went down the stairs. The boy was a walking dead man if he didn't have help and he knew it, but it was natural enough for him to be suspicious of any stranger.

Jim stepped into the hotel dining-room which was deserted at this late hour. When the waitress brought his meal, he asked, "When does the stage leave town?"

"I don't know," she said, and fled back into the kitchen.

Jim swore as he cut his steak. The waitress was like the clerk. A stranger worried them because they didn't know where he stood or what he would do or why he was here. He was so suspect that even an innocuous question frightened them. It was the damnedest thing he had ever seen. Everyone in town knew what was shaping up, even the waitress. They'd wait for the inevitable, for a boy and maybe a girl to get killed. Jim wondered how so many cowards managed to collect in a town as small as Bakeoven.

A thought occurred to Jim that startled him. He remembered how the barber had looked him over when he'd first gone into the shop. The man had been heating a boiler of water for someone, maybe Bert Knoll. If that was true, the barber might have told Jim he could have a bath because he knew it would pit him against Knoll. There was always a chance a gun-packing stranger might be faster on the draw than the local man the barber wanted killed. On the other hand, if Knoll turned out to be faster, nothing would have been lost.

He finished his meal, wondering if the waitress was going to bring him any dessert. Then it broke, a full half hour before he expected it. He heard the pistol-sharp crack of the stage-driver's whip; he heard someone rush down the stairs and across the lobby.

Jim lunged toward the door. The stage was wheeling down the street, the driver yelling and pouring the silk to his horses. Jim ran across the lobby and into the street. He saw Jarvis out there in the deep red dust, waving to the driver and screaming, "Let me on, Bruce, let me on!"

But the stage gathered speed and roared past Jarvis as he rushed toward it, clawing at the back boot like a panicky animal trying to duck into his hole before a hunter's bullet reaches him. Then the guns sounded, drowning out the crack of the driver's whip, and Jarvis fell face-down into the dust, hands thrown out in front of him. The stage rolled on out of town and thundered across the bridge.

Jim's .45 was in his hand. The killers were standing in front of the saloon, boldly as if they were sure they were above all human law and judgment. Jim fired as Jarvis fell. He got one man with his first shot, sending him spilling back through the batwings of the saloon. The other ran. Bert Knoll, Jim thought, and threw a shot after him. He missed. The man, out of the patch of light, fired back. Close, too close.

Jim was caught in the light from the hotel behind him. He dropped flat, a second bullet kicking up dust inches from his left shoulder. He squeezed off two more shots and thought he missed. No way to be sure. Then Knoll was gone around the corner of the saloon.

A girl ran out of the hotel as men rushed into the street. She knelt in the dust and cradled Jarvis's head in her lap, saying over and over, "Bob, Bob." Jim rose and holstered his gun. The barber was there. The hotel clerk. The old storekeeper. The man with the white mustache who had said he was the mayor. A half dozen more Jim had not seen before.

They moved toward Jarvis, slowly, warily, the thin light here in the street showing their scared, pinched faces. Jim laid his voice against them with bitter venom, "You all knew what this boy was up against. What kind of a town is this?"

They stopped; some of them backing away, still trapped by sucking weakness of their fear. The mayor said, "You don't need to ask, friend. You've seen what this town is."

And the barber, spiteful now, "You didn't get Bert Knoll. He'll be back."

"He won't have to hunt for me," Jim said. "I meant to save the boy's life, but I didn't know the stage was leaving so soon."

"Forty minutes ahead of schedule," the mayor said. "You can see what the town's like, all right. Take my advice and get your horse and ride out of here while you can."

"Not me," Jim said. "If you see Knoll, tell him I'll be around."

Jim walked to where Jarvis lay, the girl still holding his head in her lap. She was crying hysterically, her slender body shaken by the violence of it. Jim knelt, and taking the boy's wrist, felt for his pulse. There was none. Jim said gently, "He's gone. There's nothing you can do for him now."

She didn't hear. She couldn't hear. He picked her up and carried her into the hotel and climbed the stairs. The lamp in the room she had shared with Jarvis was still lighted. He put her down on the bed and locked the door, then pulled up a chair and sat down to wait.

Chapter Five

PRESENTLY THE GIRL stopped crying. She lay motionless, staring blankly at the ceiling. She was a little older than

Bob Jarvis had been, Jim thought, probably in her early twenties. Pretty enough if she had a little meat on her bones. Blue eyes, blonde hair that was close to being red. Her face was long and narrow and pinched, a sad and disillusioned face.

Jim smoked a cigarette, a little impatient now because he still wanted to see Matt Seery tonight. He wondered if the man had been on the street with the others. He rose, put out his cigarette, and brushed the street dust from his clothes. Most of it came out, but his suit was rumpled.

HE wouldn't make the impression on Seery Troy had hoped he would. Troy would probably call him a fool for buying into the business. He paced the length of the room, asking himself why he had. A quick answer came to him. His eavesdropping had told him one thing which had seemed important. Seery was involved in Jarvis' killing. But the answers didn't satisfy him.

He brought his chair to the side of the bed, sat down, and took the girl's hand. It was very cold. She was still staring at the ceiling, and for a moment he thought she was in some sort of coma.

He said gently, "I want to talk to you. Can you hear me?"

He saw that she was conscious. Her eyes came to him as if only then aware of his presence. She was wearing a tan blouse and a black skirt, and now she reached down to tug at her skirt that had pulled up to her knees.

"Who are you?" she asked.

"Jim Sullivan. I came to the door a while ago and wanted to help Jarvis. I could have saved his life."

"He was too scared to listen to anyone," she said. "He wouldn't even listen to me. I'm to blame for it. I killed him. I might as well have pulled the trigger."

"What's your name?"

"Betty Erdman."

"Go ahead. Tell me about it. Why did they kill him?"

"Because he loved me. But I was wrong. I should have known." She squeezed his hand, her eyes begging for his understanding. "Do you know what it is to be so desperate for help that you'll take anything you can, even when you know you shouldn't?"

He nodded. "I know."

"Bob rode for Nate Pollock. I've been staying at the old Manders place. My folks died and left me without anything. Pollock promised me a job, but it wasn't a job he had to offer. Everyone thinks I'm his woman. I'm bad, you see. I guess you know how that is. A woman is bad or she's good, and there's no halfway place about it."

"You weren't Pollock's woman?"

"I'm Matt Seery's." She turned her head away and he wondered how long it had been since she had smiled. "Nobody in town knows that. Nobody would believe me if I told them."

It jolted him. He leaned back and rolled another cigarette and lighted it. He'd bought into a hell of a lot

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more than he had realized. Troy would say he was a fool. Seery would have nothing to do with him when he heard.

"Go on," he said.

"Seery made me a lot of promises and I guess I was in love with him. Finally I figured out he wasn't going to marry me. He's engaged to a girl here in town. I couldn't get away by myself. They never let me have a horse. Well, Bob rode for Pollock and he got to coming over after dark when Seery wasn't around. Finally he said he'd get me out of the country."

She stopped, her hands knotted at her sides. Jim said, "Go on."

"I sneaked away from the house and hid in the willows along the creek. Bob couldn't get another horse for me without making Pollock suspicious, so I had to ride into town behind him. We couldn't go very far that way. That was why we decided to take the stage, but Pollock must have been told by someone in town that we were in the hotel. He sent Knoll and Perkins to get Bob. I didn't want him to get on the stage, but he said it was the only way. They'd kill him if he stayed. He was going to get a job somewhere else and send for me. He said I'd be safe in the hotel."

"About Seery: Why don't people know he was your man?"

"He has a ranch out there and he'd come out to it, then he'd come to my place after dark. I don't think anyone knew how it was except Pollock and Bob. People around here all think Seery is too good for anything like that."

Jim rose. "Stay here. I've got the room next to yours. I've got an errand to do, but I won't be gone long."

She cried out, "Don't go into the street. They'll get you for killing Perkins."

He grinned at her. "Not me. I've got more lives than a cat. Be sure your door is locked and don't let anyone in but me."

He left the room and waited until he heard the lock turn, then went down the stairs and into the street. The stage office was closed and dark, and now the only lights were in the hotel and saloon. No one was in sight. Even the horses that had been racked in front of the saloon were gone.

As Jim strode down the street and turned south at the corner, he wished he knew more about Bert Knoll. What Jim had said about having more lives than a cat was true, or had been in the past because he had a strong streak of caution and a rare sense of knowing when to push and when to let caution rule him.

He had learned there were two kinds of killers: ones like Moloch Dykens who were not above shooting a man in the back, and others who played the game by rule. There were some men Jim could place in the right classification almost as soon as he saw them, but there were others he couldn't. Knoll was one of them.

Reaching the side street, Jim turned along it and came to Seery's home. Even in the darkness he could see that it was a sprawling, two-story structure, probably built to symbolize Seery's importance just as the stone bank building did. As Jim walked up the path to the front door, he mentally pictured Matt Seery as a big, pious psalm-singer who used Nate Pollock to hide his sins of the flesh.

JIM stepped up on the porch that ran the full width of the house and jerked the bell pull. A moment later the door swung open. A tall, white-haired woman stood there, a lamp held high in her hand.

"Good evening," the woman said, studying Jim with cool detachment.

Jim removed his derby. "I want to see Mr. Seery."

The woman moved forward a step, the lamp still held high. She was in her middle fifties, Jim judged. She was wearing a black silk dress that rustled as she moved, the white lace collar fitting tightly around her skinny neck. Her lips were thin and pale, pressed together to make a severe line that was nowhere relieved by the slightest hint of a smile or good humor.

"What is your business?" the woman asked.

"My business is with Mr. Seery," Jim said curtly.

"Mr. Seery is a busy man. Whatever business you have with him will wait until morning. Then you can see him in the bank."

"No, it won't wait," Jim said.

"A man concerned with legitimate business does not wear a gun," the woman said, and started to close the door.

Jim, thoroughly angry now, put a foot across the threshold so she couldn't close the door. He said, "Tell Seery I'm here."

She flushed, her mouth line more severe than ever. She said in a peremptory voice, "The hour is late. Go away. You can talk to my son in the morning."

Jim grinned at her. "So you're Matt Seery's mother. I've never seen him, but I had an idea he was a grown man. Since he isn't, I'll discuss my business with you. If you approve, I'll see him."

She hesitated, then said coldly, "He's in the study, but be sure you don't keep him up late."

Jim stepped into the hall and hung his derby on a rack. As she closed the door behind him, he said, "Your apron string is dragging, Mrs. Seery."

"You're quite wrong," she said with cold hauteur. "A stranger would not understand."

She turned and led the way down the hall, the thick Brussels carpet smothering their steps. The dark paneled oak gave Jim the depressing feeling that he had stepped into a house which was without life.

Mrs. Seery stopped outside a door, tapped on it, and called, "Matthew, there is a man here to see you." She opened the door. "You may go in." The instant Jim was in the room she closed it behind him.

Matt Seery rose from where he had been sitting at a huge mahogany desk. He stood motionless, pale blue eyes appraising Jim who walked to the desk and held out his hand. "I'm Jim Sullivan. You never heard of me, but I've heard of you and I've ridden a long ways to see you."

Seery gave his hand a firm grip and motioned to a dark blue plush chair. "Sit down, Mr. Sullivan," he said.

He had been smoking a bent-stemmed, meerschaum pipe that was darkened by age. He picked it up and lighted it, and then, belatedly remembering he was the host, he opened a cigar box and held it out to Jim.

"Thanks." Jim took a cigar and dropped into the plush chair. "I understand your father started this town."

Seery sat down and nodded as he leaned back in his swivel chair. Jim's mental picture of him was thoroughly wrong. He had expected to find a big, brutal man, although when he had learned that the woman who met him at the door was Seery's mother, he had altered his preconceived notion. He hadn't altered it nearly enough.

SEERY was wearing a smoking-jacket of some dark, plaid material. He was still clad in the white shirt and black tie that he had probably worn all day at the bank. He was tall and very thin; his face was that of a man who lived indoors, the skin pallid. His forehead was inordinately high above pale brows. But the thing that startled Jim more than his looks was the air of gentleness which seemed to be so much a part of him.

"We came here when I was a boy," Seery said. He motioned toward a gilt-framed picture on the wall. "That was my father, Alexander Seery. He was murdered twelve years ago."

"Murdered?"

Seery nodded. "One night when he was alone in the bank. We never found out who did it."

Jim swung around to look at the picture, a little stunned by the knowledge that the elder Seery had been

murdered. Troy had neglected to tell him that. Jim studied the bold face with its saber-sharp nose and its sweeping mustache. Alexander Seery had been born to command, and Jim, thinking about Mrs. Seery, wondered how they had got along. Matt, who looked as if he was a scholar, didn't seem to be a son who would have fitted into the Seery way of life. Perhaps he hadn't. It might account for Mrs. Seery's attitude toward him.

"Must have been quite a man," Jim said, turning back to face Seery.

"He was." Seery smiled around the stem of his pipe. "Quite a man. He built the bank building which you have undoubtedly noticed. His idea was that you could have a strong bank in a frame building and people would not trust it, but if you had a weak bank in a granite building, folks would think it was going to last forever. My father understood people, Mr. Sullivan."

"He must have," Jim said, wondering why Seery wanted to talk about his father.

"He started with very little, but he made a fortune in this valley," Seery went on. "He built the house and furnished it in a manner he could not afford, but he said folks expected a banker to live like a banker. Before he died, he had a good, small ranch at the upper end of the valley which I own. He operated a stage and freight line between here and Placerville which is still very profitable. It belongs to my mother and she also owns the bank which I manage for her. She's a very strong woman, Mr. Sullivan."

JIM pulled on his cigar, not understanding why this man was hated by Troy and why she blamed him for her father's death. Jim had never seen a more innocuous-appearing man in his life than Matt Seery. He resembled a potato sprout that had never got out of the cellar.

"I can believe that." Jim shifted his weight in his chair. "Mr. Seery, I came to see you because I heard you were the big gun on this range."

"The big gun." Seery seemed amused. "That term might apply to my mother. Or Nate Pollock. But not me."

Jim reached into his pocket for a handful of the gold coins, spread them on the desk in front of Seery. He said, "You're the man I want. What god do you worship, Mr. Seery?"

The mild expression on Seery's face momentarily altered, but Jim could not tell what the man was thinking. The composed expression was there again, like a mask that had been removed and immediately replaced.

"You're a strange person, Mr. Sullivan," Seery said, "and you ask a strange question. Well, I went to church with my mother when I was a boy, but I suppose I worship a metal god the same as you do."

Jim put the money back into his pocket. "I'm a rough man, Mr. Seery, but there are some things I understand. Making money is one of them. I represent a million dollars. Some of it could come to this valley, but if you're not interested, it's no go."

Seery had lighted his pipe. Now he reached down and picking up a small Maltese kitten, put it on his lap and began stroking it. He said, "You interest me a great deal. Go on."

"I want to buy the Manders place."

Seery's eyes were on the kitten, the mask of composure remaining in place. "I'm afraid that's impossible. Manders was killed several years ago by outlaws and his daughter still has title to the ranch. She doesn't live here, so Pollock has been using her grass, but you can't buy it from him."

The kitten began to purr. It annoyed Jim, who was not a cat lover. He said sharply, "Look, Seery. I know something about the situation. I met the Manders woman. She has a ranch in the Neutral Strip. When I talked to her, she said she intended to come back. There must be some way to encourage her to come, or at least get in touch with her."

Seery shook his head. "I don't know how we could."

"If this is the right place," Jim said, "and I've heard it is, my people will invest, but they won't dilly-dally around."

"Why do you want the Manders place?"

Jim fingered the ash from his cigar. This was the moment he had been working up to, and he knew Troy's plan would fail or succeed now. He said, "One sure way to make money is to promote an irrigation system. From what the Manders woman told me, I judge there is a sizable stream that has its source on Telescope Mountain and flows across her land. She said there was a natural reservoir site on her property."

"She's right." Seery was still looking at the cat, his high forehead furrowed in a frown. "You understand, of course, that there would be hell to pay if you started talking irrigation. Most of the valley land is not patented and would be open for settlement, but the local ranchers would fight."

"I'm not afraid of a fight," Jim snapped. "What's more, my people have means of advertising. If we put in a ditch system, I'll guarantee we'll have a thousand settlers in this valley by spring."

"Why do you need me?" Seery asked, looking up.

"To give advice. You know these people. You can tell me who can be scared and who will sell and who will have to be killed. Since I'm a stranger, it would take me a long time to learn that. A second reason is that you run the bank. We need you. You'll give the settlers credit. By the time they have proved up, they'll be in debt to the bank. You'll close them out, we'll bring in a new crop of settlers, and we'll sell the land over."

"You are a rough man," Seery murmured. "And a brutal one. How much would I make out of this?"

"Maybe a hundred thousand. Depends, of course, but my idea was to split fifty-fifty."

"But I'm to stay out for the time being? Work undercover, you might say?"

"That's right. We'll take the risks."

SEERY put the kitten down and rose. "Tell me one thing, Mr. Sullivan. I saw you ride into town on a tired horse. You looked like a cowhand just in off the range. You come here dressed up. Why?"

Jim laughed. "I'm an engineer. I get around faster and with less trouble in the cattle country if I look like a cowhand, but I knew I wouldn't get into your house looking like a saddle bum."

"Quite right." Seery knocked his pipe out and put it down on the desk. "Let me think about this tonight. Nate Pollock is the man who will give us trouble. He's a rough man, too, Mr. Sullivan, a good deal rougher than you are, I think."

"I can handle him if it comes to that." Jim rose, his molars taking a grip on the tattered cigar stub in the corner of his mouth. "I'll drop over to the bank in the morning. I want you to show me the Manders place."

"Glad to do it."

Jim walked to the door, opened it. "Good night, Mr. Seery."

"Matt." A girl was running down the hall. "Matt!"

Seery frowned, plainly irritated by the interruption. "Come in, Lily."

She rushed into the room, Mrs. Seery following sedately behind her. The girl cried, "Matt . . ."

"Lily, I want you to meet Mr. Sullivan," Seery broke in. "Sullivan, this is my fiancée, Lily Darket."

"I'm pleased to meet you," Jim said.

The girl glanced at Jim briefly. She wasn't pretty, not nearly as pretty as Betty Erdman. It was the kind of situation that bit into Jim's curiosity at once. He glanced at her left hand. The diamond was the biggest one Jim had ever seen, a Seery symbol like the granite bank building and this house.

She said, "How do you do," and turned back to Seery. "Matt, did you hear the gunshots a while ago?"

"He has been in the study all evening," Mrs. Seery said. "He wouldn't

be able to hear it with his windows and door closed."

"No, I didn't hear any shots," Seery said.

"Bob Jarvis was shot and killed by two of Pollock's men," the girl cried, running the words together in her haste to say them. "Jarvis had brought the Erdman girl to town, but she didn't try to get on the stage. Then someone, a stranger, butted in and killed Perkins and wounded Knoll."

This should have been a terrible shock to Seery if he hadn't heard, but Jim, watching him closely, could not see the slightest change of expression on his face. He asked, apparently amused, "What are you so excited about?"

"Daddy says—" The girl stopped and licked her lips. "It's enough to be excited about. What will Pollock do? He hasn't had a man killed as long as I can remember. He might—might burn the town."

"Quit worrying." Seery smiled. "Pollock isn't quite that bad. Who was this stranger?"

"Me," Jim said. "I'll see you in the morning," and pushing past the girl, he left the room.

Seery had either heard about it and therefore was prepared for the news, or he had the most complete control over his emotions of any man Jim had ever seen. There was a third possibility. The Erdman girl might have lied about her relationship with Seery, but Jim could not think of any reason why she would. And if Seery had been in the study all evening, he couldn't have heard. No, Seery must be a cold fish, the coldest Jim had ever run into.

He reached the hall rack and had his derby in his hand before he realized that Mrs. Seery had followed him. When he looked at her defiant face, he sensed that she was afraid of him and therefore hated him. She liked her life; she didn't want it altered. Instinctively she would be worried about any stranger, particularly a tough one like Jim Sullivan.

"You will leave town at once," she said harshly. "Do not see Matthew in the morning."

He grinned at her. "Sounds like you give the orders."

"I do," she said. "To everyone except Nate Pollock. If you are trying to persuade Matthew to help you, you will only succeed in injuring him. Pollock is that kind of a man."

"Don't worry about your son," Jim said. "I'll take care of Pollock."

He turned the gold-plated door knob and opening the door, left the house. A tall evening, he thought as he walked back to the hotel, a very tall evening. He had made some enemies tonight, and only one friend, Betty Erdman, who would be of no help to him. But he had learned one interesting fact. Mrs. Seery was not as sure of the Seery position in the valley as Jim had supposed. She was desperately afraid of Nate Pollock.

He crossed the lobby and climbed the stairs, wondering what Matt Seery would think of his proposition and of him, now that he knew Jim was as tough as he had said. He'd find out in the morning. Then he was in the hall and stopped dead still, his heart hammering. Betty Erdman's door was open. The room was empty. He went in. There was no sign she'd ever been here. He turned back to the door and examined it. It had been smashed open.

He stood there, swearing softly. What kind of a damned town was this that would let a girl be kidnaped? Seery might not have known what had happened, but he certainly had men working for him, Nate Pollock's men.

He went into his room, still thinking about it. The instant he stepped through the door, a powerful blow struck him on the neck and knocked him to his knees. He heard Bert Knoll say, "When I tell a son-of-a-bitch like you to leave town, he'd better go." A boot slammed into his back and he toppled forward.

Chapter Six

GABE DYKENS DID NOT LOOK BACK at Jim Sullivan after they split on Starlight Mesa. He had considered forcing the issue and decided against it. At the moment it was enough to worry Jim. Maybe he'd fail at the job Troy had given him. Troy would have no use for him if he did. The one thing she couldn't overlook in a man was failure. That would be the time to kill him, for Troy wouldn't care. From the time Gabe had signed on with Troy, he had been careful not to offend her.

The piñons thinned out. Suddenly Gabe sensed that Moloch was swinging to the right. He understood the simple working of his brother's mind. Moloch knew that Gabe wanted Jim killed, and he saw no reason to wait.

Gabe said, "Let him go, Molly."

"But hell—" Molly began.

"Let him go," Gabe said patiently. "Troy gave him a job. Plenty of time to beef him after he does it."

You needed patience with Moloch. A harsh word and he'd sulk for days. He was like a one-man dog. A little kindness went a long way.

They rode steadily for two hours, the trail twisting to the northwest through low scattered brush. There was an occasional cedar and a good deal of yucca and cactus. The grass was good, and it struck Gabe that if Seery had this mesa to himself, he was a fool for not putting twice the number of cattle up here he did. Apparently Seery did have it to himself, for they saw a number of cows and calves, all carrying the Horseshoe Bar iron.

The sun was dropping fast when they topped a low rise and saw the cow camp directly ahead in a clearing. Gabe reined up, motioning for Enoch and Moloch to stop. For a moment he sat studying the layout. Just a cabin and pole corral, with a barbed-wire fence to the west around a stretch of meadow. Gabe judged that about ninety head of steers were held inside the fence.

"No cover here," Enoch said. "We'd better get into them piñons yonder."

Gabe nodded, mentally debating if it would be better to duck back over the ridge and wait until dark. It would be a simple matter to work up close to the cabin, get the drop on Seery's men, and start them walking toward town. Then they'd burn the cabin, let the horses out of the corral, and run the steers back into the brush.

He was still turning it over in his mind when Enoch said, "They're coming, three of 'em. Looks like they've got eight, ten critters with 'em."

Gabe laughed silently when he thought about the cowboys' long walk to town, and what Matt Seery would say when they showed up and told him what had happened. Too bad Gabe couldn't tell these boys that this was Troy Manders' doing!

"Well?" Enoch asked.

"Let's bust 'em," Moloch said. "The light's good enough for shooting."

"No," Gabe decided. "We'll circle around to them piñons."

It took several minutes to reach the piñons, a black wall that gave adequate cover and was close enough to the camp for Gabe to watch the crew's movements. He said, "We'll wait here till it gets dark." He dismounted and stretched, feeling the need for a cigarette but knowing he couldn't have it.

The three cowhands had turned their day's gather into the pasture and had ridden to the corral. Gabe watched them. One was an old-timer, stooped and whiskery. The others were young, hardly more than boys.

Gabe had forgotten to watch Moloch. Now he heard the rifleshots to his right and a little behind him, three of them, running out together so fast that the second and third hammered into the echo of the first. It was over before Gabe could stop Moloch.

Seery's men had started toward the cabin from the corral. They had been strung out, the old one in front, and they had gone down like three upended dominoes when the first is tipped over. Gabe grabbed the Winchester from Moloch, yelling, "You know better'n . . ." He stopped. Pa-

tience, he told himself, damn it, he had to have patience.

Moloch, the brown tip of his tongue lodged in the gap of his teeth, gave Gabe a hurt look. "I got 'em, didn't I?" he whimpered. "I made it easy, didn't I?"

"Yeah, sure, you made it easy." Gabe handed the Winchester back to him. "Yeah, you sure did."

"Easy, you say?" Enoch shouted. "Why, you God-damned bastard, you made it easy to put a rope on our necks, that's what you done."

Moloch whipped his rifle up and eared back the hammer. "You ain't gonna cuss me no more. I'm gonna blow your gizzard—"

Gabe batted the rifle barrel down. "Ease up, Molly. You've got to allow for Enoch. You know that."

Molly eared down the hammer of his rifle. "Yeah, I savvy." He cackled, the tip of his tongue working back and forth in the gap of his teeth. "He ain't bright, Enoch ain't, but me, I done a good job just now."

Gabe mounted and rode out of the pines. He didn't care much now what happened to either Enoch or Moloch. They could kill each other for all of him. Enoch had turned sullen and Moloch wasn't to be trusted. Gabe told himself he'd be better off without either of them.

He dismounted beside the three dead men. All of them had been hit dead center on a line between their noses and their belt buckles. One thing could be said for Moloch. He could shoot a fly off a man's nose as far as he could see the fly and not touch the man, only he wouldn't. He was never one to shoot a fly if he could get a man in his sights. The hell of it was he was getting worse all the time, the way whisky or the gambling fever gets hold of some men.

Moloch and Enoch had ridden up and stepped down. "Light's a little thin," Moloch said with childlike pride. "I done pretty good."

Gabe didn't look at Enoch. He knew what was coming; Enoch would pull out the first chance he had.

Gabe said, "We'll drag 'em inside."

He lifted the old man and carried him into the cabin, then went through the dead man's pockets, hunting for money. Enoch brought another body in and slammed it down and walked out. He didn't say a word. He didn't need to. One look at his stormy face told Gabe what Enoch was thinking.

Moloch came in with the third body. He dropped it, saying, "Damn it, I got him a little high." He kicked the dead man in the ribs. "Must have been the light."

Gabe searched them as he had the old man, taking only money, then he rummaged in one corner that held the grub, found a flour sack, and filled it with biscuits and bacon and some cans of tomatoes. Enoch was waiting outside. He'd have ridden off, Gabe thought, if he weren't afraid Moloch would shoot him.

Gabe picked up a lamp from the table and threw it against the wall. It broke, the kerosene running across the floor. Gabe lighted a match and dropped it into the kerosene and when he was sure the cabin would burn, he jerked his head at Moloch and went outside.

For the first time in his life Gabe felt absolutely helpless. Troy was bound to find out about this. She wouldn't stand for disobedience, and she wouldn't stand for murder. Even if he told her how it had happened, she would blame him. He'd never have her now, not of her own free will.

Then he swore. It didn't make much difference. He'd take her the first time he was alone with her—and then she'd belong to him. She was too proud to tell anyone. It was that simple, once Sullivan was out of the way. Hell, he might even marry her.

"Can't make any sense out of this thing—probably why the man tossed it in here!"

Chapter Seven

A SMALLER, SOFTER-MUSCLED MAN than Jim would have had his neck broken by that first down-swinging blow. As it was, he was momentarily paralyzed. He lay on his belly, face against the floor, pain flashing along his spine where he had been kicked.

A man lighted the lamp on the bureau. He said, "Here's one tough drifter who's gonna wish he'd never seen Rampart Valley."

And Bert Knoll, "He's gonna wish he hadn't plugged Perkins and busted my arm, too." Knoll kicked him in the side. "On your feet, redhead. I've still got one good hand, and I'm gonna use it to push that ugly nose of your'n a little more to one side of your face."

"Hold on, Bert," the first man said. "He's out cold. I aim to make him talk before we finish him. He's got some kind of a slick scheme up his sleeve or he wouldn't have raised so much hell."

"Might be a U. S. Marshal, Nate," Knoll said. "Go through his clothes. If he's got a badge, we'd better tote him out of here. Wouldn't do to have 'em find his carcass."

Jim had no idea how many men were in the room or whether any of them had a gun on him. But his mind cleared while he lay there. He braced his hands against the floor, knowing he could move. He had to, or be murdered. There was no doubt about their intentions.

"Go through his clothes," the man called Nate said. "Pull his iron, too, Ace."

"Hell, he plugged Perkins," a third man said. "Let's get it over with."

"Do what you're told," the other snapped. "He can't talk if he's dead and I want to hear him talk."

Ace grumbled, but he knelt beside Jim, a hand gripping his shoulder to turn him over. In that instant Jim came alive. He rose to his hands and knees, his head snapping back so that the top of his skull caught Ace on the chin, his teeth cracking together with a staccato click.

It took a second for Jim to come on up to his feet and wheel, right hand sweeping his gun from leather. He heard Knoll's shouted warning, heard the man called Nate curse. He glimpsed Knoll standing by the door, and he saw the other one, a black-jowled, grossly fat man, and that was all. The roof fell on him and he went down again, out cold this time.

Jim was lying on the bed when he came to. Several minutes passed before he remembered what had happened, several minutes of slow, mental groping. Red flashes kept running across his vision, and his head hurt with a throbbing ache that threatened to blow the top of his skull off. Then it came back to him, and he was surprised he was still alive.

Jim tried to sit up, but he dropped back at once. The slight movement increased the hammering in his head so that for a moment he thought he was going to faint. A man said, "Just lie there, friend. You won't get hurt any more for awhile. What happens tomorrow or the day after tomorrow is another proposition."

The voice was vaguely familiar, but a headache like this did not encourage a man's memory. He managed to twist around, teeth clenched against the tide of agony that swept through him; then he saw a man with a white mustache sitting in the cane-bottom chair, his feet on the edge of the bed. He was placid and apparently comfortable, as he sat smoking a corncob pipe, his chair tilted back, the front legs a good six inches off the floor. Then Jim remembered. It was the mayor.

"I saved your life," the man said around the stem of his pipe. "That puts you in my debt and I like to collect when a man owes me something. However, I have an idea my notion of how you'll repay that debt will fit into what you want to do anyhow. Pollock was here with Knoll and another one of his boys named Ace Rush. I persuaded them to leave, which wasn't hard since I had a gun on them, so you'll live to fight another day."

He paused, then continued. "My name's Jess Darket. I own the livery stable and a small ranch on the river. I'm also the mayor, which is a questionable honor since no one else wanted the job."

Darket pulled a sack of tobacco from his pocket and filled his pipe. He was an average-sized, mild-appearing man, perhaps fifty, endowed with a dignity and quiet strength that aroused Jim's respect. The name seemed familiar. Jess Darket. Then he remembered. Seery's fiancée was Lily Darket.

"You're going to be Matt Seery's father-in-law," Jim said.

Darket tipped his chair back, the lines of his face touched by surprise. "How did you know?"

"I came to Bakeoven to see Seery," Jim said. "I was with him last night when your daughter came in. She is your daughter, isn't she?"

Darket nodded, eyeing Jim as he pulled on his pipe, clouds of smoke drifting toward the ceiling. "So you came here to see Matt."

He did not state it as a question, but it was meant to be one. Jim said, "I'm hoping to interest him in an investment."

"I see," Darket said as if he didn't see at all. "Well, Sullivan, you arouse my curiosity. I've followed every move you've made since you rode into Bakeoven except the visit you made to Matt. I was in the harness-room in the stable when you left your horse. I watched you go to the store and come out with new duds. I watched you go into the barber shop and I know how you stood up to Bert Knoll. I know you jumped into the shooting with both feet. Now just what sort of an investment are you trying to interest Matt in?"

Jim hesitated, wondering how much he could tell this man, and decided nothing. Not since he was the father of the girl Matt Seery was going to marry. "I just couldn't sit around and let the kid get killed. What happened to the girl?"

Darket shrugged. "I suppose they took her back to the Manders place where she's been living. Pollock wouldn't let her get away. You probably didn't know, being a stranger, but she's Pollock's woman. Apparently she just got tired of him. She wasn't worth your trouble, Sullivan."

"She's Seery's woman, not Pollock's," Jim said.

The effect was the same as if he'd rammed a needle into Darket. He jumped up and grabbed the pipe out of his mouth. "Where'n hell did you hear that?"

"She told me."

"Oh." Darket sat down and put his pipe back into his mouth. "Well, she's lying, although I see no reason for it. If you weren't a stranger, you'd know. Matt Seery isn't that kind of man. I couldn't ask for a better husband for my girl." He laughed shortly. "You startled me for a moment."

That, Jim thought, was an understatement. Now he understood how Darket had been able to persuade Pollock and his men to leave. As Seery's future father-in-law, he carried a great deal of weight, more weight than a gun could give him.

"Well, I can't sit here all night talking, so I'll come to the point." Darket took the pipe out of his mouth and stared at it. "We have never in the years I've been here had a man hit town and shake it up as you have. You see, we're so far from the county seat that we have practically no law. We're close to the Utah line, and for that reason, our valley is a thoroughfare for outlaws who want to get out of the State fast, or hide out on Telescope Mountain."

"Pollock and Knoll were worried about me being a U. S. Marshal," Jim said. "Why?"

"I figured you were," Darket said. "I've had an idea for a long time that Pollock has a profitable sideline, protecting outlaws from the law, but it's just a theory. Might be good enough to interest a U. S. Marshal, though."

"I'm not."

"Well now, I wish you were." He leaned forward, gray eyes intent on Jim's face. "I want you to repay me by taking the marshal's star. We can't touch Pollock until we get a deputy permanently located here, but we must control what goes on in town. You showed last night you can do that."

"I'm sorry," Jim said. "I have other fish to fry. I'd be handicapped wearing a star."

"I see." Darket moved to the door and opened it. "If you change your mind, look me up."

Darket went out, pulling the door shut. Jim sat up, and when the waves of dizziness tapered off, he rose and poured water from the gaudily painted pitcher into the washbowl. His body was one great throbbing ache: his head, the base of his neck, his back, his ribs. He poured the water into the slop jar, propped the chair against the door, blew out the lamp, and lay down.

He wondered what Troy would say to him. He'd got his tail in a crack and put a good squeeze on it. Maybe taking the star wouldn't be such a bad idea. At least it would give him a legitimate reason for staying here.

He had to see Troy before she reached Bakeoven. She should be calling the turn. She had been right about one thing even if she had been gone for nine years: These people thought that Matt Seery could do no wrong.

He finally fell asleep, stirring often, and waking at every noise he heard in the hall, hand automatically reaching for the gun he had slipped under his pillow. Boogery, he told himself, so damned boogery he'd probably shoot a drunk if he stumbled into the room. Near dawn, he slept soundly, and when he woke, it was well into the morning.

He rose and washed his face, his hands making a sandpapery sound against the dark stubble. Maylor had been too hasty the night before to give him a good shave. He was stiff, his back and side sore, but his head had stopped aching.

Jim ate breakfast in the dining-room of the hotel. He must be a pariah, he thought, judging by the actions of the waitress who rushed away the instant she had his order. A few minutes later she brought his ham and eggs and hurried away again. He was aware of the covert glances the other customers gave him. When he left the hotel, the clerk was busy looking the other way. At this moment he was the most famous man in Bakeoven.

He went at once to the bank. The interior was as imposing as the granite exterior: an ornate crystal chandelier hanging from the ceiling which seemed to Jim a waste of money, a marble-surfaced counter with intricate brass scrollwork around the teller's window, and two expensive mahogany desks in the rear of the room, one of them holding a shiny gold nameplate with the words MATTHEW SEERY engraved upon it.

The back wall held another portrait of Matt's father much like the one Jim had seen the night before. Staring at the bold eyes and predatory nose, Jim wondered what it was like to be the son of a man like that.

The teller was a banty of a man with a projecting upturned chin and a long nose that combined to give his face a sort of a nutcracker look, an illusion that was increased by the fact that he had no teeth and was constantly sucking at his lips. He sat at a desk working on a ledger, covertly watching Jim and hoping Jim wasn't catching him at it.

"I want to see Matt Seery," Jim said.

"He won't be in today," the man said, still working on the ledger.

"Where is he?"

"I don't know."

Exasperated, Jim said, "In a minute I'm coming back there and I'll pry your nose loose from your chin and you'll talk me to death."

"I think he's at the ranch," the man said, lips fluttering like a butterfly's wings, "but he doesn't want to be disturbed."

"I want to see him about getting your job," Jim said.

Outside, Jim paused and rolled a smoke, looking up at the high, south wall of the valley with its layers of red, yellow, and buff sandstone. He had to see Seery today before Troy got here. Jess Darket might be the answer. Decision made, he strode to the livery stable and found Darket in the harness-room. Darket said, "Good morning, Sullivan. I see you're able to be on your feet."

"I'm able," Jim said. "I want to see Matt Seery and the yahoo over at the bank thought he might be at his ranch. I want you to ride out there with me. I might get lost."

Darket cocked his head and blew out a long breath, the tips of his mustache fluttering. "Why don't you tell the truth?"

Jim grinned. "All right. Since you're going to be Seery's father-in-law, you're pretty good insurance Pollock's boys will let me alone. I've got a hunch that even Pollock walks easy where any of the Seery family is concerned."

"Well, you're being honest and that's better." Darket picked up a handful of copper rivets and let them dribble through his fingers. "Why should I?"

"To keep me alive," Jim answered, "in case I change my mind about taking that star."

Chapter Eight

MATT SEERY TURNED HIS BACK to Lily Darket the instant Jim left the study. He walked to the desk and filled his pipe, taking his time. The news Lily had brought jarred him as nothing had jarred him as long as he could remember.

Bob Jarvis must have been in love with Betty Erdman, or he wouldn't have tried what he had, so Seery was glad the boy was dead. He didn't give a damn about Perkins or Knoll, but he cared about Betty more than he cared about anyone else except himself. The fact that she had tried to run away hit him like a club blow in the belly.

Now, staring at Lily, he realized how much he hated her, but she had never suspected it. He liked Betty's hair, so full of color, almost red at times when the light was right. As for a figure, hell, Lily was just plain dumpy. She simply had none of the trim vibrancy that he liked in Betty.

She edged toward the door, looking at Seery expectantly. He rose. She wanted him to walk home with her and he might as well do it and get rid of her. Now his mother had sensed he was upset, and she moved past Lily to the desk.

"Something's bothering you, Matthew," she said in the solicitous tone that made him furious because she was forever seeing him as a child. He would never be a man in her eyes if he lived to be ninety. "If that fellow said something—"

"It isn't that," he said impatiently. "It was a shock to hear that young Jarvis had been shot."

He walked past his mother and took Lily's hand. She gave him her eager smile and glancing at Mrs. Seery, said, "I'll be over in the morning, Mother."

"That will be fine," Mrs. Seery said absently, her eyes on her son's back.

Seery walked down the hall and left the house with Lily hanging to his arm. His mother liked her because she could be managed, so he had been worn down until he proposed to her and she'd said yes before he was finished with the proposal. She'd been in love with him ever since she'd worn pigtails, she said, but Seery had the idea she was in love with his name and money and position in the community.

Outside on the boardwalk, Seery thought bleakly that of all the mistakes he had ever made, proposing to Lily was the worst. He'd kept putting off the wedding, but sooner or later he'd run out of excuses. He'd break the engagement if he could, but she never gave him the slightest excuse. Anyhow, it would just mean another row with his mother. Some day he'd get out of the valley. He wasn't sure why he had stayed this long.

Lily didn't say anything until they reached her house. He stopped at her gate, but she tugged at his arm, whispering, "Come in, Matt. Daddy's downtown somewhere. He won't be back for hours."

"I can't," he mumbled. "I've got a lot of work to do."

When he got back to the study, he found his mother waiting up for him. He said brusquely, "I've got some work to do."

"I won't stay more than a minute." Mrs. Seery clasped her long-fingered, bony hands on her lap. "Matthew, you'd feel more settled if you got married. Why are you waiting?"

He sat down and laid his pipe on the desk. This was an old argument between them, part of her constant fight to dominate him and his fight to live his own life. If it hadn't been for her, he would have married Betty years ago.

He wanted to sell out and leave Rampart Valley, but his mother wouldn't hear of it. She had felt as much happiness as she was capable of feeling since her husband had died. She dominated the valley in much the way she dominated her son; she was considered an upright and righteous woman.

"I want you to be happy, Matthew," Mrs. Seery said after a long pause. "A

man needs a wife and Lily will be a good one for you." She rose and walked to the door. For a moment she paused there, a hand gripping the gold-plated door knob, then she said, "I want you to go to the county seat and talk to the sheriff again about sending a deputy out here. The killing tonight shows how much we need one."

That was another issue between them. The situation was perfect for Nate Pollock the way it stood now, so Seery had slyly used his influence to keep the sheriff from sending a deputy to Rampart Valley. It had been a delicate operation, skillfully done. The valley people resented having a deputy among them, Seery had said. They were law-abiding and they felt a town marshal in Bakeoven was all the lawman they needed. The sheriff, happy to save taxpayers' money and knowing that no one in the county cared about the outlaws who made their escape through Rampart Valley as long as they didn't bother the local ranchers, agreed with Seery.

But tonight Seery didn't feel like arguing. He said, "I'll see about it after we ship."

She left then, saying, "Don't stay up late, Matthew."

He put the kitten down and rose. She couldn't even let him go to bed when he wanted to. He paced around the room and kept thinking of Betty. He couldn't understand it. He had done so much for her. He had always thought she loved him. It was something he had taken for granted. Now Nate Pollock would give him the horse laugh. Probably be sore about it to boot.

Pollock would say, "I always knew that little bitch wasn't any good. She's made a fool out of you, and the hell of it is folks will think it's me she's made a fool out of."

But he could handle Pollock as long as he could keep Vance Frane—who had been the bank's cashier for years and had Mrs. Seery's full approval—from stealing his bank job. Pollock was up to his ears in debt to the bank. Gambling was his one great weakness. Every fall after the beef was shipped, Pollock took a trip to one of the mining camps, usually Telluride, and sat in on a poker game that would last through a couple of nights and a day, and he'd come back broke. Then the bank would loan him more money and he would be pulled a little deeper still into the pit that he had dug for himself.

Seery sat down at his desk, his mind turning to Jim Sullivan. The idea of building a reservoir on the Manders property was an old one. Manders himself had pushed it before he'd been killed. It was sound enough, although the bank could not be used as long as his mother was alive. Still, there might be some way to figure a profit, and if Seery was in the driver's seat, he could work it so Pollock wouldn't spoil Sullivan's game. But he'd better have a talk with Pollock before he saw Sullivan again.

Acting on impulse, he wrote a note to his mother that he had gone to the ranch. His mother would let Vance Frane know. He filled a sack with tobacco and dropped it and his pipe into a shirt pocket. He picked up the kitten, and blowing out the lamp, stepped into the hall.

He heard nothing. His mother must have gone to bed. He paced along the hall to his room, lighted a lamp, and put the kitten into the box that was his bed. Seery changed to his riding-clothes, buckled a gun belt around him, and slipped out through a window. As he crossed to the barn, he cursed his fear of his mother which made him sneak out this way. She'd give him hell because she thought he should spend every day in the bank.

When he reached the lane that led to Pollock's ranch, he kept going; he'd see Pollock in the morning.

Half a mile farther on he passed the Manders house and saw a light in the window. For a moment he was too startled to think clearly; then he understood. Someone, probably Bert Knoll, had brought Betty back from town after Jarvis had been killed.

He rode on to his own place, his heart hammering. Hell, he hadn't lost her. He'd bring her around. She couldn't have been in love with a runny-nosed kid like Bob Jarvis who couldn't give her anything.

He stripped gear from his chestnut and put him into the corral because he couldn't leave him at the Manders house for anyone to see who happened to ride past. All the time he was thinking that whatever was wrong could be fixed between him and Betty.

The teller barely looked up from his ledger. "Mr. Seery won't be in today," he said. "And I don't know where he is." Jim started around the counter. "Maybe I can help you remember."

He was panting when he reached the Manders house. He stopped outside until he was breathing evenly, not wanting her to know he had run. Whatever happened, he must not let her know how completely she possessed him.

He crossed the porch and went in, closing the door behind him. He called, "Betty."

The door into the kitchen was open. He saw her then, bending over the range as she looked at something in the oven. For some crazy reason she always started cooking when she was upset or worried.

"Don't touch me, Matt," she said. "Don't ever touch me again."

He stood there, shocked by the virulence in her voice. A dark bruise stood out on one side of her face where someone had struck her, probably when she had been taken from the hotel. He moved forward to the table and put his hands against it.

"Don't say that," he whispered. "You're all I've got. I love you. You know that, Betty. You've always known that."

"Love!" She threw the word at him as if it were an oath. "You don't love anyone but yourself. If you love me, you'd have married me a long time ago. You'd walk down Bakeoven's Main Street with me instead of pretending you didn't know me when I went to town. The great Matt Seery is too good to be seen with me, and now you've got the gall to stand there and tell me you love me."

Suddenly he was angry at the injustice of this. He had been kind to her. He had honestly given her everything she had any right to expect. Then, because she had become so unattainable, he was filled with a savage desire for her and he started toward her. She jumped back and picked up a stove stick from the woodbox. She tried to hit him, but he grabbed her arm and took the stick from her and threw it away. He picked her up and carried her into the bedroom.

Later, he woke and realized she was not beside him. He saw that it was full daylight, and he was filled with frantic worry, thinking she had left the house. He got up and ran out of the bedroom. She was in the kitchen, staring at the charred cake she had been baking.

She must have heard him. Without turning, she said dully, "You ought to be happy now. You made me burn my cake."

Then he saw his gun belt on the floor, the Colt still in holster, and he had a bad moment. The way she had felt last night, it was a wonder she hadn't killed him. He would not take a chance like that again.

He was reaching for his drawers when he heard her run across the living-room. He looked up to see her standing in front of the window, her slim body taut.

Someone knocked on the front door and it took a second for his mind, still foggy from sleep and weariness fully to grasp the situation and the danger of discovery that faced him. From the way Betty was acting, he knew it wasn't Pollock or one of his men. Maybe it was Sullivan. But whoever it was, he must not be found in the house with Betty Erdman.

She had almost reached the door when the momentary paralysis left him. He yanked his gun from holster and lunged toward the bedroom door, screaming, "You let anybody in and I'll kill him!" She gave him a glance over her shoulder, smiling the way a woman does who is squeezing all she can from a sweet moment of vengeance, then reached for the door knob.

Chapter Nine

THE MORNING WAS WELL BEGUN as Jim left Bakeoven with Jess Darket. The town was aptly named, he thought. Even now, in early fall, the heat pressed down upon the valley from a heavy sun. There was no wind, just hot, dry air, trapped here between the high, streaked sandstone walls that flanked the valley.

For the first time the idea came to Jim that there was more to Troy's idea of irrigating the valley than he had thought.

Two things about the valley impressed Jim. One was the fact that, lying here below these high rims, the valley would not have severe winters and therefore the growing season would be relatively long. Probably it was one of the things that had appealed to the stockmen when they first saw the valley. The second thing that impressed Jim was the fertility of the red soil. The lush grass proved that.

As they rode west, the valley grew narrower and the lift of the land became more pronounced. Near noon they swung north, Jim motioning to a group of log buildings tucked in a small cove in the southwest corner of the valley, the first ridge of Telescope Mountain rising directly behind it.

"Whose place is that?" Jim asked.

"Pollock's," Darket answered. "He's has the biggest spread in the valley. There are just three outfits up here. Or I should say two, Pollock's and Matt's. Pollock took over the Manders place after the old man was killed." Darket jerked his head at a small log house and a few outbuildings to their left. "That's the Manders place yonder."

As they rode past the house, Jim noticed a thin column of smoke standing motionless above the chimney, mute evidence that Betty Erdman had been brought back.

Later Darket swung off the road to follow a short lane. "This is Matt's place. He must be around. That's his chestnut yonder in the corral."

If Jim had drawn a picture of what he guessed Matt Seery's ranch would be, he would not have missed it far. The house was a square stone structure that might have been built for a fort.

"I'll wait here," Darket proposed. "Matt's probably inside."

Jim hammered on the back door, but still he could not rouse anyone. Some uneasiness began working in him. Seery couldn't be far away or his horse wouldn't be in the corral. Jim glanced at the wood pile. A double-bitted ax had been driven into the chopping block, its edge rusty from a recent rain. Obviously no one had used it for weeks.

Jim returned to the hitch rack. "Can't raise anybody. Seery wouldn't walk off and leave his horse, would he?"

"He's no more of a walker than you or me as long as he's got a horse." Darket stroked his mustache, frowning, worry growing in him. "I don't like this, Sullivan. I never did cotton to the notion of him living so close to Pollock, but he's too stubborn to sell. I've told him a dozen times that he'd stumble onto something Pollock didn't want him to see and he'd get plugged."

"Why?"

"Might be anything. Pollock pretends to be a rancher, but he doesn't need toughs like Bert Knoll and Ace Rush to nurse cows. I figure he's an outlaw and I'm not the only one that thinks it." He shrugged. "But hell, thinking and proving are two different things."

Darket studied the barn and bunkhouse, pulling thoughtfully at his mustache. Suddenly he yanked his Winchester from the scabbard and stepping down, tied his horse.

"Maybe we'd better look around," Darket said. "Been a lot of talk that Pollock steals a few head of steers when he has a chance and drives them up here onto the mountain. If Matt stumbled onto something like that, Pollock would kill him."

"Why don't you and your neighbors take a look up there?"

"It's a big country and plenty of places to hide a small herd. Or hide a body, either. We aren't real brave, Sullivan, if you want an honest answer. We'd rather lose some cattle now and then than to get plugged."

"Better look in the barn," Jim said.

"Yeah," Darket agreed reluctantly. "I don't like the looks of things, Sullivan. That horse hasn't been ridden

for a spell. Matt may have come out last night and poked his nose right into a slug."

Jim strode toward the barn, Darket following slowly as if this was a chore he would rather avoid. He expected to find Seery's body, Jim thought, and maybe he was wishing his daughter had got herself married to Seery before this had happened.

Lifting the peg, Jim took hold of the hasp and pulled the door open. He caught the musty barn smell, and in that same instant saw the two saddled horses tied in the stalls. He swore softly, not understanding this, and felt Jess Darket's hand grip his arm.

"That's Pollock's sorrel," Darket whispered. "The bay belongs to Ace Rush. He was one of the hellions who was working you over last night."

Jim stood motionless, a step outside the door. This was crazy, he thought. If Pollock's and Rush's horses were here, the men had to be here, too. Probably they had been in the house, watching him and remaining silent, knowing that if they had cut him down, Darket would get away. Or, and this seemed more likely, Seery was in the house with Pollock and Rush, and they didn't want Darket to know.

"I don't savvy this," Jim said. "I'm going back to the house."

"I don't savvy, either," Darket said, "but you're not going to the house and get your head blowed off. We'll just mosey back to the horses and ride to town. We'll round up a posse, and if we find Matt's body, Pollock's a dead duck."

"You ride to town," Jim said. "I'm going into the house."

He swung around, leaving the barn door open. He had taken only one step when a man's voice called:

"Hoist 'em, gents. You ain't going into the house, Sullivan."

Chapter Ten

JIM WHEELED to face the man who stood in the barn door; he was looking into the muzzle of a cocked .45. The fellow was medium tall and stocky with red-flecked eyes that were blinking as he stared into the sharp sunlight.

The thought flashed through Jim's mind that the man had been in the gloomy interior of the barn and it would take a moment before his eyes became accustomed to the sunlight. Darket had turned, too, his rifle ready but he was afraid to move. The man repeated in an ominous tone, "Hoist 'em, gents."

"Where's Matt, Rush?" Darket demanded.

Rush's gaze was on Darket now. He started to say, "I don't know—" when Jim lunged straight at him.

It was a crazy gamble, but judging from what had happened last night, Jim knew he could expect no mercy from Pollock's crew. He had a choice of risking death now, or being sure of it later on. He had a chance. Not much, but a chance, and his gamble paid off.

Rush fired, the bullet slicing through Jim's coat along his right side. He felt the white-hot burn of the slug, but he wasn't badly hurt. Before Rush could fire again, Jim batted the gun barrel down with his left, his right swinging up in a short, vicious blow to Rush's chin.

Pollock's man gave ground, his head swiveled half around, his second bullet kicking up a geyser of red dust, and Jim hit him again in the face. Rush sprawled backward into the barn litter, and Jim jumped on him, knees hammering into the fellow's belly and bringing a yeasty groan out of him. He cracked him on one side of the face and then the other, vaguely aware that Darket was yelling, "Get off him, Sullivan, and I'll shoot him. Get off."

Jim staggered to his feet, calling to Darket, "Don't shoot." He was between Darket and Rush, and at the moment Darket had no chance to fire, but Jim was off balance and still laboring for breath. Rush, flat on his back, rammed a boot into Jim's stomach and knocked him flat. He fell dangerously close to the hind feet of the sorrel in one of the stalls. The horse kicked, the hoof missing Jim's head by a fraction of an inch. Jim rolled back across the runway, and when he regained his feet, he saw that Darket was standing over Rush, the rifle barrel lined on the man's belly.

"Don't shoot," Jim shouted. "He won't be any good to us dead."

"I'm going to let him have it," Darket screamed. "He's a damned back-shooting bastard. I'm going to kill him."

Jim got to him in time, twisting the rifle out of Darket's hands. He said, "Cool down. If Pollock's in the house, he'd plug us before we could get to the horses."

Darket stumbled back to lean against the barn wall, breathing hard, sanity returning to him. He stared bleakly at Jim who was covering Rush with the rifle and nodded, finally understanding. "I guess that's right," he muttered, "but if he don't tell us what happened to Matt, I'll kill him anyhow."

Rush sat up and wiped blood and sweat from his face. He had dropped his gun and he stared at it longingly, tempted to make a try for it. Jim said, "You reach for that iron and I'll plug you." Rush slowly got to his feet and glared at Jim, blood dribbling from his nose and spreading along his upper lip. He licked his lip and called Jim a name.

"Talk," Darket raged. "Where's Matt?"

Rush spit out a mouthful of blood. He said, "I don't know."

He retreated to the back wall and stood against it, eyes swinging from Jim to Darket and back to Jim. Darket picked up a pitchfork. He said, "I've never killed a man, but I will now if you don't talk."

"We ain't seen Seery," Rush muttered. "We've been waiting for him. Hell, you know as much about him as we do."

"Why in hell would you be waiting for him?" Darket demanded.

"Dunno. That's Pollock's business. He's in the house."

"They're waiting to kill him," Darket breathed. "There ought to be a rope around here, Sullivan. Let's swing this bastard."

"Does being a mayor make you judge and jury to boot?" Jim asked.

Darket threw the pitchfork down and swore. "Well, what will we do with him?"

"We'll let him go," Jim said finally, "if he can get Pollock out of the house."

RUSH, seeing a chance to stay alive, cried, "I'll get him out of the house if you'll give me your word we can go."

"You don't know my word's any good," Jim said.

"You kept that son-of-a-bitch from plugging me," Rush said. "I'll take your word."

Darket showed he didn't like it. He picked up the pitchfork again and leaned on the handle. "You're a fool, Sullivan. They'll double-cross us."

"They'll be dead if they try it," Jim said. "Darket, I've been thinking I'll take that marshal's star if you'll go to the county seat and get me a deputy's badge to go with it. A man needs both if he's going to do any good."

Bewildered by this unexpected switch on Jim's part, Darket said, "If Matt couldn't get a deputy—"

"Being mayor, you'll carry some weight," Jim urged. "Will you try it?"

"All right," Darket said, "but I don't savvy why you've changed your mind or why you're out here."

"It's too long a yarn to tell now," Jim said. "Go ahead, Rush. Get Pollock out of the house, but if you make a run for it, you'll get a slug in the back."

Rush walked toward the door, and when he reached it, he called, "I've got 'em, Nate." Stepping back, he moved into a stall. "He'll come." He remained there, staring malevolently at Darket.

"He's still afraid he's going to die," Jim said. "Looks like he's not ready."

"Is a man ever ready?" Darket cried passionately. "Was Bob Jarvis ready last night?"

"We'll get Bert Knoll for that," Jim said. "You know, Mayor, folks get just about what they deserve. You people have let Pollock run roughshod over you for years. Letting Jarvis die last night was part of this whole thing."

"Yeah," Darket muttered. "We'll all fry in hell because of it."

A moment later Pollock stood in the doorway, staring at the rifle in Jim's hand. Jim said, "So you're Nate Pollock."

"That's who I am, right enough." Pollock laughed, a great laugh that rumbled from deep inside him. "Yes sir, that's who I am."

He was a huge man in his early forties, gross and ungainly, his belly bulging over crossed cartridge belts. He was dirty with a week's stubble darkening his heavy face. Pale eyes, almost hidden behind great rolls of fat, were bold and challenging. He looked soft, but he wasn't. Jim judged there was more hard meat in his body than blubber.

"Drop your gun belts," Jim said.

Pollock's gaze flicked to Rush's face. "So you got 'em, did you, Ace? If I had a minute alone with you, I'd show—"

"You'll get it," Jim said. "I promised Rush you two would ride out of here. I just wanted you to know I'm Matt Seery's friend."

"Mister, that don't cut no ice with me," Pollock said. "Not out here. In town it would be different. You're a tough boy, redhead, real tough, so I reckon you're lying about being Seery's friend. He don't like tough hands."

"No, I'm not lying," Jim said. "I'm wondering how smart you are."

POLLOCK's deep laugh rumbled out of him, his belly shaking. He was enjoying this, Jim thought. Some men, like Seery, were deceptive and therefore hard to judge. Others, like Ace Rush, had a veneer of toughness that was easily stripped from them. But Pollock was neither. He was utterly vicious, Jim thought, without the redeeming qualities that could be found even in a man like Gabe Dykens. Now that he had seen him, Jim could understand how he had been able to intimidate the valley.

Pollock shoved big thumbs under his belt and rocked back on his heels. He asked as if amused, "Meaning what, Red?"

"I've got second sight," Jim answered. "If you don't get out of the valley while you can, you're a dead man."

"Well now, you've cut quite a swath since you hit this country. You beefed Perkins and you winged Knoll. From the looks of Ace's face, you worked him over. But me, I'm of bigger caliber." He tapped his barrel of a chest. "I'm Nate Pollock, bucko. I run the valley and I aim to stay."

"All right, you stay and I'll help bury you," Jim said. "I told you to unbuckle your gun belts."

Pollock obeyed, then walked into the stall that held his sorrel and backed him into the runway. Jim handed the rifle to Darket, saying, "Take it easy."

DARKET, watching Pollock and Rush ride down the lane to the county road, said, "You've got a soft spot, Sullivan. Some day it'll kill you."

Startled, Jim realized he'd had the same notion about Troy. You put two soft spots together and you have a fatal weakness, but Darket was wrong about him. This was a matter of judgment, not weakness.

"You head back to town," Jim said. "I'm going to visit Betty Erdman."

He saw Darket's face go dark and bitter, for the man was like many righteous people, unbending in his judgment of women like Betty Erdman. He said harshly, "A man has only one reason for visiting a wanton like her. You'll make Pollock hate you more than ever."

"That's impossible," Jim said, impatient now. "How long will it take you to go to the county seat and get back?"

"Three or four days. It's a long ride from here to Placerville where I catch the narrow gauge. Be a longer ride if I go over the Divide."

"Get moving," Jim said. "I want that deputy's badge."

"You're singing a different tune," Darket murmured. "If the Erdman woman has anything to do with—"

"She hasn't." Jim started toward the horses in front of the house. When Darket caught up with him, Jim added, "I aim to run Pollock's bunch out of the valley. I need to be deputy to make it legal."

They mounted, Darket saying nothing until they had ridden down the lane. Then he said, "I'm taking the long way back to town so I won't go past Pollock's ranch. You'd better come with me."

"I'll be along after while."

Darket looked at him closely, then rode away.

As Jim dismounted in front of the Manders house and tied, he hesitated, seeing no sign of life around the place except the smoke that rose from the chimney. There was still no wind; the air was oven-hot, smelling of dust and the sage that grew tall enough behind the house to hide a man on horseback. He had never seen sagebrush grow to such tree-like proportions, and he was struck by further proof of the fertility of this red soil.

He walked up the path, thinking that Seery wouldn't like this, but it seemed to be the only thing he could do. Now that he was here, he was determined to have a look at the reservoir site, and Seery could show him and keep Pollock's hardcase crew off his neck.

He knocked and the door swung open at once. Betty Erdman stood there, her slender body taut with expectancy, smiling as if she had a secret reason for being amused. She said, "Come in, Mr. Sullivan," her voice quite loud, and stepped back so she was out of the doorway.

Jim hesitated again, vaguely warned by the cool expression of anticipation on the girl's face; then, disregarding the warning prickle that ran along his spine, he stepped into the house. He heard Matt Seery scream an oath at him; he wheeled toward the sound of the voice, and he saw Seery standing there, completely naked, a gun in his hand.

He needed only this glance to tell him that Seery was out of his head with fear or rage, or both. He grabbed for his .45, but before it cleared leather, Betty was clinging to his arm, crying, "No, no."

He could not shake her loose. He saw Seery's gun come up; he saw the hideous expression of death on the

man's pale face. He struggled to free himself of the girl's tenacious grip, and time seemed to stop and become eternity while he waited to die.

Chapter Eleven

SEERY'S LONG WHITE ARM straightened in front of him, the gun pointed at Jim's chest; he pulled the trigger, but there was no explosion—just the click of the hammer dropping on an empty. Seery looked at the gun, blinking, befuddled by its failure.

"I took the loads out of your gun last night," the girl said. "I had a gun. I was going to kill you myself today, but I saw Sullivan coming. I—I—"

She began to cry. Releasing her grip on Jim's arm, she ran into the kitchen and slammed the door. Jim drew his gun and walked slowly toward Seery, who for the moment seemed incapable of either speech or movement. Frenzy had driven him to the point of murdering Jim, but the moment was gone and he began to tremble.

"You're out of your head, mister," Jim said. "I figured you were here, and when I come in to find out why you weren't in the bank, you try to kill me. Are we making a deal or not?"

Seery threw his gun across the room, swearing bitterly. "You don't understand. That girl—"

"No, I don't understand, for a fact," Jim broke in. "I met your fiancée last night and it sure as hell wasn't Betty Erdman."

"Put your gun up," Seery said wearily and walked into the bedroom. "There won't be any more trouble."

Jim stood in the doorway, a lean shoulder against the jamb. Seery sat on the edge of the bed and held his head, completely humiliated. Jim, watching him through this long, taut moment of silence, sensed that Seery would always hate him for what had just happened. Inadvertently he had lost any chance of accomplishing what Troy had sent him here to do, but he would continue to try, at least until Troy reached Bakeoven.

Seery stirred and rubbed his face with both hands. He began to dress, avoiding Jim's eyes. He said, "I'm not myself this morning, Sullivan. I hope you'll overlook what happened. It was just that I—I didn't expect you." He buttoned his shirt, his fingers slow and awkward. "I haven't had time to think about your proposition. Too many things have happened since I saw you."

"Mostly that you found out Betty tried to leave the valley, wasn't it?"

Seery nodded. "I owe you an explanation, although I realize no amount of explaining will satisfy you. It's true I am engaged to Lily Darket. She's the only girl in the valley my mother considers eligible. If I mentioned Betty, I'd be disinherited. I told you last night that my ranch is all I own personally."

Seery pulled on his pants. Jim, continuing to watch him, thought of what Troy had said about the man. It didn't make sense. Pollock, yes, but not Seery, yet Seery was the one who worried Troy. She had said Pollock could be handled, but Seery would be tough. How could Troy, who knew men so well, be as wrong as she had been with Matt Seery?

"For years I've been two men," Seery continued, his face as lifeless as putty. "I've been the banker, a generous one. I've stood for something in this valley, the same things my mother stood for. Call it respectability if you want to, although the word is a lie. My other life has been here. I've loved Betty for a long time. I've done a great many things for her, and she repaid me by running away with the Jarvis boy. I told you you wouldn't understand. It doesn't make any difference except that you know something about me no one else knows. If you tell, you will not be believed."

Seery would not be talking this way if Jim had not caught him in the house with Betty Erdman. Perhaps he was trying to justify himself in the eyes of a stranger, or perhaps he was trying to keep the road open to make the bargain Jim had offered last night. And there was a third possibility. Maybe Seery was hoping to buy Jim's silence.

Pollock was a huge man in his early forties, gross and ungainly but tough. Some men, like Seery, were deceptive. Others, like Rush, had only a veneer of toughness. But Pollock was neither. He was utterly vicious, without even the redeeming qualities of a Gabe Dykens.

"I'm no blabber-mouth," Jim said sharply. "Besides, if I ruined your reputation, you'd be no help to me."

Seery sat down on the bed and tugged on his boots.

"Blackmail, isn't it? I play your game, but you call the turn. If I refuse, you tell folks I've been keeping Betty."

"Blackmail's a dirty word," Jim said. "Let's say I want you for a partner."

Seery rose and put on his coat. "Why did you come here?"

"To get you to take me to the reservoir site the Manders girl said she owned. You were supposed to meet me at the bank."

"I had to come out here," Seery muttered and started toward the door. "Let's see if she's got breakfast ready."

"I've got some things to tell you first," Jim said. "One is you've got to get Pollock off my neck."

MATT SEERY was genuinely surprised. "You mean because you shot Perkins and wounded Knoll?"

"That's part of it." Jim told him about the beating he'd taken the night before and his fight with Ace Rush. He finished with, "I told Pollock to get out of the country. One thing is sure, Seery. We can't fetch settlers to a valley that's buffaloed by a hardcase like Nate Pollock."

"I'll talk to him," Seery said.

"And another thing. If we go into this deal, you've got to run the bank, not your mother. Judging by last night, I'd say you can't call your soul your own."

Seery hesitated, then said, "I think that can be fixed."

They ate hastily and without further discussion, then nodded to Betty and went outside.

Jim mounted and rode slowly toward Seery's ranch, Seery striding along the road in front of him. What a hell of a twist this was, Jim thought, and wished Troy was here. What would she do with Betty when she found the girl here?

He reined up in the shade of the cottonwoods in front of Seery's house, and watched Seery open the corral gate and heard him whistle. The chestnut lifted his head and whinnied and came trotting to Seery who patted his neck. Seery made no effort to hide the pleasure he felt as the horse nuzzled him.

A strange man, this Matt Seery. Jim remembered how he had caressed the kitten the night before. He was hungry for love the same as any man, and perhaps there had been a time when he and Betty had found that love in each other.

Seery saddled and mounted, motioning to Jim who left the patch of shade and rode into the glaring sunlight. They angled southwest toward the creek. A quarter of a mile from the house Seery said, "If you're an engineer, you can start figuring on how a ditch would have to go. I've had this same idea myself, but I lacked the capital, so it never got any farther than the idea."

"The bank could—"

"My mother's bank," Seery reminded him. "I take orders the same as any man. We couldn't fool her by using the bank to gain possession of the patented land. That's the weakness of your scheme."

It was a weakness in Troy's plan she could not have foreseen because she had not understood the relationship between Matt Seery and his mother. Nothing could come from the scheme and Seery undoubtedly realized that. Still, he had not said so. He must have an angle of his own.

They swung directly west, following a line of cedar posts that once had formed the fence between Seery's and Manders' ranches, but the wire had been removed long ago. They began to climb through the aspens, the leaves of which were starting to turn gold.

Half an hour later they reached the top of the ridge and threaded their way down a sharp, rocky cliff and presently reached a small park that was a sort of bowl set here on the mountain slope.

"This is it." Seery pointed at the stream that meandered across the park and disappeared down a narrow, rock-choked gorge. "Wouldn't take a big dam."

"How good is the rock? A dam's no good if the sides leak."

SEERY hipped around in the saddle and gave him a searching stare. "How much do you know about the Manders girl and her father?"

Suspicion was plain to read in the banker's pale face. Jim said, "I told you last night. I talked to her in No Man's Land. She thought I was a drifter—which I was at the time, just poking around. I don't know a damn thing for sure except that she was figuring on coming back. I ain't even sure of that. Just talk, maybe."

"How much would you pay?"

"No more than I have to. Looks like two ditches, one on each side of the valley. Take a lot of money."

"Last night I heard some big talk about a million dollars."

Jim gave him a wry grin. "A banker ought to know that a millionaire got to be a millionaire by shaving a nickel off every dime. Too much construction expense will stop the deal before it starts."

They swung around and put their horses up the steep grade. They stopped on top to let their horses blow, Jim looking westward at the mountain that lifted its massive bulk toward the sky. He said, "You didn't answer my question about the rock."

"Old man Manders said it was good," Seery said. "I think he knew. He was a dreamer, but he was smart, too."

"He made some tests?"

Seery nodded. "Wanted this to be a community enterprise with all hands helping to build the dam and ditch and share the water." Seery shrugged. "He got killed before he could get it started."

They rode through the cool shade of the aspens and came again in the glare of the sun. Jim said carefully, "I think I could make a tentative offer of fifty thousand for the Manders ranch if we get a sound title."

"I can arrange it," Seery said without explaining what he had in mind.

There was no more talk as they turned along the county road toward the Manders house. As they passed it, Seery stared straight ahead. Jim wondered what would happen to Betty, and if Seery would still want her. She didn't like the life she had now, but if Seery turned her over to Pollock, she would have an infinitely worse one.

The road made a turn at Pollock's lane, and vague uneasiness nagged Jim as he remembered Jess Darket had been afraid to go to town this way. Jim had far more to fear than Darket, for what had started in town would not be ended until Pollock and Rush and Knoll were dead, or Jim was.

One moment there was no sound except the thud of hoofs against the dust-covered surface of the road; the next moment the crack of rifles broke apart the stillness and the air was alive with bullets, one of them tugging at Jim's hat.

Cursing, Seery wheeled his horse. He yelled, "Ride, you fool! I'll stop it if I can."

Jim cracked steel to his roan, bending low over the saddle. Glancing back, he saw Seery ride toward Pollock's ranch, waving at them to stop firing. There was no more shooting, but Jim did not pull his horse down until he was out of rifle range. He had made a mistake about Matt Seery. He had discounted the man's courage. It took guts to ride directly into the face of that rifle-fire. Pollock might be his friend, but a friend like that was as dependable as a pet cougar.

Chapter Twelve

MATT SEERY was in a cold rage when he reined up in front of Pollock's ranch house and swung down. One of the bullets had come alarmingly close, close enough to slice a notch in the brim of his Stetson.

Pollock stood in the doorway, a rifle held in the crook of his arm, amusement showing on his moonlike face. Seery shouted, "What the hell do you mean, shooting at us like that? You might have hit me."

Pollock's great belly shook with a burst of laughter. "Now, Mr. Seery, you don't doubt our shooting talents, do you?"

Seery yanked off his hat and pointed at the bullet notch. "What does that look like?"

"Like good shooting, Mr. Seery. Real good shooting."

Seery put his hat on, taken aback by Pollock's bald effrontery. More than once during the last year he'd had an uneasy feeling that his control over Pollock was not as complete as it had been, that Pollock was making sly threats just as he had done now. But Seery put it out of his mind; there seemed to be no reason for Pollock to become rebellious.

"I'd rather think it was bad shooting," Seery said.

His anger died in him. He found it hard to remain angry with Pollock. The man was good-natured most of the time, and always able to laugh whether he was telling an obscene joke or cracking a man's neck with his hands. More than that, he had done everything Seery required of him, even to keeping an eye on Betty Erdman, seeing she had plenty of grub, and protecting Seery's reputation by bragging in the Bakeoven saloon that he bedded down twice a week with Betty and you couldn't find a better sleeping partner in any of the fancy houses in Denver.

Pollock was slow stepping out of the doorway, the laughter leaving his face. Again the vague feeling of uneasiness began working along Seery's spine. Then Pollock moved aside, saying, "Come in, Mr. Seery," and Seery suspected his verbal contract with this outlaw pack was about to be canceled.

Bert Knoll stood by the window, left arm in a sling. He asked sourly, "How'd you get hooked up with that *hombre*?"

Seery took a moment to light his pipe before he answered. He sensed the bitterness of their temper. Pollock, who remained standing by the door, gave him a narrow-eyed, wicked stare, his face stripped of the good nature which was usually there when he was with Seery.

Ace Rush sat on a bench across the room from Seery, his face showing the beating Jim Sullivan had given him. A Mexican boy, Rafael Tafoya, stood leaning against the wall a few feet from Rush.

"Sullivan came to Bakeoven to see me," Seery said. "He's an engineer representing a million dollars of Eastern capital. He's interested in a reservoir site, and I showed him the one on the Manders property this afternoon."

"He's a damned liar," Knoll flung at Seery. "He's a gunslinger. No engineer could throw lead like he did last night."

Seery shook his head. "He's carrying more gold on him than a hired gunhand would have, and he doesn't talk like a fiddle-footed tough. I think he's on the level."

"He's a dead man," Knoll said in a low tone. "I don't care whether he's on the level or not, he's a dead man."

"I know how you feel," Seery said, "but you can wait a few days. He said he'd give fifty thousand for the Manders place. Fifty thousand is worth waiting for."

"How are you going to get title to the Manders place?" Pollock asked.

"I can rig a deed that will look good," Seery said. "Good enough to make him send for his money anyhow. That's as far as it needs to go, if you'll give me a hand. We'll see it never gets to Bakeoven."

"Fifty thousand is ten times what a man would pay for any spread in the valley," Pollock said. "A smart man like you ought to see that."

"Sure it's too much," Seery agreed, "but Sullivan knows it holds the only reservoir site in the valley. And I'm familiar enough with Eastern investors to be certain that if I can convince Sullivan a fortune can be made in this valley, he'll pay that figure."

Pollock shrugged. "All right, if you're so damned certain, we'll wait, but there's another thing we ain't waiting on. You're getting rid of the Erdman girl. She ain't getting hold of no more of my boys like she done Bob Jarvis."

Seery rose and dropped his pipe into his pocket. This was the first time Pollock had ever tried to give him an order. Now, meeting the big man's cold stare, Seery realized that his feeling of impending trouble which had been vague and intangible was taking definite shape. But it would not do to show any weakness.

"I'll make some other arrangement as soon as I can." Seery moved to the door. "By the way, Nate, my mother refuses to let me handle your business as I have in the past. You'll have to make a payment on your notes this fall."

It was a lie. His mother had never been concerned about Pollock's growing debt to the bank. At least she had never indicated that she was, although Seery suspected that the time would come when she'd use that debt to force Pollock out of the valley. Seery said it simply to remind Pollock that he held the upper hand, but it didn't work.

Pollock's great laugh rolled out of him. He said, "I don't reckon I will, Mr. Seery. You're going to tear those notes up."

Shocked, Seery said, "You know I can't do that. You owe the bank more than twenty thousand."

"I figure you will." Pollock motioned to the chair where Seery had been sitting. "Put your butt down there again, Mr. Seery. Rafe fetched in some news. If you ain't sitting down when you hear it, you'll fall down."

Seery obeyed, automatically reaching for his pipe. The news was bad, or Pollock wouldn't be talking this way. He said, "I'm listening, but nothing can change the fact that you owe the bank twenty thousand dollars."

"Oh, hell!" Knoll shouted, exasperated. "Tell him, Nate; I want to see his face."

"I'll tell him," Pollock said harshly. "My boys have finished roundup and they'll have the beef herd in the valley in a couple of days. I sent Rafe to your cow camp to see if your boys could throw your herd in with ours after we cross the river. Tell him what you found, Rafe."

"You have no beef herd, Señor Seery," Tafoya said. "The pasture gate was down and the steers were gone. Your cabin was burned." He shuddered, thinking about what he had found. "I kicked around in the ashes. Three skulls. Your boys must have been burned alive."

The pipe fell out of Seery's mouth. He caught it before it fell to the floor. He stared at the young Mexican and he began to tremble. A thing like that could not have happened to him. But he could not doubt Tafoya.

"Your steers are in New Mexico by now," Pollock said. "When we get back from Placerville, I'll send Rafe and a couple of the boys to round up your cows and young stuff, providing you burn them notes. If you think you can manage without us, go right ahead."

"I'll see," Seery whispered. "I'll see." He rose and walked out of the house, lurching like a drunken man. He mounted, knowing Pollock had him. It would be impossible to get any of the small cowmen to ride for him. By the time the pool herd had been shipped and they had driven their she stuff down to the valley, snow would be two feet deep on Starlight Mesa.

He saw that Pollock had followed him out of the house. He asked, "What's happened, Nate? We've always got along, always worked together. But today—"

His voice trailed off. Pollock might have been a stranger, his fat face showing none of the good nature which had always dominated him when Seery was with him. Contempt was there to be read in his pale eyes, in the hard smile on his meaty lips.

"I'll tell you what's happened," Pollock said. "You've cracked the whip for a long time. Now it's my turn to crack it. I'm damned if I'm gonna keep on covering up for you. When the Erdman girl ran off, she made a fool out of me, not you. That's why I had to send the boys after her and it's why I lost Perkins."

"We've got no cause to quarrel, Nate," Seery said, making his tone as friendly as he could. "We still need each other."

"The hell we do," Pollock snarled. "I've got my belly full of your fancy-Dan ways. Your granite bank building and your fine house won't do you no good with me. If you want my help on anything, you'll burn those notes. Savvy?"

"I've helped you as much as you've helped me," Seery said, anger rising in him at the man's blind obstinacy. "If it wasn't for me, there'd be a deputy in the valley right now. You'd better think that over before you break up our partnership."

He wheeled his chestnut and galloped out of the yard. Later he pulled the horse down to a walk. He needed time to think and he had no reason to hurry. In one way he was trapped because he was certain his mother would kick him out of his job and his home if she knew about his life with Betty and his dealings with Pollock. Her good name was more important to her than her son.

But maybe it didn't make any difference. He was sick of the sanctimonious life he lived in town. That pointed to a simple way out of the whole thing. He had more than ten thousand dollars deposited in a bank in the county seat. He could take Betty out of the valley and marry her and use his money to get a start somewhere else. Marriage! Respectability! Why in hell did they mean so much to a woman?

The sun was down and twilight had filled the valley with its thin uncertainty by the time he reached town. He went into the house through the back door, walking softly. He was hungry, but he didn't want his mother to know he was here. He heard voices from the parlor. Probably his mother and Lily. If Lily came drooling to him tonight, he'd kick her in the teeth.

He went into his study and shut the door. He lighted a lamp, then heard his door open and swung around. Lily stood there, staring at him, hungry for his love. He swore at her. He said, "Get out!"

She shrank back, shocked by his words and his tone. She whispered, "What have you done to Daddy?"

"Nothing. Get out."

"Not until I know what's going on." She tipped her head back, filled with defiance that was totally unlike her. "Daddy almost rode a horse to death getting to town. He took another horse and started for the county seat. He said he was going after a deputy's badge for that fellow Sullivan who was here last night. Why, Matt?"

Seery sat down at his desk, suddenly tired. The last thing he wanted was a deputy in the valley. Pollock? He laughed as he thought what this might mean. Nate Pollock would find out how much he needed Matt Seery!

"I guess Sullivan will make a good deputy, but I don't know any more than you do about what's going on." He motioned to the door. "Go on now. Leave me alone."

When she didn't move, he got up and pushed her into the hall and closed and locked the door. He heard her call, "Mother Seery, Mother Seery." A moment later his mother pounded on the door, her voice ominous as she said, "Open the door, Matthew." He said nothing and presently they went away.

He began pacing around the room, considering what he would do after he left the valley. Ten thousand wasn't much money. He could forge a deed to the Manders place that might temporarily fool Sullivan. He'd get the fifty thousand. No need to cut Pollock in on the deal. Then he'd ride out with Betty and he'd have enough to live on.

He shook his fist at his father's picture, suddenly filled with crazy fury. "You God-damned old pirate," Seery shouted. "I'll make a piker out of you, a tinhorn piker."

He sat down at his desk, turning his thoughts to Sullivan. There was an ironic sort of justice in the idea of Sullivan pinning on a star and going after Pollock. But Seery felt no real concern either way. He couldn't wait. He had no doubt about what would happen if he succeeded in swindling Sullivan. He'd have to kill him. It would take a little finesse, but it could be done with little real danger to a man with Matt Seery's reputation.

Chapter Thirteen

By the time Jim reached town after being fired at by Pollock's crew, he had made up his mind that Troy must be told what had happened. He shouldn't have any trouble finding her camp. She would not be more than a few miles east of the river.

He had supper in the hotel dining-room, and going to Darket's livery stable, rented a horse. His roan needed rest and there was no way of foreseeing what would happen tomorrow. It was dark when he left town, riding west and then swinging south and finally east, completing a wide half-circle by the time he reached the end of the bridge, a precaution he took on the off chance he was being watched.

Crossing the bridge, he rode east, thinking about what he would say to Troy. He had no illusions about her. The chances were he was wasting his time. She was almost home now; she would be anticipating the pleasure that would come from bringing Matt Seery to his knees.

He had no respect for either Pollock or Seery; he had no kindly feeling of any kind, but he did for Troy and she was wrong. He had told her that on the sandy beach of the Dolores and he'd tell her again. That was all he could do. He would fail, but he was compelled to try.

The reason was not hard to find. He loved her, a startling admission to make to himself. He had been avoiding it for months, telling himself he was curious about why she was the kind of woman she was. Perhaps he should have told her, but it would probably not have made any difference to her. Maybe it wouldn't now.

The camp was close to the base of the south wall, the low-burning campfire a pinpoint of light in the darkness. The herd was bedded down along the creek to the north. All the men except the night hawks were asleep, but as Jim dismounted, he saw that Troy was still up, sitting beside the fire, her arms hugging her strong thighs as she stared at the flames. If she heard him ride up, she paid no attention, probably thinking it was one of the night hawks riding in.

He called, "Troy."

She jumped up and swung toward him, crying, "Jim!" She ran to him, and as she made the turn from the fire, he saw she was wearing a riding-skirt, the first time he had ever seen her when she wasn't wearing a pair of men's pants.

She came to him, asking anxiously, "Anything wrong, Jim?"

"Enough, but that isn't what brought me. I wanted to talk to you."

He sensed that she didn't approve of his coming, but she didn't scold him. She only said, "Why take this risk if you didn't have to?"

"No risk," he said. "I wasn't followed. Nobody in the valley will know I'm hooked up with you."

"All right," she said. "Talk."

That was typical of her, pointedly direct with no hint of the roundabout

approach that most women would have taken. "I'm in no hurry," he said, and taking her arm, swung her toward the cliff that was a black, scowling barrier below the star-lighted sky. "I've got considerable to say."

She was docile enough, letting him lead her to the jumbled pile of boulders at the base of the cliff. She sat down and waited for him to get his talking done, her knees pulled up under her chin, her arms around her thighs in much the same way she had been sitting beside the fire.

The light was too thin to make out the expression on her face, but he felt her cool detachment. He decided he had no right to expect anything else. This was the Troy Manders he had known and puzzled over; it was not the Troy Manders who had briefly permitted herself the luxury of being a woman while they had been alone along the river.

"What the hell were you trying to do to me the other night?" he burst out.

"I could ask the same question. What were you trying to do to me?"

He sat down beside her. So he had fumbled it the other night. After all these years of being so self-sufficient, she had sincerely wanted to feel a man's strength and dominance.

"Let it go," he said. "I came to tell you what's been going on."

He told her everything except the threat Gabe Dykens had made, and when he was done, she asked, "Why did you butt into the Jarvis boy's trouble?"

"I wasn't going to let Bert Knoll have my bath," he said, angry at her for asking a question that should never have been asked.

"You still could have stayed out of the Jarvis business," she said. "You have a fault I didn't know you had. I guess I didn't know there were any men left in the world like you."

"What are you talking about?"

"When I was a girl, I read about knights and chivalry and all that. My dad had a lot of history books. Poetry, too. It was natural enough, I guess, that I'd dream of knights in shining armor who defended the weak. That's what you think you are, but you're just being stupid. It's a dirty, stinking world, Jim, and you can't change it."

"I'm not going to try to change it, but the world's not as dirty and stinking as you think. You've been mired down in the mud so long hating Seery and Pollock that you can't smell anything but the stink."

That was what he had come here to say. He hit her with the words, brutally, wanting only to make her see that there was another way of looking at life if she'd only open her eyes.

"You sound as if you'd got religion," she said mockingly.

He shrugged.

"I didn't get it from you. Or Seery or Pollock. I guess young Jarvis getting plugged caught up with me. Or maybe it was talking to Jess Darket and having him tell me what your neighbors thought of your dad. Anyhow, I told you before you were wrong and I'm saying it again."

She was silent. He could not tell whether he had made her angry; he could not even tell what she was thinking. He waited, expecting an explosion, but it didn't come. Presently, her voice quite low, "I remember Darket. And his girl, who was just a child when I left. I remember the Erdmans, too. A shiftless lot with a greasy-sack spread on the river. It's my guess she's had a better life than she deserved."

He swore. "You're the stupid one, Troy. She's not much good, but—"

"Don't cuss me, Mr. Sullivan," she flared, "or I'll use some brand-new words you never—"

"All right, all right. You said I sounded as if I had religion. If I have, I've had it for a long time. I was hunting for something when I left home and I've been hunting for it ever since. I've stayed with you for one year, two months—"

"To figure out what was the matter with me," she cried. "Well, maybe you found out or maybe you didn't, but one thing's sure. I won't make a fool out of myself again when I'm around you. Let's forget what happened the other night."

She had been thinking of it ever since, he thought. He had missed the one chance he'd had to change her life and his. He said bitterly, "Maybe you can forget it, but I can't. I'm in love with you. I didn't know it before. Seems like it hit me all of a sudden. Maybe that's the way it works. All I know is that I love you enough to try to keep you from killing something in you that's fine and decent."

He heard her take a long breath, heard her whisper, "Jim, say that again. That you love me."

"I love you. I guess you've been figuring me for the world's biggest sucker and maybe I am, but so help me, I love you."

"The world's biggest— Jim, Jim!"

She jumped up and started running toward the campfire. He caught her before she'd gone ten feet and swung her around to face him. "I'm not done talking and you're not done listening," he said. "I've seen what hate does to people. It'll destroy you, burn you out. You're not an animal. You're a human being with a choice to make."

She didn't move for a long moment. He looked at her upturned face, a vague blur in the darkness, and he sensed the torment that was in her.

"It's easy for you to talk," she said finally. "I was there when my father died. I held his head in my lap. I can't change now, Jim."

"You can change. It's all right to fight the things that are wrong, and Pollock and Seery are wrong. We'll fight them, but in the long run the important thing is what you're trying to do. If revenge is all of it, then I say it'll destroy you and me and maybe a lot of other people, too."

"You want me to turn around and go back to No Man's Land. That it, Jim?"

"Of course not. Drive into Bakeoven in the morning like you figured on doing. Go on to your place. Watch out for Pollock. He may take a crack at you as soon as he finds out what's happening."

"Then what's all this talk—"

"You haven't heard me," he said bitterly. "I'll say it over. The important thing is what you're trying to do. Your dad wanted to build a dam and have everybody share the water. He wasn't trying to beat anybody out of anything or even make a lot of money. He just wanted to help his neighbors. Isn't that right?"

"Yes, that's right," she said slowly. "I had almost forgotten."

"You'll find Betty Erdman in your house. Why don't you give her a chance to be something different than what Seery has made her, instead of saying she got what she deserved?"

"Man, man," Troy breathed, "you don't know what you're asking."

"I know, all right. Every tongue in the valley will wag. It'll take courage—"

"Whatever my faults are, Jim," she said, "being a coward isn't one of them."

"I know that," he said.

He put his arms around her and forced her to come to him. He kissed her, but it was not the same as it had been two nights ago. There was no life in her, no response. She submitted. That was all. He swung away from her and strode to his horse. When he mounted and rode away, he knew she was still standing there where he had left her.

Chapter Fourteen

Jim slept longer than he intended to the following morning, and even after he woke, he lay there, exhausted. It had been late when he'd stabled the livery horse and stumbled up the hotel stairs to his room, but it wasn't lack of sleep that had worn him out. It was the uncertainty, the bitter knowl-

edge that he still was not sure what Troy would do, or what she was thinking and feeling.

He turned his head, thinking about this thing that had happened to him. It was like being hit on the head. No sense to it. But maybe there was never any sense to being in love. He'd known men to do crazy things because they were in love and he'd thought they were loco. A man could always find a woman, some sort of woman. Now he knew how it was. Just any woman wouldn't do.

He sat up on the edge of the bed and rubbed his face again. Hell, she'd been with men for nine years, depriving herself of love because of her crazy obsession for revenge. Then he remembered she had made him repeat that he loved her. By wanting to hear the words again, Troy had proved she was all woman. Like a fool, he'd said she was figuring him for the world's biggest sucker. After that nothing had been right.

He got up and dressed. He poured water from the gaudy, hand-painted pitcher into the white bowl and washed. This business of sucking Seery into the irrigation project seemed foolish, but he'd go along with Troy this morning because she expected it. After that? He just didn't know.

Buckling his gun belt around him, he thought that Troy had depended on her own strength so long she would never admit she needed help beyond what any man she hired would give her. But she was bucking a stacked deck. He couldn't walk out on her now. Maybe he never would.

He had breakfast in the hotel dining-room, then went over to the bank. The weather had changed. Ugly clouds obscured the triple peaks of Telescope Mountain. There was no wind; the air was heavy and damp.

Jim found Seery at his desk. When the banker saw Jim come in, he rose, calling, "Good morning, Sullivan," and motioned for him to come through the gate at the end of the counter.

The banty with the nutcracker face glared at Jim. He said harshly, "This man came in yesterday asking for you. He was rude. He should—"

"Shut up," Seery snapped. As Jim came to his desk, he said apologetically, "You'll have to overlook that, Sullivan. He expects too much of some people and not enough of others."

"I shall inform your mother—" the teller began.

Seery wheeled and slapped him across the face. "You inform my mother of too many things, Vance." He turned to Jim. "We'll go into my private office to talk."

As Jim followed Seery into the back room, he saw the bright glitter of hate in the little man's eyes as he stared at Seery's back. It was part of the pattern, Jim thought. The banty was Mrs. Seery's man, placed here to watch her son.

Jim dropped into a chair as Seery closed the door, thinking that Troy's coming would break this open. Seery moved past Jim and sat down behind his desk. For some reason he was uneasy, his face paler than usual. His hair was disheveled and he looked as if he'd slept in his clothes.

"Before we start talking," Seery said, "keep in mind that I saved your life yesterday. I expect some return for a favor like that."

Jim rolled a smoke, not sure what Seery had in mind. He said, "I know a lot of things about you, Seery, more than anyone else in Bakeoven. I'm giving you good return for your favor by keeping my mouth shut."

Seery drew his meerschaum pipe from his pocket, filled it, and lighted it. "That's one way to look at it, but don't discount one fact. The Seerys have run this valley from the day my father came here. You can't blackmail me into anything if that's what's in your mind. Don't try."

"You're bragging." Shrugging, Jim fished a match out of his vest pocket. "But I didn't come in here to have a ruckus with you. Besides, it isn't important."

"What is?"

"I offered you a proposition."

"And I've been thinking about it." Seery leaned back in his swivel chair, long, white fingers clutching the arms. "You see how it is. I told you my mother owns the bank. Vance Frane is a tattler. It must be obvious that we can't work along the lines you suggested."

"Maybe you've got another line to suggest."

"I have," Seery said. "I lied about the Manders girl owning her father's place. I had my reasons which I won't go into. The property belongs to me and I'll sell for the fifty thousand you offered. The bank, of course, will have no part of your operation."

Jim canted his chair back against the wall, holding his face rigid against the shock that Seery's words gave him. It seemed incredible that he would lie so blandly.

"As I outlined my proposition," Jim said carefully, "the co-operation of the bank was part of the deal."

"It's impossible. My mother is an honest woman, Sullivan, not because she has any great sense of integrity, but because it pleases her vanity to have people believe in her."

Jim thought, *You son-of-a-bitch! Troy had you pegged right.*

"If you want the property," Seery went on, "you'll have to put up the money in cash. How long will it take you to get it?"

A fist hammered on the door. Irritated by the interruption, Seery rose and opened the door. Vance Frane said, "There's a woman out here who insists on seeing you."

"I'm busy—"

"Not too busy to see me." Troy shoved Frane aside and motioned with her gun. "Back up, Seery."

Seery retreated, shouting, "This is a hold-up?"

Troy came in and slammed the door shut. "No." Then she saw Jim and frowned. "So you beat me here."

She was wearing a brown blouse and a dark green riding-skirt. Her Stetson dangled down her back from the chin strap; her gun belt was buckled around her waist. Jim rose, not understanding this. She had intended to make a show, to drive her herd down Bakeoven's Main Street and shout threats at Matt Seery. But something had changed her mind.

Jim rose. "Looks like I did, for a fact, ma'am. A funny thing just happened. Seery says he owns your place, but when I talked to you, you claimed you still had it. Who's lying?"

"He is, but it doesn't make any difference," Troy asserted. "The Triangle M is not for sale." She nodded at Seery. "Remember me?"

He had backed across the room and stood with his shoulderblades pressed against the opposite wall, his eyes on the gun in Troy's hand. He had not recognized her, Jim thought, and that was natural enough. She had been a girl when she'd left, young enough for nine years to change her. Then, suddenly, recognition came to Seery.

"You're Troy Manders," Seery said hoarsely. "Why did you come back?"

Troy shook her head, eyes still fixed on Seery's face. "When I left, I planned to come back. You and Pollock murdered my father. You were there with Pollock's bunch, but I know what the law is in this valley when it concerns the Seerys. That's why I came in to let you know I'm back. I won't look to the law to punish you. I'll do it myself."

Jim, watching Seery, realized that the man might be weak on some issues such as opposing his mother, but he had his share of courage. He had been startled by Troy's forcing her way into this room with a gun in her hand, but he straightened now, eyeing her, and he was not afraid.

"You're moving back onto your ranch," Seery said. "That it?"

"That's it. My boys are driving a herd up the valley now. I have a good crew, Seery, good enough to take care of you and Pollock."

"Your accusation that I helped murder your father is too stupid to deny," Seery said, "but now I understand something that has been puzzling me. My beef herd had been gathered on Starlight Mesa and it would have been driven into the valley today if someone hadn't stolen it and murdered my men. That would be some of your bunch. Sullivan here tells me you had a ranch in No Man's Land. We all know that's an outlaw hangout. It seems a fair guess that you brought a wolf pack with you."

Troy was jolted by that and she showed it. She leaned against the door, breathing hard, her gun at her side. To Jim it was no surprise. The Dykens boys might have had a fight with Seery's crew, or Gabe might have disregarded Troy's orders and had them dry-gulched. Or Moloch might have done it himself. In any case, she could not keep the Dykens boys on her payroll if she stayed in Rampart Valley.

"I might have sent someone here to kill you or Pollock," Troy said, "but I wouldn't have your men killed. This is a warning, Seery. Stay off the Triangle M."

She holstered her gun, opened the door, and stalked out. Seery crossed the room and closed the door. He turned back to Jim, giving him a tight grin. "You knew all the time she was coming back. You were running some kind of a sandy on me. You're a crook, Sullivan."

Jim's cigarette had gone cold in his mouth. He threw the stub on the floor, laughing silently. "That's the funniest thing I ever heard, one crook calling another man a crook."

"Yes, it's funny." Seery sat down behind his desk. "I don't savvy your game."

"I don't savvy yours, either, claiming that you owned the Manders property."

"It was quite simple. I need money. I planned to forge a deed. I had no idea how smart you were about things like that, but I thought I could fool you long enough to get my hands on your fifty thousand."

"Well, you're being honest now, and that's something new. I figure you're not very smart, Seery, working all the angles you do."

"I'm smart enough," Seery said, "and I'll go on being honest with you. I suppose I'm a paradox, which should not be hard for you to understand. I've had to live under my father's shadow and at the same time I was controlled by my mother, so I found pleasure in living two different lives."

"I'll be moseying," Jim said. "We won't do any business."

"On the contrary, we can do a good deal of business. You want the Manders place. I need money. It isn't important why except that I lost my beef herd. I can handle Pollock. How much would it be worth to you to have him wipe out the Manders girl's outfit?"

He said it casually, without feeling. Jim had no doubt now about his part in killing Troy's father. Seery was proposing mass murder, proposing it as cold-bloodedly as a man could.

Jim moved to the desk and looked down at Seery's pale face, the man's cold eyes meeting his. Jim said, "I've met some ugly bastards in my day, Seery, but you take top money."

Seery did not take offense. "In my opinion, you run me a close second. Now let's get down to cases. If you aren't serious about getting the Manders property, say so. If you are, I'll get it for you if you want it enough to pay me for my trouble. By the time Pollock gets done with the Manders girl, she'll be glad to sign the place over."

Jim's mouth tightened as he fought his temper. He could walk out and let it stand, or he could have the satisfaction of beating Seery half to death. Then another idea struck him. If he told Seery the truth, he might force the whole thing to a quick showdown.

"I lied," Jim said. "I'm working for Troy Manders. She had an idea you'd believe me and buy the place from her so you could sell it to me for a sizable profit, but I don't reckon you'd go at it that way. Maybe you don't know it, but Jess Darket has gone to the county seat to get a deputy's badge for me. When I get it, the first thing I'll do is to arrest you for the murder of Troy's father."

Seery listened, his face showing no surprise at what Jim said. His hands had been hidden by the desk. Now he jumped up, a gun gripped in his right hand, but he had no chance to fire, for Jim had expected this. He leaned over the desk, getting hold of

Matt Seery backed across the room and stood with his eyes on the gun, Troy's shadow beside him. Then suddenly recognition came to Seery and he said hoarsely, "You're Troy Manders!"

Seery's right wrist, and they spilled back across the swivel chair and went down in a tangle of arms and legs.

Seery got in one good blow to Jim's belly; then they rolled over, Jim on top, and he grabbed Seery by both shoulders and beat his head against the floor. Seery held onto the gun. He cried out in pain, swearing and sobbing like a boy: he got his wrist free and rammed the gun against Jim's side, but he had been hurt and he had trouble earing the hammer back.

Jim rolled sideways, the gun under him, so it was flat against the floor under his body and Seery could not use it. He hit Seery in the face, rocking it. He got up, and Seery, free now, brought the gun up, getting the hammer back at last. Jim kicked his arm. The gun went off, the bullet slicing into the wall. Stooping, Jim twisted the gun out of Seery's hand and stepped back.

"If I didn't want to live in this valley," Jim said, "I'd kill you now, but I'll wait for the star."

Blood drooled from the corner of Seery's battered mouth. He wiped it away, his eyes wild with the lust to kill that gripped him. He cried, "You'll never touch me. You'll never get that star, either."

"I'll get it," Jim said, and swung toward the door. Vance Frane stood there, his mouth open. "Mrs. Seery doesn't know it, but she's got a thieving, lying bastard for a son. You'd better tell her."

He walked past Frane who began to scream for help. Jim turned on him. He said, "Shut up." Frane subsided, his face resembling a nutcracker more than ever.

Jim walked out of the bank, got his roan, and left town, riding south because he didn't want to catch up with Troy. He needed time to think.

He thought about the deputy's star, wondering if Seery could keep him from getting it. What would Darket do? He'd believe Seery. But if he didn't and if Jim arrested Seery, he'd probably find himself fighting everybody in the valley. Troy didn't want that. Neither did he.

If the valley people's trust in Seery could be destroyed. . . . Jim thought of Mrs. Seery. She would probably not believe Jim if he went to her, but it was worth a try. At least she'd have something to think about. She might already have her suspicions and she would begin adding things up. He swung his roan back toward town.

Chapter Fifteen

TROY WAS TOO DAZED to think straight when she walked out of the bank. The news that the Dykens boys had disobeyed her orders and murdered Seery's men had hit her harder than anything had hit her since the murder of her father. Mounting, she left town on the run, suddenly obsessed with a frantic desire to see her old home.

After talking to Jim last night, she had given up the idea of driving her herd down Bakeoven's Main Street. It had been a childish plan, anyhow. Someone might get hurt and she'd turn folks against her before she had a chance to tell them why she was back and what she wanted to do. So she had ordered Baldy Cronin to swing the cattle around Bakeoven and push them hard so they'd reach the Triangle M before dark.

She had come on, deciding she would simply tell Seery she was here, confident he would run to Pollock and the thing would come to a head at once. If there had to be a fight, it might as well come now. She was within her rights, and she had no doubt that her crew would win.

Now, with the town behind her, she slowed up, looking ahead at Telescope Mountain, most of it hidden by the clouds, at the trough of the valley that lay between the tall sandstone walls, at the line of willows along the creek and the scattered ranches, so familiar she might have been gone a week instead of nine years. Bailey. Matson. Yates. She remembered their names; she remembered the faces that went with the names, and more important than either, she was remembering what her father had said.

"The only way this valley can be prosperous over a period of time is to put in an irrigation system," he had said repeatedly. "I've seen Rampart Creek so low after a dry season that it didn't run enough water for the stock. We should work together and make a community enterprise out of it."

That, of course, was the last thing Pollock had wanted. With an adequate water supply, more ranchers would settle here and Pollock would have to share his summer grass on Telescope Mountain. That meant more people to watch what went on in this end of the valley, probably more law and order, greater strength to oppose Pollock.

During the nine years she had been gone, she had kept her thoughts so completely on revenge that she had forgotten what her father was like, what he believed in, what he had wanted to do. Now that she was back in the valley, these things were in her mind again, and she was ashamed because she should have kept them there all the time.

The strangest part of it was that Jim Sullivan, in the short time he had been in the valley, knew something about her father. What hurt her was the knowledge that Jim was right and she was wrong. What was even worse, she was in love with him. She had known it for a long time, but she had refused to admit it because she had not wanted anything to divert her from the grim purpose that had guided her so long.

Now, in this hour of horrible self-condemnation, the burden of guilt was too much to bear. Because of her, three men were dead, men who had never hurt her, three cowhands who happened to be working for Matt Seery.

The sun was noon-high when she reached the Triangle M. Dismounting, she tied at the hitch rail, sick with the dull ache of regret. But nothing could undo what had been done, and wishing she hadn't sent the Dykens boys to Starlight Mesa was the most futile of wishes.

SHE had supposed the place would be deserted, the windows knocked out, the yard grown up in weeds. She stood there gripping the gnawed old hitch pole while time flowed by. She fought a desire to cry. She couldn't, not Troy Manders.

She drew her Winchester from the boot and went up the path to the front door, thinking about the unpleasant task that faced her. Betty Erdman was there, Betty Erdman who had kept the grass cut and watered the hollyhocks and planted the garden, Betty Erdman who belonged to Matt Seery.

Troy went in without knocking. She closed the door and leaned against it, fighting for breath. The lump in her throat threatened to choke her. Even the inside of the house was little different than it had been the night she had left nine years ago.

She wiped a hand across her face. She could not hold back the tears. Then she straightened and set the rifle against the wall. Betty Erdman was standing in the kitchen doorway staring at her, shocked and a little frightened.

She said, "I'm Troy Manders," ashamed that this woman had caught her crying.

She heard Betty gasp, she saw the thin, pretty face go white as she said in a shocked tone, "Troy Manders! It isn't possible, after all this time."

Troy smiled, the weakness that this homecoming had aroused in her suddenly gone. There was something pathetic about Betty in her pink gingham dress that had been designed to show off her body to its best advantage. Her red-gold hair was braided and pinned on top of her head.

Seery's woman! In spite of herself, Troy could not help feeling a touch of envy as she thought of her own

strong thighs and work-hardened muscles, her sun-blackened skin and her calloused hands. There was much she could learn from Betty Erdman.

"I'm Troy Manders, all right," she said. "I've come back to live here. My herd will be on Triangle M grass before dark."

"You can't," Betty cried. "Have you forgotten Nate Pollock?"

"I could never forget him," Troy said. "He murdered my father. That's why I came back."

"I—I guess I'm trespassing," Betty said. "Give me a few minutes to pack some things and I'll get out."

Troy crossed the room to the girl and took her hands. "You haven't any place to go, have you?"

"No, but—"

"You're staying here as long as you want to. Jim Sullivan told me what happened. He works for me."

Betty drew her hands away from Troy and turned into the kitchen. She swung around and faced Troy, trying to grasp this, a lonely and unhappy woman who knew how Troy would regard her. A hand came up to clutch her throat.

"I couldn't stay here, with you knowing what I've been," Betty said in a choked voice. "No other woman, I mean, a decent woman, would understand why I'm what I am."

"I'm not a very decent woman," Troy said. "What I've done is more terrible than anything you've done, but we can't go back and live the last week over. Not even the last hour, so the only comfort I can find is the hope that I can make tomorrow be better."

"But I can't," Betty said. "I killed Bob Jarvis, Miss Manders. I killed him just like I'd pulled the trigger myself."

"Then I'm three times worse than you are because I killed three men on Starlight Mesa, but I'm not going to spend the rest of my life blaming myself. I can't live that way. I'm going to seek forgiveness and somewhere I'll find it." She stopped, realizing that Betty could not understand what she was trying to say, and realizing, too, that Betty was not taking Jarvis's death as lightly as Jim had thought. "Do you remember my father?"

"Of course. I remember everybody liked him. I've looked through his books. I've read his Bible and I think I know him because I've studied the passages he underlined. He must have been a good man."

"A better man than I will ever be a woman," Troy said, her voice made bitter by the accusation of her memory. "If you knew him, you would understand that you would be welcome here."

"But you'd be disgraced—"

Troy wasn't listening. She was looking past Betty through a window. Gabe Dykens and Moloch were in front of the house. Of all the times for this to happen! If Jim were here—

"I've got company," Troy said. "Stay in the kitchen. I'll handle this."

She walked across the front room, glancing back to see that Betty was not in sight. She opened the door just as Gabe stepped up on the porch. She said, "You're fired, Gabe. You knew what my orders were about Seery's crew."

Gabe's face was longer and more wolfish than she had ever seen it. He said, "I ain't gonna be fired."

He pushed past her into the house. Troy said in a flat voice, "Ride out, Gabe. Take Molly. Get out of this country and stay away or I'll see you hang for killing those men."

Gabe cuffed back his hat with a quick, upward thrust of his thumb. He said, "Let's talk sense. If you start gabbing about Seery's crew, I'll see folks know why you're here and what you told us to do. You ain't in no shape to fire me, Troy."

"The hell I'm not," she flung at him. "I say you'll hang—"

"Not me. Molly done it before I could stop him. Last night he got into a ruckus with Enoch and killed him. Now there's just me and Molly, and all on account of you."

"I told you to see Molly behaved himself," she cried furiously. "Don't load his crimes onto me."

"No sense of us quarreling." He took a quick step to her and gripped her shoulders. "You need me and you know it. I like you—"

She hit him in the belly with her fist, a hard blow that jolted the breath out of him. She tried to pull her gun, but he grabbed her arm and twisted it, shouting "You're my woman. Sullivan ain't man enough for you and never was. I aim to show you I am."

He kissed her, smothering her scream. She couldn't breathe. His arms were around her, holding her so tightly she couldn't fight. She kicked him on the shin, but she might as well have kicked the wall.

He drew his mouth back, laughing at her. "Sullivan never kissed you like that, did he? Hell, I'm more man then he ever thought of being. I'll do what you want done and you'll give me what I want and that's a good deal for both of us."

He picked her up and started toward the bedroom. She kicked, she cursed him and beat at him with her fists. She screamed, "Jim will kill you."

He laughed again. "You've got that wrong. *I'm* gonna kill *him*."

Gabe was a full step through the bedroom door when something hit him on the head, the sound a dry, snapping crack. He stumbled; his arms went slack and he dropped Troy. Mouthing obscene curses, he wheeled as Betty struck him again with a stove stick. She had both hands on it; she hit him with all her strength and he went down on his knees.

Troy was hurt by the fall, but she jumped up, gaining the moment she needed. Before Gabe got back on his feet, her gun was in her hand. She said in a low tone, "I ought to kill you. I will if you're not out of here in ten seconds."

He stood there, swaying, a trickle of blood running down his lean face and dripping from the point of his chin. He stared at Betty, too dazed to think straight. Troy said, "Unbuckle your gun belt. Then get out. Don't ever let me see you again."

Mechanically he unbuckled the belt and let it drop. He staggered to the front door and opened it. He said thickly, "Before this is done you'll come crawling to me. You'll see."

He went out, still reeling, and got on his horse. Troy stood in the doorway breathing hard, weak with relief, and she didn't move until the Dykens men rode away. Maybe they'd keep going, she thought dully. If they didn't, she would have more trouble and she had enough.

Betty said, "I'm sorry, Miss Manders. I had to go outside for a club. Nothing in the wood box but chips. That's why I was so slow."

Troy shut the door and sat down on a red plush chair. She wiped her mouth, but Gabe's kiss seemed to stay there. She shivered, fear still in her. Finally she said, "I owe you more than I can ever repay."

"You don't owe me anything," Betty said. "Not anything."

Troy didn't move. The minutes fled by. Nine years of living among men and never having anything happen like this until she returned to the valley. She bowed her head and shut her eyes, still trembling, and she asked herself how wrong a woman could be.

Betty had moved to a window. Her frightened voice jarred Troy back to reality, "We've got more trouble, Miss Manders. Pollock's coming."

Chapter Sixteen

SEERY PULLED HIMSELF into his chair after Jim left the bank. Taking a white handkerchief from his pocket, he began to dab at his mouth. He ached in a dozen places, but there was a sense of frustration in him that hurt far more than the beating Jim Sullivan had given him. This was the first time he had ever actually fought with a man, the first time he had ever tried to kill a man in combat.

Vance Frane remained in the doorway, his toothless gums clamped so tightly that his chin swept upward toward his long nose. He said hoarsely, "I'll get some men and—"

"Go back to work," Seery said.

"But, Matthew, your father—"

"God damn you, shut up," Seery shouted. "I'm not my father and I'm not my mother and I'll take care of Sullivan in my own way." He thought for a moment, then said quietly, "Vance, go over and jack up that barber. We've been too easy on him. He's a year behind on his interest."

"Only six months, Matthew."

"Too long. Go over and tell him to pay up."

Frane started to object, for it had never been the bank's policy to push a man when he'd had bad luck. Both Frane and Seery knew Ed Maylor's wife had been sick and he'd sent her to Denver. But there was something hard and forbidding in Seery's face, and Frane left without a word.

The instant Frane was gone, Seery went to the safe and took out the folder that held Pollock's notes. He put them into his pocket and replaced the folder. The temptation was strong to help himself to the gold, but he had no illusions about what his mother would do.

The gold would be missed at once and he'd have the law on his tail. On the other hand, it was improbable that Frane would discover the missing notes for a long time. When he did, Seery would deny he had taken them. It wouldn't make any difference anyhow. By that time he'd be a thousand miles from Rampart Valley.

He returned to his private office, took the empty shell out of his gun and slipped a new load into place. He'd make a deal with Pollock or he'd kill him. He'd get out of the valley with Betty and that would end his life here. He should have done it a long time ago, he thought, as he dropped the gun into his pocket.

He went back into the bank to wait for Frane. The man was gone a long time, too long, and Seery became impatient. He was furious when he thought of Sullivan and the Manders girl and his murdered crew. But Pollock would take care of them. Anyhow, the important thing was to get away. He paced around the room, his impatience growing with each dragging minute.

He walked to the front door and looked out. Frane was coming. Seery moved back to his desk. The instant Frane came in, Seery said, "I'm going home, Vance. That bastard hurt me more than I realized. I think I'll go to bed."

"I'll take care of things." Frane cleared his throat. "About Maylor, Matthew. He can't pay his interest now. You know how it's been. I told him I'd see if we couldn't let it go for another three months."

Seery glared at him, pretending to be angry. "I told you—" Then he shrugged. "Never mind. I'll talk to you tomorrow."

He left the bank, satisfied that Frane had not suspected anything, and circled his house, hoping his mother wouldn't see him. He reached the alley behind his house and went into the barn. Probably his mother was taking a nap. She usually did this time of day. The chestnut whinnied, but for once Seery didn't take time to pet him. He saddled as quickly as he could, mounted, and rode down the alley.

He swung onto the county road, the need for haste throbbing in him like a pulse beat. He wondered briefly if Sullivan had gone to the Manders place. Well, it wouldn't make any difference if he had. Pollock and Bert Knoll would welcome the chance to nail him.

He had not seen anything of Troy when he turned up the lane that led to Pollock's ranch. She had probably reached her place. It was just as well he hadn't overtaken her. He stepped down. Pollock was at the corrals with Ace Rush and young Tafoya. Knoll was probably in the house.

Pollock came toward him, a great laugh rolling out of him when he saw Seery's bruised face. He said, "Well now, Mr. Seery, did you meet up with a grizzly?"

"Sullivan," Seery snapped. "I was wrong. You're right. We've got to get him now."

Pollock slapped his leg and laughed again. "Ain't it funny how a man's notions change when he gets a banging around? Now you know how Bert feels."

"I know, all right," Seery said. "You're going to know, too. Sullivan is working for Troy Manders. She's back in the valley with a herd she figures on throwing on her dad's old range. She's here to square up for beefing her old man."

Pollock blinked, his moonlike face going cold. He said harshly, "You're lying."

"I've never lied to you in my life, Nate. She came into the bank and told me why she was here. I passed her herd on my way out here. Go look for yourself."

"I will." Pollock wheeled and motioned to his men. "Saddle up." He turned back to Seery. "If you are telling the truth, we'll run her critters back across the Dolores."

"There's a better way, Nate."

Pollock's jaws were set hard, muscles at their hinges bulging out like twin marbles. "Still calling the dance tune, Mr. Seery?"

"I've got a deal," Seery said. "It's a good deal for you. The only reason I'm offering it is because I want Betty. You going to listen, or not?"

Pollock jerked his big head at the men. "Hustle up, Rafe. Ace, you go into the house and get Bert. He ain't hurt so bad he can't ride." Again he swung to face Seery, his feet planted apart in the red dust, his head bent so that his chins bulged out in a great roll of fat. His attitude plainly showed that he was skeptical of any deal Seery had to offer, but he said, "I'll listen."

"The Manders girl is in her house with Betty," Seery said. "Sullivan may be there, too. Kill him. I don't care what happens to the Manders girl. All I want is Betty. Fetch her here and I'll swap your notes for her. I have them in my pocket."

"I'll take them now," Pollock said.

"You'll get them when you deliver Betty, not before." Seery's right hand was in his pocket. "Don't push me, Nate, or I'll kill you."

The big man rocked back and forth on his heels, pale eyes half-closed. Tafoya was saddling the horses. Rush and Knoll were leaving the house. When Pollock showed no inclination to either accept or reject the offer, Seery said sharply, "Don't figure me wrong, Nate. I'm leaving the valley and I'm taking Betty. I want a gentle horse for her to ride. It's a good deal for you, twenty thousand in exchange for a woman."

"So," Pollock murmured. "You're plumb salty all of a sudden."

Chapter Seventeen

Jim was scared as he tied his horse in front of the Seery house and went up the walk to the front porch. It was an odd sort of fear. He had never felt anything just like it before. Perhaps everyone who knew Mrs. Seery was afraid of her. Even Matt.

Now that Jim saw the Seery place in daylight, he realized it was grander than he had thought. A metal fence surrounded the big lawn; the row of cottonwoods that ran along the street side of the yard threw a patch of shade against the sunlight that momentarily covered most of the grass.

Jim crossed the porch and jerked the bell pull, a little ashamed of himself because he could not overcome the fear that the prospect of talking to Mrs. Seery aroused in him. Real danger such as he faced in the street when he had shot Perkins had never bothered him, but the thought of facing Mrs. Seery and saying what he was determined to say brought icy fingers out of nowhere to clutch his insides.

The door opened a crack and Lily Darket peeped through the slit. She said, "You!" as if he were a crawling thing, and would have shut the door if he hadn't put his foot against it.

Reluctantly the girl opened the door. "I hate you, Mr. Sullivan. Why my father thinks you'd make a good deputy—"

"You know about that?"

"I know, all right. I know he'll ride a horse to death getting to Placerville and he'll kill another horse getting back. And for what? Just to give a star to a man we don't know anything about—"

Jim walked past her into the big living-room, his hat in his hand. Mrs. Seery stood by a heavy mahogany table, a clawlike hand upon it. She was again wearing the black silk dress with the tight lace collar, her face as frosty as a chill winter morning.

"I am surprised you'd have the temerity to come here again," Mrs. Seery said.

Jim took a deep breath, fighting the crazy desire to run that crowded him. "I don't care for this chore any more than you do, ma'am." He motioned to Lily Darket who stood glowering in the doorway behind him. "What I have to say is not for her ears."

"I won't leave Mrs. Seery alone with you," Lily cried.

"It's all right, dear," Mrs. Seery said. "Step outside."

Her manner clearly indicated she was confident she could handle any saddle tramp who forced his way into her house, her lips a thin, forbidding line across her face. Jim waited until the door closed, still fighting a desire to run.

"Troy Manders is in the valley," Jim said. "I work for her. She's moving back onto her ranch and she's bringing a herd to stock her range."

"Well?"

"When she left," Jim hurried on, "she promised herself she would come back and punish the men who killed her father."

"They were outlaws who left the country a long time ago," Mrs. Seery said harshly. "We have had many men like them, men like you. They never stay here."

"Nate Pollock and his crew killed her father," Jim said. "Your son was among them."

She might have been frozen there. Her expression did not change except that it became more exaggerated, the lips more tightly pressed, her eyes narrowed until they were nearly closed. She breathed, "You've said enough, Mr. Sullivan. Good day."

"I'm not done. I'm guessing your position in this community and the Seery name mean more to you than anything else, but you'll lose both if the truth comes out. Your son has been living with Betty Erdman in the Manders house."

She swayed, her hand clutching the edge of the table, no longer able to hide her feelings.

"If I were a man, I'd kill you," she whispered. "What have you to gain, telling me this?"

"Nothing for me, but maybe something for Troy. She could do this valley a lot of good, but not as long as Pollock and your son are in cahoots, and as long as the valley people think Matt is sitting at the right hand of God."

"Get out," she breathed. "Get out."

"Matt has tried twice to kill me," Jim said. "If you don't persuade him to leave the valley, I'll have to kill him. Or Troy will, and I don't want that to happen."

Mrs. Seery broke. She was not an aristocrat; she was not even a lady. She was a bitchy harridan. She lunged at Jim, cursing him with a mule-skinner's vocabulary as she slapped him on one side of the cheek and then the other. Jim jumped back and wheeled and ran.

As he cleared the door he saw Lily running down the hall toward him, a shotgun in her hands. He heard Mrs. Seery's hysterical scream, "Kill him, Lily, kill him." He plunged through the front door and across the porch; he stumbled on the steps and sprawled headlong on the grass as the shotgun blasted behind him, the buckshot sailing over his head.

Lily yelled, "Where does Matt keep his shells?"

He was on his feet and running again as he heard Mrs. Seery answer, "In his desk in the study." He ran through the gate in the metal fence, yanked the reins free from the hitch pole, and swung into leather before Lily appeared on the porch. He dug steel into his house's flanks and rocketed down the street, wanting only to get out of Bakeoven.

He swung north across the grass, drawing a full breath of relief. He'd had something to be scared of, he thought as he pulled his horse down to a walk. Only the accident of his tripping and falling had saved his life. He wondered what Jess Darket would have thought if Lily had blasted his head off. If Darket listened to Lily and Mrs. Seery when he got back, Jim would never get the deputy's badge.

Now that it was over, he could laugh about it. Troy would, too, when he told her. Jim Sullivan, who had shoved things around proper from the time he'd ridden into town, had come mighty close to getting himself killed

Mrs. Seery stood by a heavy mahogany table, a clawlike hand on it. Her face was as frosty as a winter morning. "I'm surprised you have the temerity to come here again," she said.

by a crazy girl and a woman from whom he had snatched the veneer of goodness with which she had so carefully covered herself.

Presently he reached the upper end of the valley, the road making a turn to the south in front of Seery's ranch. He saw no sign of life there, and he wondered what Seery would do, now that his beef herd had been scattered and his men killed. He remembered how Troy had looked when Seery had told her what had happened. She would never forgive herself for sending the Dykens boys up there. Nothing had worked the way she had planned.

Jim was almost to the bridge spanning the creek when he saw the horses racked in front of Troy's house. He recognized Pollock's sorrel, and Ace Rush's mount. He wasn't sure of the third horse, but he thought it was Bert Knoll's. Instinctively he reined off the road and stopping behind the willows, pulled his Winchester from the boot and dismounted.

He had no idea what had happened, but Troy and Betty must be in the house. The crew hadn't got here yet. It was trouble, the worst trouble he could think of, and he was sick when he thought of what might be happening.

He waded across the stream to the willows that lined the south bank, and waited, peering through the leaves at the house. Then he heard a woman scream, a high, terrifying sound. Betty's voice! He dropped his Winchester and ramming his way through the willows, he sprinted toward the house, drawing his six-gun as he ran.

Chapter Eighteen

THE GROUND between the Manders house and the creek was flat and without cover except the tall grass. If any of the three men inside the house saw Jim, he'd be a dead man, but the cold, calculating streak of caution that had brought him through so many tight squeezes was not controlling him now. He did not think of anything except that Troy and Betty were in trouble, and he blamed himself for loitering on his way from town.

Ace Rush came out of the house just as Jim cleared the corner. He had Betty Erdman in his arms, a kicking, clawing wildcat, and he was cursing her and threatening he'd kick her teeth in if she didn't behave. He saw Jim the same instant Jim saw him. He dropped the girl and grabbed his gun, yelling, "Nate!"

If Rush had used the girl for a shield he might have got Jim, but he was excited and furious. And hurt, too, for his face was lined with scarlet streaks that Betty's fingernails had given him. All he could think of was getting his gun into action, but a thin margin of time was against him. He never got his Colt clear of leather. Jim's bullet caught him in the left eye and he was dead before he fell, lurching forward across Betty.

The whole thing was a swift explosion of action, breaking like a flash of lightning that leaves a man no chance to dodge or duck or plan. Bert Knoll stood in the doorway, stunned by Jim's sudden appearance. Betty, pinned under Rush's body, was still screaming hysterically, the echoes of Jim's first shot dying in fading waves of sound.

JIM did not pause when Rush fell; he came on toward Knoll in long, running strides as the man drew his gun and fired, a wild shot because Jim threw two slugs at the man that scored. Knoll toppled off the porch, a convulsive twitch pulling the trigger again, the bullet ripping into the first step. He went on down. Jim hurdled his body, hit the porch with both feet, and lunged on into the house.

Pollock's great bulk seemed to fill the room. He was laughing as he had laughed at danger all his life. He had an advantage of time that neither Rush nor Knoll had held: his gun was palmed and he fired the second Jim was framed in the doorway.

The bullet splintered the jamb at Jim's side, a clean miss. Jim's shot broke Pollock's right arm. He lost his gun, but he was carrying two, and now he reached for the second with his left hand, a swift movement for a man as ponderous as he was. Jim, using his last bullet, shot him in the stomach.

As Pollock bent forward, Jim realized why the man had missed. Troy lay on the floor behind him, a smear of blood on her cheek from a cut just below her right eye. She had kicked him on the calf of his right leg—not much of a kick but timed perfectly so that it ruined his aim.

Jim threw his gun down. Pollock was still on his feet, somehow holding his body upright like a bear that has been fatally wounded but still clings to a spark of life. He started lumbering toward Jim, his left hand pulling a long-bladed knife from his belt.

Troy screamed, "My rifle! Beside you, Jim!"

There was no time to look for it. Jim bent low and lunged forward, Pollock's swinging blade missing by inches. Jim butted Pollock in the belly and knocked him down as Troy rolled and scrambled to her feet. Pollock's knife had fallen to the floor. Frantically he reached for the gun he had dropped and wrapped his fingers around it as Jim fell on him.

Troy, her rifle in her hands now, shouted, "Get away, Jim, get away!"

But Jim, not knowing she had the Winchester, got both hands on the barrel of Pollock's Colt and twisted it from the big man's grip. He rose and moved back, only then aware that Troy was about to fire. He threw a hand out, knocking the rifle aside, shouting, "Hold it, Troy."

Pollock lay on his back, his pale eyes filmed by death. He made no effort to draw his other gun that was still in holster, but he found strength to laugh. Jim, watching, could not keep from admiring a man who laughed while he died.

"You are a tough hand, Red," Pollock murmured. "You'n' me, we should have been together."

Then he was dead, the smile still clinging to the corners of his mouth. Outside, a thunder of hoofs sounded south of the house. Troy ran outside, Jim a step behind her. Troy threw her rifle to her shoulder and fired, but she missed, and the rider reached the aspens and disappeared.

BETTY, trying to free herself of Rush's body, was still screaming, a shrill wave of wordless sound. Jim rolled the dead man off of her. She jumped up and started to run. Jim caught her and spinning her around, slapped her sharply on the cheek.

"It's all right, Betty," he said. "It's all right now. You hear?"

The words got through to her. She stopped screaming, her mouth still open, her eyes wide and glazed with terror. He picked her up and carrying her inside the house, laid her on the leather couch. Troy had dropped into a chair, the rifle on the floor beside her.

This was no time to talk. Jim dragged Pollock's body out of the house. He was too heavy to carry, and it was all Jim could do to drag him across the yard. He returned for Knoll, then Rush, and finding a canvas, covered them. He'd go to town and tell Ed Maylor. The undertaker would have to send a wagon for them.

When he returned to the house, he found that Betty was all right, the hysteria gone from her, but Troy still sat in the chair, her head down, rocking back and forth, the chair creaking with the movement. Jim picked up his gun, reloaded, and dropped it into his holster. He bent over Troy and took her hands.

"You're all right, Troy, you're all right," he said. "Pollock's dead."

She looked up, her face filled with misery. "You say I'm all right," she breathed, "but you're wrong, Jim. I'll never be all right. I can't forget the men the Dykens boys killed. I did it, Jim. I did it."

"That's crazy talk," Betty cried.

Jim pulled up a chair and sat beside Troy. He said, "Betty's right. I

heard the orders you gave to the Dykens men."

"You told me I'd have to fire Gabe and his brothers," Troy said in a flat, expressionless voice. "I should have. That's what's wrong, Jim. I knew all the time what they were, but I thought I needed them, and now . . ." Her voice trailed off and she looked away. "I guess I've been a little crazy. I knew all the time I was wrong, down inside me I knew."

"Listen, Troy," Jim said softly. "You can't go back, so there's no sense driving yourself crazy with regret. You can go ahead. That's what counts, the things you do from here on out."

She tried to smile, but she couldn't. She said, "You're good, Jim. I wish I'd listened to you."

She couldn't go on. She started to rock again. Betty said, "Pollock told us we couldn't stay here. We weren't paying any attention to the back of the house. I thought the rest of his crew was on the mountain rounding up his beef herd, but the Mexican boy came in the back and got his gun on us. Pollock and his men came in. He got mean. He said folks thought I was his woman and from now on I was going to be. He hit Troy and knocked her down and Rush picked me up and carried me outside. That was when you came."

Betty must have screamed when Pollock knocked Troy down, Jim thought. He said, "The fellow who got away. Was he the Mexican boy?"

"Yes," Troy said. "He'll get the rest of Pollock's crew and they'll be back. They'll kill us, Jim."

He shook his head. "Pollock's been the big gun. Now that he's dead, his bunch will break up. Chances are they'll drive his beef herd into Utah and sell them. Our troubles are over, Troy."

But there was still Matt Seery. Jim didn't want to mention him, and apparently Troy didn't, either. She'd had enough of killing. If Seery would let her alone, Jim thought, she'd forget her resolve to make Seery crawl out of the valley on his belly. But would Seery let her alone? And what about Betty?

Jim paced the room, deciding there was no pressing danger. Seery was a man who would use others like Pollock. At this moment Seery stood alone. Still, the man was a schemer and he had courage in his own peculiar way. Jim could not be sure about him.

"No, our trouble isn't over, Jim," Troy said finally. "That's what worries me. I'm to blame and nothing you can say will make it any different."

She told him about Gabe Dykens' visit and his threat to kill Jim. She finished with, "Gabe will stay around, Jim. I knew how he felt about me, but I'd always been able to handle him. I was always able to handle anything until I got back here and now—" She licked her lips and clenched her fists. "I couldn't stand it if he killed you, Jim, I just couldn't stand it."

Chapter Nineteen

MATT SEERY did not tarry at Pollock's ranch after Rafael Tafoya rode in, babbling about Nate Pollock being shot. Ace Rush and Bert Knoll, too. It was fantastic, unbelievable, that all three were dead at Jim Sullivan's hand, yet he did not doubt Tafoya's story.

"You'd better ride up the mountain and tell the boys," Seery said.

He mounted and rode toward town, not waiting to see whether Tafoya obeyed. His thoughts were in a turmoil. Nate Pollock was dead. Troy Manders had succeeded in exacting half the revenge she wanted.

Dust from the slowly approaching herd rose directly ahead of him. He glanced back toward the Triangle M, half expecting to see Sullivan coming after him, but no one was in sight. He had completely forgotten his plan of getting out of the valley with Betty. Town offered a sanctuary. He would be safe in his study. Or in the bank where the Seery cloak of respectability would cover him.

He swung off the road toward the creek, wanting nothing to do with Troy Manders' crew. When he was past them, he turned back to the road and went on to town. Now, recovering from the shock of Pollock's death, he began to recast his plans.

Troy Manders wouldn't send Sullivan to town to kill him. He was reasonably sure of that. They might strike at him by spreading gossip about him and Betty, but all he had to do was to deny it. His mother's position in the valley would protect him. His own position, too. No one had ever questioned his morals.

Only a small arc of the sun was showing when he reached town and led his horse into the barn. He rubbed the animal down, finding satisfaction in the simple task. He could not rid himself entirely of the sick emptiness that clung to his belly. Thinking clearly now, he realized it was Betty's loss that had made him a little crazy. She was with Troy Manders and Jim Sullivan, and therefore she was probably out of his life forever.

He didn't know what to do about it. The way Tafoya had told it, Sullivan was hell on tall, red wheels. But a tough hand like Sullivan could be killed. Seery should have done it the afternoon they'd looked at the dam site. Or he should have let Pollock and his boys knock him out of the saddle when they were on their way back to town. Those opportunities were gone, but there would be others.

He suddenly realized he was hungry and he might just as well go into the house and face his mother. She'd sense that something had happened and she'd put him on the rack with her questions, but he'd have to evade them. He left the barn, moving rapidly through the darkening twilight to the kitchen door.

A lighted lamp was on the table when he went in, and he saw that his meal was set out for him. A fire was burning in the stove, the coffee still hot. He took off his hat and coat and poured the coffee. Lily came in from the dining-room and closed the door. He went to her at once, not wanting her to know how completely his world had tumbled in upon him.

She asked, her body stiffly erect, "Where have you been?"

"At the ranch," he said, and kissed her.

She didn't return his kiss. When he stepped back, she remained motionless, staring at him, her face pale. She had never been that way before. He returned to the table, telling himself that of all the people who lived in Rampart Valley, Lily was the last one he should worry about.

"Have a cup of coffee with me," he said.

"No." She took a long breath, her hands fluttering uncertainly at her sides. "Matthew, two men are in the front room. They want to see you."

He stood behind his chair, panic threatening to break him. He asked hoarsely, "Who are they?"

"I don't know, but go see them and get them out of here. I'm afraid of them."

Strangers! Probably Troy Manders' men. Then Seery's panic died. Even if the Manders woman had sent them, they wouldn't kill him in his house. Besides, his gun was in his pocket.

He asked, "Where's Mother?"

She glanced away. "I don't know."

He walked down the hall, wondering about his mother. She was probably at the church. He wasn't sure, but it seemed to him she had said something about a Ladies Aid dinner. He opened the door into the front room and went in. The big, hobnail lamp on the mahogany table threw a shaded light around it. Two men had been sitting on the couch. They were on their feet now, one of them moving toward him, asking, "You Matt Seery?"

"That's right," Seery answered.

They were strangers, cowhands, the toughest-appearing men he had ever seen. His right hand in his pocket gripped his gun.

"I'm Gabe Dykens," the man said finally. "This is my brother, Molly."

Seery glanced at the other man and nodded.

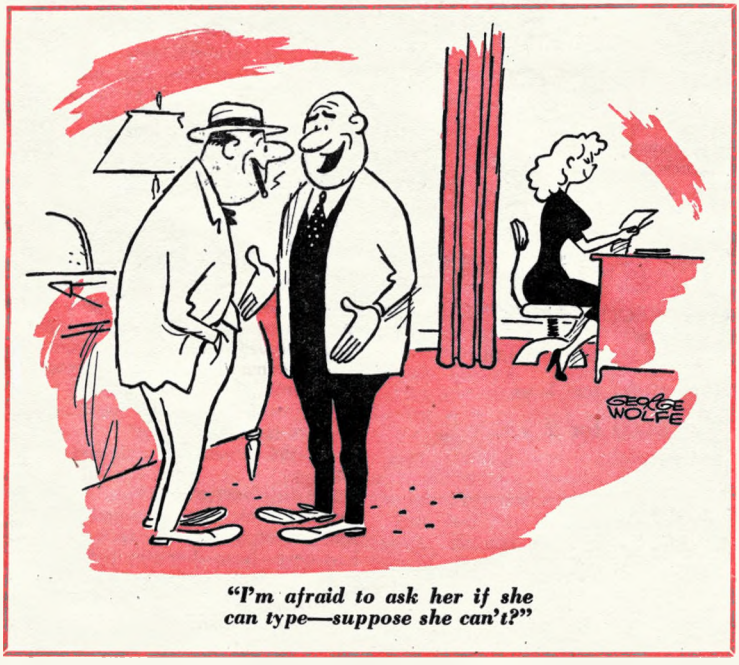
"I've got a proposition," Gabe Dykens said. "Our guns are for sale and we figured you were in the market to buy." He paused, letting his words have their effect, then added, "To kill Jim Sullivan."

That jolted Seery. They weren't from the Manders woman after all. Not unless this was some kind of a trap. When Seery didn't say anything, Gabe went on, "While Molly and me was hanging around the saloon, we picked up some talk about how Sullivan has been raising hell since he hit this country. Molly and me need money and you need a man killed. Seemed like we oughta get together."

"What gives you the idea I'd hire a man to kill Sullivan?" Seery asked.

Gabe gave him a cold smile. "I knew Troy Manders in No Man's Land where she had a ranch, and I knew she was coming here to get you and a gent named Pollock. Well, Molly and me don't like Sullivan, but we ain't beefing him just for fun—too risky, in a country we don't know. On the other hand, if you make it worthwhile, we'll do the job and light a shuck out of the country."

He could be on the level, Seery decided. People like Troy Manders and Jim Sullivan made enemies. These men might have followed them, finally catching them here in Rampart Valley. "I see," Seery murmured, "but you didn't pick up some talk in the saloon like you said."



"I'm afraid to ask her if she can type—suppose she can't?"

"We picked it up, all right," Gabe said. "About Sullivan killing one of Pollock's men and winging another one. But we knew before we got here what the Manders woman and Sullivan aimed to do. It's like I said. We've got our own bone to pick with 'em, only it ain't a big enough bone to risk getting our necks stretched unless we was paid to take the risk. Say, a thousand dollars."

Seery was silent for a moment. He had nothing to lose. If this Dykens fellow tried to shift the blame to him, he would deny it and that would be the end of it. On the other hand, a thousand dollars would be a cheap price to pay for Sullivan's death.

"It's a deal," Seery said, "but I don't have that much cash on me. I'll get it from the bank later tonight. Sullivan isn't in town, anyhow. He's at the Manders place."

Gabe shrugged. "You can give us half tonight, the rest after we plug him. That fair?"

"Fair enough," Seery said. "Make it an hour, behind the livery stable."

Gabe nodded. He motioned to his brother and they left the house.

When Seery returned to the kitchen, he found Lily standing where he had left her. He said, "My coffee's cold."

She took his cup to the sink and emptied it, then filled it with hot coffee from the pot. She brought it to him and walked back to the stove. He ate, not looking up, but feeling her steady stare. Hell, he couldn't marry her. Nothing could be worse than waking up after his wedding and finding himself in bed with her.

"Matthew."

The strained quality of her voice brought him around. She stared at him, a crazy wild temper in her. He had never seen her look at him this way, as if she hated and despised him. He said uneasily, "Well?"

"Why did you ever ask me to marry you? Why didn't you tell me you were living with that Erdman woman all this time?"

"Who told you that?" he shouted.

"Sullivan was here today. He told your mother. He said you'd been working with Pollock. It will come out now, Matthew. Don't you know what you've done to your mother? And me?"

Sullivan again!

"It's a lie," he said and stalked out.

He left the house and walked toward Main Street. He shivered, finding it hard to believe that his mother and Lily would accept anything Sullivan said. But Vance Frane hated him. If Frane had discovered that Pollock's notes were missing, he'd prove what Sullivan had said.

That must be it, Seery thought. When his mother returned to the house, she'd have it out with him, and

there wasn't a damned thing he could say that would convince her Sullivan had lied. And if he had to leave, he might just as well clean out the bank safe. He knew Telescope Mountain as well as any man. He'd pick up some grub at Pollock's ranch and a pack horse, and he'd disappear.

He was on Main Street before he realized it. The stage was waiting in front of the office. He stopped, his heart pounding. Betty was standing in the lighted area in front of the office, a valise at her feet, and she was talking to Sullivan.

At this moment Sullivan wasn't important. But if Betty left, Seery'd never know where she went, never see her again. If she knew what he was going to do, knew that he would give her the things he had denied her, it would be all right.

He broke into a run. He felt no panic now, only a hard, cold purpose. She heard him running toward her and swung away from Sullivan who stepped to one side, a hand on gun butt. Seery didn't look at Sullivan; he wanted no trouble with him now. He stopped a step from Betty, breathing hard.

"Let me alone, Matt. Don't touch me. Don't try to stop me."

"I'm not trying to stop you," he said, struggling for breath. "Listen to me, Betty. Just listen. I want to marry you. I love you. I wouldn't be here talking to you if I didn't."

"I'd like to believe you, Matt. I've always wanted to believe you."

He saw a tenderness in her face he had not seen for a long time. Suddenly it came to him that this simple act of standing here on Bakeoven's Main Street in front of everyone and talking to her was the vital thing he had refused to do and it was the reason she had turned away from him.

"I'm leaving Bakeoven," Seery said in a low tone. "I can't go with you on the stage, but I'll find you if you tell me where you're going. I'll find you and marry you. We'll have the kind of life you've always wanted."

"Let her alone, Seery," Sullivan said. "Haven't you done enough to—"

Betty silenced him with a gesture. She moved to Seery and put her hands on his arms. "I'll wait at the county seat," she said. "Kiss me, Matt."

He kissed her, his arms tight around her, vaguely aware that the driver had climbed to the high seat and a man on the ground had called, "Roll 'em."

"You going, Betty?" Sullivan demanded.

She pushed Seery away, giving Sullivan a faint smile of triumph, and got into the stage. The silk swept out and cracked sharply, the horses lunged forward and the wheels rolled and dust rose and drifted toward Seery. She wasn't running away from him tonight, he thought. She'd wait for him. He'd find her. It was going to be all right after all.

Jess Darket drifted out of the shadows. He stood in front of Seery, his face filled with contempt. He said hoarsely, "By God, Matt, I didn't believe it. Sullivan told me and I called him a liar."

It was then that Seery saw the star on Sullivan's shirt. He was the law. Darket had done it. But it didn't make any difference. Gabe Dykens and his brother would get Sullivan. In any case, Seery would be out of town and in the mountains before Sullivan found out he had robbed the bank.

He walked swiftly down the side street to the alley's end and turned into it. The sooner he got out of town the better. He had a key to the back door that led into his private office, but he decided against using it. It would be better to break in through a window. The Dykens men were strangers, probably wanted men. They would naturally be suspected when the robbery was discovered, and Sullivan would go after them, giving Seery several days' start before anyone thought of him.

Carefully he smashed a pane of glass, then reached inside and released the lock. He raised the sash and crawled into the building. Again he paused, eyes searching the darkness. For a moment his caution got the best of him. Maybe he was crazy to risk this when he had enough money at the county seat to get along.

A noise in the back of the room startled him. He yanked his gun out of his pocket and wheeled. He caught a hint of movement and fired; then a ribbon of flame lashed out toward him and he fell back against the wall and his feet slid out from under him. The gun hammered out again and again, bullets searching for him as they slapped into the wall. He felt as if a great club had struck him in the chest and he knew he was dying.

Dimly he heard Vance Frane scream, "Seery, you shot your mother." Someone was smashing the front door open. A lamp came to life as men poured in from the street. Seery thought of Betty who would be waiting for him at the county seat but he would never come to her. That was the only regret in him as he died.

Chapter Twenty

Jim felt genuine sympathy for Jess Darket as he stood beside him at the bar in the saloon. Darket, returning to Bakeoven sooner than he had expected, had found Jim in the livery stable and Jim had told him what had happened and the part Seery had played in the whole business. Darket, indignant and angry, had called him a liar. But the meeting between Seery and Betty beside the stage had been proof enough of what Jim had said.

Darket said again as he had said over and over, "My God, Sullivan, what will happen to Lily?"

"She's better off. You ought to think of it the other way. What if she'd married Seery?"

But Darket found no comfort in Jim's words. At a time like this truth was bitter, too bitter to be watered down. Lily was all Darket had, her happiness the only important thing in the world to him. They waited in silence, not knowing how badly Mrs. Seery had been wounded.

The bat wings opened and swished shut. Jim swung around. The doctor had come in. Darket asked, "How is she?"

"Unless there's some complication," the medico answered, "she'll be all right. Lily's with her."

"Did you find out how Mrs. Seery happened to be in the bank with Frane when Matt showed up?" Darket asked.

The doctor said, "Frane told me after he calmed down. Sullivan told her about Matt. She didn't believe it, but she went down to the bank to talk to him. He was gone, so she told Frane what Sullivan had said. Frane thought about looking for Pollock's notes. They were gone. She smelled a rat then. After Frane locked up, he went to Mrs. Seery's house and he was still there when a couple of hardcases showed up asking for Matt."

"The Dykens boys?" Jim asked.

The doctor threw him a questioning glance. "Frane said that was their name. You know them?"

"I know them," Jim said. "Go on."

"Well, these men said they'd wait. Mrs. Seery and Frane were in the parlor when Matt talked to them, but he didn't know they were there. Mrs. Seery heard him promise to pay them a thousand dollars to kill Sullivan."

Jim thought, *Gabe wouldn't miss a chance to make a killing pay.* So it wasn't over. He'd have to watch his back as long as they were alive. They'd dry-gulch him as he rode along some lonely trail. That would be Moloch's way.

"Mrs. Seery knew Matt didn't have a thousand dollars," the medico went on. "He told those hardcases he'd get it from the bank, so when he went back to the kitchen to eat his supper, Mrs. Seery and Frane hightailed down to the bank. He came in through a window, and Mrs. Seery started toward him. He shot her, not knowing who it was, I suppose, and Frane plugged him."

After the doctor left, Jim said, "I'd better be riding, Jess. I'll keep the deputy's badge, but maybe you can get Ed Maylor to take the marshal's star back. I won't be staying in town."

"Didn't figure you would." Darket threw a coin on the bar and walked out of the saloon with Jim, asking, "Who are these fellows, Dykens or whatever their name is?"

"A couple of killers who are gunning for me," Jim said, and let it go at that.

They walked through the archway into the stable, Darket calling, "Bill." But the hostler didn't answer. Darket swore. "I'll fire that lazy son. He's got a bottle and crawled into the mow."

"Sullivan."

Gabe Dykens' voice! Jim froze, a hand on the saddle horn. He had not expected it to happen here. And he had brought Darket to his death; Gabe could not afford to let him live. Jim dropped his hand to his side and made a slow turn. Gabe must have been hiding in a stall. Now he stood in the runway, his legs spread, his weight balanced, right hand splayed over gun butt.

Gabe was not a man to take a chance like this. Moloch was around somewhere, maybe behind Jim. He was hipped, caught here in the light this way. He had no chance unless he located Moloch. A horse in a back stall kicked at the partition, a crashing sound in the silence, and Darket called, "Stop it, Spike."

Jim wondered if Darket was scared, if he understood how this was shaping up. Gabe seemed to be in no hurry. He stood motionless, his lean head tipped forward a little, hat brim shading his eyes. He was like many killers Jim had known, squeezing out of this moment all the pleasure he could.

"Enoch said I'd have a fair draw," Jim said, "but Troy told me you let Molly kill Enoch. He was the best man of the three of you, Gabe."

Still Gabe didn't move and he didn't say anything. Waiting. Maybe for Moloch who might be outside. A prickle ran down Jim's spine and sweat broke through the skin of his face. He thought briefly of Troy. At one time he had wondered if Troy would take his death as lightly as Betty Erdman had taken Bob Jarvis's, but now he was ashamed of the thought.

"Where's Molly?" Jim said loudly. "Damn it, Gabe, is he going to shoot me in the back?"

Gabe never answered. A shot roared behind Jim, as loud as thunder here within the walls of the stable. An involuntary cry broke out of Gabe, a wild, wordless sound, and his hand drove downward toward his gun and brought it up.

Jim made his draw. He had no time to look around, but he knew this was not going the way Gabe wanted it. His gun swung up and came level, a swift, rhythmical movement; he fired and felt the solid buck of it in his hand.

Both explosions rolled out together; gunflame made its brief, bright rosette of flame and was gone. Smoke rose and spread in writhing clouds above the runway. Horses squealed and kicked at the partitions of their stalls, then there was silence as they became quiet, the smell of burned powder lingering in the stable.

Jim stood motionless, his gun in front of him, held hip-high. He watched Gabe wilt, slowly at first, then break at every joint at once and fall on his face. Jim walked toward him, hearing Darket say, "I got the other one."

Jim didn't look around. He stood over Gabe as the man brought himself up on hands and knees with stubborn strength. He cursed Jim, blood drooling from the corners of his mouth, and his eyes were terrified with the knowledge that life was running out. Then his head sank and his elbows gave under his weight and he settled back into the barn litter.

When Jim holstered his gun and swung around, he saw Moloch's body in the archway. He had been outside, waiting. Something had gone wrong with Gabe's plan, but at the moment Jim could not guess what it had been. Darket pulled Moloch's body out of the way and turned.

"They'll get their thousand dollars in hell," Darket said, "if Matt's got an account there."

"I'm in your debt again," Jim said.

"No," Darket said. "We're even."

Men drifted in from the street, attracted by the gunfire. Jim saddled up, not wanting to talk, not wanting to answer questions. As far as the Bakeoven men would ever know, a couple of gunslingers who had been hired by Matt Seery to kill Jim Sullivan had made their try and failed, not knowing they wouldn't have been paid if they had succeeded.

It was late when Jim reached the Triangle M and stripped gear from his horse, and the horse Betty had ridden to town, but there was a light in the house. He went toward it, filled with what he had to tell Troy. He stopped in the doorway, surprised.

She had taken off her riding-clothes and had put on a red robe that probably belonged to Betty. She was sitting in a rocking chair beside the table, sewing, piles of blue-flowered material all around her. It was the first time Jim had seen her sew.

She looked up, brown eyes bright with laughter. "Sit down before you fall down, Jim. I was hoping I'd get this finished before you got back because I wanted you to see me in a dress, but I'm glad you're here." He sat down and her face grew grave as she sensed something had happened. She said, "Tell me, Jim."

He told her about it. She went on sewing, one side of her tanned face lighted by the lamp. When he finished, she said, "I'm glad it's over. I would have been afraid for you as long as Gabe was alive. Bringing them here was a horrible mistake. It was like turning two mad dogs loose on the valley."

"I finally figured out what went wrong," Jim said. "Moloch didn't have sense enough to do any thinking for himself. Gabe was in the livery stable, knowing that I'd come for my horses, and he had Moloch waiting outside so they'd get me in a crossfire. They'd tied the hostler up, but Gabe didn't figure on Darket coming in with me and then he didn't know what to do. I guess he couldn't think of any way to keep Moloch from coming in. If he had, they'd have waited for another chance."

Troy nodded. "Funny about Gabe: Tough as he was, Molly was his weakness."

There was silence, then, except for the squeak of her chair as she rocked. Finally she said, "It's a strange feeling, Jim, but now that I'm back, it seems as if my father is alive. I found his Bible and the diary he wrote in every night. He had a lot of notes about the dam, its size and the tests he made and everything. I don't think it'll be hard to build. We'll do it the way you wanted to, all of us sharing the water and the work. It's what he wanted, too."

She glanced at him and brought her eyes back to her sewing again. "It's not easy for me to say I've been wrong, but I'm saying it."

When he didn't move, she went on, "I shouldn't have kissed you that night on the Dolores. A man has to take the lead in things like that. I won't change overnight, but I'm going to work on it."

"Maybe it's time I was taking the lead," he said.

He rose and walking to her, gripped her hands and pulled her to her feet, the scissors and needle and cloth falling unnoticed from her lap. He put his arms around her and kissed her. She was fire in his arms; hunger was alive in her and she wanted him to know. And when she drew her lips from his, she breathed, "Tomorrow, Jim, tomorrow."

She was a lot of woman, was Troy Manders. •

RELAX and ENJOY

MOVIES

Chase: ***Man on a Tightrope*** (20th-Fox). An exciting film of a man escaping across the Iron Curtain from Czechoslovakia into the Western Zone and freedom—not furtively and alone, but brazenly with his entire circus and troupe in tow. Frederic March is excellent as the proud owner of a once-proud circus which is permitted to exist only on sufferance of the governmental authorities, and the suspense mounts powerfully as preparations are made and unmade for the bold escape. Much of the footage was shot in Austria and Germany and lends authenticity and beauty to a good story with fine acting.

Suspense: ***Split Second*** (RKO) is a timely melodrama of six people captured by escaped desperadoes and held captive in the Nevada desert the night before an atomic bomb is to be exploded near by. The Army has evacuated the area, which makes it temporarily perfect for the desperadoes. The captives sweat out the night and their real natures appear from the strain of the waiting and the close association with a man who kills without hesitation.

Melodrama: ***The Glass Wall*** (Columbia). Refused admission into the United States because he has no visa and cannot prove his story that he saved the life of an American paratrooper during World War II, a stowaway named Peter Kuban (Vittorio Gassman) escapes from the ship which is to take him back to Trieste and begins a haunting search—somewhere in Times Square is a clarinetist named Tom, who can vouch for him. With only that slender clue to guide him, Peter starts a frantic search of the Times Square area, chased by the police, handicapped by broken ribs and his ignorance of how to locate a musician, but determined to die rather than be returned to Trieste. So begins one of the best thrillers in a long time.

RECORDS

Equipment: Today's records are of outstanding quality but the best efforts of the recording engineers are limited by the final reproduction in your home. Most people hear only half of what is actually on their records and damage them in the process. Experts blame the ***stylus*** (what we've always called needle) and agree the best styli are made of diamonds. A diamond stylus costs more originally but will last for 2,000 hours (a year of average use) or more, with no appreciable amount of wear, and records themselves last longer and sound better.

BOOKS

Adventure: ***The Alaskan*** (John Day, $4.00) by Robert Lund. Wade Carlson, big, broke and handsome, arrived in Seward, Alaska, in the spring of 1934, fleeing the depression at home. The first day he got a job as a stevedore, and from the docks he went on to try one after another typically Alaskan jobs—gold-prospector, carpenter, coastwise sailor, trapper, logger, salmon-fisher. Through his swiftly changing experiences is shown the broad Alaskan scene as it has developed during the past few years, and within the lusty story of Wade are one good rousing tale after another.

Fact: ***The Umpire Story*** (Putnam, $3.50) by James M. Kahn. The umpire's lot is a curious one, but not always as unhappy as some fans may think. He has a unique position in baseball, and in no other sport do both players and fans consider it not only a right but a bounden duty to work him over from time to time. This is an informal history of baseball umpiring from the beginning of baseball through the present, full of anecdotes and personality stories of umpires and players that make interesting reading. The author is a veteran of more than 25 years of sports-writing.

TELEVISION

Drama: Specializing in unusual stories, usually with a science-fiction flavor, ***Eye Witness*** is one of the best new shows to appear in a long time. The stories are as good as they are different, and the science-fiction doesn't involve trite rockets-to-the-moon fantasy, but a literate and dramatic approach that gives the show a taut suspense rare in TV's cut-and-dried formula shows. The cast varies but always includes top actors, and the camera work is some of the best to be seen on the channels. As tight and economical as the acting, it gets the most out of every scene.

Documentary: New York's Museum of Natural History has done an excellent job with a new show called ***Adventure***, which dips deep into the vast store of the Museum's film library for spectacular and unusual motion pictures ranging from spine-tingling shots of big-game hunting to hilarious sequences showing the courtship of tree toads. Sharing the time with the filmed material is a series of live features which reveal our modern civilization in the light of the past as explored through the Museum's collections. Some of the most breath-taking TV ever seen has been the sequences in the Hayden Planetarium, all of which makes this one of the most rewarding TV shows.

Bluebook

ADVENTURE IN FACT AND FICTION

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JUNE

FIRST SERGEANTS RUN THE ARMY

PAGE 69

There is no such thing as red tape when first sergeant talks to first sergeant—not when the I. G. inspection is coming up and the I. G. himself is a mere Lieutenant Colonel eager to win his eagles. Told by a Regular Army Major.

MATADORS DIE RICH

PAGE 26

A good matador makes fantastic money and lives like a king—until he's killed. I tried bullfighting, and came close to fame and fortune. And death.

LET'S BUILD A MAN'S CAR

PAGE 89

Most American cars today are designed to please women—who pay the bills anyway. But there are still a few males around with money to spend, and they have ideas of their own about car design.

BLUEBOOK'S COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

MATT SEERY'S TOWN

Matt had killed her father. Now, nine years later, Troy Manders had returned for vengeance, with Jim Sullivan fighting for her and against her . . . for her own good.

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