

15¢

THEY PACK A PUNCH!

FEBRUARY
1936

COMPLETE STORIES

CONTENTS
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1936

**A HARD-HITTING
HARD-DRINKING
HE-MAN
BOOZEHEAD
BY JAMES CLARKE**



Wouldn't you like to get thru the winter *without* **CATCHING COLD?**

Your chances of doing so are better if you will treat a cold for what it is — an infection calling for germicidal action

SOMETHING new is going on—something that will interest you if you are subject to colds and sore throat.

People who used to catch colds and dose them vainly, now take steps to fight having them at all. They have stopped planning to cure, and have begun trying to prevent these troublesome and often dangerous ailments.

Today, colds stand revealed in their true light. They are no more nor less than infections, involving germs. The way to treat such infections is with germicidal action which destroys bacteria.

We ask you to read carefully the results of several tests, made under medical supervision, during the winters of 1930-1931, 1931-1932, and 1934.

During these years, large groups of people were divided into two classes: those who gargled with Listerine twice a day or oftener, and those who did not gargle at all.

In a majority of tests it was shown that those who gargled with Listerine caught fewer colds than those who did not gargle with it. More-



over, when Listerine users did catch cold, the colds were milder, and were of shorter duration, than the infections of non-users.

Against sore throat Listerine was similarly successful—fewer cases for those who used it.

Bear in mind that these results did not spring out of one test made during one year but out of many tests made during several years. Thus does science lend corroboration to the testimony of literally thousands of satisfied Listerine users who have found this safe antiseptic so helpful in checking respiratory infections.

Don't wait till a cold takes hold of you, and you are forced to dose it with internal drugs of questionable effect. Get in the habit of using Listerine twice a day as a preventive measure. Listerine not only kills germs associated with sore throat and colds, on the mucous membrane of the oral cavity, but also renders the mouth clean and sweet and the breath agreeable. Lambert Pharmacal Company, St. Louis, Mo.

Listerine

-relieves Colds and Sore Throat

FATE Led Them to a Living Tomb!



"The light continued to burn!"



But Edward Eiskamp and Six Companions Cheated Death in Underground Maze

Edward Eiskamp who, with six companions, had this thrilling experience in the Sam's Point caves in the wilds of the Catskills.

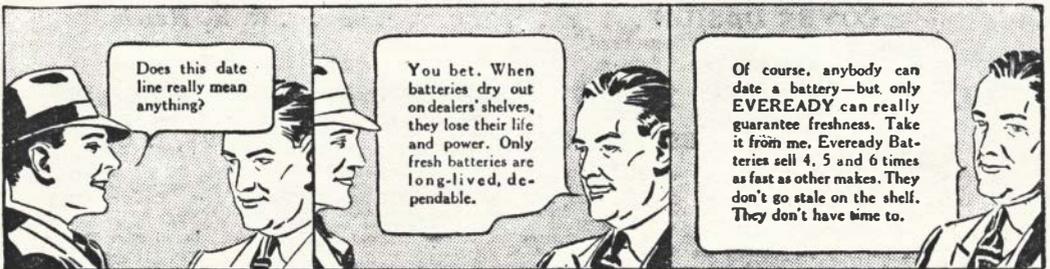


"*Splash . . .* our tiny rock-bound world went black! I had dropped our flashlight into a pool of icy water at the very bottom of that cavern-maze that burrows for miles in every direction under the Catskills. Without light, here was our living tomb. In weeks or months or years someone would find seven skeletons in this crypt.



"But the light continued to burn. Up through eight feet of water came the bright halo of hope. We fished up that flashlight, and those powerful *fresh* Eveready Batteries lighted our way back from Eternity."

EVEREADY BATTERIES
← ARE FRESH BATTERIES
ONE REASON WHY THEY LAST LONGER



COMPLETE STORIES

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+ + +

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A dainty lady is Daisy Dee

“No harsh cathartics for mine”, says she

But she takes Ex-Lax with pleasure and bliss

It's mild enough for the daintiest Miss

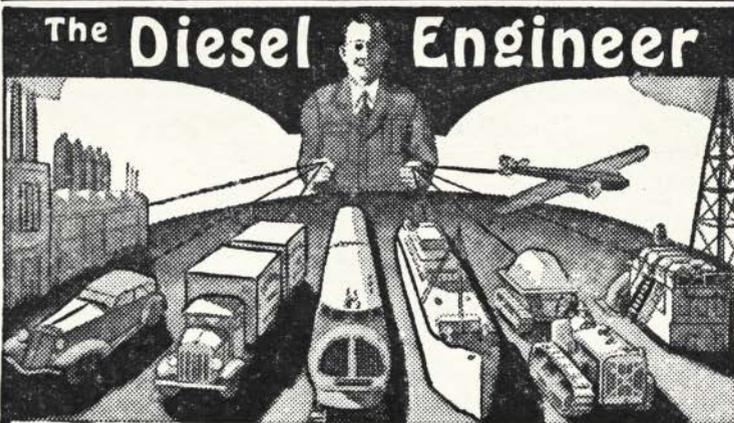
Smile if you like but take a tip from Daisy Dee and take Ex-Lax the next time you need a laxative. It will be bliss indeed, if you have been using nasty-tasting, rough-acting cathartics. Ex-Lax is a pleasure to take . . . it tastes just like smooth, delicious chocolate. But as kind as Ex-Lax is to your taste, it is kinder to your system. It is so mild and gentle that you will scarcely know you have taken a laxative. Yet Ex-Lax is completely effective, giving you thorough relief from constipation. It works overnight without over-action. Try Ex-Lax and you will understand why it is the largest selling laxative in the whole world—why more than 46 million boxes were used in America alone last year. A box costs only 10c at any drug store.

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when answering advertisements



HUNDREDS GET RELIEF from ATTACKS OF ASTHMA and BRONCHIAL COUGH

Thankful Letters Tell of Remarkable
Results Without Habit-Forming Drugs

**HELPFUL INFORMATION FREE
MAIL COUPON BELOW**

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A way has been found to combat asthma attacks and bronchial cough safely—without habit-forming drugs or opiates! A way so effective—that hundreds of sufferers report actually amazing results. A formula that sufferers may use—quickly—easily—right at home!

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Don't envy those who no longer are tortured by attacks. Benefit by their experience! Many found the way to restful nights and happy days—with Nacor. You, too, should give Nacor a chance to prove what it can do for you.

Read, below, just a few of the thousands of thankful letters which people have written about Nacor. These letters come from men and women in all walks of life—rich and poor alike. Nacor's worth is backed by proof! Let this proof guide you.

Mail the coupon today for a free copy of the most helpful booklet ever written for sufferers from asthma attacks and bronchial cough. This booklet, which has shown thousands the way to relief and comfort, will be mailed to you promptly. So act now.

Read Their Own Words

First Bottle Gave Relief

Jan. 14, 1930—"The first bottle of Nacor gave me astonishing relief. Haven't had a sign of asthma." Mrs. Eva Earnest, 301 W. Ottawa St., Paxton, Ill.

76-Year Old Man Fine

Dec. 8, 1933—"Am feeling fine. Have had no asthma since I took Nacor eight years ago." Jos. Thompson, 935 Tibbs Ave., Indianapolis, Ind.

Very Thankful

July 7, 1930—"As a former asthma sufferer, I am very thankful that I used Nacor. My trouble disappeared and has not returned." Clifford Hultgren, 4437 45th Ave., South, Minneapolis, Minn.

Had Asthma in Severe Form

July 10, 1930—"Am doing my housework again and am gaining back my weight." Mrs. M. Corn, 1317 Spruce St., Indianapolis, Indiana.

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Helps 16-Year Old Boy

Oct. 14, 1933—"My son Homer has asthma about eight years. I got the Nacor for him. He is in fine shape now, can work all day without getting tired." Mrs. H. T. Brannon, Madison, Ga.

Getting Along Fine

Aug. 14, 1933—"I am getting along fine. I cannot tell you how thankful I am for your Nacor. Mrs. Bessie Yerkes, 11320 Hale Ave., Chicago, Ill.

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NOT HAD A SIGN OF ASTHMA
SINCE TAKING NACOR

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"I had been a sufferer from asthma for twenty years. I was weak couldn't walk across the floor. I choked with every breath. We saw Nacor advertised and sent for a bottle. I haven't had a sign of asthma since taking the first half bottle. I am feeling fine." Mrs. T. L. McFarland, Rural Route 2, Box 430, Boulder, Col.



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31x2.50-22	2.90	34x3 1/2	4.25
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31x2.50-24	2.95	36x3 1/2	5.50
31x2.50-25	2.95	36x4 1/2	6.00

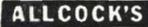
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Boozehead

Carey Hunter takes the hard way—the two-fisted way!

By James Clarke

CHAPTER I. TORCH SONG.

YOU don't need to be in Tahiti or some Spiggoty-American republic to go to hell in a pair of white duck pants. Carey Hunter did it handsomely in New Orleans, Louisiana, U. S. A.

He had a job in the office of the dock board, for which many people envied him on account of the sizable pay check he drew every week. To Carey, it was just so much time spent in jail. Come evening and Carey started rambling. He knew about a hundred bartenders by their first names. Gamblers, reporters, bums, ship captains, cops, businessmen, and blues singers knew Carey by his first name. A lot of them had been drunk with him.

He liked bright eyes and silk stockings as well as you do, and he



was a soft-hearted, open-handed sort of a fellow who had a hard time saying "no." All of his flames took him for more or less, but the little girl at the Sugar Club was the one who really got to him. At eleven thirty and two in the morning they



pushed a piano out on the floor and this girl was sitting on it. Her name had been McClosky, but she called herself "Yvette." She had a soft, husky voice and she sang looking right down into your eyes. Carey was crazy about her—so crazy he

wanted to marry her. But Yvette wasn't that kind of girl. She borrowed two hundred dollars from him and went North with his mother's scarab ring and another man.

Carey had a date with her at midnight. It was winter, and he went in all dressed up in a new blue suit and gave everybody a grin and a "hello." But none of his friends grinned back. The manager took him aside and told him. Carey went white and quiet, but all he said was:

"Thanks, Jack. What are you drinking?"

The news had spread around and people at the bar looked at him, but no one said anything except a man with a purple-veined nose and heavy red folds of flesh drooping from his chin. He was Carey's boss, a politician, and brother of a bigger politician. He was in the Sugar Club with his brother and another politician who was so big he had his bodyguards along. All but the bodyguards had been drinking and felt pretty good. When Carey's boss saw him he laughed. He said:

"Hello, sucker!"

Carey said "Hello," and his boss turned to the big-shot politician. "Meet the sugar daddy," he said. "He works for me for seventy-five a week, and he thought he could be hot poppa to these night-club frails. Now he's wondering why one of 'em run out on him! Stand back, handsome, and let the gents get a look at you!"

Carey gave the big-shot politician a tight grin. "I only get what I earn, but you can ask around here which one is the tightwad—old three chins or me."

The bar was lined with people who knew Carey's boss and his ways. They laughed plenty and Carey's boss couldn't take it. He waddled forward, sputtering.

"Damn young pup! I'll show you that——"

He swore and swung a fat fist heavily. Carey ducked and his feet shifted on the smooth floor. It had been a long time since he had boxed for the amateur welterweight championship of the city, but he had not forgotten everything.

"I've been wanting to do this for a long time," he said, and knocked his boss pants-over-appetite.

"Get him!" said his boss's brother.

"Yeah, give him the works!" said the big politician.

A husky bodyguard grabbed Carey's left arm, another his right. "Outside, punk!" They marched him out through a crowd that stood silent and shaken. They already knew what these bodyguards did to people.

They walked Carey into an alley. One of the guards let go Carey's arm and whispered to the other. Carey just stood there waiting for it. Then the other guard let go.

"Beat it!" he said.

The first guard held out his hand. "Shake first. If the big shot wasn't paying me six Cs a week I'd have done that little thing two hours ago."

AT dawn Carey was drinking a gin fizz with a bartender by the name of Fritz. It had been a large evening—part celebration and part to forget what Yvette had done to him.

"Well," Fritz said, "what you going to do now, Mr. Hunter? Jobs are scarcer than feathers on a shark."

"I don't want a job. I want to drink. Look, Fritz. I just remembered I bought me a shanty boat one night last fall when I was tight. Seemed like a good idea. She's up on blocks there on the mud flats over the levee—where all those other boats are. They tell me you can get by over there without money."

Fritz nodded. "They fish river cat and swipe coal off the barges and dog big logs that get loose from the rafts upriver. They get by pretty good."

"Sounds like what the doctor ordered."

"Most of them have already gone to hell when they get there," Fritz said. "Some of 'em are on the dodge. It's Federal ground over the levee

and no cop had better go over there. They don't give a damn for nothing."

"No alarm clocks, no bosses. Nobody cares how drunk you get."

"No," Fritz said. "For a guy that don't want to be nothing but a souse, it's O. K."

Carey disregarded the half-contemptuous, half-anxious look in Fritz's eyes.

"I'll move over to-day."

Fritz took off his white jacket. "I'll take you over and introduce you to a friend of mine—Old Rose. She's got no future, but she used to be queen of the French Quarter when the Quarter was a hot spot. I want you should get started right over there."

CHAPTER II.

HANG-OVER.

ONE August day Carey roused with hot light on his eyelids, a smell of tar in his nostrils, and a buzzing in his head. The hot light meant that it was late afternoon. The smell of tar meant that he was on the deck of his boat. The buzzing meant that he had been very, very drunk. He kept his eyes shut, trying not to waken any further. Vaguely he remembered being in "Old Rose's" shanty boat the night before, and that her man, who worked sometimes as a stevedore, had brought in a couple of gallons of something. By the taste in Carey's mouth it must have been liquid brass.

He had a feeling that something unusual had wakened him and was bothered until a voice sounded.

"He's in there asleep, the bum! Carey! Hey, Hunter!"

The voice was clear and loud, and sounded as if the speaker were used to getting what he wanted, whether other people liked it or not. Carey

was annoyed because he did not like "Dude" Bogan. He wondered why he had come. There came the quick voice—like a bird's chirp—of Ben Goldmark, the pawnbroker, whose comings and goings across the levee no one knew much about, though there were many rumors.

"Wait a minute! Why didn't you tell me you were getting this Carey Hunter, so I could say 'no' right away? He is positively not the man."

"Why ain't he?" said Bogan.

"For this we want somebody to depend on—some bum or somebody that has done work like this before. This Carey Hunter is a high-class fella."

Bogan laughed. "The hell! He'll do it. And he's safe—not dumb enough to spill anything, and too damn drunk to want to know too much. I don't pick any wrong guys for my jobs, Ben."

"I ask you—has he been in jail? Has he ever been in some mob? Did he run liquor, even, when there was prohibition? I tell you he is high-class. He used to come into my shop and I would lend him something on his watch. He never gave me no arguments about how much or what interest. And every time he would come back and claim his watch again. 'Thank you, Ben,' he used to say to me. 'You're a great little guy, Ben.' What do we want with a fella like that, Bogan?"

"He may have been a gent once," Bogan said, "but he's just a booze-head now. That guy would do anything for a drink of liquor."

"He is that way, huh? I heard he was drinking plenty, but I didn't know it was that way with him. We might do something with this fella yet, Bogan."

"I picked him, didn't I? That guy don't drink—he laps it up. He'll do

this, or anything else we want of him. And there won't be no trouble afterward. Quit yapping and we'll go wake him up."

"If he is not dirty," Goldmark said, as they climbed the steps, "I don't want nothing to do with him. But if he is dirty, he is O. K. When a guy like him goes dirty he is not high-class any more, he is a bum."

All this Carey heard like voices speaking in a dream. Bogan prodded him with the toe of a heavy shoe and he sat up, blinking.

"What do you want?"

"Hello, Mr. Hunter," Goldmark said. "How is life treating you?"

Carey climbed to his feet and wished he had a drink to keep him from shaking. He made a small effort to dust off his grimy clothes before offering his hand.

"Can't kick, Ben. How are things with you?"

The pawnbroker shrugged, but Bogan cut in before he could answer.

"Come on down to my boat."

Carey did not like the way he spoke. He looked Bogan up and down, and said:

"I've got better things to do with my time. If you want anything of me you can spill it right here."

Bogan smiled. Carey was tall, but Bogan's eyes were on a level with his. Bogan's eyes were gray and wide and shallow, like the eyes of some cats. His long mouth did not widen; the lips pulled back away from his teeth.

"You'll come," he said. "I got a jug of corn down there."

Carey looked hard at Bogan and liked him even less. But he was shaking; his stomach was jelly inside his ribs. He could feel a drink of raw corn liquor on his dry lips already. But still he didn't move. He had seen that all the time they stood there Ben Goldmark was look-

ing him up and down with little shrewd eyes. He looked at himself. His white ducks were filthy, and so was his shirt. He could not remember whether it was a week or ten days since he had bathed. Goldmark was watching him shrewdly, as if wondering. Bogan still smiled a little as if sure of the answer. Carey tried to pull himself up straight, but could not make it. His shoulders slumped and he grinned shakily.

"I never refused a drink yet," he said.

CHAPTER III.

FOUR HARD GUYS.

AS they walked along planks laid on the muddy ground, the sun went down behind them. The heavy willow clumps along the river turned to blocks of shadow. A lantern burning yellowly in Bogan's shanty boat showed pictures of half-nude girls and fighters on the walls, where there also hung a long-barreled Luger pistol, a short automatic, and a shotgun. Two strangers sat among the flickering shadows. One, a hulking figure with blue shirt open halfway down a hairy chest, was "Monk" Anson. A slighter, smooth-faced, smooth-voiced man turned out to be Ben Goldmark's brother, Captain Goldmark. Carey remembered that he had lost a ship in a mysterious wreck concerning which the insurance people had raised a howl. People said that Federal men had been watching the Goldmarks, and that the brothers were lying low.

These things wandered through Carey's mind, but the jug of whitish liquor on the table drew him like a magnet. Bogan laughed.

"Go to it! Get your ears unstopped!"

When Carey lifted the jug his hands shook so that the liquor

slopped over his lips and ran down his chin.

"Hey!" Bogan said. "You tryin' to take a bath?"

Carey scarcely heard the men laugh. As the raw whisky ran down his throat he shivered twice. Then his hands grew steadier.

"Sit down."

It was not an invitation, but a command. Bogan's gesture toward a box was abrupt and like his words. He was the youngest man in the room, but he was running things. As he seated himself Carey felt his vague anger against Bogan grow stronger. Bogan turned to Ben Goldmark.

"You do the word-slinging."

Ben Goldmark, small, and hunched, and big-nosed, on a broken chair, smiled at Carey in a fatherly way.

"We are going to give you a hundred dollars," he said. "Just like that. You don't have to do nothing but keep your mouth shut."

"Big-hearted Ben," Carey said gently.

"Captain Goldmark," the pawnbroker said, waving a thin hand toward his brother, "is mate on the *Polyphemus*. You know her?"

Carey nodded. The day before, he had watched the rusty-sided tramp with the fancy name drop anchor nearly opposite the settlement of shanty boats. He remembered that she ran irregularly between New Orleans and the Caribbean ports. Her owner-skipper, Captain Janvier, had a good reputation. Ben Goldmark was looking with steady, bright eyes.

"To-morrow, or maybe Friday, they will need a man on the *Polyphemus*. You don't have to go to sea or nothing. All you have got to do is row out there, and Captain Goldmark will sign you on. That night

you will be left for anchor watch. If you go to sleep——"

Goldmark leaned closer to Carey and spoke slowly and clearly.

"If you go to sleep, that is all the better. If you are awake you will not see nothing anyway. A fella with a bandage over his eyes can't see good. He can't yell when he has got adhesive tape over his mouth. A smart fella like you is not going to get himself hurt by making trouble. You understand me?"

"Sure," Carey said. "And when they come and find me, what do I tell 'em?"

Ben Goldmark shrugged. "Anything. You could tell the truth, even. Somebody come up behind and grabbed you, and before you knew it they had you tied. They will take you to the police station, maybe. But that will be all right. You ain't never been in jail and there is no way to make a liar out of you."

Carey grinned, and shoved a straggling lock of yellow hair out of his eyes. "Sounds easy," he said.

"My boy," said Ben Goldmark, "we are doing you a big favor. A hundred dollars, and you don't have to break no laws!" He paused, and added, looking straight at Carey: "A smart fella like you would understand it is unhealthy to remember who might have tied you up."

Carey looked at Monk Anson, and Captain Goldmark, and Bogan. They were all staring back at him.

"Yes," he said. "I can see that."

HE reached behind him for the jug. He had never seen four harder men than those in the room. The calm, casual way in which they planned piracy amused Carey. He said:

"How about this hundred bucks? Do I get it now?"

"Take us for suckers?" Bogan's clear voice rose angrily. "You get it when we give it to you."

"That's not business," Carey said. "Seems to me I ought to get half down."

Bogan jumped up and his shallow cat's eyes stared down into Carey's face.

"For a lousy bum," Bogan said, "you want a hell of a lot. You'll take what you get and like it, see?"

Carey had been kidding with them, but all of a sudden he was mad.

"Who do you think you're talking to, Bogan?"

For an instant Bogan's eyes blazed. Then he laughed suddenly and jerked a thumb over his shoulder.

"On your way, boozehead! And if you're drunk when we send for you, I'll take you apart like a dollar watch!"

Carey got up, bringing his face within a foot of Bogan's.

"Thanks for the drink," he said. "You can stick your job down your throat, and the ship, too. I wouldn't touch this proposition if you laid your hundred on the line right now."

For a moment Bogan did not move. Then his chin went forward and his hand drew back.

"Rat on us, will you!" His right fist shot toward Carey's jaw. Though Carey ducked, he felt the force of the punch on the side of his head. His neck snapped with the jolt, and he did not get his guard up in time to keep Bogan from sinking a following left into his ribs.

The blows hurt and Carey covered up as he backed away. Bogan's eyes changed to a curiously shiny look. His lips drew back into a set smile and he followed Carey, throwing punches that drove him back against a wall.

Carey slid sidewise and got into the open. A chair went over. Somebody moved the lantern out of the way. But the other men did not speak or interfere. Carey fainted Bogan and tried to cross with his right. He missed and tried again. Bogan clipped him on the ear and made him back away. Bogan fought as he moved in ordinary life, with a swagger, as if contemptuously sure of himself.

CAREY could feel his arms wanting to droop, and he couldn't hit what he aimed at. He couldn't time his punches, either. There was still too much liquor in him. He waited for Bogan and tried to nail him with a short left, but his fist shot over Bogan's shoulder and something caught him under the chin and lifted him off his feet.

He landed on his shoulders, rolled over, got up shakily. He was in darkness, on deck. The cabin door through which Bogan had knocked him was before him. Bogan came through it. A blow landed in the pit of Carey's stomach. Another found his eye and he went over backward.

This time he hardly knew when he struck. There was a jar that seemed to tear his body apart and his head was a blur of dizzy pain and lights. There came a thud beside him. A voice said:

"Where is the drunken bum?"

Bogan had knocked him off the deck. Bogan had jumped over after him. There was mud under his cheek. Carey tried to rise and a terrific kick nearly caved in his ribs. He covered his face with his hands as the heel of a badly aimed foot brushed his neck. He had to get up and fight. Forcing himself with all

the will left in him he struggled to his feet and put up his hands.

Bogan did not bother to fight. He slapped down Carey's guard with one hand and seized his shirt front. Taking time to make each one count, he chopped short blows into Carey's face.

The mangling of his features Carey did not feel, but each time Bogan's fist landed, pain flashed sharply through his skull. Nobody could stand this very long. Blows he struck at Bogan did no damage. He got his hand around Bogan's left arm and shoved.

The front of his shirt ripped out in Bogan's hand. As Carey staggered back, he put up his hands again. It was very dark and he did not see the blow that knocked him off his feet.

Carey crashed into branches. He threw out his hands to steady himself, missed his hold and sprawled flat on his back among the willows. As if from far off he heard voices calling. Bogan answered from near by. He swore as he beat the willows, hunting Carey. The sounds moved farther away.

Only one thought was in Carey's battered mind: to fight Bogan. With great difficulty he got to his feet and tried to get out of the willow clump. But the thick, elastic stems blocked him. When he finally stumbled into the open, he did not see Bogan. Carey groped on through the darkness, slipping and stumbling on the muddy ground. He did not think of which direction he took or how long he kept going. He was actually out on his feet, upheld only by the blind, dogged idea of going on with the fight.

When, at last, he tripped over a wooden step and fell heavily, Carey lay still.

CHAPTER IV.

MODERN MIRACLE.

CAREY opened one eye, but the other was fast shut. It felt the size of five eyes. He saw a wrinkled, brown face with bright, black, gentle eyes. The head above was fringed with gray hair. The man had on a clean, faded khaki shirt and a black string tie. He smiled, but approached warily.

"You reached out and hit me in your sleep. You must have been fighting before we found you on our steps."

Carey's jaw ached when he grinned. "I must have been," he said. "You wouldn't have a drink handy, would you?"

The man shook his head and his eyes grew troubled. "I haven't."

Carey hurt all over, but the way his system cried out for alcohol made the pain as nothing. He would have to get up and go over to Old Rose's. But getting up seemed a terrible lot of work just now. He heard a rustle of cloth and, turning over, saw a girl approaching with a tray held before her. She could not have been more than sixteen. Her fresh, tanned skin had the glow that comes only from frequent washing. Her hands were clean and so was her white cotton dress.

She put the tray on a chair and stood looking at Carey with clear eyes. Her mouth was full and tender, and there was nothing in her expression of either criticism or disgust. There was only sympathy. The man said:

"This is my daughter, Katherine. My name is Millard Hudson."

Carey stared. They were newcomers over the levee, and he had not realized how different they were

from the others. His grin came suddenly.

"My name used to be Carey Hunter, but I'm not sure what it is to-day. I feel like a couple of other people."

They smiled back at him. The girl's eyes had the straight-at-you look of children.

"You need breakfast," she said. "I'm sorry there's only salt pork instead of bacon."

"It looks great to me," Carey said, but he knew he couldn't eat. He waited till Katherine went away.

"I've got to have a drink. I hate to bother you, but if you'll go over to Old Rose—Mrs. Gleason—"

Millard Hudson shook his head. "Your body's a mass of bruises. You may have internal injuries, and I'm not going to have you dying on my hands. Lie still and try to sleep."

Carey tried to forget his twitching nerves and the feeling like rats gnawing his stomach. A fly walked across his nose and pricked his raw nerves till he wanted to yell.

"I've got to have a drink!" he said, and started to get up.

Millard Hudson shoved him back and it seemed odd to Carey that the frail man could do it so easily. He put Carey back twice more and finally lashed him to the bunk with a piece of light line. Delirium tremens began with an army of bright-green cockroaches that sat around and jeered. For twenty-four hours Carey lived in a world full of strange and terrible things.

But when he came to himself, weak as a kitten, he felt differently than he had felt in a long, long time. He felt at peace. He lay there listening to Katherine scrubbing clothes on deck, and the far-off hoot of boats. After a while Millard Hudson came in and sat down beside him.

"You've been darn decent," Carey said. "Even gave me a bath. There's no way I can pay you back. I don't know what to say."

"There's nothing to say. About all we can do in this world is help people when we can. Nobody is strong enough to get through life without help."

It was strange to hear anybody talk this way on the wrong side of the levee. The Hudsons were strange people to be here. Millard Hudson said:

"You don't seem to be the kind that gets into trouble easily."

Carey knew that Hudson was thinking about the beating, but he didn't speak of Bogan. Just to think about what had happened made him hot.

"Anybody can get into trouble around here," he said.

Millard Hudson said: "We didn't have any unpleasantness coming downriver. These people who seem so bad—they're kinder and more generous than people we call respectable."

CAREY looked at him, asking questions. Millard Hudson said that he had been president of a flour-milling company in an Illinois river town. He understood milling, but not finance, which he left in the hands of a cousin. Persuaded by the cousin, he invested company funds unwisely and lost them—and was indicted for embezzlement. The cousin testified against him at the trial.

He was acquitted, but his reputation was ruined. People he had known since boyhood refused to speak to him. Katherine had a bad time at school. Millard Hudson was sixty-two years old, and his health had been ruined by overwork. But he chose to drift down the Missis-

sippi for better or worse rather than accept the contemptuous charity of people who despised him.

When he bought the boat he told Katherine that relatives had agreed to take her in. Katherine was just short of her fifteenth birthday, but her thoughts, in many ways, were not a child's. Millard Hudson said that she did not even look like a child as she sat straight and still in her chair.

"Aunt Helen thinks you're a bad man," she said.

"She does, but that has nothing to do with it. You've got to have a home."

"You'll be all alone. There won't be anybody to take care of you."

"I'll get along very well."

"I'm going with you. Father, I'm going, too!"

To Carey the Hudsons' trip was a miracle. They passed the whirling eddies and scraped snags that would have ripped the bottom open, and rode out storms. They met wanted men hiding in the river brakes, tough trappers and tougher men who kept water-front dives. Both the river pirates and the drifting river rats would have liked to have their boat. The wild crews of the tow boats pulling long strings of barges saw that Katherine was beautiful. But no one molested them; no one tried to lay a finger on the girl.

"They saw that we didn't mean any harm, and they were kind to us," Millard Hudson said.

"How long," Carey asked him, "do you figure on staying here?"

Millard Hudson frowned in the lamplight. "Quite a while. Our money's about gone and I can't earn much. My blood pressure is too high for me to live much longer, and I want to give Katherine a high-school education. It should help her

make her way and it's all I have to give. We'll stay here that long, at least."

"It's none of my business," Carey said. "But if she was my daughter, I'd pull out of here to-morrow. Some of these rough babies are liable to get a yen."

CHAPTER V.

MAN HUNT.

MILLARD HUDSON had gone to work, and in the cool of early morning Katherine was cutting Carey's hair with a safety razor and a pair of scissors. They had been laughing about the way Carey looked in an old-fashioned nightgown with Millard Hudson's bath robe over it. The sleeves hit him at the elbows. Katherine was like her direct, childlike eyes; she had not yet realized what it meant to be a woman. As her warm fingers touched him, Carey knew the intimate friendliness of a sister. He had no sisters, and could scarcely remember his mother. Girls he had known around town had long forgotten what innocence meant—if they had ever known the word. This was a new feeling and he liked it.

Katherine handed him a mirror. "Is that all right? Father hasn't any more hair than a monk. But you've got pretty hair and I want to make it look nice."

A deep chuckle came from the doorway. The woman who stood there wore a loose cotton dress that was comparatively clean. Her hair was gray, her face wrinkled, but she carried herself erect with head lifted, and every line of her expression showed a worldly-wise good humor.

"Hello, Rose," Carey said.

The woman came in a little heavily, for she was stout, though not

quite fat. She eyed Katherine and Carey as if amused.

"Mrs. Gleason," Carey said, "this is Miss Hudson."

Rose thrust out a hand with three fingers amber-colored from tobacco. "Pleased to meet you, honey."

She turned back to Carey, and the amusement went out of her face, leaving it anxious. "I got to talk to you, son."

"I'll go up on deck," Katherine said quickly. "You'd better get back in bed, Mr. Hunter."

Rose followed her with appraising eyes.

"Pretty nice! Pretty dog-gone nice! You pick 'em good, son."

Carey was angry, but there was no use in trying to explain innocence to old Rose. She was, in her way, paying Katherine a compliment. He said:

"What's on your mind?"

"You too sick to get up and travel?"

Carey grinned. "I feel swell, but the girl and her old man think I need a rest, so I'm staying till they tell me to get up. They think I need taking care of."

Rose laughed and drew from a dress pocket a brown paper cigarette which she licked down before lighting it.

"You're a cute son of a gun! I bet they even bring you your meals in bed. You ain't going to want to give it up, but you got to——"

Rose paused and one beautifully arched eyebrow rose as she listened; first a man's voice, then Katherine's, then the man's again. And the man was Bogan. Carey could not hear the words, but he knew what Bogan would likely say to Katherine. He started to get up.

"Lie down!" Rose whispered, so fiercely that he stopped where he was.

The next moment Katherine came in carrying her book. She was not in a hurry, or blushing. She walked calmly and with poise. Many an older woman would have made a less dignified retreat.

"I'm sorry to disturb you," she said. "That man——"

Carey was sitting upright. "What did he say?"

Katherine hesitated. "I'd rather not tell you. But it's all right. I don't pay any attention to men like that. If you don't pay any attention, they go away."

She had barely spoken when Bogan's clear, loud voice came up to them. "Think you're too good for us? You're just another little skirt over the levee, sister! I'll be seeing you."

CAREY swung his legs off the bunk and was instantly shoved back so violently that his head cracked against the wall. Rose glared down at him.

"Will you lie still, or do I have to crown you?"

A small window was close by. Parting the white curtain cautiously, Rose looked out.

"He's got that Monk with him. They're going down toward his boat."

Carey sprang up.

"I'm going to get him told right now! Katherine's one girl Bogan's got to lay off of."

Rose blocked his path. One side of the mouth which had not yet lost all its beauty, curled with amusement.

"Yeah?" she said. "You going to fight the both of them in your nightie?"

Carey looked down at the billowing folds of the nightgown, and at his arms bound by the too-short sleeves of the bath robe. A grin

slowly stretched his mouth. Katherine was laughing and the sound was music chiming against Old Rose's whisky-hoarse chuckle.

"Climb back in that bunk and listen to me," Old Rose said.

Rose sat down beside him, flicked the ash from her cigarette and shot a look down the cabin to make sure that Katherine could not hear.

"It's a damn good thing," she said, "you didn't stick your neck out. Those guys are out to get you, son. They ain't sure whether you blew or not, but they keep looking for you just the same.

Bogan sent a guy to hang around police headquarters to see if you showed up there. I'm telling you, you better lam as soon as it's dark. And don't stop running till you're in Alabama."

They were afraid that Carey had gone to the police with the story of their plan to raid the *Polyphemus*. They wanted to be sure he was out of the way, and if they found him they would very likely kill him. Carey nodded soberly.

"Thanks, Rose."

She got heavily up and crushed her cigarette out under her heel.

"O. K., son. Don't come back, savvy? You're a good kid, even when you're

drunk, and I'd hate to find you in the willows with your insides leaking out. I got to blow, now."

She waved a hand toward Katherine and her hoarse voice boomed. "So long, honey!"

Katherine crossed the room and smiled at Carey.

"She's rough," Katherine said, "but she's nice."

"She sticks by her friends," Carey said. "Do something for me, will you, Kay?"

"Of course I will. Would you like a cup of tea?"

Carey shook his head. "Stay inside as much as you can."

"You mean those men? You're afraid they might do something to me? Father——"

"He thinks all men are like him. But keep out of sight any way—just to please me."

Katherine smiled. "All right. But you mustn't worry about me."

The Hudsons had picked up a banjo and all day long Carey lay around plunking out lazy negro tunes on it and amusing Katherine with stories of his boyhood. When Millard Hudson came home at dusk he was waiting for him on deck.

The willows were golden-green and the broad river

DO YOU KNOW—

1. Why free theater tickets are called "Annie Oakleys"?
2. Why loin of beef is called "sirloin"?
3. What is the only bird that can fly backward and also rise straight in the air?
4. What is the fastest shutter speed on a modern camera and what is its practical value?
5. What common garden shrub, which is associated with old-fashioned gardens, had its origin in Persia?
6. What mineral does not come out of the earth?
7. Are there many shooting stars, and why do not all come to earth?
8. Where is the largest meteor fall in the world?
9. What magic powers the Kaffirs ascribe to meteors?
10. When artificial iron was first produced?
11. What common liquid can become a true mineral?
12. In antique times gems were supposed to have mystic properties and were supposed to be worn on different days. What were the stones for the seven days of the week, and why?
13. When gems were worn as a form of magic to ward off disease, did the size of the stone have any meaning?
14. What famous diamond of to-day had its origin in ancient times?
15. What great diamond has disappeared?

Answers on page 82

looked like yellow skin drawn over muscles that writhed and rippled underneath. A little below, the *Polythemus* lay disreputable in her streaks of rust. From here she looked deserted and Carey spent an instant wondering what Bogan and the Goldmarks wanted aboard her. He turned abruptly.

"You've got to get Katherine out of here," he said.

Millard Hudson smiled. "Have I?"

"I'm not fooling. You don't know these people. You think you do, they'll change on you just like that!" Carey snapped his fingers. "A fellow passed some words with Katherine this afternoon and he says he's coming back. He's nobody to have around your daughter, Mr. Hudson, and you aren't going to be able to keep him off. There's nothing to do but get out."

Still Millard Hudson smiled, not taking him seriously. "We can live here even though I haven't found work. We couldn't live in the city."

"You can get by some way."

Hudson shook his head and spoke patiently. "I can see you're trying to advise me for my own good, but you're wrong, Hunter. As long as people behave themselves decently, they don't get into trouble."

"But listen——"

Millard Hudson interrupted. "Katherine has called us to dinner three times. Let's not spoil a good meal by arguing about unpleasant things."

Carey looked at Katherine standing in the cabin door, then back at her father. Millard Hudson seemed worn and old, but the set of his features was firm. There was simply no way to change his mind.

"I've got to go," Carey said, and plunged down the steep steps.

CHAPTER VI.

SUICIDE FOR A THIRST.

OLD ROSE was busy with a frying pan when Carey came in.

"Hey," she said, "didn't I tell you to wait for dark? Bogan will open you up like a can of sardines."

"To hell with Bogan! Got anything to drink?"

Rose chuckled. "Look over there in the cupboard. I've heard of guys dying of thirst, but you're the only one I ever knew to commit suicide for a drink."

Carey took a big stone jug out of the cupboard, sniffed, and tilted it. Then he gasped. "What—what do you call this, Rose?"

"That's Irish whisky, you mug. I just made it myself."

"Out of what—ethyl gas?"

"Potatoes. If you don't like it, put it back. The old man and me was going to drink it to-night, only he had a call to work on a boat. Leave him some, anyhow."

Carey took another snort and put down the jug. "I could leave him two good jags and still be plenty drunk myself. What makes you think Bogan's man enough to open me up?"

"What makes me think——" Rose relapsed into a disgusted silence, which she did not break until she had filled plates for Carey and herself and they were sitting at the table.

"You been sober so long," she said grimly, "that you've gone soft in the head. You're a good kid, but you don't even know what 'tough' means. When it comes to stuff like that you wouldn't stand a show with me—let alone Bogan and the Goldmarks. Why, Bogan killed a man when he was only sixteen, son."

"Maybe," Carey said. "But I'm

sticking around. Bogan beat me up the other night. I'm not going to let him think he's got me licked."

Rose put both elbows on the table and looked hard at Carey. She chewed as she talked.

"Think this is amateur stuff? Think it's got anything to do with a guy having guts or not? You don't know nothing, son. How come Bogan to beat you up?"

There was no reason to hold this back from Rose. As he told it, her eyes narrowed behind the blue eddy from her cigarette.

"The *Polyphemus*, huh? I heard they got hold of Pete Romero's fast boat this afternoon. That means they'll pull it off to-night, and it's big stuff or Ben Goldmark wouldn't fool with it."

"What could they get off the *Polyphemus*?"

"They tell me this Janvier that runs her is thick with the spigs down in Cuba and them places. They say he helped many a one lam out of there. He might have the whole damn treasury aboard."

Carey laughed.

"Quit it!" Old Rose said. "When guys like Ben Goldmark and Dude Bogan go after something, they ain't got time to mess around. If it came to blowing you in two with a shotgun, they'd just as soon do it as not. You eat your supper and lam. I'll give you a bottle to take along."

"I'm not going, Rose."

She snorted. "A skirt! I should 'a' known you'd fell for the kid over there. You're afraid Bogan will get her."

There was no use in trying to explain to Rose how he felt. Carey shrugged.

"Anyhow, I'm sticking around."

Instead of arguing, Rose smiled. "A man loses what sense he was born with when a woman gets to

him. Did I ever tell you about the diamond ring I got off the district attorney?"

"No."

"Pass me that jug!"

A LITTLE after ten o'clock "Wobbly Bill" Spooner came in. A great soap-box orator in his day, he had been hit over the head so many times that he lived in a fog. He held out a note to Carey.

"He's a good man. Gave me a meal for carrying it. I got delayed. Delayed, see? There was a crap game. Pink Simmons and Gonzales and Louy Cornu——"

His voice rambled on while Carey unfolded the paper. The trim, neat handwriting seemed to jump off the page and into his mind.

Dear Hunter: I hope you won't feel that I am imposing on you. And I also hope most sincerely that you are at least half sober.

The fact is that I'm in something of a predicament. Some men, who are waiting for me now, have offered me a job as watchman on a steamer lying near here—the *Polyphemus*.

The job is a godsend to us, but it worries me to leave Katherine alone. She insists that she's not afraid and that she will be all right, but I'm a little concerned.

Will you be kind enough to keep an eye on her and see that she gets along? It's a lot to ask of a comparative stranger, but there is no one else to whom I can turn. Sincerely,

Millard Hudson.

"Love letter?" Rose asked. "Why don't you run off with her, Carey?"

"Shut up and let me think!"

Carey knew he was some drunk by the way his eyes hurt when he looked at Wobbly Bill. He wondered if he were sober enough to handle this thing. He had to be.

"Bill," he said. "When did Mr. Hudson give you that note?"

"What time? The girl was still

washing dishes. I got delayed. There was a crap game——”

The Hudsons' boat was dark, but when Carey knocked Katherine's voice came clear and unafraid.

“Who is it?”

“Carey Hunter. I've got to see you.”

He heard a bolt drawn, and then Katherine stood before him, wearing a flowered kimono. She looked anxious.

“Father's made you go to all this trouble!”

“Excuse me,” Carey said, “but this is no place to be standing in a night-gown.”

He pushed her gently back and bolted the door. As they stood face to face, Katherine's nose wrinkled and her eyes doubted him.

“Yes,” Carey said. “I've been drinking and I'm sorry. But I know what I'm doing. You've got to go to a safe place until I can get your father off that ship.”

“Off the ship? But he has a job!”

“Those men that hired your father are crooks, Kay. And there's some kind of rough stuff going to be pulled to-night on the *Polyphemus*.”

Carey did not remind her that Bogan had seen her and would come back. He did not say that they would probably not let her father get off the ship alive. The alarm in Katherine's widening eyes made him wish he had not had to tell her anything.

“You're sure?” she said.

“Some day I'll tell you how I come to know about it. But I know, Kay.”

“Then hurry! Never mind about me. Just go and warn father!”

“You don't know me very well, Kay. But you've got to do what I say. This boat is no place to be. I'm going to leave you with Old Rose till we get back.”

Her clear, unwavering eyes looked at him for a long time. “All right, Carey.”

She did not know she had called him Carey, but he felt good about it all the time he stood on deck waiting for her. It meant that she trusted him. Rose was sitting at the table rolling cigarettes out of a cigar box full of tobacco that looked like spinach. Carey had smoked them, and they tasted like insulation burning off a hot wire. Rose grinned.

“You come for my blessing, or what?”

“Never mind kidding,” Carey said. “I'm asking you to do something and it means plenty. Take care of Katherine for a while.”

“Ain't you man enough to take care of her yourself?”

“Listen! They've hired her father for anchor watch on the *Polyphemus*, and Katherine's all alone. I want her safe when I come back, and there's nobody but you can keep these rats away from her.”

Rose was serious, now. “She's your girl, son. And anybody else that tries to monkey with her is going to have a scrap on his hands. But where you going?”

“Out to the *Polyphemus* to get her dad.”

“Are you nuts? Bogan and them might be there now.”

“That's my worry. Take care of Katherine, will you. And if anything happens, if I don't show up again, see that she gets home. She's got people in the North.”

“You don't want nobody else to have her, do you? O. K., son. I was the prettiest thing that ever stepped off a train in New Orleans when I was her age, and men was just the same then.”

CHAPTER VII.

A MAN'S DECISION.

CAREY* bent his back and the rowlocks creaked with the strain. Soon the *Polyphemus* rose above him. He took a turn around the anchor chain with the painter. The liquor had begun to die in him, but he was still clumsy and cursed himself.

He took off his shoes so as to get a toe hold on the slippery links of the chain. The hard iron hurt. There was no sound except the rustle of the current round the ship, and she carried nothing but riding lights at bow and stern.

He got an arm round the bitts and hauled himself on deck. The dingy iron plates were wet with mist, and cargo booms made strange, faint patterns overhead. There was a house amidships with galley and officers' quarters below, and the bridge on top. On the forward and after ends of the house were galleries with winches for working the cargo booms. She was the pattern of a dozen tramps Carey had been aboard before.

Mr. Hudson was leaning against the rail at the forward end of the bow. He started when Carey spoke his name.

"Who is it?" he called out.

"Carey Hunter. You've got to get off this ship, Mr. Hudson."

Hudson laughed. "You have so many ideas about what I should do, Hunter."

"This is one time I know what I'm talking about. You don't know who those guys that hired you are."

He told Millard Hudson about them, and about the proposition they had made him.

"I don't know what they want on the ship, but I know what Bogan is after. He wants Katherine, Mr.

Hudson. He saw her to-day and she made him sore by walking out on him. That would be reason enough for Bogan, even if she wasn't so good-looking. Bogan's used to getting what he wants. Giving you this job is a dodge to get you out of the way."

"But I'll be home at daylight, and you said they were coming to-night and——"

"You won't be home at daylight, Mr. Hudson. You won't ever leave this ship at all. They can't trust you, so they'll kill you to keep your mouth shut."

Millard Hudson leaned against the rail and looked at Carey. "I believe you, but it sounds fantastic. Like some story to frighten children."

"This is a good time for a grown man to be scared," Carey said. "Come on. Let's get going."

But Millard Hudson did not move. "No," he said. "I can't come. Run along, Hunter, and look out for Katherine the best you can. She'll tell you to whom to write."

Carey's teeth clicked when he shut his mouth.

"Why in hell can't you come?"

"I'm responsible for this ship."

"But——" Carey said. "For Judas's sake! This is a bunch of crooks that hired you and they figure to kill you. How do you figure you owe them anything?"

"Not them. It's the owners of the ship who have hired me. This man Goldmark acted as their agent. I'm responsible to the owners, and I've got to stand by, no matter what happens."

Carey got mad and waved his arms.

"It's all right to hold up your end of a job," he said. "But what about Katherine? You've got responsibility to her."

"I have." Pain was in Millard Hudson's low voice. "But Katherine already has that embezzlement business to remember her father by. I'm not going to leave her the memory of a man who was afraid to stand by his responsibilities."

"But what's going to happen to her? Suppose your people don't send for her? Even if they do send—it might be too late."

"Katherine will get along all right. She's naturally decent and uncommonly level-headed. And people are kind."

Carey rubbed his jaw. Hudson was sold on this crazy notion, and there was only one thing to do—knock him out and carry him ashore. But as he cocked his right hand Carey hesitated. The old boy had something. Crazy or not, this was a swell thing to do, and Carey would have liked to stay and fight it out against Bogan shoulder to shoulder with him. But there was Katherine waiting in old Rose's shanty boat. Carey set himself.

"You wood-headed, thumb-handed Swede! Do you think we got all night?"

That was Bogan's voice. They heard the faint mutter of a launch motor muffled under water.

CHAPTER VIII.

GUNFIRE IN THE SHADOWS.

CAREY and Millard Hudson looked at one another while the sound of the boat jockeyed about and voices came up to them. Bogan cursed Anson.

"No guns," Carey said. "Nothing. We'll have to hide and stay hid until we get a break. Come on!"

They crossed the forward deck and went up to the gallery where the winches were. It was pitch-black and Hudson muttered as he

barked his shin against a flywheel. Bogan and the others were coming up the sea ladder.

Carey looked about him and over his head. The booms had been laid down flat and lashed together. He sprang, caught a steel cable, braced a bare foot against the wall, and swung himself up. Lying flat along the boom he reached down a helping hand.

The voices came up and entered the house behind them. Hudson's frail body failed him suddenly. He sank back and slipped his wrist from Carey's grasp.

"Can't do it." His whisper came faint. "I'll hide down here."

He disappeared into the black shadows around the winches. Bogan came out and stood on the gallery. His bare head was only two feet below Carey.

"Where in hell could the old monkey be?"

Ben Goldmark's voice answered from the passageway.

"I think he has got scared and hid himself."

Bogan swore and plunged back inside. Ben Goldmark's torch sent a shaft ahead of him down to the well deck. Bogan came back with a lantern and followed, but the others were searching the after part of the ship.

Carey stood up and steadied himself against the mast. If he went now, and quickly, there was a chance that he could reach the launch, cut her loose and maroon them here. They would hardly dare kill Hudson.

A narrow ledge of steel ran along the face of the deck house. Not wide enough for his foot, it was yet a possible road to the ship's side. And there was no other way to reach the sea ladder. He took a cautious step and stopped. Ben

Goldmark was out on the bow. Bogan had gone into the forecastle. Carey went on his precarious way.

He had almost reached the side when footsteps rang on the steel below. The hot, white rays of a gasoline light came out of the passageway. A squat, wide-shouldered figure followed. But instead of going on down the ladder, Monk Anson turned toward the winches. His lantern made greasy wheels and drums leap up with terrible clearness. Carey could see Millard Hudson crouched between some levers and a brake drum. He looked small and helpless, like an elderly rabbit.

Carey turned back. With his breast and arms pressed against the wall he slid his feet along the ledge as fast as he could. For an instant he could not look down. Monk Anson grunted like a rooting boar, and levers clanked.

Carey jumped, turning in the air so he could land on the lashed booms. As he came down, Anson was hauling Millard Hudson out of the machinery by the collar. He brought up his gun to pistol whip the old man over the head.

Carey did not pause on the booms. His feet struck and he sprang again, with legs spread. Before Monk Anson could strike, Carey landed astride his thick neck. They went down together, sprawling among the gear.

The lantern, by some miracle, landed upright and did not break. As Carey untangled himself and sprang up, he saw Anson's gun lying on the deck. He snatched it up as Anson rose. He had huge hands that he opened as he came toward Carey, as if he meant to get them around his windpipe. There was no time for mercy. Carey fired, saw him stumble and go down.

On the instant two guns cracked

almost together, and the bullets whanged against steel beside Carey. He dropped to the gallery floor.

"Get down!" he said, and Millard Hudson dropped beside him.

"Are you hurt?"

Millard Hudson said he wasn't. Danger had not made him lose his head, either. Though lead slugs clanged on metal all around them he reached out to grab the light and throw it. It smashed on the well deck.

Carey cocked the big, old-fashioned .45 and aimed at the dim glow of a lantern. His bullet struck the deck and whined away. Bogan threw the lantern overboard; Ben Goldmark had already put out his flashlight. The ship was suddenly dark.

"Let's go!" Carey said. "If we can make the ladder we've got 'em by the hair."

HE had forgotten Captain Goldmark. They had not taken three steps when a shot crashed ahead of them. Millard Hudson drew in his breath with a little cry that was almost drowned by the echo of shots from below. Carey pulled up short.

"Get you?"

"A scratch," Millard Hudson said, and winced as Captain Goldmark's gun spat a bullet between them.

Carey pulled him around. "We've got to get back!"

Bullets followed them, but they reached the shelter of a winch. Carey fired at the passageway entrance. A shot answered and he fired again, but the captain was too well protected. Best to save the remaining shells. He might hold out here until some one came.

But Bogan was not waiting for anything. Carey heard him on the steps and fired once, without effect. Bogan yelled:

"What the hell's the matter? Why don't you go get him?"

Then he came forward, shooting as he came. When Bogan was almost on top of them, Carey pulled the trigger.

There came only the *click* of the hammer striking a defective shell. Less than a yard away, Bogan swore and snatched at his armpit. His gun was empty. Carey rose up and smashed the revolver into his face.

He pinned Bogan's arms to his sides, but before Carey could bend him far enough to throw him, he came out of his momentary daze and lunged forward. Bull-strong, he carried Carey backward against the wall. Carey set himself, clamped Bogan's arms down tighter, and heaved. They stood there straining until the sweat broke out on Carey's face and his muscles cracked. He put out a leg to trip Bogan.

In that moment the hard muzzle of a gun jabbed into his side. Mil-lard Hudson yelled, what words Carey could not tell. There was an impact behind him as two bodies crashed together and a gun went off. Powder burned hot along the small of Carey's back, and he loosened his hold for an instant.

With a heave and a wrench Bogan swung him around. His arms broke free and a knee, intended for the groin, caught Carey in the pit of the stomach. His breath stopped in the midst of pain and he went backward. Something hard struck him across his hips.

Then his feet went up over his head and he was falling. Falling. Water struck the side of his head like the blow of an open hand. He went down still, down into the cold river. And while he sank he caught his breath again and took in a great lungful of water.

Instinct made him fight his way

to the surface and turn on his back. He floated, coughing up water. The Mississippi current is swift, and when Carey finally checked himself the lights of the *Polyphemus* were dim points in the mist.

AT first Carey swam slowly with his head out of water, then he stretched out and really swam. It took a long time, and all the strength he had, to crawl back over the space he had drifted so easily. He caught the anchor chain to rest, then went on again, swinging away from the sucking eddy along the ship's side.

The launch was painted dead black, and he did not see it until he was almost there. All about was a great silence. No ships were near, and the men seemed to be occupied somewhere inside. A few long, reaching strokes, and Carey caught the mooring line.

He was trying to reach into his wet pocket for a knife when the beam of a light stabbed the dark at the top of the ladder. Carey could see Ben Goldmark's bowed shoulders. He caught the edge of the landing stage and shoved himself under water.

He came up under the stage. There was head-room and he clung to the grating while feet trampled above him. Ben Goldmark said:

"I think yet we should go back for that old man. If he disappears, who will care for that? But when they find him lying dead they will look around plenty."

"Shut your face and get in there! If you're sucker enough to get caught up with, that's your hard luck. I ain't going to get caught—and the cop that does come up with me is going to wish he hadn't, that's all!"

The engine throbbed suddenly.

like an exclamation point after Bogan's speech.

Before the wake stopped foaming, Carey was climbing the ladder. He groped through darkened rooms until he found matches in the galley. He came upon a lantern and started through the ship. When he could not find Hudson on deck, he went through the rooms, and finally came to the captain's stateroom aft of the bridge.

A strip of paneling had been torn out to reveal a wall safe. The twisted door hung by one hinge. There was nothing at all inside, but a glitter on the floor caught Carey's eye. He picked the thing up and turned it over slowly in his fingers; a single earring with the gold much tarnished. But nothing could dim the brilliance of the diamonds with which it was set.

Carey slipped it into the pocket of his dripping shirt and went out. Rats went hurrying out of his way and roaches scuttled up the walls. The echoing, shadowy bowels of the ship were ghostly.

When he came to the 'tween-decks cargo space forward, Carey stood very still. There was a pool of blood at the foot of a stanchion and a huddled figure lay in it.

Carey walked over and knelt beside Millard Hudson. There were two bullet holes in his back. Looking up, Carey saw that the hatch was open a few feet directly overhead.

He was still looking up when he heard a launch motor. Instead of passing, it came closer. Carey looked down at Millard Hudson. He had meant to take the body, but being found here meant at least one night in jail. Katherine was alone with Old Rose, and Bogan was ashore.

When he climbed on deck, the launch was making a turn to bring

her alongside. But before he put out the lantern he saw a trail of blood that smeared halfway across the well deck. After he had been shot, Millard Hudson had tried to crawl away, and in the darkness had fallen through the open hatch.

Some one hailed the ship, and Carey heard the launch scrape along the landing stage. There was not time to go down the anchor chain to his skiff. Poising for a moment on the rail, Carey dove far out into the river.

CHAPTER IX.

BARBARIC WEAPONS.

THE place Carey landed was a long way from Old Rose's boat. After he got his breath, Carey started to jog trot, following the trail in and out of the willows, past the lighted boats, where he heard laughter and voices. He stopped at the foot of Rose's steps. Lights were on inside, but it was still as if everybody was asleep. Carey didn't like it.

His bare feet made no sound on the steps, but the door banged when he flung it open. Bogan and Ben Goldmark and his brother were sitting at the table. Bogan had Katherine on his lap. She sat very still, and one side of her face showed scarlet with white finger marks where Bogan had slapped her. Old Rose was backed into a corner beside the stove, and Captain Goldmark held a gun trained on her while he drank coffee with the other hand.

They all looked at Carey, and Captain Goldmark's gun moved around to cover him. Bogan's big Luger was lying on the table, and he slopped coffee trying to get the cup out of his hand. Ben Goldmark reached for his gun.

But Old Rose had a handier weapon. The heavy iron skillet

caught Captain Goldmark above the temple and crumpled him where he sat. Bogan dumped Katherine off his lap, and his hand closed over his gun just as Carey dove across the table on top of him.

They went down all mixed up with each other and with the chair. As his chin struck Bogan's chest, Carey saw the Luger in the hand Bogan flung out to break his fall. Carey got hold of the long barrel, wrenched it away, swung it like a club.

Bogan's hand met the butt, but he struck too hard. The weapon whirled away and fell with a clatter. Then Bogan's powerful knees rose under Carey, thrusting him up and away. They got to their feet at the same moment.

Carey knew better than to wait. He stepped in and let go a long right at the ugly wound he had made when he smashed the gun into Bogan's face aboard the ship. Bogan blocked the blow and hooked viciously at Carey's jaw. The punch was short. He swore as he charged in.

This was a different sort of fight than the one before. To-night Bogan was like a hurt but still-powerful animal. He wanted to kill the thing that had wounded him. He did not smile to-night.

But Carey was different, too. He stopped the rush with a straight left that grazed the wound under Bogan's eye. Bogan covered up and Carey sank a fist in his ribs.

It drew a grunt, but Carey barely got his hand away in time. Bogan tried to grab it. He kept on trying to get hold of Carey. As the fight went on it seemed as if it would end by Bogan's getting a hold on him and bearing him to the floor. That would finish it, for Bogan was too strong to be wrestled with.

Carey kept away, using his long arms to stop the furious rushes that carried Bogan in too close for safety. Bogan was clever enough to keep the wound on his face covered. But no man can guard his face and his belly at the same time. Carey hit him plenty—over the heart, the liver, the stomach—but Bogan could take it.

NO ordinary fight could have gone on so long without rounds. But there would be no end to this until one of them lay dead. Sweat dripped into Carey's smarting eyes, and he could not tell the whistling puffs of his own breathing from Bogan's. But when Bogan charged yet once again, Carey was set and waiting.

Almost within reach of Carey's fists, Bogan suddenly dropped his arms and bent double. His legs drove him onward like a full back hitting the line. His hard head crashed through Carey's guard and slammed him in the mid-section.

His breath caught and he went back, helpless for the instant. Bogan's arms tightened round his waist like the cinch of a saddle. They crushed. They bent him backward. In a moment he would go over.

The wall stopped him. Bogan, whose head was down against Carey's shoulder, strained for an instant longer. Then he wrenched sidewise.

The twist gave Carey a little room. His elbow went up and out, and he felt a crunch as Bogan's nose broke. The sharp, intolerable pain had its effect. Bogan's hands went to his face and he took three backward steps.

Carey pushed against the wall to get his balance and went after him. He threw a punch at Bogan's jaw with everything he had. But Bogan

did a curious thing. Making no attempt to fight, he ducked under the blow and whirled away.

As Carey brought up and turned, he heard Rose yell. Bogan was stooping. He straightened, and the big gun was in his hand.

Carey sprang. He saw the gun's long barrel swing on him, watched it as he would another fighter's fist. His own left hand shot out, open, exactly as if to block a blow. He caught the gun by its muzzle and shoved.

The bullet tore through his hand before the roaring explosion jarred his ears. Carey did not pause. He had blocked the blow. Now his right fist shot out straight before his driving shoulder. The jar on Bogan's chin had a clean feel, and Carey knew that he had put him down even before Bogan fell on his back across the upturned table.

Carey fell on him. It was now that he had to finish Bogan, if at all, and there was no time to think about civilized weapons such as guns. His own knees pinned down Bogan's legs. As he tightened his hands on Bogan's neck, Carey forced him back and back across the edge of the table.

Something snapped. The body went limp under Carey; the head rolled loose in his hands. But he still hung on, not knowing just what he had done.

"Get up!" Old Rose's voice said. "Get up. You've broken his back!"

CHAPTER X.

A MAN STANDS UP.

CAREY pulled himself up shakily. Against one wall stood Rose with a gun poked into Ben Goldmark's ribs. Captain Goldmark was a huddled lump in a chair.

COM-3

"Where's Kay?" Carey panted.

Rose grinned and pointed. "The kid passed out a long time ago."

She was lying in front of the stove. Carey looked down at the broken body of Bogan.

"Lucky she did. What are we going to do with him?"

"Help me tie up this toad and we'll lug him outside for now. We don't want the kid to see him."

"Listen!" Ben Goldmark said. "I have got some money put away. I could maybe raise a whole grand to square this."

Rose drew back her hand. "Shut up before I knock them false teeth down your throat!"

They tied his feet to the legs of a chair and lashed his hands behind his back. They tied his brother up, too. The deck did not seem the place for a dead man, so they lifted Bogan up to the cabin roof. Rose said:

"Let me put a rag on that hand. There's enough blood around here already."

She took the potato whisky from the cupboard and poured a little into the ragged hole in the web between Carey's thumb and forefinger. It bit like fire.

"Take a drink. You need it."

Carey shook his head and motioned toward the bunk where Katherine lay.

"Save it for me."

Rose chuckled, but said nothing as she bandaged his hand. She took a clean rag and bathed Katherine's forehead with water.

"Those men," Carey said. "They won't bother you any more, Kay."

"Father?"

"He wouldn't come away with me. He said he had to stay by the ship because he'd promised. Kay, he didn't want you to remember him as a man who went back on promises."

Her eyes still asked questions.

"They came. I did what I could, but it was your father saved my life. Then I got knocked overboard and they killed him. He was a brave man, Kay."

After a long time she said: "He was a good man, too. It's funny I don't want to cry. Why don't I?"

"Honey," Old Rose said, "you don't cry about things till they stop hurting so bad. We better see what those guys got off the *Polyphemus*."

Inside an old suitcase were two mahogany boxes like small chests. The silver locks had been broken. In the chests were hundreds of small packages of soft paper. Carey unwrapped a bracelet. Rose held a crucifix up to the light.

The gold of the ornaments was massive and soft and curiously worked, and the smallest stones were valuable. Katherine did not move to touch them, but Rose unwrapped package after package, filling her hands with colored fire. She sat back with a sigh.

"Why ain't I young? Put it on you, honey. There!"

She hung a heavy chain around Katherine's neck, and rubies glowed darkly against the white of her dress. Carey wished he could keep the necklace for her. She was lovely now; in a year or two—

THE door banged open and a lean, tanned man in an officer's cap stepped in with pistol leveled. Carey put his hands up at a gesture. Behind him came a slight, faultlessly dressed man whom Carey recognized as Herbert Carter, the city's biggest jeweler. They were both wet and muddy to the knees. As she rased her hands, Old Rose nudged Carey.

"Janvier!" she whispered.

The captain of the *Polyphemus*

had come for his gems. He scooped up the guns which lay on a shelf and tossed them out the door. Then he looked into the chests.

"Looks like they're all here, Mr. Carter. Lucky for me they got to fighting among themselves. You'll swing!"

His dark eyes blazed at Carey.

"Would you gentlemen kindly untie me, please?" Ben Goldmark was grinning, as cool, as suave, as if he were behind his own counter. "I am Captain Goldmark's brother. We were not lucky, like you gentlemen, or we would have saved these jewels already."

They were all startled except Old Rose.

"You lying louse! You'll stay tied up till they put you away in a steel cage." She jerked her thumb at Carey. "He didn't swipe your stuff. If it wasn't for him you'd never get a look at it again. Take the little toad out and hang him!"

Captain Janvier said: "You can put your hands down, but I'll drill anybody that makes a funny move." He whirled on Ben Goldmark. "Tell your side, and make it short!"

Ben Goldmark lied smoothly, without breaks. It would be easy to believe that Carey was a red-handed murderer whom the Goldmarks had almost captured in a desperate attempt to save the jewels. Carey did not do so well. He kept remembering Millard Hudson lying in that smear of blood, and it shook him up so that he could hardly talk. The silence that fell was cold, in spite of summer.

Captain Janvier said: "I wouldn't trust either of 'em with a nickel, but we can find out which one's the biggest liar. Will you hold 'em here, Mr. Carter?"

The jeweler nodded. Captain Janvier jabbed the pistol into Carey's

back and marched him out. They followed a path along the river's edge. Captain Janvier's torch picked out a launch, and there was Millard Hudson looking up at them.

He blinked, and the shadow of a smile touched his suffering face. "Hello, Hunter."

It was so faint Carey scarcely knew that he had spoken. He forgot the prodding gun and bent over Millard Hudson.

"They didn't finish you? You're going to pull out of it?"

Millard Hudson shook his head. "I had to—know about—Katherine. She—all right?"

"Yes," Carey said. "She's fine. But you aren't going to die. You are—"

A shiver passed through Millard Hudson's body. His eyelids quivered, and a little froth of blood bubbled at his lips. Captain Janvier picked up his wrist to feel the pulse.

"Gone," he said. "He's been conscious ever since we found him, but he never said a word. Looks like he kept himself alive until he could find out. Who is it he was asking for?"

"His daughter. The girl in the shanty boat."

"What you doing with her?"

"He asked me to take care of her."

Captain Janvier prodded him with the pistol, and they started back. But Carey halted after a few steps.

"Here," he said, and put into Captain Janvier's hand the diamond earring he had picked up aboard the *Polyphemus*.

Captain Janvier's light shone on it, then flashed into Carey's face. "Where's the rest?"

"Right there in the boxes!"

Captain Janvier's face came close and his voice was like a gun being cocked. "You'd better come clean. Some friends of mine trusted me to

sell that stuff. They're ruined; Cuban revolution wiped 'em out. It's all they've got left, and they trusted me, see? If I find out you're holding out on me, I'll break your damn neck!"

THE gun prodded Carey onward. Rose was making coffee, but Mr. Carter kept her covered. Katherine sat very pale and quiet, with her chin in her hands. Captain Janvier looked at her searchingly, and did not speak of her father.

"I'm not sure yet," he said. "What do you think you're up to, mister?"

Carey went on pouring water into a bowl. He had got a glimpse of his bloody, dirt-streaked face in the mirror. While he was washing, he heard Mr. Carter tell Captain Janvier to sit down and have some coffee. They had all night to appraise the jewels; the customs office would not open till morning.

"The jewelry's got me jumpy," Captain Janvier said. "Three days to get them into the country! That's what comes of not having any ready cash—you always get in a jam."

Carey came back to the table. Captain Janvier's eyes focused on him and stared.

"Your name Carey Hunter? Did you work in the dock-board office a while back?"

"Yes. What's it to you?"

"Remember you, now. Didn't recognize you with your face all smeared up. You're friends with Captain Bullard, aren't you?"

Carey nodded.

"Nobody," Captain Janvier said slowly, "can be a liar and a friend of Job Bullard's. You've got a good reputation among the merchant skippers. Looks like I'd got you wrong."

"You did."

"Sit down. Looks like I owe you

something for to-night." He pulled out a check book. "Five hundred isn't much, but it's the best I can manage."

"Save it!"

"What's eating you?"

"A while ago you said you wouldn't trust me with a nickel. Besides, I didn't do anything for you. I was taking care of myself and my friends."

Captain Janvier searched Carey's face, then put away his check book.

"O. K., if that's the way you feel. I could use a man like you to run the Havana end of my business, but I suppose you wouldn't want that, either."

"No," Carey said. "What I've been doing suits me plenty well."

"What have you been doing?"

"Drinking."

Captain Janvier laughed. "You're an independent devil, at that. We'd better get going, Mr. Carter."

He reached for the boxes, but Old Rose said. "I ain't proud! Fifty dollars will do me—and I'll take it right now."

Captain Janvier stared, then answered her grin. "What do I owe you for?"

"I laid out Captain Goldmark so he ain't woke up yet. If it hadn't been for me your pretties would have been by-by."

"That's right," Carey said, and Captain Janvier got out his check book. He chuckled as he wrote.

Glancing sidewise, Carey saw Katherine sitting motionless beside him. She sat so quietly that Carey had forgotten; he had forgotten that her father had trusted him to get her home. The quicker he did it the better he was going to feel.

"Look," he said. "I've changed my mind. I won't take five hundred, but I'll take two, if you still figure you owe me something."

Captain Janvier nodded and wrote, while Mr. Carter—who seemed uninterested in anything else—tied up the chests.

"And thank you kindly," Captain Janvier said, handing Carey a check. "Step outside, will you?"

Carey followed him on deck.

"We'll bury the old man in the river," Captain Janvier said. "No use to bring him up here for the girl to see. You say you killed somebody?"

"A guy named Bogan. He's up there on the roof."

"Bury him, too. No sense in making a mess out of this. We can send the Goldmarks up for piracy. Couldn't prove they killed the old man, anyhow."

They carried Bogan to the launch and came back for Captain Goldmark. Mr. Carter marched Ben Goldmark down at pistol point. As they shoved off, Captain Janvier held out his hand.

"I apologize for what I said about not trusting you. You looked like a bum, and this is a rat's nest along here. If you change your mind about that job, let me know."

Carey was thinking about Rose's whisky jug.

"Thanks," he said. "But I won't change my mind."

THE taxi was dark and stuffy. Carey could only see Katherine's face when they passed street lights at deserted corners. Shock had numbed her, and he was surprised when she spoke.

"Where are you taking me?" she asked.

"Didn't you know? I'm sending you home to your people. The train leaves at five o'clock."

Light fell on her suddenly. She had come to life. Wide eyes stared at him and her lips trembled.

"Carey, I'm not going back there!"

"Yes, you are. You've got to go home. This is a bad town for a woman on her own, let alone a kid like you."

"It isn't home—back there! I'm not going."

"You've got to, Kay. I promised your father I'd see that you were safe, and I'm going to buy you a ticket and put you on that train."

"I'll get off at the first stop. Carey, do you think I'm going back to live with those awful people? They hate father. They think he's a criminal!"

Carey thought of Millard Hudson, and in the same moment of Bogan.

"They don't know what a criminal is."

"They think they do. They think father robbed them."

They were downtown now and he could see her face all the time. This girl had the will of a grown woman. She would not go back to Illinois. She said:

"Take me to the Salvation Army. They help people find work, don't they?"

Carey rapped on the glass and gave the driver an address. They whirled through echoing streets and pulled up before a building like a shadowy pile of gray stone. A nun with a severe but kindly face opened the door.

"I want to leave this girl with you," Carey said.

The nun took them into a kind of office and wrote down their names. She got Carey to tell her about Katherine.

"She has no relatives?"

"I'm taking care of her," Carey said, looking the nun in the eyes. "Her father put her in my hands."

"I see." The nun mentioned teachers and spoke of a monthly rate.

Carey took out Captain Janvier's check and signed it. "It's good. I'll send you some more in a couple of months. They'll take good care of you, Kay. I think maybe you'll like it here."

Katherine was on her feet. Her eyes were troubled and she shook her head violently.

"Carey, you can't do it! You can't be responsible for me."

Responsible. Millard Hudson had died because he felt responsible for a rusty ship. Carey smiled at her.

"That's nothing much," he said.

Dawn was breaking silver through the river mist when he pulled the skiff under the high, rusty side of the *Polyphemus*. He hoped Captain Janvier would give him a drink when he took the Havana job. But if the captain didn't, Carey could stand it.

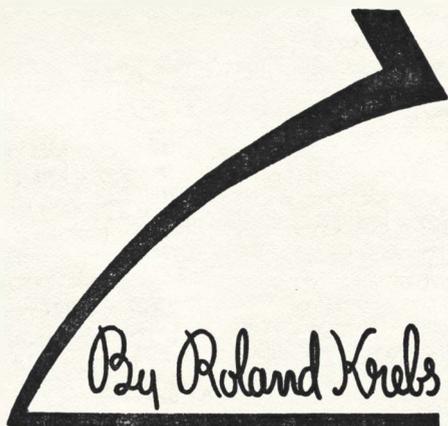
*You're bucking
the odds*



WHEN YOU BUY THE *unknown*

● Why gamble your money on unknown razor blades when a known-quality blade like Probak Jr. sells at 4 for 10¢? Probak Jr. guarantees plenty of clean, cool shaves. Tomorrow, start the day with Probak Jr. Buy them from your dealer.

PROBAK JUNIOR



By Roland Krebs

Capers



TRANSYLVANIA, in old Hungary, is a country that you have to see to believe. It has two major industries. One is the making of wine. The other is the drinking of wine. Transylvania's wine has been pronounced the finest in all the world by many connoisseurs. But most of the world never finds it out, because there isn't enough left over to export after the local population has been cared for.



They pay off the ministers with wine in Transylvania. It works swell. The ministers never complain of being underpaid. Wine, however, is not the only pay the pastor gets. His flock also provides him with crab apples for vinegar and acorns for his pigs. After pay day, some ministers have given the crab apples to the pigs and tried to make vinegar out of the acorns.

The Saxons of Transylvania are so fond of drinking wine that they virtually force travelers to drink with them. Travelers who have refused often have been badly beaten. Those who accept usually are knocked out also.



Why Columbus bothered to discover America when he could have discovered Transylvania is a mystery to us. Incidentally, it cost the folks who financed Columbus's voyage a little more than two thousand dollars.

It cost America several billions to discover Europe during the World War.

It has been said that London is England, because everybody in England goes sooner or later to London. New York, however, is not America. Perhaps it's just as well.

and Catcalls



Speaking of early America, Paul Revere is famous for his midnight ride, but few people know that he was a practicing dentist. In other words, Revere divided his time between warning about redcoats and warning about pink toothbrush.

Brigham Young left one million dollars, nineteen wives, and fifty-seven children. Fifty-seven and nineteen totals seventy-six. When you split a million seventy-six ways, you feel that nineteen widows would welcome fifty-seven millions.

A Leningrad surgeon got a year at hard labor in prison for leaving a towel inside a patient upon whom he operated. The patient, too, threw in the towel. He died.



A Minneapolis woman has invented a device that slices onions in such a way that they don't bring tears to your eyes. Now if somebody would only invent an onion that didn't bring a breath to your lips!

Historians disagree about Napoleon's height. Some say he was five feet two inches tall and others estimate it as much as five feet seven inches. You must admit, though, that the little fellow was a great guy—and lived high.



The cow perspires only through her nose. Too bad cows don't have handkerchiefs. If they did, they could wipe their noses and their sweating brows in one stroke.

Pigs also sweat through the nose, but they never miss handkerchiefs. They're too messy to bother.



The Statue of Liberty was made in parts in France and assembled in America. The arm that holds the torch was finished long before the head and sent over in advance of the head. This indicates that instead of coming head-first to America, Liberty sort of felt its way.



Diving in the Third

By Maxwell Penrose

Strategy—and the big punch.

TOMMY had eaten practically nothing, and Marge, he saw, hadn't even picked up her knife and fork. The situation was pretty tense. Tommy had known when he called her up that morning to have luncheon with him that he had a job cut out for him to explain those six months in the woods, away from New York, when he hadn't written her a single line. And, too, he had known his work was cut out for him if he was to make Marge see he wasn't letting her down because he had come back to town looking for a fight.

Before Tommy Canlon ever broke his hand—the Terry fight, that was—Marge McCabe had made herself clear on the subject of box-fighting. Marge hated the ring as much as Tommy loved it; and naturally she figured that he loved it more than he loved her if he was going on

fighting after the injury to his hand. Tommy fiddled with a square inch of roast beef on the end of his fork, regarding it dourly.

"I," he said bitterly, "was a fool to expect you to understand. You make up your mind about a thing, and that's the end of it. A swell reception for a guy who's been swinging an ax eight hours a day a hundred miles from nowhere for the last six months!"

"It's better than you deserve, at that," Marge retorted sharply. "You could have written, you know."

Tommy seized the opportunity to repeat himself eagerly. "Listen, Marge, haven't I told you I didn't write because I had to see for myself if I was really through—like Bill said? I couldn't hang around on your hands a has-been, could I?"

"A has-been!" Marge said scornfully. "At twenty-three. You talk like a fool!"

Tommy looked at her sulkily.

"Seems to me if a girl really cared for a guy she'd try to see his side of things once in a while."

"But I have tried, Tommy. Before the Terry fight I told you I wouldn't stand in your way as long as you weren't hurt, and you promised me you would quit if anything ever happened. And something happened. You broke your hand——"

"But that didn't mean anything, Marge," Tommy protested. "Accidents like that are liable to happen to any one."

"Tommy, didn't dad say——"

"Aw, Bill," Tommy interrupted, and shrugged his shoulders in a way which implied that that was that. "Bill McCabe is just about the swellest gent who ever lined up a boxing card, Marge; but you know and I know that he isn't quite bright where you're concerned. Bill," Tommy said, "is like a middle-aged hen with one chick."

MARGE looked a little white around the mouth, and the warmth in her brown eyes had given way to a decidedly chill light. With an air of finality she placed her napkin beside her plate.

"I'm afraid it's no use, Tommy. You can't blame a girl for looking ahead. I want a husband I can count on to last a few years. Dad's perfectly right in telling you to stop. I don't blame him at all for refusing to use you at his club any more."

"I can lick any lightweight in the business right now," Tommy said pugnaciously, "including Hinkey Hoffman, the champ. But that doesn't mean anything to you. You'd rather be married to a twenty-five-dollar-a-week shipping clerk than be the wife of the lightweight champion of the world, and driving your own car and fighting your way

through a mob of servants in and out of your own home."

"I'd rather be the wife of Tommy Canlon, shipping clerk," Marge said wistfully, "and scrub his floors and cook his food and raise his babies, than spend my time hanging around some cheap club watching my man being pounded silly."

"Then," Tommy concluded accusingly, "you don't believe in me. You don't think I've got the stuff. That's what you're trying to say, isn't it?"

"Oh, Tommy!" Marge cried. "You make it so hard! Before you hurt yourself in the Terry fight I would have backed you against the world, and you know it. But you promised me you would quit at the first sign on the wall, and now you won't. Life is too short to gamble with happiness. If you won't quit now, you won't quit later when other and more serious things happen—when you're knocked out, maybe." She shuddered. "Tommy, I'd die if that ever happened to you."

"But it won't, Marge," Tommy said eagerly. "Listen. When I told you I would stop if anything ever happened—serious, that is—I meant it. I meant it then, and I mean it now. But nothing ever happened. This hand—gee, Marge, give a guy a break! Let me prove Bill and all the rest of 'em wrong. Just this once, please."

And because Marge McCabe was very much in love, she listened.

"But, Tommy," she protested troubledly, "it'll just go on this way. There will always be 'another time.'"

"Marge"—Tommy looked directly into her eyes and talked from the bottom of his heart—"I'll tell you what I'll do. If I lose in my next fight I'll take off the gloves and hang 'em up for good. I'll go out

and get any kind of job you want. How's that?"

"It's a promise?" Marge insisted, searching his earnest face.

"Cross my heart!" Tommy said. "O. K.?"

And, very softly, Marge said, "O. K.," and Tommy grinned.

"Bill at his office?" he asked.

"I'm afraid," Marge warned, "that you're not going to talk Bill McCabe around quite so easily as his daughter. But I wish you luck."

"Bill better get me a battle," Tommy said. "I got in touch with Abe Manglebaum as soon as I hit town this morning, and he told me he could get Sailor Jackson up at Hymie Kaplan's Metro Rink Club on Saturday—and business is business."

"You're nothing but a little bulldog," Marge said.

Tommy Canlon watched her for a moment as she walked away from him after they had said good-by in front of the restaurant, and he reflected that he seemed to be getting more than his share of breaks. Then his eyes grew thoughtful.

What would Marge say—what would Bill McCabe say—if he ever told them that that hand which had caused the lot of them so much trouble had been broken before he ever entered the ring with Terry?

But Tommy knew he would never tell that. Tommy knew that Bill McCabe had won a lot of money from Freddie Weiss on that fight, and Tommy Canlon didn't want any one—Bill McCabe least of all—to feel that they owed him any favors. Tommy knew he would never tell Bill McCabe that he had gone into the ring with a broken right hand just because he knew Bill was counting on him to drag his dough out of the fire.

BILL McCABE had a dingy little office fitted up in his Crescent Athletic Club on One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street. Bill was sitting at his desk gloomily removing the band from a cigar when Tommy announced his arrival. "Lo, Bill, how they running for you?"

Bill McCabe spun in his chair. "Great gosh!" he exclaimed. "Tommy Canlon!"

Tommy grinned. "In the flesh, Bill. In the flesh."

"Come in, boy. And where the devil you been these last six months? Marge——"

"I know, Bill," Tommy cut him short. "I've already seen Marge. I ought to've written, but I wanted to find out if that hand was gone, like you said it was."

McCabe looked at him owlshly. "You're not still thinking of fighting, Tommy? You know once a hand goes in there——"

"Look, Bill," Tommy interrupted, "don't start that again. I'm not through. I'm going away from here fast, and I want a fight. I've——"

But half an hour later Bill McCabe was still unconvinced. Soberly, through a thick pall of cigar smoke, he looked at Tommy Canlon.

"Tommy," he said, for the tenth time, "you're a fool if you stick in this game. You're strictly a puncher—a right-handed puncher. And with that gone you'll just hang around the smaller clubs, taking 'em on the head till you're nothing but a stumble burr. Think it over. Marge likes you, and it ain't fair to the kid. She wouldn't like it very much to have you come in some evening walking on your heels."

Tommy shook his head patiently. "You're repeating yourself, Bill. I came up here to talk business, not to have my palm read. Your next

show's on Friday; this is Wednesday. You can fix it and I'm ready—the best shape I was ever in. Sign me on with some good boy and I'm long gone.”

“Long gone to the looney bin,” Bill said gloomily.

“Maybe,” said Tommy. “But on the way I'm going to pick up the title and a lot of sugar to play with on rainy days.”

But Bill was not to be won over. He shook his head stubbornly. “It's no go, Tommy. Go out and get yourself a good job somewhere—for Marge's sake if not for your own.”

Tommy got up, his face hard in spite of himself. There wasn't any way he could tell Bill that his hand had been broken before he went in the ring with Terry—that it wasn't soft. He couldn't tell Bill that it was his backing him against Terry, Freddie Weiss's boy, that had gotten Tommy Canlon a broken hand. He couldn't tell Bill all that stuff about Weiss's coming to him before the fight with his proposition that he take a dive to Terry; that he had refused, and Weiss had retaliated by putting a pair of strong-arm boys on him when he was on his way to the club, and that Tommy Canlon had gotten a broken right hand. Tommy couldn't tell Bill the truth about that hand, but he knew he wasn't through.

“All right, Bill,” he said stiffly. “If that's the way you feel about it, it's O. K. with me. How about using your phone?”

Tommy located Abe at the professional gymnasium where they usually did their work, just above the Garden on Eighth Avenue. His voice was curt.

“I've changed my mind about that Sailor Jackson fight on Saturday, Abe. Go down and fix things with

Hymie Kaplan, and I'll be seeing you.” Tommy hung up the receiver before Abe had time to answer. As he turned from the telephone, he saw Bill McCabe looking at him troubledly.

Bill shook his head. “Gosh, Tommy,” he said heavily, “I wish I could make you understand how I feel about it, but I reckon it's hopeless. However, I'll just pass the tip along that Jackson's the toughest yegg you've met. From New Orleans, with a jaw like a battleship. You couldn't hurt him if you had a stick of dynamite in each hand.”

Tommy grinned with something of his old self. “Well, Bill,” he said tolerantly, “feeling that way I wouldn't put any money on Sailor's nose.”

TOMMY lay on a marble-topped rubbing table beneath the ring, wearing a pair of elk-hide boxing shoes and white sateen trunks. His skin glistened beneath a thin coat of alcohol and oil of wintergreen applied by Abe Manglebaum. They were alone. From above, the deep rumble of the crowd poured steadily over them, picking up Tommy's pulse and heightening it. Tommy was about to go out, and at the knock on the door he jumped off the table. He was reaching for his bath robe, which Abe had turned to hand him, when the door opened slowly and three men lounged into the room.

It remained for the smallest of the trio of visitors to speak first—a dapper little fellow in a camel's-hair coat, wearing a thin, confident smile on his sharp face.

“Well, well,” he said genially, advancing, leaving his companions to lean easily against the wall behind him. “If it ain't my old friend

Tommy Canlon come back. How the hell are you, Tommy? And where you been?" He completely ignored Abe Manglebaum.

At the voice, at sight of the outstretched hand, the color rushed back into Tommy's face in an angry wave. Involuntarily his taped hands clenched.

"There's the door, Weiss," he said. "Get out before I throw you out."

Freddie Weiss chuckled and jerked his head at the two men behind him.

"Such fine boys, Tommy, to hear such rough language! Shame on you, fella. We just dropped in to talk over old times."

Tommy shot one quick glance at the pair behind Weiss, and bent to pick up his bath robe, which Abe had dropped. Then he turned to Weiss with a sneer.

"You're a great guy, Freddie," he said. "Always got your gorillas around to do your dirty work, eh?"

Weiss chuckled appreciatively, half turning to his companions.

"Listen at him, boys. A great kidder, hey?" Then, abruptly changing his manner, he addressed Tommy again. "Keep your shirt on, young fella. We just came up to have a little business talk, and I want it straight. What the hell is this racket you and Bill McCabe are trying to pull?"

Tommy looked at him with amazement that was not in the least feigned.

"Bill McCabe——" he started, but Weiss interrupted.

"Lay off the innocent stuff, Tommy. It won't get you no place with me. I want to know why you ain't starting your comeback on one of Bill's cards, and I want some explanation for all this heavy dough Bill's got down on Sailor to-night. I happen to know Bill don't think

no more of you than he does of his right arm."

Tommy started forward; then he turned and sat down on a bench. It took some time for the full import of the words to seep into his brain. He felt sick. Bill McCabe, his best friend—Marge's father—betting against him! He looked up at Weiss without seeing him and shook his head vaguely.

"I don't get you," he said dully.

Weiss walked over to the boy and sat down beside him on the bench. He nodded his head at the two men leaning on either side of the door.

"You guys go out and see what the air is like," he said. "And take Abe with you. Tommy and I want to have a little talk."

ABE, at a nod from Tommy, went without protest. When the door closed again Weiss threw one arm across Tommy's shoulders confidentially.

"Listen, kid," he said. "I know this game from the inside out, and the only good thing about it is the dough. I've always been a friend of yours, in spite of that little business before the Terry fight. But I was sore, and I hope you ain't going to hold that against me, see?"

Tommy did not answer. Just then there wasn't anything he could say. He shook his head dumbly, which might have meant anything.

"Swell," Freddie Weiss said. "Now we can get some place. This is the way it is. I've seen you fight, Tommy, and I know you can take this Sailor. And Bill knows it, too. And if Bill McCabe is laying his money against you, there's a reason for it. How much are you getting to lay down to Sailor Jackson to-night?"

For just a second Tommy fought an impulse to whirl on Weiss.

"You seem to be pretty interested, Freddie," he said. "Worth anything to you?"

"Exactly five thousand dollars' worth of Bill McCabe's bets on Sailor I took over from Joe Clancy's book," Weiss answered matter-of-factly.

Five thousand dollars!

Tommy got up and began to walk back and forth, his hands clenching and unclenching at his sides. It wasn't fair; Bill had let him down. And there wasn't anything he could do about it.

Suddenly a wave of anger against McCabe swept over him; but that passed as quickly as it had come. After all, Bill McCabe was Marge's father, and even if he had put Tommy in a spot, he couldn't forget the girl. Bill McCabe was no longer a young man, and his affairs were never in too good shape. If Tommy went in there and won his fight, Bill would just about be washed up financially. If he threw his ambitions to the winds and laid down to Jackson, Bill would be in the clover. But what about Marge? Tommy Canlon knew Marge McCabe too well to hope she wouldn't hold him to his promise to quit the ring for good if he lost to-night.

No, Tommy decided, he would have to take it in silence and grin. Marge, after all, would be the wife of a shipping clerk, for Tommy couldn't forget that everything he was he owed to Bill McCabe. He couldn't forget the big man who, a few years back, had picked up from the streets a thin, underfed youth and gave him his chance to prove his passionate contention that he could fight. Tommy couldn't forget that any more than he could forget that he owed Bill McCabe for Marge.

On the instant Tommy saw all his

dreams of the championship go glimmering. He slumped down on the bench again.

"Well, Weiss," he said dully, "you and Bill have just about played hell this time. What's the rest of the number?"

Weiss looked at the boy beside him for an instant, speculation in his eyes. He took a long time to fish a cigarette from his pocket and light it; then he said cautiously, almost as if he were feeling his way:

"If Bill hasn't got a deal with you, and he goes out and bets his money against you, Tommy, it looks like he ain't as much your friend as you thought he was. It looks to me like you got a right to be a little sore, don't it?" Tommy grunted, but did not look up. And Weiss went on, "Well, I don't have to tell you that McCabe ain't no friend of mine, either. We're in the same boat, Tommy, and I know how we can throw the hooks into Bill McCabe proper."

"And," Tommy said, "how is that?"

"Sailor," Weiss said briefly, "happens to be a friend of mine, and for a consideration he's going to take a dive in the third. For your part you'll get credit for stopping a tough boy if you'll play ball with us—and a cut of the five grand I'm going to lift off Bill McCabe in bets on Sailor. How about it?"

"Play ball?" Tommy repeated softly. "And just what do you mean by playing ball, Freddie?"

"Why," Freddie Weiss said, "just come in there and make it look good. You know, let Sailor down easy and——"

Tommy straightened up. He couldn't keep it back any longer. His right hand drove squarely to the point of Freddie Weiss's jaw.

TOMMY never remembered those moments when he waited for the bell that would send him out in a fixed fight. He was oblivious of Abe's hysterical pleas to know what had happened in the dressing room, and only dimly conscious of the sea of faces about him, the deep murmur. Then, suddenly, he found himself out in the white glare, and a great distance away, it seemed, was "Sailor," marching in flat-footed, a dogged, intent look on his heavy face. Automatically Tommy lifted his left hand, but it was slow. Sailor brushed it aside and crowded in until Tommy grabbed and held on.

He was dead all over. It was the first time in his career that he faced sure defeat. Tommy Canlon knew the bitterest moment of his life: He was going to lose—not because there was a better man in the ring with him, but because he couldn't forget the friend Bill McCabe had been to him in the past; couldn't forget that it was Marge's old man who was counting on him again. The first time he had gone into a ring unfit to fight, and won; to-night he was going to lose, and he never felt better in his life. He was going to beat Sailor Jackson to the fall; he was going to quit deliberately.

The referee slid in between them, and Tommy shot a light left for the head. Then it happened. Tommy saw the punch start, but he made no effort to slip it. It was a sweeping right swing that smashed time and place into a thousand stars. He had been wide open, and Sailor had stepped in with everything he had behind the punch. In the split second that Tommy had to gauge the blow before it landed, a bitter satisfaction welled up in his heart. If he had to take it, he'd take it the hard way.

At eight he came reeling back to awareness of where he was. Miles away the referee's face was tossing whitely, and when Tommy heard nine it was instinct that brought him to one knee. At ten he was just pulling himself up on the ropes when Sailor was on him.

Half conscious of what he was doing, Tommy folded up. He was all elbows and gloves, and Sailor, with the house on its feet behind him yelling for a knock-out, threw himself in behind both hands, throwing punches without thought of direction. Tommy reached out blindly and tried to hang on, but there was no strength in his arms. He slid down Jackson like a pole—and the bell saved him.

The smelling salts cut through some of the fog that drowned Tommy's brain. He rolled limply on his stool, shaking his head and trying to make out the formless group across from him in Sailor's corner. The roar of the place smashed up into the rafters and broke in a thousand echoes in Tommy's throbbing head.

The hard way—well, it was proving harder than even he had anticipated. He had gone in there wide open and taken everything.

Abruptly the thread broke as a thought hit Tommy like a punch. And with it a galvanic return of energy. He motioned for the salts again and, as Abe thrust the bottle under his nose and the cold fire filled his lungs, Tommy sat up and his thoughts began to race.

Diving in the third, yet Sailor had come out throwing one from the floor! Something was wrong somewhere; in some way Freddie Weiss had got his wires crossed. A guy didn't come out and try to tear the other boy's head off when he was diving in the third!

TOMMY was in condition and, when the bell smashed flatly, he had just about recovered. He met Sailor squarely in the middle of the ring. He had but one thought in mind now, Bill McCabe and Freddie Weiss were forgotten. Tommy Canlon had a tough boy on his hands, and all his attention was centered upon taking care of himself. He had to get that punch back. He was going to get that punch back with interest.

Sailor crashed in behind a whirling left hook that nearly ripped off Tommy's scalp, and his right smashed high to the body. Tommy flashed a short left an inch below Sailor's heavy chin, but his following right landed solidly. It took Sailor high on the head and Tommy felt a wild surge of exultation. He fought his way inside with both hands and for a moment they stood toe to toe—and it was Sailor who stepped outside and away.

Tommy followed and jumped a lifting straight left into Sailor's face, then crossed hard and fast with his right. Sailor's left eye was beginning to swell and Tommy knifed at it with a reaching jab.

"Diving in the third, Sailor?" Tommy snarled out of the corner of his mouth. "You'll never see the third, Sailor."

"That's war talk, fella."

Tommy knew then that he had a fight on his hands.

Sailor came in rolling a left hook into Tommy's body that made his stomach quiver. Tommy tied him up and when they broke he hooked shortly for the head, then bowed and shed a flock of lefts and rights that came from nowhere. This Sailor didn't have to set himself to let 'em go.

The house was yelling through a single great throat as Tommy

stepped out into the open and circled away. Sailor tried to bow in, but Tommy lifted his head back on his shoulders with an inside right that made it look as if it had been jerked from behind with a cord. Sailor made a lot of noise with his nose and plowed in, and Tommy stepped before him as he came and never missed with either hand. Just before the bell Tommy shot a one-two that carried every one of his one hundred and thirty-three pounds, and Sailor's handlers had to come out and get him. Tommy grinned into Abe's working face as he flopped down on his stool.

"The third," Tommy said. "I'll get him in the third."

"You look like money in there, Tommy," Abe said. "But you were terrible in the first. You went out with your hands down."

Tommy grinned. "I went out like a shipping clerk, Abe."

Sailor came back in strong, and tried hard; but it was Tommy's night. He was younger and faster, and as tough, and he set the pace. He stuck with his left and whipped his right across to Sailor's head, and with two minutes of the round gone he got the opening he was looking for. Sailor bowed, plowing in, leading with his head. Tommy shifted and gave before him, then suddenly straightened. His right came up, wickedly quick, in an uppercut that cracked on Jackson's jaw sharp as a dry stick snapped against the solid wall of sound beyond the ropes—and Sailor dove forward, face down in the resin like a bull in the ring. Tommy shifted from left to right leg like a dancer to clear the sprawling man, and he kept on without a backward glance into a neutral corner. Before the referee reached five Sailor's handlers had climbed into the ring.

BEFORE Tommy finished dressing, he had figured it out. Like a fool he had gone in there with Sailor and gambled with his future on Freddie Weiss's unsupported word that Bill McCabe was following his money, and his money was against Tommy Canlon. Tommy had gone in there with his hands down, and had come within an ace of being knocked clear out of the boxing game. As he pulled at his tie with hurried fingers, he told himself that he had been a fool for luck. If that punch had been an inch lower, Tommy Canlon would never have gotten up there in the first round, much less been able to put two and two together and see that Sailor Jackson was out to win. But—and he hadn't answered this in the least half an hour later when he started up the stairs to the McCabe flat in Forty-eighth Street—what was it all about? What had been Freddie Weiss's object in coming to his dressing room and giving him that song and dance about Sailor throwing the fight? Tommy knew that Weiss had no love for him—still, as a means of petty vengeance, his action was a bit too elaborate.

At the McCabe door Tommy had a sudden, overwhelming moment of fear. What if Freddie Weiss hadn't been lying and Bill really had his money down on Sailor? What if Sailor's wild right that had almost put Tommy down for the count had been accidental? What if Sailor, sensing an easy victory, had gone on to win then if he could, hoping to fix it with Weiss after the fight? If Bill had dropped five grand tonight—

Tommy quit thinking. He took a deep breath and opened the door. Bill McCabe, his back as broad as a barn door, stood by the radio.

"Hello!" Tommy said, a bit weakly.

Bill turned. "Well," he said, "the conquering hero comes."

Marge ran into the room, but Tommy didn't take his eyes off Bill's face. He couldn't tell a thing from it.

"Nice fight, Tommy," Bill said. "I got the flash from the *Times* offices—couldn't see it myself." He stopped and looked at Tommy quizzically. "Come up to tell me 'I told you so,' boy?"

"Nuts, Bill," Tommy said. Then, taking a running dive right into the middle of the thing, he blurted, "Bill, I've got to know. Listen. Did you have any money on this fight to-night?"

Bill lost his poise. He wouldn't look at Tommy, and he wouldn't look at Marge, who had fixed him with an accusing eye.

"Bill McCabe, if you bet any money to-night after promising me that—"

Bill threw up his hands, cutting Marge short. He looked at Tommy sheepishly.

"Tommy," he said, "as a matter of fact, I did have a little down to-night. I had a few dollars with Freddie Weiss."

Tommy's heart dropped. "How much, Bill?" he said heavily.

"Only a grand—"

"A thousand dollars! Marge cried in horror. "Oh, you—you treacherous thing!"

"A grand," Tommy said. "Well, that's better than five. If you had lost five—"

Utter consternation spread over the broad, genial expanse of Bill McCabe's face.

"Lost?" he repeated. "I don't get you, boy. I won. I didn't lose."

Tommy blinked and looked as if he didn't quite understand. He sat

down. Very slowly he took off his hat and ran his fingers through his short brown hair.

"You bet on *me*, Bill?"

Bill looked apologetic. "Tommy, I got to thinking after you signed on with Sailor. Maybe you'll think I'm crazy, but I got to thinking, and I decided I wasn't playing 'em across the board with you. It sort of," Bill McCabe said, very embarrassed, "eased my conscience to go out and put a little sugar on you to win."

For just a moment Tommy stared without comprehension down at his hands, then he began to laugh.

"Neat!" he said. "Oh, very, very neat, only it didn't work! Bill, Freddie Weiss told me it was the other way around. He told me you

had five grand down on Sailor, and Sailor was diving——"

"Diving?" repeated Bill McCabe. "Why, Tommy, Sailor didn't come in there to dive. He almost stopped you in the first——"

Tommy grinned.

"Strategy, Bill, strategy!" he cut in. Then he turned to Marge, who looked as if she firmly believed she was closeted with a couple of madmen. "Girl, get your bonnet. As I was coming down I saw a moon waiting in a tree over in Central Park and I want to know about it. To-morrow I've got a full day. I've got something to say to the boxing commission that, maybe, will keep Mr. Freddie Weiss away from dressing rooms for a long time—if his jaw ever gets so he can talk again!"

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Switched Licenses

CHAPTER I.

A DATE.

SORTING through the neckties on the back of the door, Cliff Chanler tried each in turn. He stood in front of the cracked mirror over the bureau, holding them up for inspection.

His mother's voice drifted to him: "Cliff. Cliff, are you coming down for dinner? Oh, Clifford!"

"Be down in a minute," he called.

He yanked a dark-green tie from the rack, and knotted it deftly. He stood off and looked at himself, slicking his hair down more firmly with his hands.

He thought he looked pretty good. His complexion had cleared up.



Hot cars mean hot action!

By C. S. Montanye

"The skin you love to touch," Cliff thought, smiling. "I'll tell Daisy that to-night."

"Clif-ford!"

"I'm coming."

He turned out the light, and ran downstairs. In the dining room were his mother and two sisters. Ella, the elder, sniffed when he sat down.

"My perfume?"

"What's on the menu?" he asked his mother, ignoring the question.

Belle, the younger, giggled.

"He puts it on his face after he shaves," she told Ella.

"I don't typewrite all week in old Goodman's office to buy toilet water for you," Ella announced. "I suppose I'll have to lock my door whenever I go out."

"I'll buy you a gallon of it," Cliff said.

Belle giggled again.

"You must be selling lots of cars," she observed. "How about the

Demings? I saw Maud Deming yesterday afternoon. She was taking a demonstration in a Nuick."

Cliff laughed.

"She can take a million demonstrations, but when she gets her old man to buy it's going to be one of our cars."

"How many cars have you sold this month, Cliff?" his mother asked.

He picked up his knife and fork.

"Well, not any—yet. Had a couple of leads, but they fell through."

"That's the trouble." Mrs. Chanler took a slice of bread and passed the plate to Ella. "When you keep drawing against your commissions, it eats up all the profits."

"Don't worry about me. I'll sell Maud one of our de luxe eight jobs. That'll make up for everything."

"Optimist," Ella murmured. "I suppose you're using ninety per cent charm and ten sales talk."

"Suppose he does?" Belle put in. "As long as it works, what difference does it make? He can't help being one of the snappiest young men in this town. Can you, Cliff?"

"Cut it out, Belle."

"He's conceited enough," Ella snorted. "Don't say things like that. Twenty-five and he acts like fifty. Worldly polish! He'd be a pain in the neck to me."

"Daisy thinks he's swell," Belle murmured.

His mother looked up.

"Are you going out with Daisy Boyd to-night?"

"To the Grove."

"I'd never take a girl there," Ella said, "if I thought anything about her."

"Why not?" Cliff asked.

"It's not a nice place, for one thing."

"You mean it isn't nice because they sell beer?"

"I mean it isn't nice."

Mrs. Chanler showed interest.

"Explain yourself, Ella."

"Ask Cliff to do that. He knows more about it than I do. The young men I go with never take me there."

"You bet they don't," Cliff said, grinning. "They walk you down Iroquois Street and show you the store windows. There's nothing the matter with the Grove. Just because a couple of hard characters were pinched there last spring doesn't mean anything. They just happened to stop in for a beer. The cops were following them."

"That isn't true," Ella said. "One of them lived there—Decker. He was a member of the Bernie Kaskell gang."

"Don't believe everything you hear," Cliff said.

"You must have a swell time," Belle said wistfully. "I wish I was eighteen, able to step out—stay out late."

"Why, Belle!"

She looked at her mother.

"I mean it! I'm sick to death of the sappy kids I have to pal around with." She glanced mischievously at Ella. "There ought to be one female run-around in this family. There's too much dignity as it is."

"Does Mrs. Boyd let Daisy stay out late?" Mrs. Chanler asked.

"I guess Mrs. Boyd doesn't know much about Daisy," Ella said.

Cliff pretended not to hear.

"What have you got for dessert?"

"Tapioca pudding."

"The big kind—fish eyes," Belle added.

"That lets me out," Cliff declared, tossing his napkin on the table.

"Cliff, sit down and wait."

"Can't be done. I've got to go to the office and get a car for to-night. See you later."

"Cliff." His mother followed him out to the hall.

"What's the matter now?"

"Don't drink anything, Cliff. Remember what happened last time."

"For goodness' sake, have a heart. I'm a man. I'm twenty-five—as Ella reminded us all. I know what I'm doing."

Her hand fell on his arm. Her face shadowed.

"Cliff, I'm always so worried about you—on these wild parties. It's so easy to make a mistake that seems trivial and takes years to get over."

He patted her hand, laughing.

"Don't worry about me, ma. I'm nobody's fool. A couple of drinks, sure. They slipped an extra half dozen over on me the night I sold Carrington the station wagon. I was celebrating. But never again—honest."

He kissed her and turned away. He made sure he had his keys and let himself out. In the moonlight the front yard didn't seem as untidy and overgrown as it had by day. He recalled his promise to cut the grass, trim the hedge, and paint the front gate. He never had much time for jobs around the house.

THE salesroom of Whitefield Motors was on the corner of Iroquois Street and Elm Lane. The concern had the county agency for the new Standard Eight. It was a fine car and, despite severe competition, Cliff had managed to sell quite a few.

He walked briskly down the shadowy street thinking of Daisy. Ella was always making cracks about her. It was nobody's business how late she stayed out. He wondered if he had fallen for Daisy Boyd. He knew a lot of girls, but she appealed to him most. The only

trouble was that she didn't have the class and background of Maud Deming.

There, he told himself, was a girl. Maud wasn't pretty, but she was smart. She had gone East to college. When she returned to Whitefield she brought a cosmopolitan poise and some wonderful clothes. Besides, the Demings were well fixed. Her grandfather, old Hyatt Deming, had founded the Whitefield Title & Mortgage Co. Her father was the present president. She lived in an old colonial house on Hermit Hill, the aristocratic section of Whitefield. She had dogs and horses, played golf and tennis, and was one of the younger set's leaders at the Grassymere Country Club.

The showroom of Whitefield Motors was lighted. Flood lamps threw a rosy glow on a special sport sedan. That was the model Chanler expected to sell Maud Deming. He went around the corner to the service entrance, where he looked over the line of cars parked against the back wall. The one he wanted was a La Ralle convertible coupé, a special job. Riker, the company head, had taken it in trade.

Frank, the night manager, came over while Cliff climbed into the driver's seat.

"Taking this one out, Cliff?"

"That's right."

Frank looked dubious.

"Are you sure it's all right?"

"Why wouldn't it be?"

"I heard Mr. Riker telling Joe Field the La Ralle wasn't to be used. It's practically sold to somebody over in Atherton."

Cliff switched on the lights, looked at the fuel gauge, started the motor.

"It's O. K., Frank," he said.

The coupé rolled out into Elm Lane. He looked back. Frank was

staring after him, still dubious. Cliff smiled to himself. What was the good of working for an automobile agency if you couldn't get a decent car to take your best girl out in? He wasn't going to hurt it. For one night he was stepping out in style. Besides, he reminded himself, there was a chance that Maud Deming and some of her friends would drop in at the Grove—"slumming," they called it.

He had to make a good impression on Maud. It wouldn't do to have her see him in some old rattletrap. He exulted in the surge of power his foot conjured from the accelerator.

It was O. K.—using the La Ralle despite Lawrence Riker's orders. He had a date.

CHAPTER II. THE GROVE.

CLIFF stopped in front of the Boyd cottage on Willow Street. The twin horns sounded softly. He lighted a cigarette and relaxed. You always had to wait for girls and Daisy was no exception.

The Boyds had had tough going. Daisy's father, a contractor, had deserted her mother. Pete Boyd had been a high roller. In the building days of '28 and '29 he had made plenty. He had tried to crash the country club. Failing that, he had been a big shot among the bright lights of Atherton. Some blonde had hooked him. Once Daisy told Cliff that she thought her father was out West. The blonde was trying her luck in pictures. Mrs. Boyd, left practically penniless, had turned to dressmaking for a livelihood. But, Cliff knew, it was mostly Daisy's earnings at the Whitefield Arcade, where she was cashier, that kept them going.

Cliff supposed that it was because of Daisy's salary that her mother gave her a more or less free rein. She never bore down on the girl. Daisy had her own key and made her own hours. She was a nice kid. Cliff had known her for years. They had gone to high school together. Because of their financial status the Boyds weren't accepted by the "best people" of Whitefield.

Suddenly the front door was opened and closed. Cliff leaned to open the coupé door for Daisy. She climbed in with an exclamation:

"What a swell buggy, Cliff! Who does it belong to?"

"Just a turn-in."

"It's grand. How come they let you use it?"

Chanler started the engine.

"I borrowed it."

She looked at him anxiously.

"You'd better be careful. Suppose something happens to it?"

"Nothing will."

He looked at her in the dim light made by the instrument panel. She surely was pretty. She was small. Her hair was a sort of light brown with touches of gold in it. He had never seen such long-lashed blue eyes. Her mouth was full-lipped. She was the cuddly kind, a girl a fellow could care a lot about.

"Love me, honey?" she asked, drawing her feet up under her on the leather seat.

"Sure do."

"That's nice," she sighed.

"Love me?"

"What do you think, Cliff?"

"I wonder. Sometimes I think so, other times no. I'm never sure about you. I guess that's what keeps me going. But how about Alex Trefford?"

She pursed her red lips provocatively.

"Who am I to take Maud Dem-

ing's best and only away from her?" She laughed under her breath. "Alex had lunch at the Arcade today. He said he might be in a party at the Grove to-night."

"I was afraid of that," Cliff said. "Why?"

"I don't mean it the way it sounds. I had an idea Maud and her gang would drop in."

"What she does means quite a lot to you, Cliff?"

"Not so much."

"You think she's pretty good."

"She is."

"You've got a nerve——"

He dropped his right hand over her knee.

"All prospects for a Standard are pretty good."

"That's your excuse. Understand, I'm not jealous or anything. You don't have to twist around what you mean. Why shouldn't you admire Maud? Even if she isn't exactly a beauty she has an awful lot to offer."

"I guess Trefford knows that," Cliff murmured.

"You do, too."

He looked at her.

"What's the idea? We start out for a good time and you begin talking about Maud Deming. What started that?"

"Something Alex said to me at the Arcade."

"What did he say?"

"That would be telling. You're conceited enough as it is."

"Listen, lay off that conceited stuff. This is the second time to-night I've had it hurled at me. First my sister, then you. I'm not conceited, honestly I'm not."

"All men are conceited," Daisy declared softly.

Cliff grimaced in the dark mirror of the windshield. Conceited? He really wasn't. What did he have to

be conceited about? He was lucky if he averaged thirty-five a week. He'd be fortunate if he ever pulled himself up into the four-thousand-dollar-a-year class.

They turned left at Winding River Bridge. The Grove was a half mile farther on, back from the road.

THE roadside inn glowed. When Cliff backed into the parking space there were more than fifty cars to keep the La Ralle company. He helped Daisy out, and they started toward the building.

Halfway across the cinder parking circle he stopped and looked at a swanky four passenger speedster, a special job that must have cost five or six thousand dollars.

"Some bus," he said.

"Recognize it?" Daisy asked.

"Can't say I do. Do you know who owns it?"

"Bernie Kaskell. I saw him in it yesterday."

Chanler whistled to himself. Kaskell, a Chicago product, was a notorious character around Whitefield. Whatever his racket, he always had plenty of money, dressed and lived well, and kept safely out of the law's reach. He divided his time between Whitefield and Atherton. He always traveled with a Jack Lacey, who probably was his bodyguard.

"Come on, let's go in. Feel high, honey?" Cliff said.

"Like a church steeple, handsome."

Cliff admired Daisy when he took a seat opposite her at their table. She certainly looked pretty. She liked places like the Grove. She seemed to absorb gayety. She liked music and dancing crowds. He handed her the wine card.

"You know my poison," she said.

"Tom Collins?"

"That's hitting the glass on the rim."

"Two Tom Collins," Chanler told the waiter.

He settled back and looked around the place. He always did that from habit. Some prospective customer he might contact.

Cliff didn't see any one he knew well, but most of the people he had seen before. The same crowd went there every week. Whitefield merchants and shopkeepers, their wives, girl friends and high school youths.

"What are we waiting for?" Daisy asked, when the drinks arrived.

"Nothing I know of. Orchestra's pretty smooth to-night."

Daisy was soft and warm in his arms. She had some kind of perfume on her hair. It was nice, kind of sensuous. The drink warmed him pleasantly. The world, he decided, was a pretty good place. Tomorrow he'd close up a couple of deals and show Riker something. No sales so far for the month. But he had Maud Deming up his sleeve. He'd shake her down directly.

They had a couple more drinks. Chanler radiated good cheer. He was a live wire, a go-getter. He must have inherited a lot of his mother's pep and ambition. His mood softened. Ma was a peach. She'd had a tough time keeping the family together.

"Why so quiet?"

Chanler came out of his brown study.

"Just thinking."

"About what?"

"You, mostly."

"Let's dance," Daisy said, making a face at him.

About twelve o'clock Chanler saw Bernie Kaskell and Lacey come in. Kaskell was rather small, slim, and dapper. He had dark skin, and

brown eyes large enough and with lashes long enough to have been a girl's. But there was nothing effeminate in his hard, thin-lipped mouth or the expression in his face. Lacey was much taller and heavier, a nondescript youth with a couple of big hands and one damaged ear.

When they passed Chanler's table Kaskell nodded affably.

"Hello," he said.

Cliff nodded back, with a word.

"I didn't know you knew him," Daisy said, surprised.

"I don't. He brought his car in once—the one he used to drive—for service and greasing."

"Well," Daisy continued, "here comes some one you know a lot better."

Cliff followed her gaze with his own. A party of six were entering the room. He saw Alexander Treford, perfectly turned out in evening clothes, with Maud Deming beside him. He knew the others by sight as persons who spent most of their time playing golf at Grassy-mere.

Daisy watched, her slim fingers toying with her glass.

"Thrilled?" she said.

"What about?" When she nodded over toward the other table, Cliff laughed. "Not particularly. Let's have another drink."

She studied him.

"Haven't you had enough, Cliff? I don't want to be the one to drive you home."

"You're trying to tell me I'm tight? Daisy, you're nutsy to-night. Everything's under control."

"I'm glad you told me. All the same, no more gin for you."

"I'd hate to be married to you, baby. You'd want to wear the pants, wouldn't you? Don't do this and don't do that. All you'd need would

be a lead for the brass ring in my nose."

Daisy's pretty face shadowed.

"I'm not like that, really, Cliff. I just want to watch out for you."

His hand tightened over hers.

"I know it. You're sweet. Don't mind me. I'm just a big roughneck in a clean collar."

The music started. He saw Daisy's expression change. She jerked up her head. At the same minute a hand touched Chanler's shoulder.

"Dance this one with me, Cliff? I'm sure Miss Boyd won't object. I want to talk to you about that car."

Maud Deming stood beside him. Cliff got up quickly. He was surprised how his head swam. He mumbled something, steadying himself by gripping the chair.

"Sure you don't mind, Daisy?"

"Certainly not." Her tone was intended to be casual, but there was a frosty note in it. "Business is business, I suppose."

He turned to Maud Deming. He saw Alex Trefford staring as he danced off with her. She laughed under her breath.

"Was that terrible of me, Cliff? I mean, taking you away from Daisy Boyd?"

"You heard what Daisy said. Business is business."

"But this isn't."

"No?"

"No, I bought a Nuick this afternoon," she told him.

CHAPTER III.

COLLISION.

CLIFF searched Maud Deming's face. She was always joking. She had a way of saying one thing and meaning another.

"You bought a Nuick?"

"Dad thought it best."

That was a poor excuse, Cliff told himself. What she wanted she always got. His record wasn't going to be so hot this month. He had counted on the sale.

His mood changed. What was the matter with him? Luck was terrible. Was he losing his grip?

"I'm sorry," Cliff said. "Anyway, you bought a swell car. You'll get a lot of satisfaction out of it."

She squeezed his hand.

"You're a darling, Cliffie. It's a gift—the way you meet your situations."

He wanted to tell her that meeting this one required a lot of courage. Instead, he led her through an intricate series of steps.

He began to study Maud as they danced. It kept his mind from the disappointment of the sale he had lost. She wasn't at all pretty, but she had a certain amount of glamour. She was a brunette. Her eyes were a dark brown.

"Why don't you drop around at the club some afternoon and play a round of golf with me?" she said. "Remember the year before last? We had some awfully good games."

"I don't get much time any more."

"Can't you steal an hour or two? You're not as rushed as all that."

"I'll see what I can do," he told her.

"That's a promise. Try and make it Thursday, Alex is having a cocktail party from five o'clock on."

"He'd love me to come."

"If I want you," Maud said, "that's all that's necessary."

"Engaged to Trefford?" Cliff said.

"Still foot free and fancy loose."

"That's sensible."

"Says you." She laughed. "How about yourself? Every time I see you you're with Daisy Boyd. Anything secret going on?"

"If you mean we're planning a honeymoon, it's no."

Suddenly Maud laughed.

"Well, that's dandy. She's been glaring at me with green lights in her eyes. This time they don't mean 'go.' You'd better take me back. Don't forget Thursday. I'll be looking for you."

Cliff returned her to Trefford, said "hello" to those at the table, and went back to Daisy.

"So that's over?" she said icily. "I didn't notice her signing on the dotted line."

"She bought a Nuick this afternoon."

"And that's what she took you away from me to tell you! I must say she's big-hearted. She turns you down, then drags you off to tell you about it."

"Please, Daisy," Cliff said, "don't ride me. I feel low enough as it is. I was counting on her order."

"It's almost one o'clock. We'll dance once more and then you can take me home."

"You sound as if you're mad at me."

"I'm not exactly overjoyed. She could have at least brought Trefford over to entertain me while she had you."

"I told you it was business," he said patiently.

"Monkey business!"

THEY passed Bernie Kaskell and Lacey when they went out. Kaskell had a bottle of champagne in an ice bucket beside his table. A cigar was tucked in one corner of his thin mouth.

"Sure you're able to drive?" Daisy asked.

"Of course. Don't be silly."

His hand closed over her wrist.

They both laughed. He helped her into the La Ralle, switched on

the lights, and kicked the starter. The moon sailed high in the sky. When they reached Kingston Boulevard, Chanler drove as far as Shelter Rock and stopped. That was the usual sparking place for Whitefield's young *Romeos*. Daisy's head drooped to his shoulder.

"You haven't kissed me all evening," she said.

"I'll make up for that." He searched for her lips with his. "Where are you, anyhow?"

"Down here—by your lapel."

Her mouth was sweet to taste despite its lipstick smear. The kiss sent a tremor through him. He wondered again if he were actually in love with Daisy.

Presently she sighed and looked at the moon.

"Are you in love with me? I mean, the right way?" she asked.

"What do you think?"

"I don't know. I can't figure it out. Sometimes I think you are, then again I'm not so sure."

"Then you're like me. I'm the same way—with you."

"You're terribly sweet, Cliff. You're everything a girl likes, with one exception. That's the fact there's something missing. I don't know what to call it—faith, I guess. If you had that you'd be perfect."

"What do you mean—if I had it?"

"I should have said if you could arouse it in me. If I could only feel it, be sure of it. I can't. Don't ask me to explain. Somehow I can't put it in words."

"I'm sorry," Cliff said. "I want to do the right thing. I'm awfully fond of you, Daisy. I don't know exactly how to decide if I am in love with you the way you want me to be. I've never been in love that way. I'm an amateur."

"Look out I don't give you the

gong," she laughed. "Now, let's start home."

He kissed her again when he reached the house on Willow Street.

"See you soon, Daisy."

"Thanks for to-night."

"Despite Maud?"

"Yes, in spite of her."

He waited until the second-floor window glowed with light, then he drove toward Iroquois Street. From the time he left Shelter Rock he had been vaguely conscious of the headlamps of a car behind him. Now, as he reached the corner of Whitefield's main thoroughfare the same car, picking up speed, rushed past him.

Cliff was an expert driver. He was always careful. He observed the traffic laws to the letter in all cases. But skill and highway obedience were of little avail now. The other car suddenly turned in front of him. He jammed on his brakes and swung the wheel sharply to the left to avoid the crash. He might have swerved clear if the other car hadn't stopped. There was a loud, disheartening crack as the La Ralle collided with the car in front.

Cliff was jolted against the wheel, the breath knocked out of him. Before he could climb out or do anything, the car that had caused the accident roared away. Somebody in the corner house opened a window and peered out. A milkman came across the street.

"Hurt, buddy?"

"No, I don't think so. That car that just——"

He ran out into the middle of the avenue. The tail light of the other car was disappearing in the distance. Chanler went slowly back to the La Ralle. The milkman stood in front of it, looking it over, shaking his head.

"He certainly smacked you plenty,

buddy. Funny the way it happened. What was the idea of him cutting you off like that?"

Cliff didn't answer. He watched the water trickling out of the smashed radiator. The chromium bumper hung from one bolt. The right fender was folded back over the punctured tire. But what made Cliff's heart sink was the list to the car. That seemed to indicate a twisted front axle, and front axles were expensive.

"You didn't happen to get his number?" he asked the milkman.

The other shook his head.

"Get his number? Buddy, I couldn't even tell you what color that car was. He got away like a bat out of hell."

CHAPTER IV.

OFFER.

THE president of Whitefield Motors, Lawrence Riker, was in his office when Cliff entered. Riker was a small, paunchy man in his late forties.

Cliff waited until Riker finished talking with his wife over the telephone.

"No, it's impossible," the man was saying. "I can't get off this afternoon. Tell me what train Amy's coming on and I'll send one of the boys down to the station to meet her." He listened, grunted. "What do you mean hospitality? This is business. If you will have guests in the middle of the week and can't cut a bridge party to meet them it's too bad. What's that?" He shifted his cigar from one side of his mouth to the other. "Positively, no! You can——"

He jammed the receiver back on the hook. He recovered his equanimity by picking up a letter and pretending to read it. Then he

looked up as if just aware of Cliff's presence.

"Sit down. I want to talk to you."

Cliff slid into the chair reserved for customers when closing a deal. Riker frowned at the desecration.

"I know what you're going to say, Mr. Riker. If you'll let me explain just——"

"Explain? It'll take a lot to explain why you came in here last night, took a car you had no business to, and smashed it up. Go ahead, let's hear it."

Cliff told his story frankly. When he spoke of the accident at the street corner he saw Riker's expression become skeptical. The man picked up a repair estimate form and looked at the figures on it.

"Joe handed me this a few minutes ago. It'll cost three hundred bucks to fix the coupé." He put down the sheet and glanced at a cashier's report beside him. "I see you're overdrawn fifteen dollars. Three hundred for repairs and you're fifteen short."

"I'll work it off," Cliff said earnestly.

"You will; but not here." Riker tipped back in his swivel chair. "Cliff, you're fired. I might have given you a break if you were producing. But you're not. I don't know what's the matter with you lately. You've let a half dozen sure sales slip through your fingers."

"I don't want to alibi myself," Cliff said, "but it's the car, Mr. Riker. You know that as well as I do. This isn't any time to introduce a new machine."

Riker looked at the young, handsome face.

"So you're giving me a lesson in automobile salesmanship?"

"I'm trying to tell you why——"

The swivel chair snapped back to level.

"You even let the Deming girl buy a Nuick. I'm not going to argue with you about it. You're through here. Take this bill along with you. I expect you to do the honorable thing and pay it when you're able. You can reduce it a little at a time when you get another job."

CLIFF put the repair bill in his pocket. He went out on Iroquois Street. The morning sun was strong and warm. The awnings on the windows of Samuel Goodman's law offices on the second floor of the Frost Building were lowered. Cliff could hear the rattle of a typewriter. That was Ella, busy at work. She now was the bread winner. He could imagine what she would say.

Toward two o'clock, and after he had made fruitless visits to places where he thought he might possibly find a job, he went home. As he turned into the street Chanler caught a glimpse of Bernie Kaskell's car. More important, it was parked directly in front of the Chanler house.

Kaskell came through the gate as Cliff reached it.

"I was just about to shove a note under your front door, Cliff. Nobody home. Come on, hop in. I want to talk to you. Had lunch yet?"

"No, not yet."

"Neither have I. That's swell. We'll get a bite and I can explain while we're eating."

Cliff got into Kaskell's car. He was a trifle dazed. What did Kaskell want with him?

Kaskell's destination turned out to be the Abbey, a road house halfway between Whitefield and Ather-ton. Kaskell let one of the attendants park the car and led the way to a table on the shaded porch. Cliff

sat down while a waiter placed menu cards before them.

"Two club lunches, Emil," Kaskell said. "Bring us a couple of Manhattans."

He lighted a cigarette and looked at Cliff.

"I don't get this at all, Kaskell."

"You will in a minute. I heard a piece of information this morning. Somebody told me you had split with Riker."

"He fired me," Cliff said bluntly.

Bernie Kaskell rested both elbows on the table.

"That's what I understand. It's a good thing you got away when you did. Riker's ready for the skids. I happen to know the banks are about ready to clamp down. His paper isn't worth the ink on it."

"I'm not surprised."

Kaskell inhaled tobacco smoke.

"What happened?"

Cliff told him the story. Kaskell listened attentively. When he finished, Kaskell asked him if he had any clew to the identity of the one who had caused the damage.

"He got away too fast," Cliff explained.

The waiter brought the cocktails.

"Getting down to brass tacks," Kaskell continued, "I think I can get you a job. My brother-in-law, Mike Palanto, has opened a second-hand car salesroom in Atherton. He's only handling good stuff. Mike's a funny duck, but he knows the business. Like to work for him?"

"How much?"

"Commission and salary. Don't worry about that. Mike's got plenty. He'll make better terms with you than Riker. I can fix it. For a long time I've kept an eye on you. You've got what it takes, Cliff. I saw you hoofing with the Deming girl last night. That's what Mike's

after—some one who can bring in folks with dough."

Cliff's eyes narrowed slightly. On the face of it the proposition seemed open and shut. A good job in the only trade with which he was familiar. He hesitated. Kaskell's reputation was none too good. To be associated with a relative of his might not be so good either. He shrugged. After all, it was nobody's business where he worked or who employed him. Besides, he argued, he would never get another chance like this.

Cliff mashed out his cigarette.

"I'd like to meet your brother-in-law. If he'll give me the job I'll be glad to take it."

Kaskell extended a hand.

"That's the way to talk. It's in the bag. As soon as we're finished here I'll roll you over to Atherton and introduce you."

The waiter brought the appetizer. When Cliff picked up a fork his hand wasn't entirely steady. He couldn't understand it. It was as if some vague premonition had come to him. Bernie Kaskell. Kaskell's brother-in-law. Atherton. Was he making a mistake that would cost dearly? Or was it just his imagination, strained by the events of last night and this morning?

Cliff didn't know.

CHAPTER V.

STALLED.

MAUD DEMING was on the porch of the country club when Cliff drove up that Thursday afternoon in a sporty black-and-silver roadster. The long hood, and white side-walled tires made an expensively rakish appearance.

Maud looked it over.

"Which uncle died and how much did he leave you, Cliff?"

"This isn't mine. It's a demonstrator. I mean, I gave a demonstration in it an hour ago. Classy job, isn't it?"

"It's as smart as the devil," Maud said. "Park it and chin with me before we go out. I haven't seen you in a blue moon."

They lingered in the parking space. The sun shone brightly. A breeze came across the fairways. Distant figures trudged over the velvet green course. Maud looked crisp and cool.

"Some one said you were in the automobile business in Atherton," she began.

"I left Riker. I'm with the D-G Corporation." That sounded better than saying he worked for Mike Palanto, Bernie Kaskell's brother-in-law. "I'm getting more money than Riker paid me. I like it a lot. I've sold three cars and I've been there less than a week."

"I'm glad to hear it," Maud said.

They chatted for a few more minutes and she took him back to the clubhouse.

Trefford and a girl came out to make it a foursome. The girl's name was Lynn Makepiece. She had large black eyes and raven-dark hair. She was casual, wisecracking. Chanler noticed the quick, surreptitious looks she gave him. They started, teeing off presently, driving into the sun.

"What are we playing for?" the Makepiece girl asked.

"Let's make it a dollar a hole," Trefford suggested. "That O. K. with you, Cliff?"

Chanler nodded. He had about fifteen dollars with him. He couldn't afford to pay for Maud, too. He hadn't seen her play for some time. He seemed to remember she

had been pretty terrible. Perhaps she had improved. He fervently hoped so. At any rate, there was nothing he could do but accept Trefford's terms. No one was going to call him a piker and short sport.

They wandered down the fairway. Cliff listened to Maud's gay, inconsequential chatter. His thoughts were divided between the match and his new job. Again he wondered if he had made a mistake. There was something about Mike Palanto's Used Car Emporium that disturbed him oddly. He was sure, something was amiss somewhere. It wasn't reasonable to expect a secondhand dealer to sell a practically new four-thousand-dollar car for nine hundred and make a profit. Cliff's eyes narrowed. Palanto had a dozen other listings with similar prices. There was something funny about it.

They came to the last hole. Cliff looked at the back of his score card. So far he and Maud were out seven dollars. Not so tough. They halved the eighteenth hole and went toward the clubhouse. Trefford and Cliff left the girls at the door of the locker room.

"We'll grab a shower and get upstairs," Trefford said. "You'd never know it to look at me, but I'm throwing a cocktail party at five."

"It's ten after now," Cliff said.

"I like that bus you rolled up in," Trefford continued. "What's it worth?"

"A couple of thousand, but you can buy it for eight seventy-five."

Trefford gave him a quick look.

"On the level? That's real value. Let's have your card. I might be able to send you some business."

Out of the showers and dressed, they went upstairs to the lounge. On the wide veranda Cliff saw about a dozen people. They were laugh-

ing, drinking. Cocktail shakers made frosty music. He caught a glimpse of Maud in the group.

"Pardon me a minute," Trefford murmured. "I've got to make a telephone call before I go out to the zoo."

He stepped into a booth. Cliff picked up a magazine and balanced himself on the arm of a leather sofa. He didn't want to listen, but he couldn't help hearing some of what Trefford said:

"Hello. . . . Yes, it's Alex. . . . Suppose I stop around for you about nine? . . . Anywhere you say. . . . Good. . . . See you later, Daisy."

MAUD fluttered up to Cliff when he went out on the porch. She dragged him around, introducing him. Then she got him in a corner, pushed a plate of sandwiches close and handed him a cocktail glass.

"I don't suppose you go in much for this sort of thing, Cliff."

"Not much."

"Silly, but nice. You drink a lot of alcohol and eat a lot of unnecessary food that makes you thirsty so you'll drink more. In order to drink you have to eat, so you eat, get thirsty and eat—" She broke off with a laugh. "Why don't you stop me? I'm liable to go on this way for years and years."

She perched herself on the broad arm of a chair. Cliff had to force animation. He kept thinking of Trefford and Daisy. Stepping out together. Nine o'clock. He felt a dull resentment. Daisy was his girl. What business had she running around with Alexander Trefford? What business had Trefford making dates with her?

What did Trefford want with Daisy from a casual night's ro-

mance? Kisses. Love. The thought of Daisy in Trefford's arms sickened Cliff. When he finished his drink his anger increased. It wouldn't have taken much to have made him pick a fight with Trefford. He wanted to crack a fist off the other's jaw, wanted to tell him a thing or two, spoil his smug, tanned face.

"I've got to be going," he said to Maud.

"So early? It isn't seven yet."

"I know, but I've got to get home for dinner."

She leaned over and studied him.

"Tell you what. Here's an idea that's colossal. Let's cut and run. You take me to dinner somewhere. Just we two. It'll be fun."

Cliff stared back at her. Why not? Anything was better than going home and spending the evening brooding over Daisy's date. Maud was good company. She'd keep his mind off his troubles.

"All right. Will you be my dinner guest, Miss Deming?"

He thought they'd have some difficulty getting away, but nobody paid any attention to them. Cliff went down to the parking space, got the car, and drove up to the porch of the clubhouse.

The sun had wheeled far into the west. Maud climbed into the car, pulled down her hat more firmly over her waved hair and lighted a cigarette.

"Where'll we go?"

"How about the Abbey?"

She shook her head.

"Too many people. Ever been out to the Spinning Wheel?"

"I've heard of it."

"Let's try it."

Chanler reflected. Seven dollars from fifteen left eight. Surely they wouldn't eat eight dollars' worth of

food. He had to have a couple of bucks left in case they needed gas.

The road was a new, water packed highway. Once or twice the engine seemed to catch and miss. Chanler eyed the instrument dials.

"Dirt in the feed line," he said. "I'll make a note of it and have it blown clear to-morrow. I'm glad she ran all right when I gave the demonstration. I think I've sold it."

Maud tipped her head back against the upholstery.

"I owe you seven dollars," she announced.

"You don't owe me anything."

"I saw you hand Alex that much for our losses. You don't suppose I'd invite you to play golf and let you lose money. Not a chance. Another thing, I'm taking you to dinner."

Chanler felt a hot wave of color in his face. He spoke without looking at her.

"What do you think I am—a gigolo?"

"If you really want to know what I think I'll be glad to tell you. I think you're one of nature's noblemen. How do you like that? Seriously, I'm rather fond of you, Cliff. If you weren't so serious all the time. If you'd only forget that life is real and life is earnest, then you'd be about one hundred per cent."

"Thanks, I'll try and remember to do that."

"I don't think you could. It's not your nature. As the twig is bent, so shall the mighty oak sprout. I guess you're finished sprouting. By the way, I don't seem to recall having heard your reactions. What do you think of me? Am I nice or awful?"

"Nice."

"I hate that word. How nice?"

"Awfully nice."

She moved a little closer to him.

"Well, that's a comfort. If you think I'm awfully nice why don't you ever loosen up? You're so aloof when you're with me."

"I don't mean to be."

"Probably you can't help that either."

AS Maud and Cliff lingered over their coffee and cigarettes in the Spinning Wheel, a man came in and looked around. He was tall and heavily built. He wore a gray suit and carried a felt hat. He went over to their table.

"I beg your pardon," he said to Cliff, "but are you the party who's driving that black-and-silver roadster outside? I notice it has dealer's plates on it. Is it for sale?"

Cliff gave him a card. The man read his name and nodded.

"I'd like to have you stop in our showroom, Mr.—"

"Jackson—Henry Jackson. And thanks, I'll do that in a day or two. I've been looking for a good buy for some time—something snappy my daughter can drive. I hope you'll pardon my intruding on you, Mr. Chanler. You'll see me soon."

When the man left them Cliff made a gesture.

"That's the way it goes. They come to me, begging for a chance to buy something."

Maud smiled.

"You weren't so stupid when you let Larry Riker go. Listen, why can't we take a ride before we go back to town? Have you looked out of the window? It's moonlight and there are more stars than there are in Hollywood."

"I have to make a phone call," Cliff said, getting up. Maud raised her carefully shaped brows. "I'll call the house," he added, "and tell them not to expect me."

"Oh." Maud's cold expression

changed. "I thought it might be some one else."

They drove down a road that went through the hills. The night was warm. The moon was new. Maud's perfume drifted to him. It made him think of Daisy. Thinking about her brought back the dull anger. By this time she and Trefford were on their way. He remembered the sweetness of Daisy's lips. Now that same honey would be given to Trefford. He wondered if it were love that made him jealous. He tried to put her out of his mind.

About an hour later the engine coughed, missed, and stopped. Cliff got out and lifted the hood. He knew quite a little about mechanics. Maud smoked a cigarette and watched interestedly. With an electric torch, Cliff found the cause. One of the carburetor adjustments had gone bad. The butterfly valve had broken. It was a tow job unless he could get another part.

"Very bad?" Maud asked.

"Not so good. Where are we?"

"A thousand miles from nowhere. More specifically we're somewhere near Devil's Glen. There isn't a garage within miles—a house or a telephone either for that matter. What do you do in a case like this?"

"Walk, or sit it out and wait for morning."

"I think I prefer to sit and wait. High heels aren't much good on roads like this. Too bad we didn't bring a shaker of cocktails."

Cliff put down the hood. He stared off into the darkness. The idea of sitting in the car and waiting for morning didn't appeal to him. He tried to decide what to do. There must be a house with a telephone somewhere around. If he could find one he could telephone to Atherton. Mike Palanto's shop had an all-night shift. Some one could

get the necessary part and drive out with it.

"If you're not afraid to stay here alone," Cliff said, "I think I'll wander around and see if I can't locate a phone."

"I'm flattered," she drawled.

"If we don't get it fixed," Cliff said, "we're likely to be here until all hours to-morrow."

She snapped her cigarette away.

"Do what you think best."

"I'll leave the lights burning."

"That's thoughtful."

He paid no attention to the annoyed note in her voice. He started off down the road. Thirty minutes later he glimpsed the lighted windows of a farm across a field. When he knocked on the door a gangling youth opened it.

Cliff saw the telephone in the hall before he asked to use it. He got Palanto's place without trouble. In another minute he was talking with Lacey's brother, Gus. Cliff explained his difficulty in detail.

"I'll get a car and be out as soon as possible," Lacey said. "Let's have that road again."

CHAPTER VI.

PALANTO'S BUSINESS.

AT five in the morning Cliff left Maud Deming at Hermit Hill and drove to Atherton. Gus Lacey had gone on ahead. Palanto's place occupied a corner building on one of the city's busiest streets. The showroom was in front of the service department and shop. Cliff drove the black-and-silver roadster in on the cement floor.

A group of mechanics stood around a dusty Ackard. It had evidently just come in. Cliff noticed one of the men taking off the Illinois license plates.

"What a sweet job," Gus Lacey

was saying to some one. "Another coat of paint and she'll be on the floor Wednesday. I think we'll throw on a new pair of headlamps."

"How about the motor number?" a short man asked.

"Joe'll take care of that."

Cliff went over to the car. As he approached it Lacey coughed significantly. A silence fell over the group.

"That's a nice boiler," Cliff said, walking around it. "But why paint it? It looks new."

"It is, but green isn't so popular in this burg," Lacey said carelessly. "Turn her out in platinum gray and you can sell her in an hour."

There was a certain indefinable tenseness that Cliff was aware of. He looked at the clock over the door.

"Guess I'll go home and get some sleep."

"Sure, staying out all night with a dame in a broken car won't keep you awake to-morrow," Lacey murmured. "I'll tell the boss how it was and you won't have to show up until around noon."

Cliff drove back to Whitefield. He was no fool. The episode had only one meaning. Palanto was dealing in "hot cars." The dusty Ackard had been picked up somewhere and brought in. The motor number would be changed to prevent identification. A new set of headlamps, as Gus Lacey suggested, together with a change of color would alter its appearance so the former owner would be unable to recognize it.

His face hardened. He thought about his own connection with Palanto's business. He might have known it was too good to be true. He couldn't stay on with them. His heart sank. Out of a job again, looking for any kind of work to

keep him busy. He was worried and tired when he got back to the house and tiptoed up to his room.

"Is that you, Cliff?"

His mother's anxious voice filtered out into the hall. He answered in a husky whisper.

"I had a breakdown. Nothing serious. I had to wait to get it fixed. Let me sleep late. I don't have to go back to the office until noon."

He undressed, put out the light and crawled into bed. For a long time he lay awake, watching his room turn from gray to the gold of the morning sun.

PALANTO was showing a car on the floor when Cliff went in. The man was dark, slender, as well-groomed as Bernie Kaskell. He had a certain cosmopolitan polish. He was a good talker, suave and convincing. He nodded to Cliff, finished with his customer, went to the door with the man and returned to Cliff's desk in the corner.

"Heard about your hard luck last night. Too bad."

Cliff looked at the lean, inscrutable face.

"Yes, it was too bad."

"How about the prospect you took out?"

"He liked it. He's to telephone you this afternoon about the financing. He wants it spread over eighteen months."

Palanto grimaced.

"Some mug who wants to ride around like a millionaire on a shoestring." He shrugged. "Let him. It's not our grief if he doesn't meet his payments."

Cliff got up.

"I'm quitting, Mr. Palanto," he said.

The man's cold expression didn't change.

"What's the matter—not enough dough?"

Cliff was prepared for the question. He shook his head.

"No, it's not that. I'm thinking of going into another line."

Palanto showed white, even teeth in a quick smile.

"That's too bad," he murmured, "coming at a time like this."

Cliff frowned.

"What do you mean?"

"You talk to Bernie later on. He'll tell you."

Some one was coming in and Palanto turned away. Cliff sat down again. He picked up a couple of letters from prospects and read them. They didn't make sense. His mind was busy with what Palanto had told him. "Coming at a time like this." What did that mean? Why should he see Kaskell? What kind of trickery were they up to?

He had to get out in the air. The showroom shut him in like a prison. That was a significant thought—like a prison. Hot cars and bad characters. He had sold stolen cars. He had helped unload them. No one would believe he had worked there for days, innocently unaware of what was going on.

What could he do about it? If he told the cops he'd be in a spot. He had read enough and heard enough about the complex ways of crime to realize a squealer's fate. Besides, Kaskell probably had political protection. The chances were that he'd be the only one to suffer.

Chanler drove back to Whitefield. He killed time until five o'clock. Then he parked in front of the Arcade. He could see Daisy in the cashier's cage. There were only a few patrons at the tables.

After a while Daisy turned her

post over to the night cashier. She came out by the employee's entrance. She walked over to the car where he waited.

"What are you doing back so early, Cliff?"

"My time's my own. Get in. I'll drive you home."

She seemed reserved, almost aloof. She had little to say until he turned the corner and straightened out on Eagle Street.

"Thought you said you were taking me home."

"I want to talk to you first." He looked at her in the windshield mirror. "Have a good time last night?"

"What do you mean?"

"Stepping out with Trefford."

"Who told you——" She stopped abruptly, laughed. "Oh, so that's what you wanted to talk to me about? Cliff, I didn't think you were the jealous kind."

"I'm not—I hate to be played for a sucker. I take you places, have a good time with you because I'm crazy about you. The minute my back's turned Trefford calls you up and makes a date. I wouldn't care if he was some one in our class, some one with good intentions. What does he want with you?"

"What do you want with me?"

"I'm in love with you."

"Maybe he is, too."

"I expect," Chanler said deliberately, "to marry you as soon as I have some money put by."

Daisy's exclamation was a small, hushed sound. She drew back in the corner of her seat, looking at him wonderingly. It was the first time he had ever mentioned the word marriage. He saw that it came as a shock. He smiled grimly to himself. Daisy didn't know it but it was as much of a surprise to him as it was to her. What he said had

popped out on the inspiration of the moment.

"Do you mean that, Cliff?"

"I never say what I don't mean."

Her hand crept to his arm.

"Cliff, I didn't know——"

"Well, you know it now," he said gruffly. "So quit playing around with Alex."

"You really love me enough to want to marry me?"

"You heard what I said."

Her eyes were as bright as if they had caught the warm, electric glow of the sun. Her fingers tightened on his sleeve.

"I'm so happy. I—I thought it was Maud. That's really the only reason I let Alex date me. I wanted to show you I could go out with others. Cliff, let's go somewhere and celebrate."

He stared ahead at the road.

"Sorry, but I've got to go back to the office. I've got to talk with——"

He broke off abruptly. He had told Daisy he intended to marry her and he was going back to Atherton to give up his job.

CLIFF left Daisy at her house, kissed her as she was getting out of the car and drove off. He kept the accelerator pedal down all the way along Kingston Boulevard. He felt upset and uncertain. Why had he ever told her that? It only complicated matters. And, he was sure, enough complications confronted him.

He left the car in front of the showroom. The elaborate car which Kaskell drove was at the curb ahead of him. Chanler's pulses began to beat faster. He went in. Bernie Kaskell was in Palanto's office. He looked up, beckoned to Cliff and told him to shut the door.

"What's all this stuff Mike's been telling me about you quitting?"

"I'm getting out of the automobile business."

"Got another job in view?"

"Not exactly, but——"

Kaskell's face darkened.

"Come clean, Cliff. What's the trouble?"

"Nothing, nothing at all. I'm just fed up selling cars."

"You're sure that's the only reason you want to bow out?"

"What other reason could there be?" Cliff countered.

Bernie Kaskell lighted a cigarette.

"That's what I'd like to know," he said smoothly. "Cliff, you won't want to quit when I break this. I told you I liked you. Mike thinks you're a good guy, too. We were talking it over the other night. You're a live wire, what we need. We've got plenty of dough and we're not Scotch. We've decided to take you in as a partner here."

For a minute Cliff stared blankly.

"A partner?"

"Sure. An even third split on the profits for all of us. That's what we think of you. Mike's going to see his lawyer Friday about making it legal. You know, changes in the corporation and so forth. We're all going over to the lawyer's office and sign the new papers. How does that sound?"

He looked into Kaskell's eyes. He had to stall for time. The new turn of events bewildered him. A partner! Palanto and Kaskell were covering themselves. Probably they wanted him for an out in case of trouble. Did they know that he was wise to what they were doing? Was Kaskell's proposition flavored with a sinister motive? Were they, too, stalling? Were they feeling him out, trying to learn how he'd react?

"I want to think it over," Cliff said.

Kaskell slapped him on the back.

"Naturally. Let us know to-morrow. Listen. You're smart, Cliff. You want to make money. You know chances like this aren't shoved your way every day. Don't go goofy. Grab it while you can."

There was a knock on the door. The boy who did office work and ran errands looked in.

"Phone call for Mr. Chanler," he said.

Maud's voice came across the wire.

"Cliff? I want to see you to-night—as soon as possible."

"I'm sorry, but——"

"If you have a date you'll have to break it. This is important! Come up to the house as soon as you can."

There was a note in her voice that he had never heard before. Across the showroom he saw Bernie Kaskell. He was looking out into the street, listening to what Cliff was saying. From the shop a sudden staccato rumble of an engine sounded.

"Couldn't you possibly make it to-morrow?"

There was a little pause.

"Cliff, I must see you to-night!"

"All right. I'll be up in an hour," he said.

CHAPTER VII.

FOR LOVE.

ELLA met Cliff in the hall when he came out of his room.

"You'd better call your girl friend, Cliff. She rang twice."

"Girl friend?"

"Daisy, bright boy. How many girl friends have you?"

"She called?"

"Twice. What's the matter with you—in a fog?"

He went downstairs. His mother and Belle were in the kitchen. The appetizing aroma of roast lamb

crept out. It was Cliff's favorite dish, but to-night he was scarcely aware of it. Ella was right. He was in a fog, a worried, muffling, enveloping fog.

He went into the living room. The telephone was on a table. He pushed Belle's knitting aside, used the dial, waited.

"Cliff," he said, when Daisy answered.

"You left in such a rush," she said, "I hardly had a chance to say anything. What are you doing to-night?"

"I'll be busy for a while."

"Doing what?"

He hesitated. Tact and diplomacy were necessary.

"Making a call."

"Oh." Daisy's tone was disappointed. "Couldn't you see me later? Come down to the house when you're free."

"O. K., but I might be late."

"I'll wait."

He hung up the receiver. Ella was in the doorway, smiling cryptically.

"Love's a wonderful thing," she murmured.

"Is it?"

She caught his hand when he passed her.

"I'm a sour so-and-so, Cliff. I don't mean to be nasty. Guess it's my disposition. Tell me something. You look worried. I've noticed it the last couple of days. Anything wrong?"

"Of course not. What could be wrong?"

"I don't know. Mr. Goodman said he saw you in the Frost Building, trying to sell a car to Mr. Nathanson—that black-and-silver roadster you've been dashing around in. I overheard him say it was one of Bernie Kaskell's automobiles. Did

Kaskell own it or are you selling it for him?"

Belle came out in the hall.

"If you two can stop chewing the rag, I wish you'd give me a hand. Dinner's ready to go on the table."

AN hour after Maud had called him at Atherton he went in between the bronze gates at Hermit Hill.

When Cliff rang the doorbell the butler answered.

"I have an appointment with Miss Deming."

"If you will come in, sir, I'll tell her. Miss Deming is still at dinner."

"You're wrong, Parker, Miss Deming is finished. Thought I heard the bell. Come in, Cliff."

Maud led Cliff into a room to the right of the hall.

She wore a severely plain black dinner dress. Her hair had been waved. Her only jewelry was a string of pearls. She was sleek and charming.

She pushed the door shut. They were in a small, wainscoted study. It was evidently her father's retreat. Half a cigar was in an ash tray. There were books on the table. When she turned, Chanler saw something in her eyes that was bright and alive.

"Sorry I'm a little late. I had to go home, dress, and have dinner."

"That's all right—so long as you came."

He studied her.

"What's all the excitement?"

She kept her gaze on his face. She opened a silver humidor, took out a cigarette, lighted it.

"Who was the good Samaritan who rescued us last night with the gadget that made the roadster decide to run again?"

"Gus Lacey."

"Friend of yours?"

"Hardly. He's in the shop, where I work. Why?"

Maud flicked the ash from her cigarette.

"He called me up early this afternoon."

"Lacey called you up? What about?"

"Getting a thousand dollars." She smiled faintly. "He suggested it might be worth that much to me to have my good name protected."

Cliff frowned. He tried to find humor in her expression. He knew her reputation for joking.

"I don't get it."

"I didn't either. I thought it was Alex trying to be funny. I had told him about our misadventure last night. But it wasn't Alex and it wasn't funny."

"But what did Lacey mean—protect your good name?"

"Exactly what it conveys. He pointed out the fact that I didn't get home until dawn, that I was with you. He reminded me that it would take a lot of believing on the part of some people to think everything was harmless. He even went so far as to suggest that perhaps the editor of the Atherton *Squib* might like the news for his 'Personalities' column. I guess you know what a dirty little sheet that is."

When the thing began to penetrate, Cliff's face hardened. Polite blackmail. A swell outfit he was connected with. Stolen cars and any other easy way of getting money. A thousand dollars.

"What did you say?"

"I told him I'd think it over. He's to telephone to-morrow."

"Why didn't you call the police?"

"And get into the newspapers?"

"But——"

"I think I'll pay Mr. Lacey what he wants."

Cliff looked at her aghast.

"You mean you'll let him black-mail you?"

"Yes. After all, a thousand isn't much."

"For a first installment. He won't stop at that. Besides, he hasn't got a leg to stand on. I can prove we had a breakdown and that I walked miles to find a telephone."

"How can you prove it?"

Cliff hesitated. How could he prove anything? Nobody'd believe him. Whatever he said would be interpreted as a gentleman's gesture toward a lady's honor. Then, abruptly, his mood changed.

ALL he had to do was tell Bernie Kaskell what had happened. Kaskell wouldn't let Gus Lacey get away with it. Cliff saw that the telephone call was a piece of private chiseling on Lacey's part. He was probably counting on Maud's shelling out without mentioning the transaction to any one.

"I don't think he'll annoy you again," Cliff told her.

"Why?"

"I know how to muzzle him."

She searched his face.

"How?"

"There's a way. Forget it. Now, if you don't mind, I think I'll get going."

"I was hoping you'd stay. How about the Grove?"

"I can't to-night."

"Why are you so indifferent? Can't you ever meet me halfway? You must know I like you."

He felt a strange repulsion. He couldn't explain it. He tried to laugh it off.

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"You know perfectly well. Last night—out there on the road—you couldn't get away from me quickly

enough. I almost had to beg you to make that date for yesterday afternoon. What's the matter with me, Cliff? Don't I add up right?"

She was so close her breath touched his cheek. Her eyes were tragic. Something in them made him uncomfortable. He didn't know what to say, what to do.

"You've got a swell imagination, Maud."

"It isn't imagination. Don't you suppose I know. You don't care a darn."

"I've always liked you."

She laughed. It was a brittle, mirthless laugh.

"The way you'd like any girl. Not the way I want you to like me."

Her arms stole up and linked about his neck. Her breathing grew more rapid. He stood motionless, looking down into her upturned face. He could feel the quick beat of her heart.

"I might as well tell you something, Maud." His voice was low, suddenly unsteady. "I hate to do this, but I have to. I'm engaged to Daisy. We're going to be married as soon as I can save enough."

Slowly, her hands unclasped. The arms dropped from his shoulders. She stood off, regarding him seriously. Then she walked back to the table, helped herself to a fresh cigarette and clicked a lighter.

"Well, that's that. You can't blame me for trying. Odd, how much I care for you."

"I'm sorry, Maud."

"What have you got to be sorry for?"

"If things were different—"

"But they're not, they never will be. Let it go. I'll get over it in time. You don't have to stay any longer, Cliff. Nice of you to come up. Let me go to the door with

you. I'll be seeing you now and then."

Relief replaced Cliff's previous emotion.

"And don't worry about Lacey."

She went out to the car with him. He climbed in and switched on the lights. In the starlight, the black evening gown accented her brooding air of melancholy. Again the thought crossed his mind that he was riding away from luxury, turning from the good things of life. For what? His heart answered.

"Good-by, Cliff."

"So long."

There was a note of finality in her voice. When he reached the bronze gates and looked back she was still standing where he had left her.

He drove back to town. He decided to tell Daisy what he had learned about Palanto's business and the partnership proposition. Daisy was smart. He always thought a lot of her advice. Perhaps, together, they could figure a way out of the mess.

Cliff stopped in front of the house on Willow Street. He ran up the porch steps. Mrs. Boyd opened the door at his ring. She was a small, plump woman. She looked careworn. Her hair was streaked with gray. She had none of Daisy's vivacity. Long ago she had become resigned to circumstances.

"Daisy in?"

Mrs. Boyd looked surprised.

"She went out a half hour ago to the pictures."

Cliff didn't say anything for a minute.

"I had a date with her."

"She went out with Mr. Trefford. She left a note for you, Cliff. I'll get it. Won't you come in?"

When he got back in the car he opened the envelope Mrs. Boyd had

given him and drew out a sheet of paper. Daisy had written the note in pencil, scribbled it off hastily:

I just found out what happened last night. What kind of a song and dance have you been giving me? Right along I've suspected it was Maud. I can't say I blame you, but do me a favor. Don't bother to see me again or try to explain.

He read it twice. So Trefford had broadcast the same thing for which Gus Lacey wanted a thousand dollars to keep quiet about? Cliff's smile was grim and sardonic. He kicked the starter, released the brake, and started the car.

CHAPTER VIII.

ARREST.

NEITHER Palanto nor Kaskell was at the showroom when Cliff went in the next morning. There was a memorandum on his desk to the effect that a Mr. Jackson had telephoned and wanted him to call him when he came in. It took a minute or two to place the name. Jackson was the man who had spoken to him at the Spinning Wheel.

The number was that of the Hotel Corinth, Atherton's biggest and best hotel. Chanler put the call through. He had to wait while Jackson was being paged.

"Mr. Chanler? I phoned you about that car you were driving the other night. If it's convenient I'd like to have you bring it over to the hotel."

Cliff thought fast. The Whitefield customer hadn't paid a deposit. Usually a deal was open until money changed hands.

"What time would you like me to come around?"

"How about eleven?"

"Fine."

Cliff hung up the receiver and went back in the shop. Lacey was there, superintending a repair job. Lacey stopped and looked at him. Cliff pretended not to notice the other's interest. The matter of Lacey could wait until he saw Bernie Kaskell.

"Dust off the black-and-silver roadster," he told one of the mechanics. "I'm going out at eleven o'clock."

"O. K."

Lacey walked over.

"Nothing doing, Cliff. That boiler's sold. The party in Whitefield spoke to Mike about it last night after you'd gone."

"Did he pay a deposit?"

"I don't know what he paid, but there's a 'sold' tag on the windshield."

"I'll take that Adillac coop then," Cliff said to the mechanic.

Jackson was in the hotel lobby when Cliff entered at eleven.

"I'm sorry," Cliff said. "The car you saw at the Spinning Wheel was sold last night. I didn't know it when I spoke to you. I took the liberty of bringing an Adillac convertible around. It's outside."

They went outdoors. Jackson stood at the curb and looked at the coupé.

"That's a beauty. Mind if I drive?"

"I wish you would."

Cliff got in beside him. Jackson took a short cut through to the Kingston Boulevard. He asked questions. How much was the car? Where had it come from? Who had owned it? Then, becoming personal, how long Cliff had been with the D-G outfit? Where he had been before that? How many cars he sold a week? Did it pay well?

Cliff answered mechanically. His thoughts were divided between

Daisy's note and what he had to do before Friday. He couldn't let himself be dragged into the proposed partnership. And he had to be careful. A mistake on his part was likely to be serious.

Jackson put the car through its paces. Cliff's thoughts centered on Daisy. He had to clear up the misunderstanding between them. Something seemed to have happened to him since last night. He couldn't explain but it was there, in his heart. He was sure now that he had always loved Daisy. Queer how a fellow came to his senses all of a sudden.

"I like this car a lot. What's the price?" When Cliff mentioned it, Jackson lifted his brows. "I suppose you know the market is a good deal more than that? I've been looking around some and I know what they cost. What's wrong with this job?"

"Nothing, not a thing."

Jackson turned, frowning.

"I can't understand why it should be so cheap if it's O. K."

"There isn't much of a demand for large, expensive cars," Cliff said. "Palanto—the party I work for—believes in turning them over quickly. A small profit and a lot of sales. That's better than holding them, not moving them for months."

"Do you mind if I have a mechanic check it?" Jackson said.

"Go as far as you like."

"Fine. A friend of mine in Whitefield knows a lot about this make. We'll run over and let him take a look at it."

"I come from Whitefield," Cliff said. "Maybe I know your friend."

Jackson hesitated a fraction of a second.

"Chap by the name of Gorman? I don't think you do. He doesn't work steadily. He's sort of a spe-

cialist. He's staying at the Whitefield Arms."

CLIFF had never heard of the man. Gorman. Whitefield Arms. That was strange. A mechanic could hardly afford the high rates of the best hotel in town. He looked at Jackson. The man resembled a business man. There was nothing distinctive about him. His features were inclined to be a trifle hard, his mouth was a bit thin-lipped, but he didn't have any of the earmarks of a person trying to get away with something.

Jackson stopped before the hotel.

"Excuse me a minute. I'll go in and see if Gorman's here."

Chanler sat in the car for a while, then got out and went across to a drug store. He dropped a nickel in the telephone and called the Arcade.

Daisy answered.

"I want to see you to-night," Cliff said.

Her voice was low, indignant.

"You must be crazy, calling me up here. What I said in that note still goes. I don't want to ever see you again."

"But, Daisy——"

A click cut him short. As he returned to the car Jackson and his friend were coming out of the Whitefield Arms. Cliff hurried over.

"This is Buck Gorman," Jackson said.

"Let's drive down the street a way," Gorman suggested. "I'd like to see how she handles."

He took the wheel. Jackson wedged himself in next to Cliff. The way Gorman drove showed he knew something about cars. He put the Adillac through the same routine test Jackson had.

"You've got a little backlash in the universal," Gorman declared. "That's nothing, it can be taken out easily. Plenty of compression. Mind if I stop somewhere and lift the hood?"

"Go right ahead," Cliff said.

Gorman stopped in front of a vacant lot. He and Jackson got out. The hood was raised. Gorman hung over the engine. Jackson spoke to him. The man took some kind of a typewritten paper from his pocket. They talked for several minutes while the motor idled. Cliff couldn't hear what they said. Finally Gorman put the hood down, fastened it and wiped his hands on his handkerchief.

Jackson walked back to the car. He got in.

"You can drive, Mr. Chanler. Drop us off at the Arms. I'll call you up this afternoon and give you a final answer. Satisfactory?"

"Sure. What time will it be?"

"Between three and four."

Back at the Whitefield Arms, Cliff let Gorman and Jackson out. He was pulling away when a tan roadster stopped for the traffic light a few feet away from him. He felt some one looking at him. When he glanced up he saw it was Jack Lacey, Kaskell's bodyguard. The next minutes the light went green and the roadster roared away.

Cliff drove off slowly. The thought of Daisy tormented him. He had to see her, had to explain. Time was running away. He had solved nothing. He could almost feel Kaskell and Palanto's net tightening about him. Restlessness filled him. He couldn't mark time any longer. He had to do something before he left the showroom that night.

Again he tried to hit on some idea. Every hour he delayed brought him

closer to what must be disaster. But when he was back in Atherton he was no nearer any decision than he had been when he had first discovered what Mike Palanto's business was.

The Italian was in his office. Cigar smoke tanged the air. The office boy was sorting the used-car advertisements he had clipped from the newspapers. On the pile Cliff saw a copy of the Atherton *Squib*. It made him remember what he had to tell Bernie Kaskell.

He hung around the showroom until Kaskell's ornate car arrived. Kaskell got out and came in.

"Hello, Cliff. You've sold a car. Nathanson bought the black-and-silver job."

"So I understand. Got a minute? I'd like to talk to you."

"Sure, all the time you want. What's on your mind? Not still thinking of quitting? I saw our attorney this morning and already the papers are being drawn up. What is it?"

Cliff drew him aside.

"Gus Lacey."

He told Kaskell what had happened. He watched the other's inscrutable face to see how he was taking it. When he finished Kaskell twisted his mouth into a smile.

"I'll take care of Gus, Cliff. Tell your girl friend not to worry. I'll give you a guarantee he'll never ask her—or any one else—for as much as a dime."

At ten minutes after three Jackson telephoned.

"Tell you what I'd like you to do," he said. "Come over to the Corinth with a sales contract. I'd like to read it over before I sign it. I've got to stick around here to meet a business friend. My room is No. 607. I'll be expecting you."

"Be right over," Cliff said.

When he went out he saw Jack Lacey's tan roadster coming down the street. Lacey watched him until he turned the corner. Cliff went into the Corinth.

"Sixth floor," he said to the elevator operator. "Mr. Jackson."

"Left, then right. Second door," the operator told him.

Chanler knocked on the door of Room 607.

"Come in."

He transferred the folded sales contract blank from one pocket to another, opened the door, and walked in.

"You're prompt, Mr. Chanler. Sit down. We want to talk to you—about cars."

There were three other men in the room besides Jackson. Gorman was one. The other two had their hats on and lounged on the sofa in the small sitting room that was part of the suite.

Something ominous about the room, the men, Jackson's tone, made Cliff's nerves crawl. He looked from one to the other, his heart beginning to pound.

"I brought your contract blank with me—"

"Sit down. We won't bother with the contract. I'm interested in more than one car—in all the cars you're selling over at your place. Hot cars, aren't they?"

As Jackson spoke he dropped a hand in his pocket. When he took it out and opened it Cliff saw the shine of a police badge. At the same moment Gorman shut and locked the door. He dropped the key in his pocket and stood with his back to the panels.

"What do you want to know?" Cliff asked, trying to keep his voice steady.

Jackson walked over to him.

"We want you to answer a few

questions. Make 'em good. You're under arrest and a lot depends on what you say and how you say it."

CHAPTER IX.

TRAP.

AN hour went by. Cliff passed it answering the questions that Jackson fired at him. He tried to make his replies simple and frank. Again and again Jackson attempted to trip him up by asking a question in one form and then repeating it in another. Gradually Cliff's story, starting with his midnight mishap in the La Ralle, unfolded.

Gorman nodded when he spoke of the collision at the corner of Iroquois Street.

"You mean to say you never got wise to that? It's got whiskers. Palanto's bunch had you marked, followed you, broke you up intentionally so you'd lose your job. Then all Kaskell had to do was drop around the next day and offer you a better one. You're not very smart, are you?"

Cliff flushed. Worry gripped him. He could think of nothing except what it would mean to his mother, to Ella and Belle. He felt sick and beaten. The worst part of it was he had had fair warning. He had hung around Palanto's place, feebly trying to think up some bright means of getting away without putting himself on the spot. It was his own fault. He stared at Jackson, trying to find some ray of hope in the man's face.

"So that's your story?"

"It's the truth," Cliff said earnestly.

Jackson looked at the others.

"Strange as it seems," he said, "I believe you. It's hard to think that any one could be so stupid, but there

have been cases. The minute you were wise to Palanto you should have turned your information over to the police here."

"I wanted to, but I thought——"

"Sure, you thought you'd let the personal angle come first. We've been on Kaskell's trail for weeks. He's the brains of the ring. Palanto's just a stuffed shirt. The outfit's well organized and smart. They've covered themselves cleverly, but they slipped up this morning on that Adillac coop."

"What did they do, forget to block out the serial number?" one of the two men on the sofa asked.

Jackson shook his head.

"No. They took care of that. The car was owned by a doctor in Chicago. A week ago he had it rewired. They used a special, patented type that isn't for sale generally. Gorman checked the wiring this morning and identified the car. It's the first time we've had a definite lead."

"Enough to clamp down and round the lot of them up," Gorman said briefly.

Jackson looked at Cliff.

"I'm going to give you a break, but to get it you'll have to work with us. We need some one on the inside. When I crack down I don't want to pick up a bunch of dumb mechanics. I want Kaskell!"

Cliff drew a breath.

"How——"

"I'll do the talking," Jackson interrupted. "I have a plan. I want to split the ring in two sections. I want Kaskell and Palanto away from the showroom when we walk in there and take charge. I want you to draw them off for me."

"How can I do it?"

Jackson narrowed his eyes.

"That partnership racket you spoke of should be a foundation. Tell them you want a say in the

matter. Suggest clauses you want drawn up. You don't have to be too smart about it. Let them think that inasmuch as they're taking you into the business, and you've been selling plenty of cars, you want one or two things your way. Be diplomatic and tactful. Try and persuade them to go out to dinner with you to talk it over. Think you can?"

"Yes."

"Any particular eating place Kaskell favors?"

"The Abbey on the Kingston Boulevard."

"Too far," Gorman said.

"I'd prefer having it in town here," Jackson declared.

Cliff thought.

"Maybe I can get them over to Del Vila's. That's on South Ninth Street." He leaned forward. "But I don't know if they've made plans for to-night."

"You'll have to be a good talker," Jackson said. "Even if they have something to do, tell them you'll only keep them a half hour or so—long enough to get a bite. That's all the time I need."

"And if I put this through for you?"

Jackson looked at the two men on the sofa.

"You get a clean bill, the moral being 'call a cop when you see anything suspicious going on.'"

He added more instructions before Gorman unlocked the door. The next minute Cliff was down the corridor, ringing for the elevator. The heavy hand of the law had slipped away from his shoulder. He felt free, better than he had since the night the dusty Ackard had aroused his suspicions. Now, if only Daisy would be reasonable, if she would believe as readily as Jackson had.

HOW'D you make out?" Palanto asked, when Cliff sat down at his desk.

He shook his head.

"He's a tough bird to sell. He wants more time to think it over. He can't make up his mind whether he wants a coupé or a larger job."

"Who is he?"

"A sales manager for a Dayton hardware concern." That was Jackson's idea. "He's on the road a lot."

"And he's staying at the Corinth?"

"That's right."

"Keep after him," Palanto advised.

"He'll have to decide soon. He's leaving to-morrow night."

Palanto went back to his office. Bernie Kaskell wasn't in evidence. Cliff asked the office boy if he knew anything about him.

"Yeah. He's coming back at five thirty."

The telephone bell rang. Cliff answered. His pulses leaped when he heard Daisy's voice.

"I've been thinking it over, Cliff. Perhaps I ought to hear what you have to say. I want to be fair about it. Meet me at six at the Arcade. We'll go somewhere for dinner and then——"

"I can't, Daisy."

He heard her laugh.

"Oh, another business date?"

"Exactly. To-morrow——"

"I'm not interested in to-morrow. Of course, if you feel that way——"

"Daisy, listen. This is important. Everything depends on it."

"What—for instance?"

Palanto loomed up in the door of his office.

"I'll call you back to-morrow, Daisy," Cliff said.

"Don't bother."

Kaskell drove up at a quarter to six. He went around the shop,

stayed there a few minutes and returned to the showroom. Cliff met him when he came in.

"I've been thinking about that partnership contract," Cliff began. "There are a couple of things I'd like to talk over with you and Mr. Palanto. How about going out for supper together?"

Kaskell looked at him.

"O. K., if you don't make it too late. I've got a date at eight. Wait'll I see what Mike has on the blotter."

He spoke to Palanto and nodded carelessly.

"All right, Cliff. We'll make it snappy. This party on you?"

"Yes."

"Where do you want to go?"

"Del Vila's good enough?"

"Sure, what do you think we are—show offs?"

They used Kaskell's car. Del Vila's was only a quarter filled. It was too early for the dinner crowd. The place was lined on two sides with small booths. Cliff knew that there were better accommodations for his purpose upstairs.

"How about one of the private rooms?" he suggested.

"Now you're showing off." Kaskell grinned.

The manager led him to a small supper room and turned on the lights. Kaskell ordered cocktails and the usual table d'hôte dinner they served. He said something humorous about never being able to get out of the habit of playing host.

Cliff waited until the drinks were served. He looked at his watch. It was twenty minutes past six.

"I've got to call my girl," he murmured. "Excuse me a second."

The booth was down the corridor, a safe distance from the supper room. He slid a nickel into the box and called the number Jackson had

given him. It must have been a special wire. Almost immediately a voice he recognized as Gorman's spoke.

"I want Mr. Jackson. This is Chanler."

A pause. Then:

"Jackson speaking."

"I'm at the Del Vila," Cliff said. Palanto and Kaskell are with me. I'm in a private supper room on the second floor. It's the third door from the right when you come up the stairs."

He heard Jackson's grunt of satisfaction.

"Good. Keep them there. I'll be over as soon as possible."

HE hung up the receiver and returned to the room. The cocktails had arrived. Cliff noticed the waiter. He was a small, hard-looking man. He wasn't much of a waiter either. There was a clumsy way to the manner in which he served.

"What's your name?" Kaskell asked him.

"They call me Louis."

Kaskell winked at Palanto.

"Well, Louis, make a note of this. I like olives in my cocktail—not thumbs."

"I'm sorry, sir."

"New on the job?"

"Started this afternoon."

"Getting a break-in on us, eh? Tell the manager we want some one with experience. Go on, beat it."

They sat down to dinner. Cliff's nerves were on edge. With every footstep in the hall something leaped through him. He supposed Kaskell was armed. It was queer he hadn't carted Jack Lacey around with him lately. Maybe whatever danger he had prepared against was over.

"What's on your mind, Cliff?"

Kaskell asked. "What about that partnership agreement? What did you want to suggest?"

Chanler had almost forgotten the excuse that had brought them to the Del Vila. He took a sip of water and looked up.

"About the profits. When do we split them? I mean, do I get dough every week, the same as I'm getting now?"

"Sure, you do. You'll be able to draw your own checks. We won't be there to bother you."

Palanto showed his white teeth in a smile.

"No, we won't."

"We're going to open a branch in Dayton," Kaskell explained. "That's one reason why we're letting you in, Cliff. Pretty soon we'll have a chain all through the Middle West. We'll build up a powerful business."

He added details. Palanto ate noisily. Cliff seemed to count the passing minutes. He felt his pulses thump when footfalls outside stopped at the door.

The knob turned. The door opened. Cliff sat glued in his chair. He relaxed when Jack Lacey shut the door after him and came farther into the room.

"Kelly, at the shop, told me you were over here."

Kaskell bunched his napkin.

"What's the idea, Jack?"

Palanto kept on eating. Lacey nodded to Cliff.

"He's the idea! I got a flash of him this morning in front of the hotel at Whitefield. A couple of guys were leaving him. One of them looked kind of familiar. All day I've been trying to place him. About twenty minutes ago it came to me like lightning."

Cliff's hands tightened on the edge of the table. Kaskell frowned.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," Lacey snarled, "your boy friend here has been making dates with the cops! The bird he was with this morning is Jerry Gorman, the Chicago flatfoot! The other mug is a dick, too, Major Jackson——"

Kaskell was on his feet instantly. His hand dipped in under his coat. A flat automatic slid into view. His eyes were like twin pools of fire.

"That phone call to your girl friend!"

Palanto dropped his knife and fork. The Italian's face seemed to turn gray.

"A plant! Bernie, we've got to lam!"

"I'll say so!" Kaskell dug the nose of the automatic into Cliff's stomach. "Get up, rat! We're leaving in a hurry! You're coming along! One word out of you and there won't be enough left to sweep up!"

"Wait a minute!" Cliff protested. "You've got this all wrong. Jackson's the one who wants to buy the Adillac!" He stalled desperately, banking on one thing. From the first they had played him for a sucker. If he could still make them think he was dumb he might be able to pull out of it. "The other man was a mechanic! Jackson wanted him to check the car before he bought it. He said——"

"Take a look at the hall!" Kaskell rapped out.

"There's a rear stairway," Palanto said quickly. "I saw it when we came up."

Jack Lacey spoke from the door:

"All clear!"

"Move your feet!" Bernie Kaskell ordered, nudging Cliff with the weapon in his hand. "We're going places!"

CHAPTER X.
SHOW-DOWN.

KASKELL'S car ate up the miles. The night was clear, but moonless. Cliff sat between Kaskell and Palanto. The gun still covered him. Jack Lacey drove. The route was the old dirt and macadam road that paralleled the Kingston Boulevard.

Cliff's hopes sank to zero. He was in a tight corner now. Kaskell didn't believe him. They were taking him for a ride. When they reached whatever destination they had in mind they'd shoot him, dump him at the side of the road and keep going. He didn't have a chance.

"Right turn," Kaskell said to Lacey.

Two miles farther on Kaskell spoke again:

"Turn left beyond the stone wall."

The new road was little better than a cattle track. They bumped over ruts for a thousand yards. A small, one-story building loomed up ahead. It was a squalid place. In the rear were chicken houses, wire netting inclosures and runs. A forlorn, weed-grown garden stretched between the hen houses and the building. Lacey drove the car almost to the front porch. They got out. Palanto stayed close to Cliff while Kaskell unlocked the front door. A kerosene lamp flared up.

"Bring him in."

Cliff found himself in a dreary living room. The furniture was dilapidated, moldy. A musty smell permeated the house. Horsehair sofa, battered rocking-chair, mangy carpet were the scanty furnishings. The most modern thing was a telephone on a shelf. Kaskell picked it up, dialed a number and spoke. The conversation was a series of monosyllables and grunts. He hung up.

The face he turned to Cliff might have been carved from stone.

"So you didn't know you were with coppers this morning?"

"I told you——"

Bernie Kaskell ripped out an oath.

"You're a damn liar, Cliff! I just spoke to Eddie. The cops clamped down on the showroom and shop a half hour ago! They've taken Gus and the rest of the boys! They've got——"

Jack Lacey drew his lips back over his teeth.

"And you guys thought Cliff was dumb! You didn't think he got wise when Gus told you he was there the night the Ackard came in! Let me have a crack at him!"

Palanto pushed Lacey aside. Again Cliff saw fear in his face.

"What are we going to do, Bernie? If it's a clean-up they'll tail us——"

"I've thought of that." Kaskell laughed. "We'll ditch the car, steal another and head east. They won't find us. If we can get to New York it's in the bag."

Palanto seemed to perk up.

"Sure, the big burg. That's the bet. Hop a steamer for South America——"

"While they give Gus the limit!" A muscle twitched in Lacey's unshaven face. "That's swell for you guys. How about my brother?"

"I've been thinking of him," Kaskell said smoothly. "What do you think I came out to-night for? I've got some dough bunked here. I'll slip you five grand. That ought to be enough for a Chicago mouth-piece. Take it and cut for the Windy City. When you get there see Don Fogarty. He's a ward politician. You know him. He'll get the right lawyer."

Palanto nodded at Cliff.

"What about him?"

Kaskell shrugged.

"We'll bore a couple of holes in Cliff on the way out and leave him. It'll be a long time before anybody finds him. Keep him covered, Mike. I got to go down in the cellar."

HE disappeared through a rear door, leaving the automatic with Palanto. Lacey paced the floor, mumbling to himself. Cliff stood leaning against the wall. He knew that when Kaskell returned with what he had gone to get it would be all up with him. Whatever he must attempt to do would have to be accomplished within a few minutes. He couldn't stand there, helpless, and let them kill him. He had to make one effort to save himself, no matter how futile it was. He gauged the distance from where he stood to the chair Palanto leaned on. A dozen feet. The door leading to the porch was to the left. If he could only get the gun.

Kaskell's steps sounded on the cellar stairs. Bernie was coming back. Cliff tensed himself. Suddenly he made a lunge at the Italian. Palanto fired twice. His aim was bad. Both shots ricocheted off the ceiling and brought down powdery puffs of plaster. Cliff was on him in the next breath.

He caught Palanto's arm. With all his strength he bent it back, forcing the fingers open. The Italian grunted with pain. A terrific force struck Cliff on the back. That was Lacey's knee. An arm curved around his neck. He struggled to wrench the automatic from Palanto. Dimly, he saw Kaskell in the doorway, a brown leather satchel in his hand. Then, through the roaring in his ears, he seemed to hear the pant of an automobile engine outside.

COM-6

Queer what fancy did in minutes of danger. There was no traffic on that road. Who'd come along the cattle trail? Fighting desperately, they crashed up against the wall. Palanto had enough. The Italian reeled away. Cliff tried to pry Lacey's arm from his throat. Kaskell dropped the bag and snatched up the automatic Palanto had dropped. It was all over now. Another instant and Cliff knew it was farewell to everything.

He made one last attempt to throw off Lacey. Kaskell's gun went up. It lowered. He wheeled around. The door banged open. In the lamp-light Cliff had the impression of Jackson crossing the threshold, of others behind him. Fantastically, he saw Louis, the awkward waiter of Del Vila's, bob up beside Gorman. He didn't have his apron on now. A police revolver was in his hand.

"Drop that gun, Kaskell!" Jackson commanded. "The house is surrounded! You haven't a chance!"

For a fraction of a second Bernie Kaskell hesitated. Then, with a shrug, he tossed the automatic to the horsehair sofa.

"You win, major!" he said.

THERE was a light on the second floor of the house on Willow Street. Mrs. Boyd let Cliff in.

"Daisy's home," she said doubtfully, "but I don't know if she's gone to bed. What in the world's happened to you, Cliff?"

He didn't look very presentable. His necktie had been ripped in half. His coat was disheveled. He had tried to slick down his hair, but with no great success.

"It's a long story, Mrs. Boyd. You'll read about it in the papers tomorrow. I've got to see Daisy right away."

Mrs. Boyd shook her head.

"I don't know what's come over the young folks of to-day." In the hall she stopped and looked back. "Weren't you surprised when you heard about Maud Deming?"

Cliff stared. Maud Deming. He had almost forgotten there was such a person.

"What about her?"

"Then you didn't hear how she and Alex Trefford ran off together last night and got married. They've gone East on a honeymoon."

But that wasn't half as important as Daisy's footsteps on the stairs. She came down slowly, one hand on the railing. Mrs. Boyd went

through a rear door. Daisy came into the living room. She looked at him wonderingly, as if he were some one who had been away a long, long time.

"Cliff, what's happened?"

Later, he would tell her the whole story. Tell her that as soon as he got another job and started saving, they'd get married. He wasn't worried about the future now. The principal thing was that she was close to him, that he was able to take her in his arms, draw her to him and lean to kiss her mouth, free at last of lipstick.

"Nothing's the matter—now!" Cliff said.

ANSWERS TO "DO YOU KNOW—"

Questions on page 23.

1. Annie Oakley was a famous woman sharpshooter, who rose to fame during the days of Buffalo Bill. She was a dead shot. Complimentary tickets are always punched twice to indicate that they are "dead" for selling, hence they are called "Annie Oakleys."
2. Tradition has it that King James I., at a banquet, found this cut of beef so much to his liking that, making the gesture used when knighting a person, he said, "We call thee Sir Loin."
3. The humming bird is the only bird that can fly backward and also rise straight in the air.
4. The fastest shutter speed on a modern camera is 1-185th of a second. Its use is of prime importance in the study of bird flight.
5. The common lilac is native to Persia.
6. Meteorite comes out of the sky. Its most common appearance to man is the "shooting star."

Continued on page 95

A cough drop which also helps build up your alkaline reserve!

LUDEN'S Menthol Cough Drops

now contain an **ALKALINE FACTOR**

You'll notice no change in Luden's refreshing taste nor in the quick, soothing way they bring relief. But now when you Ludenize...you also contribute to your alkaline reserve. Keep a box of Luden's handy; and use **5¢** them at the first sign of a cough, cold or irritated throat.

Accused

By Allan Vaughan
Elston

ALFRED HORTON, known throughout the islands as "Big Alf," moored his motor boat at the landing and stepped out upon the ramshackle bamboo pier. Behind him the lagoon stretched blue and peaceful until it reached a gut of curling white water which gave in turn into deep sea, green and restless. Ahead of him lay his beach, his house, his plantation. And beyond those the jungle rising steeply to the mountains. An eager pride stamped itself on Alf Horton's blunt, brown face. He was proud of these things which were his own—the fruit of ten years' hard labor here on Pago Pago.

He had good right to be proud of this hand-carved island estate. It was beginning to pay now; the fatness of a wallet in his pocket proved it. But most of all he was proud of Camella.

Camella was his wife. She met him at the bungalow door, and he



The finger points!

caught her up with the boom of a laugh, kissing her. She was a pretty little redhead, only a slight armful for Big Alf Horton. Horton was quite mad about her, had been always, and always would be. He had married her three years ago at Papeete, on the deck of her father's trading vessel. And even now Alf Horton still marveled at the mystery of her having consented to share his own lonely fortunes here on Pago Pago.

"You hurt me, Alf!" she said. "You're like a big bear."

He thought her welcome was a little unnatural. He set her on her sandaled feet, entered the bungalow with an arm around her.

"And I'm always forgetting you're just a tiny bird," he chuckled. "Did you miss me, honey?"

"I thought you weren't coming back until to-morrow, Alf."

"Made a quick deal," he explained. The selling of a crop had taken him to Ojii village, at the far end of the island.

"They paid you a fair price?"

"A fair price, pretty one," he said, and pinched her cheek.

She moved away from him. Standing at a window, she looked out to sea. She seemed restless, Alf thought. Just now she made him think of a bird poised for flight.

"Not getting fed up with this life, are you, Camella?"

"I? Of course not, Alf." But she did not look at him.

He went to a reed rug which hung on the wall, pushed it aside, and exposed a small safe. In it were conserved the savings of Alf Horton. He opened the safe and added to its store the money from his wallet—four hundred pounds.

It made a total of a thousand pounds stored there, and Horton considered it quite secure. The serv-

ants were honest. And, anyway, no one knew of it except himself and Camella.

Horton now went into the bedroom. He removed the white ducks he had worn to Ojii and slipped on the dungarees he usually used about the plantation. His eye, then, fell upon a spot of green color.

It lay upon the bedroom dresser. When he picked it up he saw that it was a heavy gold ring with a lumpy turquoise setting. It was a man's ring. Horton had never seen it before.

In a mild surprise he took it out to Camella.

"Where did this thing come from, Camella?" His inquiry was in no wise suspicious, merely curious.

Yet it struck him that Camella was a trifle disconcerted. She drew a quick breath. Her blue eyes, big for the smallness of her face, stared at the ring. Then she answered: "Oh, that? I found it on the beach."

WHO, Horton wondered, could have lost such a ring on this isolated shore? It was a long way to the nearest plantation. In fact, a stretch of virgin jungle cut Horton's improvement off from all other residents of the island. To reach them, or Ojii, Horton always motored up the coast in his boat.

"You've seen no beach combers around, Camella?"

"Of course not, Alf. No one ever comes to our cove." She said it a little bitterly, as though she had long harbored a resentment against their isolation.

Horton went outside with the ring in his hand. Back of the bungalow was a windbreak of palms. Well to the rear of that stood the huts of the native help, dark against the setting sun.

Horton could see Suki Li, his wiry and gray Chinese foreman, leading a dozen Samoan laborers in from the fields. Brown women and half-naked children were waiting at the quarters.

Horton signaled to Suki Li and displayed to him the ring.

"Camella," he said, "found it on the beach."

The old Chinese foreman squinted at the ring. "It has beauty," he said softly. "And perhaps value, my master."

"Have you seen it before?"

"This humble person now sees it for first time."

"Noticed any strangers around here lately?"

"No, master."

"Any boat come into the lagoon while I was gone?"

"If boat come, this unworthy person do not see it. We have been work far back in fields, master."

That was true, Horton thought. Suki and his crew would have been out of sight of the lagoon during daylight hours. And Camella took a long siesta each afternoon.

Inquiry among the natives was also fruitless. No one had observed any strange man on the beach. Yet this beyond doubt was a man's ring. And since the gold of it was untarnished, it could not have lain on the beach for any great while.

"It has beauty," Suki repeated. "It is ring of fine gentleman."

Alf Horton grinned broadly. "Until the owner turns up," he said, "I might as well wear it myself."

He tried to fit the ring on the middle finger of his left hand, but the ring was too small. On the index finger, however, it fitted nicely. He was wearing it there when he returned to the bungalow.

DREAMS, as a rule, were foreign to Alf Horton. Yet that night some strange uneasiness intruded upon his senses, causing him to awaken at three in the morning.

Tropic moonlight came brilliantly into the room. Horton turned his head on the pillow. Then, to his surprise, he became aware that Camella was not by him.

He called to her. There was no answer.

A chair, on which her clothes should be spread, was bare. Apprehension coursed through Horton. He sat up, his gaze moving about the moonlit room. Certain details of it were disturbed. He struck a match, lighted a candle. Then he saw that a drawer of the dresser was open, and empty.

A suitcase should be over in a certain corner; but it was not there. A terror seized Horton. Had Camella deserted him? Had she slipped off in the night? But where could she go?

He called again, and again she did not answer. Alf Norton hastily drew on his clothes. Then, with the candle, he entered the main room. There he was shocked by the sight of his open safe. The safe was empty.

"Camella!" he cried bitterly. Silence. The sharpness of it stabbed through him.

Then he heard the motor of a launch. When he rushed outside he saw a light down at the landing. A grayish launch was moving out into the lagoon. Two dim figures were in it. One was a woman. More than that Horton could not see.

A tightness on his left forefinger reminded him of the ring. A man's ring! The ring of the man who was now in that launch. And Camella was running away with him! He

had been here before, Horton realized, and the two must have planned it for to-night.

"Camella!" Horton was racing toward the beach. He called her name again and again with a piercing despair.

"Come back, Camella!"

Only the fading sound of a launch answered him. Horton reached the beach and dashed out upon the little bamboo pier. His own motor boat was there. He jumped into it, primed it, whirled the crank furiously.

He got the thing started, pushed off, gave impotent chase down the lagoon. All the while he was shouting for Camella, calling her with a mad hopelessness to return to him from the night.

Now he was at full speed. Out into churning white water he raced, where the surf-sprayed gut made a door to the sea. The launch was already bouncing through that gut. The distance widened. It was a bigger, faster boat than his own. Pursuit was useless, Horton knew; yet he drove on furiously. If he could get out into green water he could at least see the direction of flight.

The fugitives, once they were in the open, might turn north toward Ojii or head outward toward one of a score of neighbor islands. Apia lay eighty odd miles to the east. There were numberless small islets and atolls in these waters, toward any of which they might steer.

To observe such final direction, Alf Horton raced his boat madly out through the gut. He drove without caution, his eyes fixed hotly upon the shape ahead. He saw little else. And so his keel struck a reef.

Before he knew it, his boat had capsized. He was in the water, swimming, and knew with bitter despair that he could pursue no

farther. No chance to right the boat. He turned and breasted the surf, swimming back toward the lagoon.

Just as he reached blue water he saw a fin—a shark's fin! It was like a knife, fast asail in the moonlight. The lagoon this far out was often alive with sharks. But just now Horton was too furious to be frightened. He saw another fin cut the water nearer to him.

Swerving only a little to one side, he swam toward his pier. Then the thing hit him. Hideous pain sliced through him. His left arm seemed to be in boiling water. Every nerve was dragging through fire.

Except that his feet now touched bottom, he would have perished. He waded chin deep, flailing blindly with one arm. He saw Suki Li and some of the natives on the beach, heard them shouting. When he reached them, Alf Horton fell forward in a faint.

Using his coolie coat for a bandage, Suki Li checked the spouting blood. The next Horton knew he was on the bed at the house, his left arm like fire and grotesquely thick. He writhed there in a fever, shouting for Camella.

Camella did not answer. She was gone. So was Horton's left hand. The shark had cut it off, precisely at the wrist.

HORTON lay three days waiting for a doctor. Intense agony waited with him. Although Suki Li had given deft first aid, applied a disinfectant, and stoutly tightened a leather tourniquet, the case called for a surgeon to properly stitch the skin.

There was no doctor on Pago Pago. Yet at the port of Ojii, thirty miles up the shore, trading craft were usually anchored. Such a vessel might provide a ship's doctor.

Two of the most dependable natives were dispatched to Ojii. They returned after twenty-four hours to report that only one trading boat was there, and that its company did not include a doctor. But the skipper had promised to send a doctor from Apia, his next port of call. A competent American doctor named Pryde, the skipper sent word, had settled only a few months before at Apia.

Therefore Horton was forced to wait for two more days on his bed of pain, while Suki Li sat by, fanning him with a palm frond. The tourniquet was like a tight, fiery shackle all that while.

"Must keep it so, master," Suki advised softly, "or we lose whole arm."

Horton groaned, turned his face to the wall.

Hours dragged like years. Then, on the third day, a tug was seen to anchor off the lagoon. A boat came ashore, bringing Doctor Ira Pryde of Apia.

"They tell me a shark nipped you," he said briskly to Horton. "Bad business. Gangrene by now, I'll bet."

Pryde was a tall, ruddy man in neatly creased linen, and wore nose glasses. Horton winced at the sight of the tools the man was laying out. Then Pryde put him to sleep with ether, efficiently resected the mortified flesh, amputated just below the elbow, at last stitching live skin over the stub. When Horton became dizzily conscious, he saw Pryde sitting complacently by the bed, smoking a cigarette.

"You'll be all right, my friend," Pryde said, "if you just stay quiet a couple of months."

"I can't wait that long," Horton said hoarsely.

"Why not?"

"I got to find Camella."

"Camella?"

"My wife. She ran away with a man."

Pryde smiled wryly. "Women will do that once in a while."

Horton lay savagely silent while Doctor Pryde smoked two more cigarettes. Then Suki came padding in. "Bring the doctor something to drink, Suki."

Suki brought whisky. "Any idea who the man was?" Pryde asked, as he filled his glass.

"No," Horton said bitterly. "But he used to wear a big ring. Suki, bring me that ring."

"Where is it, master?" Suki asked.

When Horton remembered where the ring was, his lips tightened grimly. Since he himself had been wearing the ring that night, the ring now should be in the belly of a shark.

"Never mind, Suki."

"What kind of a ring?" Pryde inquired. He refilled his glass with whisky.

"A gold ring with a big egg-shaped turquoise setting. Maybe you've seen some one wearing it." Horton raised on his right elbow eagerly.

"If I have, I don't recall it," Pryde said. He added with professional sternness: "Lie back. And don't get yourself excited. If your wife was the kind to run away, you're probably well rid of her."

Dizziness again gripped Horton. He lapsed into semiconsciousness and lay there with his lips muttering. Hours later he was revived by Pryde, who was holding cold water to his lips. It was dark, now. A lighted lamp was on the table.

"Think you're O. K.," Pryde said. "But I'll hang round till to-morrow, in case of complications."

His voice sounded a little thick. Later, Horton saw that the quart liquor bottle was empty. Suki brought another.

By morning Pryde was frankly drunk. Horton had slept fitfully; his fever was gone and the pain was now less acute.

"Any time you get over to Apia," Pryde said in parting, "I'll have nosher look at that arm. G'-by."

"Thanks," Horton said wearily. "I owe you a lot for this job. More than I can pay, right now." He thought bitterly of the thousand pounds gone from the safe.

"Thash all right. Glad to be of shervice to fellow countryman. We Yankees gotta stick together, you know." Pryde fumbled a card from his pocket and dropped it on the table. The card read:

IRA PRYDE, M. D.
APIA

Suki Li escorted him to a boat.

ALTHOUGH the doctor's orders were two months in bed, in less than a week Alf Horton was on his feet. His clothes, when he dressed, hung loosely on him. When he stood before a mirror, his gauntness and pallor shocked him.

Restlessly he moved into the other room. A score of intimate details there reminded him of Camella, details which now seemed hateful and derisive. The door of his safe still stood open. The emptiness of that safe matched the emptiness of his own heart.

He went outside. Facing inland, he stared dully toward his cane fields. He had no feeling of pride for them now. Inside of him there was room only for a hard knot of bitterness.

"I'll chuck it," he said. "I'll sell

the layout for the first song offered and go back to the States."

He faced toward the sea—the wide, mysterious sea, into which Camella had disappeared with a stranger. To which one of a thousand shores had she gone? There were, Alf Horton knew, many times a thousand islets and atolls beyond that reach of green water, some near, some far. Surely some one of them now sheltered Camella.

Which? He compressed his lips to a hard line and resolved to find out. He would find and face that man who had robbed him of Camella; then he would sell out the plantation for any cheap price and go away forever.

As his mind fastened tenaciously upon that plan, he strode to the beach. The bandaged stub of his arm bulged painfully by him, but he was barely aware of it. In a mere launch, Horton thought, Camella and the man would not have gone far.

At Horton's feet, now, the gentle waves of the lagoon whispered. Suddenly, with a start, he saw a thing which lay on the sand just clear of the water. A thing of flesh, flat, white, five-pointed. For an instant he supposed it was some odd specie of starfish.

Then, with a shudder, he knew it wasn't. It was a thing without life washed up by the tide. He moved closer to it. A convulsion of shock struck him, then, and robbed him of breath. Here, on the sand, lay his own left hand.

The shark had merely knifed the thing off, then flashed on. Now, more or less impregnated with salt by days in the sea, it lay on the beach at Horton's feet. Why hadn't crabs immediately dispatched it? Horton did not know. He could only guess that some submarine protection of

weed or rock had conserved the hand these last several days. Many things he did not know, and many things no man knows, about what goes on at the bottom of the sea.

Here, now, it lay on the beach. His own hand.

There was a ring on one finger—a man's ring, a band of heavy gold with a bulging turquoise setting.

The hand itself filled Horton only with revulsion. But for the ring, he would have let the sea reclaim it. But he wanted the ring. The ring was both cue and clew. With it he would tour persistently through all the South Seas, displaying it everywhere, until finally he should encounter some one who had seen it before.

It was a bold and conspicuous ring. Surely some one had seen the man wearing it.

Horton now stooped to retrieve it from the dead finger. But he winced back, in a cold sweat, finding himself unable to touch this flesh which had been his own.

He would let Suki strip the ring from this hand. Suki was Chinese, and stoic.

He turned and started for the fields to call Suki. But looking back, he noticed that the new tide was coming in fast; wavelets already were lapping at the hand. The thing might not be there when he came back with Suki.

So Horton picked up from the beach a wind-blown palm frond. Upon this broad leaf he lifted the hand, taking up a thin layer of sand with it. Then, gingerly and at arm's length, he carried it to the bungalow.

He put the palm leaf on a desk in the main room. Stepping outside, he called Suki.

Suki came promptly.

"Get that ring for me, Suki." Horton pointed to the hand.

Even Suki was jolted by the sight of it. However he obeyed without question. To take the ring from the index finger, he doubled the three outer fingers and the thumb back under.

Horton, as Suki handed him the ring, asked: "Did you salvage the motor boat?"

"Yes, master. It is high on beach, drying."

"Get a couple of the men, and launch it. Fill the tank with fuel. Hurry." Horton, eager to be off on his quest, could think of nothing else.

"Very good, master." Suki hurried out.

Horton went to his bedroom and packed a bag. He could hardly wait to reach Ojii, Apia, Papeete, even Tongatabu if necessary, showing the ring at all quarters. Some one, surely, had seen it. And the man who wore it.

When he passed through the main room with his bag, he failed to notice it there on the palm leaf—a hand with one finger pointing.

Horton went out, locked the door.

Suki came toward him. "I'm off for Ojii," Horton said. "Two of the natives can take me there, and bring the boat back."

The old Chinese foreman protested. "But master is not well, yet."

"I'll be as well one place as another."

"How long will master be gone?"

"Don't know. Just keep working the place until you hear from me. I've locked the house. Don't let any one come near it."

SIX hours later, two natives landed Horton on the beach at Ojii.

"Take the boat home and report to Suki," Horton directed.

He himself turned grimly toward

the village. A sprawling, lazy place it was, of thatched huts and sheet-iron stores. Here beauty met squalor, slim, oblique palms with cans and bottles piled under them, an exquisite coral bay lapping a beach scavenged by buzzards. Goats and mangy dogs on the main street, a pretty brown barmaid peeping out at them. At a hundred such ports, Horton knew, he might have to show the ring.

They all knew him here, of course. Natives and whites clustered around.

"Shark, huh?" exclaimed Trader Smith, who ran the main store. "We heard about it, Alf. And a tough turn o' luck, too."

"Ever see any one wear this?" Horton showed the ring.

Trader Smith squinted at it, shook his head. "Don't know's I have. What's a ring got to do with it, Alf?"

"Never mind." Horton continued his inquiry about the village. No one had seen the ring before.

Two small steamers and one four-master were anchored in the bay. Horton went aboard all of them, showing the ring. No member of any of the three crews could give him information.

One skipper was about to weigh anchor. His next port of call was Apia, and Horton went there with him.

A dozen ships of varying tonnage were at Apia. Horton took a skiff from one to another of them, eternally inquiring about the ring.

"Seems like I seen that ring once," a raw-boned Yankee mate said. "Couple o' year ago, it was, at Papeete."

"Papeete?" Horton echoed hopefully. "What sort of a man was wearing it?"

"Can't just recollect. But I got in

a poker game at a hotel there. Tourists and seafarin' men, I recollect, were driftin' in and out o' that game. I reckon a dozen of us, off and on, took a hand. Lasted all night, it did."

"Some one won the ring in the poker game?"

"Nope. But one o' the players wore it, I think. I got a picture of a hand holdin' five cards, with knuckles toward me, and that nobby chunk o' turquoise showin' there. Can't say who it was."

Horton prodded, prompted, urged. But the mate's memory failed to furnish further details. Horton resolved to work on toward Papeete, the crossroads of all the South Seas. There, if any place, he should pick up the trail of the ring.

Now he went ashore at Apia and made a tour of the shops. Above one he saw a sign, reading:

DOCTOR IRA PRYDE.

Pryde might as well have a look at his arm, Horton thought. But when he went up to the office, a cockney boy told him the doctor was out.

"'E went on a 'urry call to one of the hother hilands," the boy said. "Look fer 'im back to-morrer."

Horton resumed his round of the shops. At this busy port there were many, but no one had seen the ring. Nor had any one seen Camella Horton, either alone or with a man.

Pryde, the next morning, was at his office, but drunk. He was quite too drunk to examine Horton's arm.

"Toldja to stay in bed," the man complained thickly.

"I know you did, doc. But I gotta find out who ran away with my wife. It's a chap who used to wear this ring. Ever see it before?"

Pryde stared stupidly at the ring;

"Looksh Oriental," he said. "Have a drink?"

"No, thanks." Horton left him, impatient to make further inquiries.

A freighter was leaving for Papeete, with due stops at Uvolu and Palmerton islands. Alf Horton took passage. Inquiries at Uvolu and Palmerton failed.

His main hope was Papeete, beaten path of all the big tourist boats, the rendezvous of all drifters. He even hoped that he might find Camella there; but he did not. From ship to ship in the bay he went, from street to street of the town. Tourists eyed him curiously. Seafaring men stood in groups, whispering, passing on from one to another the story of his search. Native girls peered down from the balconies; and smart young ladies from Chicago saw him there, and wondered. A heroic figure, yet pathetic—the big man from Pago Pago with the bulging white swath on the stub of an arm, grim, earnest, at times furious, seeking everywhere, always inquiring about a ring.

THE curio shops of Papeete claimed Horton for a whole day. "Have you ever seen or sold this ring?" He asked it so often that it seemed to him every whisper of the palms and every lapping wave answered him with a chorus of noes.

Then a man in one of the curio shops said yes.

"This ring? Of course I know it. I zold it two years ago—and at a cheap price, too."

Alf Horton's one good hand clutched at him. "You sold it? Who to?"

The man spread his palms. "How would I know? It was only a small zale, and for cash. I do not keep books on cash zales."

"But what sort of a man bought it?" Horton asked eagerly.

"That I can tell you, my friend. I zold it to a one-eyed Cherman. And for zuch a cheap price! It's a vonder I don't go broke, zelling rings for zuch a cheap price!"

"A one-eyed German? Are you sure?"

"Of gourse. I remember he had only one eye. The right eye was justa zocket, my friend."

"But how do you know he was German?"

"And why shouldn't I know he was Cherman. I'm a Cherman Jew myself. These people game in here, and I see right away they are tourists off a Cherman ship; they came in here together, talking Cherman."

That was all Horton could get out of him. A one-eyed German! A one-eyed man did not fit his conception of a suitor who could persuade Camella to elope. It was more reasonable to presume she would prefer a companion unafflicted by any such physical blemish.

Yet on another count the information was convincing. Two years ago was a date referred to by two separate witnesses. The mate who had seen the ring worn by a poker player at Papeete. And the Papeete curio dealer who had sold the ring to a tourist.

Horton called upon the German vice consul. The consul was a friendly, cultured gentleman. "A one-eyed German? There are many, I suppose," he said. "But I know of no such a one who could possibly fit your case, Mr. Horton."

Finally discouraged at Papeete, Horton took a ship for Hervey Island. He pursued his quest without avail through all the Cook group, and arrived finally at Tongatabu in the Friendlies.

His persistent question now was:

"Did you ever see a one-eyed German wearing this ring?"

Men, white, brown, and black, said no. On forty ships and as many beaches the answer was always the same.

"Honolulu Bill" Bates, of the trader *Maipo*, was anchored at Tongatabu. Bates knew of Alf Horton well, having often touched at Pago Pago for cargo. Horton now wearily took passage with him back toward the Samoas.

He told Bates his story, showed him the ring.

"Never seen it afore," Honolulu Bill said. "Nor nary a one-eyed German. But hold on, Alf. What day was it you say your woman left you?"

"It was the night of May 15th," Horton said.

Bates scratched his head. Then he went for a look at his log.

"Say, Alf," he said later, "I figger maybe I seen the pair of 'em."

"You did? When?"

"Accordin' to the log, we passed by Moon Island the mornin' o' May 16th. I recollect we sighted a launch that day. A long way off it was, but they was two people in it. One of 'em looked like a woman. They was p'inted toward Moon Island."

"Moon Island?" Horton queried doubtfully. "But there's nobody lives on Moon Island."

"Used to be a plantation there long time ago," Bates insisted. "It played out. But the buildings are still there."

A NEW excitement gripped Horton. The end of his chase might be nearer home than he had supposed. For Moon Island was only seventy miles from Pago Pago, and fifty from Apia.

"Can you drop me off there?" Horton begged.

"Don't mind if I do," Bates said.

Days later, the low shore of Moon Island arose on the horizon. From the sea, it seemed only a dot of jungle.

"But there's fresh water there," Bates said. "And a old clearin', and a house. I'll go ashore with you myself, Alf. If that blighter's holed up there with yer wife, he might get tough. And you with only one hand!"

Horton clenched that one hand while steel flashed in his eyes. "I'll handle him, if he's there," he said.

They dropped anchor off the islet. Bates, Horton, and two sailors rowed to shore in a boat. A thick screen of palms confronted them.

"There's a path," Bates said.

Horton's face flushed as he took the lead. The path led them through dense jungle for a short way, then opened into a half-overgrown clearing. Ramshackle bamboo buildings were there, but no sign of life.

The main bungalow was much like Horton's on Pago Pago. But the roof sagged at one corner; vines covered it in a wild riot of stem and blossom; the door stood open. Empty, Horton was sure.

Then, as he approached, he saw a footprint on the moist ground. It was short and narrow; the footprint of a sandaled woman. *Camella!* Instantly he was sure that *Camella* had been to this house.

He found, however, that she was not here now. Nor was any other human.

"The pair of 'em 've been here, though," Bates said.

And Horton, peering into the main room, saw a table set for two. Soiled plates and cups were there. One cup contained stale coffee, and on

the cracked saucer were the ashes of a cigar.

On the floor lay a string of beads, the string broken, some of the beads crushed. Camella's. They were bright coral beads she had made herself at Pago Pago. Then Alf Horton saw the gun.

It was a heavy pistol, and lay on the dusty floor. Near it were dark stains. Blood, he was dimly sure. His heart turned cold. When he took up the pistol he found that it contained one empty shell and three loads.

It was proof of violence, a shooting. Alf Horton sat down sickly, covered his face. One of two fugitives here, it was plain, had shot the other.

And Camella had always been timid of firearms. Never would she touch one. Definitely this weapon was not hers. Therefore it must have belonged to her companion. Had the fellow become tired of Camella? Had they quarreled? Horton groaned.

"Hold steady, mate," Honolulu Bill said gruffly. "Looks like a job o' murder."

"Likely the bloke mistreated her," one of the sailors guessed. "When she threatened to go back to her husband, money and all, likely the bloke got tough. Scairt fer his skin, maybe."

"Knocked her off, looks like," agreed the other sailor, "then got rid o' the body in the jungle or at sea."

"There ought to be some way to find out who the guy is," Bates said.

Horton ransacked the premises for something which might identify the unknown man. All he found was a paper which had been used to wrap some bundle. A newspaper. It was an old copy of the Berlin *Tageblatt*, printed, of course, in German.

At Apia, a day later, Horton reported to the authorities. He enlisted the sympathy of many friends, including the American vice consul. The white colony of Apia buzzed with excitement. The officials of this New Zealand mandate bestirred themselves, taking complete command of the case. A one-eyed German was sought on the charge of stealing one thousand pounds, and on suspicion of murdering Camella Horton.

The port of Apia, however, could offer no culprit who answered the description. The several German residents there were all highly respected citizens. Alf Horton talked at length with each of these, found himself unable to believe ill of any single one.

"Thing for you to do, Alf," the consul advised, "is to leave everything to the law. Get this revenge idea out of your head. Better go back to Pago Pago and get to work on your plantation,"

"To hell with it!" Horton said bitterly. "I'll sell it, first chance I get, and pack off to the States."

"A corkin' good layout you got over there. Would you take three thousand pounds?"

"Yes. Or two. Or even one thousand," Horton said. "I'll grab any cheap offer."

Soon it became known around town that Alf Horton was "fed up" with the islands, and that he'd accept as little as one thousand for a plantation easily worth three times that sum.

Horton himself rode a launch back to Pago Pago. When the palms of it came in sight, the scene served only to mock him. All the old lure of it was gone.

He'd get forever from the sight of it. Failing to sell the place at

any bargain, he could make a present of it to Suki Li.

Suki Li was not in the group which, having sighted the launch, was waiting for it on the beach. Only the Samoan workers were there. They told Horton that all was well; but that Suki Li had gone yesterday to Ojii in the hope of news from the master.

"He come now," one of the natives said, and pointed out to sea.

He was mistaken. The boat which was coasting into the lagoon was not Suki's. A native pilot was at the wheel. In the bow stood a tall, ruddy man in whites.

The sun glittered on nose glasses which the newcomer wore. Then Horton saw that he was Doctor Ira Pryde.

Pryde stepped heartily ashore. An agreeable chap when sober, Horton thought.

"Heard you're giving away plantations," Pryde exclaimed.

"Amounts to that, doc. I'm offering ten years' work for a thousand pounds."

"So I heard. Sounds like a bargain, what?"

"It is," Horton assured him.

"Might take a whirl at it myself," Pryde announced. "Got a little cash to invest; the life might suit me, too. Doctorin' down here in the islands—well, it's a thankless job, Horton."

"Glad to show you around," Horton said hopefully.

He conducted Pryde on a tour of his fields, pointed out the extent of his clearings, the water, the growing crops.

Dusk fell as they completed the inspection.

"It's a deal," Pryde decided. He added with a chuckle: "I got a Yankee knack for quick trading."

"All right. I can go back to Apia

with you and draw up the papers there."

"Let's wind it up here and now, Horton. I got the cash with me. You just give me a receipt, stating what it's for. You can send me a legal title later."

"Right. Let's go to the house."

THE bungalow had been locked securely since May. Horton fished a key from his pocket, unlocked the door, and they stepped inside the dark room.

Pryde sniffed. "Gosh, you ought to keep this place aired. Smells like a morgue."

Horton groped to a table, struck a match, lighted a lamp. He sat down there, and Pryde faced him across the table.

The doctor produced a fat wallet. While he counted from it one thousand pounds, Horton began writing out an agreement of sale and a receipt.

"You're satisfied with the deal, I hope," Pryde said.

"Quite," Horton said, with a shrug. "I'll even throw in this infernal ring." He tossed on the table a turquoise ring. "The quicker I sell out and get away to the States, the quicker I'll quit prowling these islands asking questions about that ring."

Then, just as Horton poised his pen to sign the receipt, there was a knock.

"Come in," Horton called.

Suki Li entered. They had failed to hear his motor boat arrive from Ojii.

"Interminable days we wait for you, master," Suki Li greeted. "So I go to Ojii for news—and find this."

He extended a letter. The envelope was postmarked Melbourne, Australia. Horton's hand trembled

as he took it, for he saw that the writing was Camella's.

The inclosure read:

Dear Alf: Try to forgive me.

I thought he was taking from you only my wretched self. So when I learned that he took also your money, I left him. He took it, I suppose, after I had opened the safe to get my beads.

He tried to stop me from leaving him, shot at me, but he was drunk. So he only hit my arm, and I got away to the boat.

Try to forgive me, Alf. Camella.

The shock and the thrill of it subdued Alf Horton, made his voice come awed and low. "It's from Camella. The man tried to kill her, but she doesn't say who he is."

Pryde had averted his face. Now Horton saw him stare at something, then flinch back, pallid. The man's arm went defensively to his brow,

dislodging the glasses from his nose.

The object of his stare shook three words from Pryde: "*Ach! Mein Gott!*"

A wild panic dilated Pryde's left eye. But only the left. The right remained unchanged. The right eye was glass, but even then Horton, dazed himself, did not fully understand.

"She doesn't say who the man is," Horton repeated vaguely. "Who is he?"

Then he followed the terrified gaze of Pryde, and saw that which answered him. It was on the desk over there, a brutal, frightful revelation. Propped in sand on a palm leaf lay what had been a human hand.

The single extended finger of it, accurate and accusing, was pointing straight at Doctor Pryde.

ANSWERS TO "DO YOU KNOW--"

Questions on page 23.

7. There are approximately twenty million shooting stars daily, and the great majority are consumed in the terrific heat caused by the friction of their speed.
8. The greatest meteor fall in the world is at Canyon Diablo, in Arizona. Several thousand pieces of meteorite have been found there, ranging from a gram to a thousand pounds in weight, scattered over an area about three and a half by four and a half miles. The original meteor must have weighed between fifteen and twenty tons.
9. The Kaffirs have a tribal custom of having a newborn infant inhale a vapor from a fire in which is meteorite. They believe that the infant thus gets through its system the strength of the stone from heaven.
10. Artificial iron was first produced by the Hittites as early as the Thirteenth Century, B. C., and was in common use among the Greeks as early as 1000 B. C.
11. Water, when it freezes becomes crystallized, and in this form is a true mineral.
12. All yellow stones for Sunday, as they were appropriate to the sun. On Monday, the moon day, moonstones and all white stones but the diamond. Tuesday, the day of Mars, had garnets, rubies, and all red stones. Wednesday claimed the blue stones. Thor's day or Thursday required amethysts and all stones of sanguine color. Friday, the day of Venus, had the emerald. Saturn's day claimed the diamond.
13. The common belief was that the larger the magic stone, the greater its safeguarding properties.
14. The Koh-i-noor is believed to have belonged to Karna, King of Anga, five thousand years ago. It is one of the Crown treasures of Britain.
15. The Great Mogul diamond, found about 1640 at the Kollur mine near Golconda, after leaving a trail of murder, war, rebellion, and massacre, has vanished from sight in recent years.



Smart Crowd

COM-6

DON ESTEY put a glass in a metal holder and squirted sirup into it. From the corner of his eye he watched the prescription counter at the rear of the drug store. Hagerman, the boss, was busy with two customers.

"Eight, to-night?" Don asked.

The girl who sat perched on the stool in front of the fountain shook her blond head.

"Not to-night," Don." Carolyn Waters had a husky, contralto voice that didn't go with her blond appearance. She spread her hands on the edge of the counter, studying her lacquered nails. "I've got a date with Ray Orr. He's taking me to Treasure Island."

Don Estey squirted carbonated water into the glass. His tanned young face darkened.

"But you promised you'd go there with me!"

She helped herself to two straws.

"Did I? Must be a mistake. I don't remember."

Don put some dishes in the soapy water below the spigots. He studied Carolyn. He told himself he might have known she would back out of the date if Orr asked her.

He couldn't say much more because the two customers went out. Old Hagerman walked to the front of the store. He stood looking out into Main Street.

"Nice weather, Miss Waters."

"Lovely."

"Quite a shindig over at Treasure Island to-night."

"So they tell me," she drawled.

She finished the soda and laid a quarter on the counter. She gave Don a nod and a smile. Hagerman opened the door for her.

"There's a nice girl," the druggist said.

Don took her empty glass. His mouth tightened. Ray Orr. The dapper, pool-shooting, high-rolling Ray. Plenty of rooney, a line with the ladies, a snappy new roadster. Ray was a smart guy—like the crowd he traveled with. Smart crowd.

Don thought of the two tickets for the Treasure Island dance. It was closing night at the amusement park, the last dance of the season. He dried his hands on the fountain towel. Hagerman, chewing a clove, turned away from the door.

"Any one from the sheriff's office stop in this morning?" When Don answered, he went on: "They'll never get the guy who robbed me, never. By this time he's in the clear with my nine hundred dollars."

"He'd have been crazy to hang around here."

Hagerman shrugged.

"Maybe. A lot of these crooks get careless. Would you know him if you saw him again?"

"I'll never forget him," Don said.

At seven o'clock the fountain man who relieved Don came on the job. Don hung up his white coat and went across to Benny's Grill. The dog wagon was crowded. He

The wise-money crowd
meets a "dumb cluck."

By William Archer Sayre

ordered, but had no appetite. Disappointment filled him. For days he had been looking forward to the dance with Carolyn.

He took out the two tickets. Orange oblongs, gayly printed. He read their wording. A treasure-hunt waltz was the big feature. Twenty-five dollars would go to the lucky couple adjudged the best dancing team. He had pictured Carolyn and himself winning it.

He choked down the rest of his coffee, pushed his unfinished piece of pie aside. He paid the check. Benny glanced at his plate.

"What's the matter, kid? Find a fly?"

Don went out and walked up Main Street. He tried to straighten his thoughts. A buck apiece for tickets and no girl to take. Suddenly he thought of Dolly Cranford. He didn't know her so well, had chinned with her at the drug store. She wasn't so hot as far as looks went, but some one had told him she was a swell dancer. He wondered if she had a date.

He cut across Farragut Road and walked as far as the Cranford house. Besides Dolly there were two younger girls. One of them opened the door when Don rang the bell.

"Dolly home?"

Before she could answer there was a quick patter of feet on the stairs. Dolly Cranford came to the door.

"Hello, Don. Fancy seeing you. What's on your mind?" When he looked at her sister significantly, she said: "Upstairs, Millie. Quick, now."

She went out on the porch with Don.

"I've got a couple of tickets for Treasure Island. Doing anything?"

"No."

"Want to go over with me?"

"Love to."

Her expression was enigmatic. Strangely, in the soft half-light she didn't look as plain as he remembered her. Her hair was brown, curly. She wasn't as tall as Carolyn, but was more vivacious.

"Then get dressed. I'll come back in twenty minutes. Right?"

"Fine."

THEY took the eight-thirty bus. She wore a wrap over her black and silver evening dress. They sat in the front seat, near the driver. The bus was well filled with others going out to the amusement park. Don saw a couple of members of Ray Orr's smart crowd.

"This is funny," Dolly said, while they rolled along. "I mean, you popping around at the last minute, asking me to go with you."

"What's funny about that?"

She looked up at him.

"I promised Ray I'd go with him. This morning he called up and said he'd changed his mind. Nice guy. When I make a date with him again he'll know it."

Don smiled ironically.

"We'll have fun. Say, wouldn't it be hot if we could grab that treasure-waltz prize?"

They talked it over. Then the conversation turned to the drug store. Dolly wanted to know the details of the holdup.

"Tell me about it," she urged.

"That's ancient history now."

"I know, but I never did get all the particulars. What happened?"

"Nothing much. I had the late shift. Hagerman had gone home. He left me to close up—me and Pete, the porter. A car stopped out front. A guy came in. He was about my age, well dressed. He asked me to change a ten-dollar bill.

When I opened the cash register he pulled an automatic. He told me to keep my hands out from my sides and stand still."

Dolly's dark eyes gleamed.

"Like a movie."

"He cleaned the register. Hagerman had about nine hundred bucks in the safe, money he had drawn to pay off bills. The crook got that, too, after he locked Pete and me up in the wash room. The safe was old, not hard to crack. He was gone a half hour or more before we got out."

The bus lumbered on. Dolly asked questions. It was the first time Don had taken her out. She was interesting. He found himself liking her. She had the knack of being engrossed in whatever he said. That appealed to his vanity. She wasn't Carolyn, of course, but she was all right.

After a time they reached the amusement park. It wasn't really an island. Sutter's Swamp was on three sides. A creek ran in front of it. That was good enough for the proprietor of the place to call it "Treasure Island."

The main dance hall sprawled in the middle of the park surrounded by booths. Most of the patrons were there. The weather was clear and cool, cool enough to tell Don the season had ended.

He knew a swarm of recollections. He had had a lot of fun at the park. So many nights he had gone there with Carolyn and danced. He remembered Carolyn's blond head on his shoulder, how soft and thrilling Carolyn's lips had been.

"What's the matter, big boy, in a trance? This guy wants the tickets."

Don came out of his reverie. He handed over the orange pasteboards. The band was playing. The floor

was already crowded. He stood near the ropes, Dolly beside him, pretending he was recognizing friends. In reality he was trying to catch a glimpse of Carolyn—Carolyn and Ray Orr. His girl and Dolly's boy friend!

"Might as well get warmed up."

Don nodded at Dolly's suggestion.

"Might as well, if we're to cop that twenty-five."

What he had heard about her dancing was true. She seemed to float over the floor. She had some kind of perfume on her hair.

"You're a swell dancer," he told her, when the orchestra stopped for an encore.

"You're not so bad yourself."

They both laughed.

"I'm sure we'll win the big prize,"

Don said.

She pressed his hand confidently.

"I've spent my share twice already," she said.

ABOUT half an hour later he saw Carolyn. She wore a new dress. It was pale green. It was cut low in the back, clung to her like the paper on the wall. She had on more make-up than usual. Her eyes were blue-shadowed. Her cheeks glowed with color. Her full, kissable lips were vivid.

Don looked at her escort. Ray Orr was tall and slender. He was very dark. His black hair glimmered in the smoky light. He moved along with the easy swagger of one who knew he had the best-looking girl in the place. His crowd greeted him noisily. Carolyn seemed to enjoy the attention. Her lips curved in a satisfied smile.

When she looked in Don's direction he turned to Dolly. He talked fast, glibly. She seemed to understand the reason.

"What's the matter, big boy? Don't want Carolyn to see you're low?"

"Why should I be low?"

"Because you're with me—not her. I know. Never mind. Looks like we're both out of luck to-night. Let's make the best of it."

There was something in Dolly's voice and eyes that struck him oddly.

"You're a good kid," he told her. "What's the matter with you? In love with Ray?"

"I used to think I was," she said slowly. "I got over that some time ago. Maybe it's just as well. My father was always raising the devil whenever he came to the house."

"Why?"

"He didn't like him. He said Ray wasn't any good. Shall we dance?"

Once or twice Orr and Carolyn were so close that Don could have touched them. At such times Carolyn smiled stiffly. She was plastered against Ray. Her cheek was pressed to his. Her eyes looked languorous. Her mouth was pursed. They drifted along together like one object. So many times she had danced like that with Don, warm and exciting in his embrace.

Don took Dolly to a table. He bought her a ginger ale. Only soft drinks were sold at the dance hall. Orr's crowd, however, always managed to bring a case of beer in or some Scotch. They had pulled a number of tables together and were whooping things up. Some of the girls were singing. Len Shrader, Ray's best pal, was opening another quart of whisky with a flourish. They only quieted down when the manager of the place got the drummer to beat a roll so he could have their attention. The man explained the next dance would be the prize waltz.

"Every one participating," he announced, "will get a number at the office. Wear them on your arm. Three judges will call out the elimination numbers. The couple remaining until the end wins the grand award."

There was a rush for the front part of the building.

"Take it easy," Don advised. "There'll be plenty of numbers for all."

"I'm not in any hurry." Dolly laughed under her breath. "I'd love to win to-night—show Ray he's not the only pebble on the beach."

"So would I," Don said shortly.

Her hand slipped into his.

"Let's win—what do you say?"

"Suits me! I'll keep trying."

She studied him.

"I'm getting to like you better all the time. That's funny. I didn't think I could fall for any one after Ray. Tell me something truthfully. Are you sold on Carolyn?"

Don pushed back his chair. He rubbed the back of his hand across one lean cheek.

"I used to think she was pretty sweet."

"Poor guy. Then it must be tough for you. I mean, sitting with me and watching Ray get all the play."

Don didn't say anything. He shook himself, lighting two cigarettes and giving Dolly one.

"Guess the big rush is over. Come on, we'll get our numbers."

THEY entered their names on the contestants' chart. They were given No. 37. Don put Dolly's on for her. When he pushed the cardboard up over her rounded arm her skin was velvety soft. He fixed the number so it wouldn't slip. She watched him.

"My, you know how to use your hands."

"You would, too, if you mixed sodas all day."

They went back to the ropes. The teams lined up, waiting. They stood near the tables where Orr's smart crowd congregated. Their remarks for their idol were gusty, admiring:

"Don't let 'em put you out, Ray!"

"You've got the goods, old boy!"

"Keep going, Ray! We're rooting for you!"

Presently, after another announcement, the band broke into a brilliant waltz. The teams moved out on the floor. Colored lights rained down upon them, dazzling. Don took Dolly Cranford in his arms.

"Here we go!"

A half hour must have elapsed. There were only six couples left now. Whenever Orr and Carolyn passed the tables his crowd cheered and applauded. The colored lights were turned off. The white, overhead arcs beat down garishly. Those not dancing lined the roped-off inclosure. Suddenly, on the north side of the building, Don saw a young man who, by himself, looked on.

As he passed Don stared into a familiar face. The other wore a blue suit, a felt hat. A topcoat was folded over his arm. His features were hard and cold as steel. He had heavy-lidded eyes, a straight nose, and a thin-lipped mouth.

"What's the matter? You're out of rhythm! Don, you've missed a step!"

They danced to the orchestra dais.

"I—I'm sorry. It——"

A megaphoned voice broke out above the blare of the band:

"Team No. 37 will leave the floor!"

Dolly's hands trembled.

"Now you've done it! Don! What in the world——"

He led her through the roped entrance. A wave of laughter came to him. His mind quickened, working fast. The hard, cold face. Hagerman's nine hundred bucks!

"Wait here. I'll be back in a minute."

He seated Dolly at their table. She gazed at him wonderingly.

"Where are you going? I don't get——"

"Back in a minute!"

He pushed a way through the crowd. He was not certain what his intentions were. He had only one idea. He had to get the man who wore the blue suit.

Pushing and shoving, he reached the north end of the place. But the lone watcher had gone! Don's breath caught in his throat. Too late. The other had recognized him, shoved off in a hurry!

His eyes searched the place wildly. Then, abruptly, he caught a glimpse of the man turning into a corridor that led to the men's wash room. Don surged forward. He was so eager, impatient he stepped on a girl's foot.

"Why don't you look where you're going? You big monkey, they put you off the floor because you can't manage your feet——"

Her escort swung around.

"Hey! What's the idea?"

DON didn't wait to apologize or explain. He quickened his steps to a run. The corridor was gloomy. He was just in time to see a door close. He reached it, yanked it open, piled into the wash room—to come to a quick stop.

The nose of an automatic was jammed hard against his stomach.

"Thought you'd be along! So you remembered me? That's swell. Just stand where you are and keep your trap shut!"

Don sucked in his breath. His feelings changed. The impulse that had sent him breathlessly in pursuit of the man whose heavy-lidded eyes peered into his own, left him disconcerted, sick. He cursed his own stupidity. He had acted like a fool. Instead of getting a cop, using his head, he had gotten himself into a fix, a tight corner.

"Be careful with that rod!" Don heard himself saying. "Murder's tougher than robbery!"

"Yeah?"

The gun forced him back.

"You can't get away with this!"

The man's lips curved back in a sneer.

"Neither can you! A smart guy, eh? Well, I've got the right medicine! When they come across you I don't think you'll be able to spill any information. Get that?"

Don's heart pounded. Outside, Carolyn and Orr winning the waltz. Dolly waiting for him at their table. He was sorry he wouldn't be able to go back and tell her what had happened. She'd probably keep thinking he had no manners. He didn't want her to believe that. He didn't want to do anything to hurt her feelings. She was a good kid and he liked her a lot.

"What are you going to do?"

The heavy-lidded eyes narrowed to slits.

"Bump you off, fresh guy! Maybe—"

The wash-room door clicked open. A man came in. Don saw it was Len Shrader, Ray's pal. At the same moment the man who held him at bay moved his head a fraction of an inch. That was all Don needed.

He acted without hesitation. He slid away from the gun. Simultaneously he whipped up his left arm. His fist struck the man's cheek. Don used his right hand in a swinging

hook. The gun clattered to the floor. Shrader, the picture of amazement, stood with his mouth open. The man in blue snarled an oath. He lunged at Don.

Don sidestepped nimbly. Dolly had said he was clever with his hands. That also went for his feet. He shoved out a deft leg. He tripped the man. The other fell headlong. Fighting mad, Don threw himself on him.

He heard the panted words the man ripped out to Shrader.

"Do something, you dumb cluck! Get that gun! Get this guy off me! Hurry up before somebody comes in!"

Squirming, trying to grip the throat that escaped his hands. Don ceased his attack. He was within a foot of the automatic. Shrader was reaching for it. Don grabbed Shrader's arm, yanked him off balance and closed his fingers around the barrel of the weapon. Then the wash-room door opened again. Some men came in.

Don reversed the automatic. He took a hard, stinging blow that struck him full in the mouth before he wedged the automatic over the blue serge coat.

"Get up!" More men were crowding in. "Get a cop! This is the guy who robbed Hagerman's drug store a couple of weeks ago!" he exclaimed, trying to get his breath back. "While you're at it you'd better watch Shrader! He's a friend of this mug!"

TOWARD five the following afternoon Carolyn Waters took the end stool at the fountain. She opened her fur-collared coat. She wore a rakish little hat that matched her tweeds.

"Chocolate soda, vanilla cream."

Don put a glass in one of the

metal holders. He squirted chocolate sirup into it.

"Tough about Shrader squealing—letting Ray and the rest of that smart crowd in for the rap." He took a scoop of vanilla cream, added carbonated water. "I knew Ray was a swell pool shooter, but I never figured he got his money crookedly. I guess you feel pretty bad about it."

The girl spread her fingers on the edge of the counter. She considered her lacquered nails meditatively.

"Not so bad. He didn't mean anything to me."

Don pushed the straw jar over to her.

"Only twenty-five dollars' worth? I hear you and he won the waltz. Nice going."

She drank half of the soda. Her blue eyes looked up at him through her long lashes. She began to smile. It was the same provocative, languorous smile he remembered from the summer.

"Don, there's a grand picture at the Bijou to-night. How would you like to take me to the second show?"

Hagerman came out to wait on a customer. When he went back to the prescription department, Don shut the vanilla ice-cream can, picked up a towel and polished the spiggots. Strange how her magic had dissolved into nothing. He said:

"Sorry, I've got a date—with Dolly Cranford. She," he added more to himself than to her, "is just my type, a swell kid."

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Murder Below



CHAPTER I.

"A NICE MURDER."

SHE was a nice-looking girl, a brunette, smallish, with a laughing mouth and humor-dark eyes; but when she was bored, or nervous, she would spurt jets of acid with her words, and lately she'd been letting

me have it hot and keen. So I wasn't pleasant.

"You think you resemble Juana Hansen, huh? She'd be delighted to hear that! She's on the island, by the way. At her home."

Marian shook a dark head.

"No. She went to Hilo to-day. To see the volcano."

"Which will look like an icebox, with her there."

By Donald Barr Chidsey

He got what he wished for—
murder plus!



Marian didn't answer, didn't even sniff. She certainly was nuts about this Juana Hansen. Copied her clothes, and her way of doing her hair, and everything. Which wasn't like Marian at all. But things were mighty quiet, and had been that way for a long time; and there wasn't much to do, but go to the movies.

I rose and stretched, and strapped on my gun, and donned a linen coat, and took a radiogram off the hook, and started for the door.

Marian's eyebrows flickered with amusement, and her lips twitched.

She always said that I was nothing but an educated roughneck anyway, and that carrying a gun made me feel important. As a matter of fact, she carried one herself whenever we went out on some dubious job—she knew how to use it, too!

She said: "All armed for conflict? Afraid the big stamp collector will growl and curse at you?"

"No," I said haughtily. "I'm just afraid I might get pushed off the sidewalk by eight or nine of those big manly he-men of Hollywood who keep clasping your friend Juana Hansen to their bosoms all the time!"

With that I went out, slamming the door.

Well, it was a bum crack. If it could be called a crack at all. But that's the way things had been going lately between Marian and me. No pep at all. Not even ambition enough to get good and nasty to one another. Just bickering all the time, like a couple of kids. I was really crazy about Marian, and I don't think she considered me such a bad guy, but we'd met under pretty exciting circumstances, and we were both built for excitement, and loved it. Yet excitement was just what we couldn't get. Hanging around a tiny office all day, doing nothing, was hard.

I was sorry I'd been snarling at her so much lately; but that's the way it was.

Not that Honolulu was quiet these days. It was the middle of the season, with Waikiki jammed with visitors. The price of sugar was high, and so was the price of pineapples; and when both sugar and pineapples are high, and the tourists are coming tra-la-tra-la, then Honolulu hums! Also the navy had been there recently, which didn't make it a graveyard.

But the sailors hadn't brought any jewels; and neither, apparently, had the tourists; or if they had, they'd held on to them.

And the Great Eastern Insurance Co., which I represented in the territory, with Marian Chalmers as my assistant, specialized in jewels—and in jewel thieves.

I wandered down King Street and stopped in to see my friend Wingert, who is practically *the* philatelist—authority on stamps—of the Islands.

"I don't know what I'm coming to!" I pulled out the radiogram. "There must have been a mistake in transmission. Imagine a stamp collection being worth enough for an insurance company to make out a one-hundred-thousand-dollar policy against it!"

Wingert grinned.

"Plenty of 'em. Some of them must be worth a good many times that sum. The one King George has, for instance."

"Yes, but he's a king," I pointed out.

"Which means he hasn't had time to make a really high-class collection. There was some rich men who do nothing else, all their lives. Now take for instance this old crab, Elias Whittem, whom I met in New York a couple of years ago—"

That had me on my feet, waving the radiogram.

"Is Whittem's collection really worth one hundred thousand dollars, then?"

"Every cent of that, and probably more. Why?"

"Because," I said, "Elias Whittem is aboard the *Countess of Kelway*, and he radioed our Frisco office yesterday that his stamps had been stolen. He evidently didn't know we have a representative here now. Frisco instructed me to meet the

Countess, when she docks this noon. That's where I was just going."

Wingert got up, reaching for his coat.

"I'll go with you and point out Whittem," he said. "I need a little excitement."

I exploded: "Excitement! You call chasing postage stamps exciting? Now if we would only run into a nice murder— But, of course, nothing like that would ever happen here!"

I didn't know what I was talking about.

WHEN a ship sails from Honolulu, or when one docks there, they always make a big thing of it, for when you live on a little island in the middle of the biggest ocean in the world, you like to watch ships come and go. In Honolulu the huge Aloha Dock is right near the center of town, and the ships usually move at about noon, so that almost everybody makes it a long lunch time and goes down to wave. Besides, they have music. They always have music in Hawaii when they can think of any excuse for it.

So I wasn't at all amazed to see Marian Chalmers there. It was a natural place for her to be. She frowned at me fiercely, moving her hand like a man reaching for a gun. I gave her a dirty look and turned back to Wingert.

"But I don't see how anybody on shipboard could possibly swipe half a dozen thick albums of postage stamps!" I said.

The *Countess of Kelway* was in the middle of the harbor, looking lovely as all hell. Just after we arrived she let out an ear-splitting blast of her whistle. It was a sort of hello, full of exuberance, and everybody on the dock cheered

wildly. As tugs took charge of the immense white ship and started fussing her toward the dock, the passengers began throwing long streamers of colored paper. They took the *leis* off their necks and waved them in greeting. The band was playing, and everybody sang like mad.

"You don't understand," said Wingert. "The Whittem collection isn't large. In fact, it's probably one of the smallest on record. The old crab only has thirty or forty items, but each one of them's worth a little fortune."

The harbor was cluttered with small craft. Men stood up in them waving. The Kanakas who dive for coins were doing the biggest business of their lives. I think I'm pretty good in the water myself, but those kids are fish! You never saw anything like them! Practically naked, fighting among themselves all the time, each one with a mouth crammed full of silver, yet managing to yell continuously up at the passengers: "Throw us a quarter, mister! Throw us a quarter!" Each one of them has lungs like an opera star, too.

"Even so," I said, "why the devil should anybody want to steal anything on shipboard?"

"That," Wingert reminded me, "is for you to find out."

The *Countess of Kelway's* practically uncountable thousands of tons nestled against the dock as neatly as though she'd been a thirty-foot skiff, and the gangplanks were run out, and people began to swarm over. The *lei* women were holding up great batches of flowers. The customs men and immigration men and the department of agriculture men just stood around grinning: there was practically nothing for them to do when a cruise ship came.

The bandsmen, in spotless white drill, swung into the "Song of the Islands."

"See Whittem?"

"No, I don't. Let's see if we can get on board."

We plowed up one deck and down another, and still Wingert couldn't seem to spot the man we were looking for; so finally we went to the purser's office.

The purser was a long thin blond, with a snooty manner, and just now in a vile temper. No, he didn't know where Mr. Whittem was. Yes, he had heard about the robbery, and he thought the whole business was preposterous. Why would anybody steal a collection of stamps aboard a ship at sea? Mr. Whittem had never officially reported the theft: the purser had learned of it through the chief radio operator, when Mr. Whittem notified the insurance company. Besides, Mr. Whittem had failed to check the stamps with the purser, and the line wasn't responsible.

"If there was a crime, which I doubt, it happened on the high seas," he said, "and so it would be a matter for the Dominion authorities. I'll report it when he reach Vancouver."

I showed him my identification, and explained that we hadn't been able to locate Whittem.

"Perhaps he's still in his stateroom. He's a crochety old fellow. Stayed down there most of the time. I don't know what he ever took a cruise like this for," the purser added bitterly.

The stateroom was far below, 19-D, a minimum rater, though Whittem was supposed to be rich. The corridors were almost deserted. You could hear the music on the dock, and the yells and screams of delight, and all the babble; but down

there it was quiet as a Quaker Sunday. I knocked twice at 19-D, and then pushed open the door.

I said: "Well, I'll be damned!"

Wingert didn't say anything for a minute or so. I think he was almost sick. He leaned against the doorway, his face as white as his linen suit.

"What was it," he whispered, as though it burned his throat, "what was it you were saying about running into a nice murder?"

CHAPTER II.

MURDER ON THE STAIRS.

EVERYBODY was stopped from leaving the ship, and those who had left, and were still on the dock, were asked to stay there. Naturally they couldn't keep up a state of affairs like that very long—the dock was a madhouse. While the orders were being sent out, Wingert, an officer, the ship's doctor, and I kept watch over what remained of Elias Whittem, stamp collector, bachelor, and old crab.

He had been shot square in the middle of the back, and his spine was busted in half; yet possibly, from his expression, he had known it was coming. His mouth was open wide. His eyes were open, and packed with panic. He was sprawled across the stateroom floor, on his side, and his two arms were flung above his head.

"Shot while he was being held up," the officer suggested.

But I didn't think so. A shot that broke a man's spine would cause him to buckle up, and his limbs would go lax. Whittem's arms were far above his head, and perfectly straight.

He was wearing heavy tweed trousers, which was pretty strange when you consider that he had been about

to disembark at Honolulu. He'd been dead, the doctor estimated, not more than half an hour. He wore no coat, but a soft white shirt with collar attached, sport shoes, a tie clip, a black-and-red tie. The bullet hole was an exceptionally clean one. There was very little blood. There were no powder marks, and no black or dark-blue rim around the edge of the hole in the shirt.

The bullet, presumably, was still inside of him.

This much I had been able to see when the cops arrived. They wouldn't permit me to step inside, but the place was so small that from the doorway I could see everything they saw as they searched. Certainly there were no stamps of any kind. There was a vest to match the brown tweed trousers Whittem wore, but there wasn't any coat. The cops didn't seem to see anything queer about this. Nor did they seem to think it strange that this brown tweed was the heaviest suit in the wardrobe.

Of course, they were working under a terrific strain. Everybody was demanding to know what all this was about, and the ship's officers were insisting that passengers be permitted to disembark.

Eventually the photographers and the finger-print men were given the stateroom to mess up as they pleased; the body was removed; and all interested parties moved to the smoking saloon aft, where questions were to be asked and maybe answered.

I slipped out to the dock and located my friend Ikey Kaihiki. Ikey, by actual measurement, was one-half Hawaiian, one-quarter Korean, one-eighth Portuguese, and one-eighth Hebrew. He was about fifteen, small, dark, and tough as they come. He was one of the lads who

dive for coins whenever a tourist ship comes in. He was more than that. He was the leader of a gang of such lads, recently triumphant in a battle with another gang, so that Ikey and his followers were now the only ones permitted to meet such ships as the *Countess of Kelway*.

It seems curious that a kid of that age could be a gangster, but he was. When I found him his left eye was swollen, and so was his mouth; and his cream-and-coffee skin, practically all of which was visible, was splotted with bruises. But he was grinning, as always.

I told him what I wanted and how much I'd pay.

"You leave it to me, Mr. Pennell. We get them for you."

"And you'll also keep your trap shut, Ikey!"

"We get them for you, and we keep our trap shut. You leave it to me. I bring them to your office tonight."

I went to the smoking saloon.

WHITTEM'S room steward had been on deck, or within sight of some other stewards or officers, for at least half an hour before the murder could have occurred. He was a thin little guy, and scared. The night steward was questioned, and the bath steward, and the stewardess, and various others. They had little to tell. Whittem, they testified, had been a trying passenger, but not, to their knowledge, in any way criminal. They were dumfounded by what had happened. The room steward was certain that Whittem had no gun in his cabin. I started to ask whether Whittem had been accustomed to wearing heavy tweeds in the tropics, but the cops shushed me.

The stewardess had only been called to 19-D once, and that was the

previous night, when Whittem had asked her for a needle and thread. It wasn't a strange request, coming from a bachelor. She had asked him if he wished her to sew any buttons on for him, and he'd said that he'd do it himself.

I got in a question here:

"He give you the thread back afterward?"

"Why, yes."

"How much of it had he used?"

"Why, it was quite a bit, sir. Almost half the spool."

Sundry passengers brought back from the dock, persons who had been seen talking with Whittem at different times during the cruise, were questioned. They said they scarcely knew the man. Apparently none of them cared much for him; several hadn't even known his name.

A Mr. and Mrs. Hartson, a middle-aged Canadian couple, who had the room next to Whittem's, 21-D, came back voluntarily when they heard the fuss. When Whittem had been killed, they said, they were on the deck with everybody else, getting a first look at Hawaii. They were amiable, unsophisticated people who seemed anxious to help. The woman was frightened, dowdy, conscientious.

"He seemed to be a lonesome sort of man," Mr. Hartson said. "We were at his table, but we didn't really know him otherwise."

"Did he get along all right with the table steward?"

"Well——" Mr. Hartson seemed reluctant to answer. "Well, as a matter of fact, he was always complaining about the service, and he threatened again and again to have that steward fired."

This interested the cops a lot. But they didn't call in the table steward. I didn't find out until aft-

erward that this was because they couldn't find him.

The chief radio operator was called, and he produced copies of all the messages Whittem had sent or received. There were seventeen sent. The first sixteen, addressed to a New York brokerage house, were in code. The seventeenth, dispatched the previous day, was addressed to the San Francisco office of the Great Eastern Insurance Co.—my outfit—and reported the theft of the stamp collection. The answers from the brokers were mostly figures, which meant nothing to anybody present. The answer from Great Eastern assured Whittem that I would meet the ship at Honolulu.

That was that. Eventually the passengers were permitted to go ashore, but members of the crew were kept for further questioning.

Marian Chalmers had been listening to all this. Trust her to get in on everything! When it was over she got me as I was wriggling away, and whispered excitedly to me for a few minutes.

I scoffed, and told her the idea I had. She repeated her idea. I asked what the hell she had to back it. She said: "Is proof everything?" and I told her it certainly was in this business.

"Well, I've got a woman's intuition," she said.

"You know what you can do with it, don't you? I'm going to do some real detective work."

"With the aid of your trusty six-shooter?" she whispered.

THE police, as the investigation continued, became convinced that the murderer was the table steward who had waited on Elias Whittem throughout the cruise. Whittem had cursed that steward repeatedly; a dozen wit-

nesses testified to this with more vehemence than the Hartsons had used. The steward, whose name was Mahon, had again and again told fellow stewards that he'd kill Whitem one of these days. And Mahon had disappeared. He must have been one of the first to quit the ship, and one of the first to quit the dock, too. When, by questioning other stewards, they learned that Mahon once had served a prison term in Montreal, they were naturally satisfied that they had their man.

But they didn't "have" him. They couldn't find him.

The ship's officers searched that big new tub from stem to stern and back again. All the passengers were ashore, sight-seeing, and no warrants were necessary. They wouldn't admit it afterward, but I happen to know that the officers went through every single stateroom, and through everybody's clothes and personal effects. They turned themselves into burglars, even though they didn't take anything. They had stewards posted in the corridors, in case passengers should return unexpectedly.

They found no gun, and they found no stamps.

A radiogram from Vancouver changed sailing plans. The *Countess* was to remain in Honolulu for a full forty-eight hours, instead of twenty-four. The passengers, most of them delighted, made a plans for extra sight-seeing trips. It was all very thrilling.

I attended the autopsy that afternoon, and later I called upon the police ballistics expert to get his report on the bullet the doctors had taken out of Elias Whitem.

"It was pretty badly mashed against one of the ribs," he said, twiddling a tiny slug of lead between his fingers, "and I won't really

promise anything. Except that it was fired from a revolver, not an automatic, and that it's got a right twist of about eighteen and a half."

"Which means what?"

"Which means that if it was fired from an American pistol it was probably a Smith-Esson .38, or maybe a Smith-Esson Special .38. That is, you understand, if it was fired from an American pistol. I don't know much about foreign makes."

"That's a small stateroom," I pointed out, "and yet there were no powder marks on the shirt."

"With a good grade of smokeless powder there wouldn't be any, unless it was fired at less than say two feet."

I added: "There was no grease around the edge of the hole in the shirt. Doesn't any cartridges leave a little layer of grease behind it when it enters anything?"

"That's right," he admitted. "It's pretty funny about that. What do you make of it?"

"I wouldn't know," I said. "I'm just guessing, right now, and I don't like to tell anybody my guesses."

JUST the same, I told Marian Chalmers my guesses, a few hours later in the office. She didn't really sneer at them, but she still insisted that I was being too technical.

"You sound like a story detective," she protested.

"All right. And you sound like a story heroine," I snapped back, "with all that rot about woman's intuition!"

The night was dark now, and King Street below was noisy with Kanakas, Japs, Chinese, Filipinos, and here and there a souvenir-collecting tourist. I glared out a window. I was sore.

Marian said: "That kid will never find anything."

"Ikey will find them, if they're there. Either Ikey or some of his boy friends. They're smart kids."

"They're a pack of hoodlums!"

"Just the same, when Ikey comes here with that——"

She interrupted: "He won't come."

"Yes? Well, let me tell you that kid will——"

I stopped, listening.

The building was deserted—or should have been—except for us. Murder or no murder, the arrival of such a ship as the *Countess of Kelway* must be properly celebrated with hula dancing and a lot of music. So naturally this office building was dark and quiet.

That was why the sounds carried so distinctly to Marian and me.

We were in our office on the third floor, and the sounds seemed to come from the end of the hall, near the stairway. There was a quick scuffling, one loud round juicy American cuss word, a gasp, some pounding, a series of grunts and thumps. Then a familiar voice called: "Mr. Pennell! You come!"

Marian reached for the desk drawer where she kept her little .22, but I was out in the hall before she could reach it, my own gun in my fist.

The light wasn't good. At the head of the stairs, maybe thirty feet away, I saw three blurred figures. One was on the floor, motionless. The other two were leaning over it, and one was pounding its head. They must have seen me better than I saw them, because of the light from the office. Anyway, three shots crashed one right after the other, and then there was a fourth. The window behind me, at the other end of the hall, tinkled to the street in a thousand pieces.

I fired back, twice, and the two dim shadows disappeared. I ran after them, cocking my gun. I vaulted over the small figure crumpled on the floor at the head of the stairs, and went down those stairs four at a time.

The hall was utterly dark. I swung around the first landing, reached the second floor in three great bounds, and ducked.

Something had told me to duck; and the something was right. The middle of my back took the blow intended for my head. It hurt like hell. But if it had landed where it was meant to land, it would have cracked my skull.

Another blow slished past me. I stumbled, trying to get out of the way, and fell to one knee. There was a crash near me—somebody shooting wild—but I was off-balance and couldn't shoot back. Then I heard them running down the stairs—two men. As I started after them a door slammed, and I knew even then that I wasn't going to get them.

Five minutes later I was back on the third floor, bending over the bloody limp form of Ikey Kaihiki.

Marian whispered: "They must have beaten him horribly." She rose, turning away. "He was alive when I reached him, and he said something about them taking it from him. He asked for you, and said they'd taken it from him. Then he died."

"He put up a fight," I muttered. "He was a game kid."

"What was it he meant?"

"Either the gun that killed Elias Whittem or else the coat that went with Whittem's brown tweed pants. I don't know which, but it was probably the gun. I'd asked him to get his gang to dive for both of them. They're wizards at anything like

that. And I'd figured that since nobody heard the shot, Whitem must have been killed just as the *Countess* was letting out that terrific blast of her whistle. The natural thing for the murderer to do was chuck the gun out the open porthole, so's not to be caught with it later. So I had Ikey and his gang dive for it in the neighborhood of where the ship was when that whistle was blown, and dive for the coat between that point and the dock. Ikey evidently fished up one of them, probably the pistol, and he was bringing it here to me. But somebody couldn't afford to have that gun traced by its serial number."

We could hear the cops entering the building, pounding up the stairs. I knelt beside the poor bloody kid.

Elias Whitem might have meant something to somebody, somewhere, though I doubt it. And a hundred-thousand-dollar collection of stamps would certainly mean something to a lot of people. But to me little Ikey Kaihiki was worth a lot more than either. He was tough, a wharf rat, because he'd been brought up that way; but he was as faithful and loyal a kid as I've ever known. And now here he was twisted and beaten, his head all spongy, dead. I stood up.

"All right," I said. "We've got the rest of to-night, and all to-morrow, and the next morning, before that ship sails. We'll get those rats if it's the last thing on earth we do!"

She looked up at me with her eyes very wide, and her lips open a little.

"You're mad, George?"

"I'm mad," I admitted. "I'm ready to try anything. Even that woman's intuition gag of yours. Now listen: We're going to——"

The cops reached us then.

COM-8

CHAPTER III.

MISS CHALMERS, GUNWOMAN.

THAT night I talked for a long while with the chief radio operator of the *Countess of Kelway*, and afterward I sent a long message to New York, requesting a prompt answer.

The cops put Ikey's death down to gang warfare. It was known that the lad had a lot of enemies, and it was supposed that some of these had talked their big brothers into chasing him. Ikey, it was believed, had taken refuge in the first door he came to, had been chased up the dark stairs, and had been overtaken and beaten. They'd beaten him harder than they intended. Ikey, already badly bruised and cut from a fight the previous day, and worn out after having been swimming under water a good part of the afternoon, hadn't been able to take it. The big brothers had realized that they had probably killed him, and got panicky. They had seen me coming, gun in hand, and had let fly at me a few times.

This was the way the cops explained it; and I didn't say anything to correct them. They questioned me for a long time, at that. They let Marian go early, but they kept me at headquarters until after midnight.

When I went back to my home in Waikiki at last, I was good and tired. Not sleepy. In fact, I didn't think I was going to be able to sleep. The house was a tiny shack in Kaiulani Avenue. It was some distance from the sidewalk, all alone, crowded about by banana trees. As I went to the front door a man pushed aside a frond of one of those banana trees and stepped up close to me. I couldn't see his face.

"No hurry, buddy. You're not going that way anyway."

Something hard was pressing against my ribs. There was a step behind me, and somebody else said: "This enough to convince you?"

So I put up my hands, very slowly.

The pressure against my ribs, front and side, was released.

The first man said: "Going to act nice, eh? That's the sensible thing to do, buddy. Act nice and you won't be hurt."

Well, I didn't act nice. Instead I went completely off my nut and did one of the silliest things I'd ever done in my life. Maybe it was the thought of little Ikey Kaihiki. When I told Marian I was mad because of that job, I hadn't been kidding. I must have been off my head completely, to do what I did.

What did I do? Why, I just hauled off and smacked that first man square on the chin.

What I should have got, then, was a slug of lead through the back, right where Elias Whittem had got his. But I was too crazy to think about that. I ducked, twisted, and sailed into the second man.

We had a grand little time of it for a few seconds. The first man evidently got up again, or maybe my sock hadn't taken him off his feet. Anyway, there were three of us milling around, panting, swearing, sweating, kicking, slugging one another.

Then somebody yelled something out of a window, a light appeared near by, and all of a sudden I was sitting there alone.

They'd manhandled me pretty badly, and I was too weak and dizzy to chase them right away. By the time I reached the sidewalk, staggering, there was no sign of them. I ran up to Kalakaua Avenue and

back to Kuhio Street, but I didn't see anybody.

Then I began to wonder why they hadn't killed me. It couldn't have been because they were afraid of the noise, for we'd made plenty of noise threshing around among those bushes. It must have been because they wanted me alive.

Maybe I knew too much for somebody's comfort? Or maybe somebody thought I knew too much? Maybe somebody had figured it out where Ikey Kaihiki was going with that gun?

On the other hand, was it the murder gun Ikey had been bringing me? I had asked him to look for two things, and if he found either he was to bring it to me without telling anybody else about it. Ikey, dying, had told Marian that "they" had taken "it" away from him, but he hadn't said what "it" was. I'd just taken it for granted that it was the gun.

Suppose it was the coat? That would prove that my theory of the killing was correct, but it wouldn't locate the murderer.

The pistol itself might be traceable, and might point straight to the murderer. Maybe they thought Ikey had that pistol, as well as the coat, when they followed him from the dock to my building? Maybe they couldn't find the pistol on him, and thought it possible that he had already turned this over to me? So they wanted to ask me questions. They didn't want to kill me, right away. They wanted to torture me first, and find out what I knew. That was why, when I resisted, they hadn't shot me.

All this came to me very fast.

And with it came the realization that since Marian was, after all, practically my partner, they might go after Marian, too.

Marian!

She lived in Beach Walk, not more than a quarter of a mile away. Waikiki was deserted, so that nobody saw me make that sprint in what must have been a record for all time.

WHEN I swung into Beach Walk I had my gun out. Marian's bungalow was the third or fourth from the corner, and there was an automobile in front of it, facing the other way. There was no light in the house, and none on the automobile. A man was stepping out of the car. He heard me, turned, saw me, and sprang back into the car. I didn't dare shoot; I couldn't be sure. But I reached the car as it was starting and jumped to the running board. The car jerked ahead, and, holding on only with my left hand, I was almost thrown. I dropped my gun, grabbed the car door with my right hand as well. The engine roared.

Pain shrieked up both my arms to the elbow. It was as though I'd thrust my hands into fire. The world tried to do an Immelmann or something, and I was on my back in the gutter looking at dainty stars through the tossing top of a coconut tree. It was so peaceful that I just felt like going to sleep there.

But I remembered things. I sat up. On my left was a patter of feet, and Marian appeared, looking swell in blue pajamas and a blue-and-silver kimono. Less pretty was the shiny little .22 she held.

"What in the world is this?" she asked coolly.

I got to my feet very carefully, because I wasn't quite sure whether I was going to be able to stand. But I made it. My head was whirling, and my knuckles still transmitted that shrieking pain up my forearms.

I must have looked terrible. I certainly felt that way!

"Kid——"

She rapped out: "Don't call me 'Kid'!"

"All right then, Miss Chalmers. Miss Marian Chalmers, the dick, the gunwoman. Will that do?"

"I carry a gun when I think it might be needed, yes."

"Well, this is the night for it then." I limped back the street a little ways, found my own pistol, examined it, holstered it. "You and I are in demand to-night, Miss Chalmers. People would like to talk to us."

"Who?"

"I don't know, but they're not gentlemen anyway. It's no night for either of us to be alone. So whether you like it or not, your boss is going to sleep on your couch to-night, and all windows and doors of that shack are going to be kept locked."

"But the neighbors will——"

"To hell with the neighbors! This is no time to worry about things like that! Come on, let's go."

CHAPTER IV.

FIXED UP.

IN the morning, early, I was down on the Aloha Dock, asking questions. I asked them half-heartedly, sighing; and they were half-heartedly answered. Every member of the crew and most of the passengers were tired of answering questions about Elias Whitem.

Along about nine thirty somebody said behind me:

"Are you—uh—getting anywhere, Mr. Pennell?"

I turned and found Mr. and Mrs. Hartson, that amiable, middle-aged Canadian couple who occupied Stateroom 21-D. They both had an eager, sympathetic manner. He was

perhaps fifty or a little less, short, thick across the chest, with earnest blue eyes and grayish hair. He wore nose glasses, and tilted his chin to peer up at me through them. Mrs. Hartson was maybe a little younger. She had a handsome figure, but you had to search for it. Her clothes looked as though she'd got them from a mail-order house and put them on during a cyclone.

"Well, it's a tough proposition," I answered and smiled. After the gruff answers I'd been receiving it was pleasant to talk with people like this. "The police and the line are both sore about it, and they're not anxious to have me poking around. As a matter of fact, I don't seem to be getting anywhere anyway."

"That's a shame," Hartson said, as though he really thought it was. Mrs. Hartson nodded sympathetically.

I said: "Well, at least it's a break for you folks, getting an extra twenty-four hours here. Where were you going to-day?"

"To-day," said Hartson, "we figured on hiring an automobile and driving around the whole island. I understand it's only about ninety miles, and good road all the way."

"That's right. And you see the Pali, and the Mormon Temple, and Schofield Barracks, and lots of places. But there's one place you won't see—at least, not unless you have a driver who happens to know where it is," I told them, "and that's the home of Juana Hansen."

Mrs. Hartson's eyes lighted up.

"Oh, the movie star! I'd heard she has a home out here, and she comes out here to rest now and then!"

"And she really does rest," I told them. "The place is a little off the highway, and you have to know how to find it."

"Is she there now? Wouldn't it be thrilling if we could get a glimpse of her!"

I said: "She's really charming, in private life."

"Oh, do you *know* her?"

"Oh, yes. And she's out there right now. If you folks would like —" I paused thoughtfully, and gazed around the ship. People were coming up from breakfast, putting films into cameras, consulting tourist literature, buzzing about their plans. I sighed. "The truth is," I said, "I was just beginning to wonder why I'm doing so much work on this case. It's really no part of my job, and I'm getting sick of it. I was just thinking. Why don't you folks let me take you around the island myself. The trip would do me good. And we could stop in at Juana's place on the way. I'd give her a ring first, to make sure she's there."

Mrs. Hartson cried: "Oh, that would be putting you to too much trouble! That's wonderfully kind of you, Mr. Pennell, but we——"

"Not at all," I broke in. "I haven't had a chance to chat with Juana for some time. I couldn't take you right away. Four or five little matters I've got to attend to at the office. But there's plenty of things for you to look at right here in the city, in the meanwhile."

They protested again that it would be an imposition, but finally we agreed that I should meet them at the dock in my car, at noon.

I WENT out to the street and waited for a while. Pretty soon Marian came hurrying along. I fell into step with her.

"All right?" I asked.

"I think so. We'll have to do a little powdering first, before we can be sure. How is it with you?"

"Perfect."

We went to the office, and worked for maybe half an hour on a pair of military brushes, a tube of shaving cream, and three or four other things like that. We used black powder and white powder and dragon's-blood powder, and little brushes of camel's hair. Then we used a magnifying glass marked with fine concentric circles. And finally we sent a long radio message to Washington, D. C.

The department of justice there maintains a single-finger print classification file. Only the worst criminals, the truly bad boys of the underworld, a few thousand of them, are represented in this file. What Marian and I sent was the Battley code of six separate prints.

The answer, of course, would have to go to the chief of police, Honolulu. The department doesn't supply information to private parties. So when Marian left me I went to headquarters and had a long talk with my friend, Captain Waite, who was in charge of detectives there.

"It's just a hunch," I told him.

"It sounds like a crazy one to me," he said. "I thought you didn't go by hunches, Pennell?"

"I haven't got anything else to go by, now! Besides, this isn't my hunch. It's Marian's, and she's a smart girl."

"I guess she has to be, to make up for you," said Waite.

When I came out of headquarters the time was almost noon. I rented a car and drove to the Aloha Dock.

Mr. and Mrs. Hartson were waiting for me, all a-twitter at the prospect of the trip. Hartson said he'd pay for the gasoline, and I tut-tutted, and Mrs. Hartson, who looked like the deuce in what she thought was a snappy sports outfit, said it certainly was nice of me.

Well, we went to the top of the

Nuuanu Pali, where there's a view that takes the breath right out of you; then we went down to the windward shore and just bowled along for a while. We were just about as far from Honolulu as you can get without going into the Pacific, when I turned sharply to the left and drove up a private road.

I hadn't been kidding them about knowing where Juana Hansen lived.

"I had Juana on the phone," I told them carelessly, "and she said for us to stop for tea. She'll be waiting for us on the lawn." I pointed. "There she is now."

The smallish, dark-haired woman, in a stunning sun suit, waved to us from the depths of her beach chair. She rose, smiling, and greeted us as I stopped the car a few yards away. I introduced Mr. and Mrs. Hartson, and she said she was always delighted to meet friends of Mr. Pennell. She was very gracious, very charming. She clapped her hands, and a Filipino house boy brought us tea. She chatted with the Hartsons, who looked awed.

"Just now I'm resting," she said. "It's so quiet and peaceful out here. Would you care to look at my flowers?"

As we strolled over to the flower beds, she fell back a few steps and whispered to me:

"Any word from Washington yet?"

"No. Did you have any trouble bribing the servants?"

"No," she whispered. "But it cost me thirty dollars all told. I still don't quite understand the need for this rigamarole."

"Well, my idea was that maybe they wouldn't agree to make the trip with me if I didn't hold out some extra promise like this."

"I'm a little nervous about it, George. I feel something's wrong."

"Why, what in the world could be——"

But she was stalking forward, smiling, and pointing out flowers.

"Those *lehuas* are more impressive, of course, and they make wonderful *leis*, but the ones I'm fondest of are my violets here. These little ones are *waiolekas*, and these are *pakalana*—they're Chinese violets. These over on the end are Samoan violets—the natives here call them *pukinikini*. Now down this way——"

She did it marvelously, I'll give her credit. And yet, like her, I was a little worried about something. I couldn't describe it. Certainly the scene was peaceful enough. Juana Hansen, of course, we knew to be in Hilo, on another island, and she wasn't expected back until the following day. Her home was halfway up a hillside, and there were no other buildings in sight. In front, across a down-sweeping lawn, the shore was perhaps half a mile away. A mile or so out the water was violent upon the reef. Just beyond the reef a small, dingy schooner loafed; it didn't seem to be going anywhere.

But there was something wrong. I felt it, stronger and stronger every minute. Around us the countryside was drenched with beauty; but there was a threat behind it.

WE went back to the tea table. Marian did most of the talking. To the Hartsons she must have seemed thoroughly at ease; but I knew her better, and I knew she was nervous.

The conversation didn't interest me, and I'm never much of a talker anyway, so my glance went wandering. That was how I happened to be the first to see the man coming across the lawn.

I didn't like his looks. He was tall, and had hay-colored hair and a tiny hay-colored mustache. He held his hands behind him.

He was coming right toward us, and when he got closer I saw that he had a black eye.

Had I given him that last night? Suddenly I jumped to my feet, and my hand started for my gun.

The man brought both his hands around in front of them, and he had an ugly black automatic in each of them.

"Don't do it," he said. "If these aren't argument enough"—he wagged the gats—"there's a guy over there with a Thompson."

I moved my eyes. Sure enough, the businesslike muzzle of a sub-machine gun was pointed at me from a oleander bush not fifteen feet away.

"Raise 'em, buddy," the tall man said, and wagged his guns again.

Very slowly I raised my hands.

Marian didn't say a word, and didn't stir.

Mrs. Hartson rose with a tiny, tinny scream. She ran a few steps, stumbled, and fell into a swoon. Nobody paid any attention to her.

Hartson sprang to his feet, shaking an angry forefinger.

"See here, what is this? What do you men mean by coming here and trying——"

I interrupted with: "Save it. Save yourself the trouble."

You never saw anybody change the way that Hartson did then. He tossed me a keen, hard glance, sighed, then grinned a little. He took off his nose glasses, shrugging.

"I don't have to wear these damn things any more," he said, staring at the glasses. "I suspected that you knew too much, Pennell, ever since that native kid yelled your name when the boys were taking him. I

thought maybe he might have brought you the gun too, before that. How did you find out about that coat, by the way?"

I explained: "Whittem had the trousers on, and the vest was in his closet, but where was the coat? Also, the position of his arms. Why that? And why did he wear such a heavy suit?"

"Do you know the answers, yourself?"

"Oh, yes!" I was eager to keep them talking. The thing I was most afraid of was that Marian would go for her gun. Obviously they didn't suspect that she had one. They didn't know that she wasn't Juana Hansen. And the outfit she had on wasn't much bigger than a bathing suit. But I knew Marian too well to think she'd be separated from her little .22 on a job like this. I figured it must be in the sewing bag she was carrying, and I was afraid she might go for it and get herself killed.

"Oh, yes!" I said. "He was wearing that suit because it was the only one he had with enough lining to conceal the stamps in. The rest of them were all tropical suits, and not lined. And Whittem, though he'd reported his stamps as stolen, simply couldn't bring himself to part with them. He was planning to collect the insurance and still keep the stamps. He'd been losing heavily on the market, as I found out by having our New York office check with his brokers, and, in addition, I guess you'd been squeezing him for money, too. What did you have on the man?"

"Plenty," Hartson said grimly. He wasn't the mild-mannered little Canadian now. His eyes were icy blue, and his mouth was hard.

Mrs. Hartson said: "Yes, plenty." She had got up from her fake faint,

and was brushing herself off. "I certainly am in a hurry to get out of these damn rags and climb into some clothes that fit me," she complained. "Well? What are we all standing here for?"

"First," said Hartson, "I want this baby's gat."

THE tall man kept a gun pointed at me while Hartson approached me cautiously, and with two fingers drew the pistol out of the holster under my left arm. I kept talking all the time, partly out of sheer nervousness, but chiefly because I wanted to stall them. There was a chance, after all, that Captain Waite of the Honolulu cops would come out here looking for us. If Washington wired back that some of the prints we had sent in were those of a notorious criminal—and whoever this man Hartson was, he was no small-timer—then the Honolulu cops probably would go into action right away. Waite knew I was at the Hansen house.

Marian understood this, and understood why I was trying to stall. Marian and I always understood one another and got along perfectly—when there was danger around.

"You shot Whittem," I said, "just as the steam whistle was blowing, in the harbor. I don't know why you did it——"

"The guy was holding out on me! He'd promised to raise some money on his stamps when we got to Honolulu—I needed it here—but instead he tried to fake a robbery. He wasn't going to report it officially. He was just going to radio to the insurance company. But the radio operator told the purser about that message, and it got out that way. I didn't hear of it until we were off Diamond Head, and everybody was up on deck. I went to Whittem and de-

manded the stamps. But he wouldn't turn them over. I got sore——"

"You lost your head, that's what you did!" Mrs. Hartson snapped.

"All right, I lost my head. Anyway, I blasted him."

"Yes," I said. "Then you tossed the gun out of the porthole. You couldn't find the stamps at first, until you felt his coat. He'd ripped open the lining and used half a spool of thread sewing it up again, with the stamps inside. You felt them there, but you figured it might take several minutes to get them out, and naturally you didn't want to spend any more time in that stateroom than you could help. So you took the coat off the dead man, and took it to your own stateroom next door, and got the stamps out there. Then you weighted the coat and threw it through your own porthole."

"You're very smart," Hartson sneered. "Come on."

But I stood where I was, and kept talking.

"Whitem had his coat on when he was shot, and that's why there was no bullet grease around the hole in the shirt. I doped that out right away, and I set those kids to diving for either a gun or a tweed coat. One of them found the coat. And you, you lousy crook, had the poor kid beaten to death!"

"Dear, dear, dear," said Hartson. "For a guy who's in the spot you're in, you certainly are outspoken."

Marian sat perfectly still. She was pale, but that was the only sign that she was frightened.

"Well, what about it?" rasped Mrs. Hartson. "Are we going to stand here all day?"

Hartson turned to Marian.

"Come along, Miss Hansen. A week or so in a nice quiet place, while we dicker with your managers or your lawyers for one hundred

thousand dollars' ransom, and then we'll return you as good as new. You wanted a rest, didn't you?"

"You seem to forget," said Marian, speaking calmly but very slowly, either because she wanted to stall, or because she wanted to keep control of her voice, "that you're on an island. You're two thousand miles from the nearest mainland."

"You're good at figures," Hartson conceded. "Are you any good at geography, too? Do you know that there are other islands in this group? Molokai, for example, is only about twenty-five miles away. And under the cliffs of Molokai, in a place not even an airplane pilot could locate, there's a sweet little hide-out. Hallie and I had planned to go there anyway."

I said "Oh" stupidly. The meaning of that auxiliary schooner loitering around just outside the reef came to me now. I moved my eyes in that direction.

"Precisely," said Hartson. "Hallie and I had a tip, by radio, that there might be somebody waiting for us at the dock in Vancouver. Somebody we didn't want to meet. So we thought we'd better drop off here for a while until things got cooler. We had all arrangements made before we even got into Honolulu. We thought we could squeeze Whitem for one more chunk of blackmail. But, of course, we didn't expect to have to do any killings."

"You didn't expect to snatch a movie star, either."

"No," Hartson admitted, "we didn't expect that. You fixed that up when you invited us to meet Miss Hansen. By the sweetest piece of luck in the world she happened to live practically opposite the place where we were going to row out to the schooner. So we let you take

us along. You've really been a big help, Pennell."

I asked: "What are you going to do with me?"

"What the hell do you think we're going to do with you?"

It had been a dumb question. Of course, they would take me along with them in the schooner for a little distance. Then they'd tie weights to me and drop me over the side.

But Marian! The sweat stood out all over me when I thought of what was going to happen to that girl. They'd find out soon enough, by radio probably, that Marian was not Juana Hansen. And then what? I wouldn't be there then. But Hartson would, and these two gunmen, and maybe some of the members of the schooner's crew.

CHAPTER V.

DEATH AT THE CROSSROADS.

THE man with the Thompson came out of the oleander bush, giving me a dirty look. I didn't recognize him, but I saw that his mouth was badly swollen, and that caused me to understand the look. Evidently I'd got in a couple of pretty good pokes last night in front of my bungalow.

Never taking his eyes off me, the man asked: "Here?"

Hartson said: "No, you fool! Don't you realize that there are servants back in that house, probably watching everything we do? There's going to be no corpse as evidence in this case!"

A flame of hope sprang up inside of me; but Hartson put it out instantly when he turned with a tight, triumphant grin.

"But don't let that make you think, Pennell, that any of those servants are going to telephone to the city for help. The telephone wire

was cut before you and I ever got out here."

"Come on," said Mrs. Hartson impatiently.

We used the car I had rented. The tall fellow with the hay-colored hair got behind the wheel, and Hartson signaled to Marian to get in the front seat beside him. She obeyed without a word. She carried her sewing bag with her. I was put in back, on one of the folding seats, facing the back seat. In the back seat were Hartson and Mrs. Hartson, and between them, his submachine gun still deliberately pointed at me, the man with the swollen lips.

"Suits," this man said. To me he said: "I'm going to have a lot of fun with you, buddy, after what you did to me last night. The fishes can wait a couple of hours, I guess."

He kept the gun pointed at me all this time. The muzzle wasn't more than two feet from my chest, but they made me keep my hands in my pockets. I didn't turn around to see what Marian was doing. I didn't dare.

We bumped slowly down the winding private road.

Just short of the highway, which was near the shore, we stopped at Hartson's command.

"Get out and take a look up and down the road," Hartson told the driver. "Just to be sure."

I heard the man get out. I didn't look around. But I kept wondering whether Marian was sneaking out that .22 from her sewing bag.

The driver came back, after a minute or so, and I heard him say: "There's one car coming, from the direction of Honolulu, and it's tearing right along. It must be almost at the end of this lane by now, but I don't suppose——"

What happened after that happened very fast and noisily.

THERE was the roar of an automobile engine behind me, a screech of brakes, and a grating of tire rubber on the soft road. Hartson's right hand moved for a coat pocket. The man with the swollen lips whispered to me, "Well, anyway, *you* don't walk out," and his finger tightened on the trigger.

Right against my left ear a pistol crashed five times. It was so close to me that it burned my ear. It seemed to be burning the whole side of my head.

The man with the swollen lips looked flabbergasted. His mouth was open, his eyes were enormous. But his arms went limp, and the sub-machine gun dropped to his lap, then slithered quietly to the floor of the car.

Mrs. Hartson shrieked, reaching for the door nearest her. I went for Hartson's legs, got one of them, lifted it just as Hartson got out his gun.

He sent a couple of bullets through the top of the car, and I grabbed his right wrist. We lurched against the woman. She had gotten the door open. All three of us tumbled out, Mrs. Hartson screaming blue murder, while Hartson and I fought for the gun.

For an instant, rolling on the ground, I had a glimpse of the driver—the man with the hay-colored hair. He had drawn his two big automatics, and he was running toward where I struggled with Hartson. The guns were pointed square at me, but he wanted to get closer before he fired, for fear of shooting Hartson.

Then something near the front of the car went *tat-a-rat-tat-tat-tat-tat*, and the man with the hay-colored hair turned completely around, and very slowly, almost gracefully, fell on his face.

Hartson would have quit then and there, but I had a good grip on him. By the time Captain Waite and the other cops got to us, I was sitting on him and had his gun wrist in both hands.

They took the gun away from him, and one of them ran after Mrs. Hartson, who had decided to try a little sprinting. Captain Waite was blating something into my left ear, but I couldn't hear what it was, and I wouldn't have cared if I did hear. I got up, and almost fell down again because I was so dizzy. I staggered over to the car.

Marian Chalmers was lying with her legs and feet on the running board, while the rest of her body was on the road. She had slipped out that little automatic when the police car turned in from the highway, knowing that "Swollen-lips" would open up on me with the Thompson gun. She'd fired at him, over by shoulder. And with the same movement, using her other hand, she must have flung open the door at her side and tumbled out.

She was stunned, bruised a little around the shoulders and on the back of the head, but really not hurt at all.

It made me feel so glad when I learned this that I guess I must have cried a little or something. I was blubbering something about the nerviest and swellest woman who ever lived, when I snapped out of it at the sight of her eyes. They were open now, and damned if that girl wasn't grinning at me!

"A very neat piece of detective work, partner," she said, pretending to talk tough, out of one corner of her mouth. "But it would have been better if you'd thought that they might have cut the telephone wire."

"Am I supposed to think of everything? You were here, too, weren't

you? In fact, you were here before I was!"

"I'm not really a detective, like you," she said sweetly. "I just go by hunches."

"Yeah? Well, I guess all your hunches wouldn't have done us a bit of good if I hadn't figured it out about that coat——"

AND there we were, scrapping again. You would have thought we'd just had enough fighting for a while. As a matter of fact, I never felt more like putting my arms right around her and telling her what I really did think of her; and yet it seemed the most natural thing in the world to be snarling and snapping at her again. I guess we were probably both pretty nervous, after all the excitement.

Captain Waite stopped us.

"The wire came from Washington not long after you left Honolulu, Pennell. I tried to get a message to you here at the Hansen house, to tell you to hold on to Fanning, but the operator said——"

"Is this man Art Fanning?" I yelled.

"This man is Art Fanning," said Waite, "and I guess he was about the hottest fugitive in the whole world. All the dope was that he was hiding in Mexico City somewhere, or else in Central America. Well, anyway, as I was telling you, the operator said there was something wrong with the line here, and that sounded pretty funny to me, so I got a few of the boys and we grabbed ourselves riot guns, and jumped into a squad car, and drove here like the hammers of hell. And now I want to know——"

I had turned for another look at Arthur Fanning, alias Hartson, international crook extraordinary.

That was why I didn't hear the rest of what Waite said. I had turned my left ear toward him, and my left ear, after having those five shots fired within an inch of it, was temporarily out of service.

I turned back.

"What?" I said.

"He wants to know," Marian said, "how it was we ever got suspicions of Hartson in the first place. Why don't you tell him?"

"Well," I admitted, "it was Marian here. I had the thing pretty well worked out, how the crime had been committed and all that, but I really had nothing against Hartson or anybody else. It was Marian who spotted them, at the preliminary questioning in the smoking saloon."

"But what was wrong with them?" Waite said. "They went off the dock, but when they heard the hullabaloo they came back again and volunteered to tell whatever they knew."

"Yes. After first passing the Elias Whittem stamp collection to one of their boy friends, who were waiting for them."

"But what did Miss Chalmers suspect them?"

He turned to Marian. But she was daubing powder on her nose. I frowned at her. I explained:

"Well, it sounds nutty, but what she said was that there must be something phony about that pair—at least about the woman. And the reason she thought so was because the woman, she said, was a smart woman, and a good-looking woman, and a fashionable woman—yet she was deliberately trying to look dowdy and dumb. Now what Marian said was that a woman might try to look better than she was, as to clothes and all that, but a woman never would try to look worse unless there was something awfully funny going on."

"As a matter of fact," Waite said, "she must be Hallie Harris, who used to be a celebrated stage beauty before she fell in with this guy Fanning. I suppose frumpiness was the best possible disguise she could assume. And it would be a disguise for Fanning, too. He was always a slick dresser."

"So Marian," I said, "insisted that we ought to sneak down to the Hartsons' stateroom sometime when they were out, and dust the place for prints. I wouldn't agree until somebody murdered Ikey Kaihiki, which made me so sore I was ready to try anything."

Marian finished with her face, and put her vanity case back into the sewing bag.

"He's the kind of detective who's got to get mad before he can do anything," she told Captain Waite.

"Yeah?" I said. "Well, any time I feel inclined to get mad after this I'll just remind myself of how funny you looked back there in the garden, trying to pretend you were Juana Hansen herself."

"It fooled them, didn't it?"

"Well, what if it did? Whose idea was it? Yours? No!"

"Cut it out!" Waite yelled. "Cut it out!"

One of the cops came over to where we were standing. He'd been searching what remained of the guy

with the hay-colored hair, who had managed to get outside of a flock of slugs from two of the Honolulu police department's new automatic rifles. He was holding fourteen sheets of paper, each one inclosed in celluloid, and each containing shreds of a few bright-colored stamps, and each multitudinously perforated.

"Found these in the guy's inside coat pocket," he reported. "What do you suppose they used to be?"

I took them.

"They used to be a hundred thousand dollars' worth of hobby," I answered. "But I guess they're not worth that much any more."

"They might have been, still," said Marian, talking to the cop, not to me, "except for the fact that this job was botched because somebody wanted to do everything himself."

"Is that so?" I said, sticking the blood-soggy stamps into a pocket. "Well, maybe if you'd been directing this job——"

"If I'd been directing this job I'd——"

And that's the way it went. All over again, all the way back to Honolulu. As long as we were working together we worked swell, but once the excitement was over we'd start to fight again. In fact, we've been at it ever since. And yet I really am nuts about that girl. It's a funny thing, isn't it?"

The Corpse Comes In

by DONALD BARR CHIDSEY

Another fast-paced novelette about the college-boy detective and his sharp-tongued, straight-shooting partner.

In the next Complete Stories.



Two delicate cases—not delicately handled!

Case For Jean

By Richard Howells
Watkins

SOME one tapped softly on the door of the stateroom.

Jean Forth, who was wriggling out of her white chiffon evening dress, looked at the door with a sudden thoughtful frown.

The time was one thirty in the morning.

Half an hour before, the Blue Pennant liner *Conqueror*, dropping the pilot off the Ambrose Channel light vessel, had turned her bow toward Cherbourg.

In the rôle of passenger, Jean had

dallied on the boat deck with an acquaintance to view with quiet appreciation the silvering of the seas by a big May moon. Then she had said good night and descended with leisurely steps to her ornate room.

She had anticipated only sleep, until that discreet tap reminded her that she was something more or something less than an ordinary first-class voyager.

"Adams, miss!" said a low voice.

Jean slipped back into her dress and opened the door.

The ship's master-at-arms stood outside. At a gesture from Jean he came in and closed the door. Adams was one of the few members of the crew who knew Jean's actual status.

"Pardon, miss," Adams said. "Will you kindly step up to the captain's sitting room? A steward 'as been shot."

Jean suppressed something closely resembling a shudder. She liked stewards.

"A steward would be shot," she murmured, with forced nonchalance. "All right, Adams."

The man withdrew. Jean darted a panicky glance at the mirror, hardened the curve of her lips ruthlessly with lipstick, ironed all expression from her face, caught up a wrap and hurried out.

When Jean Forth, quite penniless and utterly untrained save in the niceties of gracious living, had obtained an under-cover job on the *Conqueror* through a ship-owning friend of the family, she had not counted on stewards being shot after bedtime. The protection of multitudes of wealthy and often foolish voyagers who traveled under the Blue Pennant had seemed more of a daytime job. But, with leaping heart, she accepted this thrilling challenge.

"I must act hard-boiled, even

bored," she warned herself. "I must!"

On her way through the thick-carpeted public rooms, Jean noted that a few of the passengers were aware that something out of the way had happened. Up on the boat deck there had been no signs of excitement.

The instant Jean knocked on the door of Captain Thomason's sitting room abaft the chart room, the captain, slightly flushed, came out and quickly closed the door behind him.

The small, square shipmaster, pleasantly young for a liner captain despite a patch of graying hair above his ears, looked soberly down at the slim girl. Despite his shortness of stature he topped Jean by an inch, and he contrived to make it seem six.

"It is my duty to report to you, in the absence ashore of Chief Detective Stone, that a steward has been shot," Captain Thomason said curtly. "Now please go back to bed, Jean. I'll handle it."

Jean's red lips curved out of their severe lines. "I can just see the headlines," she murmured. "'Captain Turns Detective; Ship Strikes Rock.'"

"I'll risk it," the master stated crisply. The flush upon his face deepened a trifle.

"They'll fire me—and you know it!" Jean Forth charged tremulously. "Those directors never were more than half convinced that a girl could be useful in protecting passengers. Are you playing fair with me?"

John Thomason groaned, a most unprofessional display of emotion in a liner captain.

Jean tilted her nose at him and waited. Without a word, he opened the door and stood aside to let her enter.

WITHIN, an elderly, stooped man as lean as a whip and whiplike too, in the quick, jerky manner in which he moved, swung his head toward them. His small round face, bushy-browed, crisscrossed with wrinkles and nut brown, peered intently at Jean Forth, reminding her strongly of an inquisitive monkey. And yet it was a strong face—a fighting man's face.

"An attempt has been made to kill this gentleman, Miss Forth," the master said. "It is undoubtedly connected with a previous attempt at murder that was made ashore. You may have heard of Mr. James Fletcher Lenihan."

"Damn funny if you hadn't," the monkeylike Mr. Lenihan growled, as Jean nodded affirmation.

"The bullet aimed at Mr. Lenihan struck one of our stewards—Wood—severely wounding him. The surgeon tells me he may die. Despite this, Mr. Lenihan refuses absolutely to give me any assistance in tracing the man who fired the shot."

"It's my business, not yours—or this young lady's," Lenihan retorted angrily. His face wrinkled more than ever, and his eyes seemed to recede behind the bushy brows. "Steer your boat and let me alone! I'll see that this steward is well paid for his bullet hole."

"I cannot move Mr. Lenihan from this position," the captain said, in his cold official voice. "You will accordingly, Miss Forth, make plans to safeguard Mr. Lenihan from attack. I will place several men at your command."

The bent, thin form of Lenihan quivered angrily. His eyes glittered.

"You leave me alone!" he snarled. "If I want to risk being shot, it's my affair!"

"Not on my ship, sir," said Captain

Thomason, inflexibly. "At Cherbourg or Southampton you may take what risks you please. Under my authority—no!"

"Once I get ashore I'll have this ship jerked out from under your blasted authority!" Lenihan flared.

Captain Thomason squared jaws that were already grimly angular. He did not speak.

Over Jean Forth swept a mounting curiosity. An oil millionaire who seemed to enjoy being shot at was worthy of observation.

Concerning James Fletcher Lenihan she knew little save what she had read recently in the headlines. An assassin had fired upon the old man as he was entering the elevator on the nineteenth floor of his hotel. The operator had slammed the door and dropped the car out of range of the gunman. Lenihan had been unhurt. His assailant had escaped unseen.

Jean remembered that the bare story had been eked out with a long sketch of Jim Lenihan's rise from derrick man in an oil field to command of a huge oil company. He was described as a picturesque figure, and Jean, watching the old man shaking his fist at the captain, had no quarrel with that description.

Lenihan whirled and confronted Jean Forth. Never had Jean seen such stubborn anger on a man's face.

"You put spies on me, young lady, and I'll have your job, too!" he rasped.

"And, if I don't, Captain Thomason will have my job," Jean retorted cheerily. "A simply terrible world, Mr. Lenihan!"

The old man with the seamed face gulped at this audacious flippancy. He strode to the door, opened it, and slammed it behind him.

"You're awfully decent!" Jean Forth said swiftly to the captain,

before he could speak. She slipped out after the oil millionaire.

OUTSIDE the door, Adams, the master-at-arms, was lingering.

Jean Forth touched her hip inquiringly. Adams grinned and lifted his coat to reveal a weighty holster. Jean waved toward the retreating millionaire and the master-at-arms promptly fell in some distance behind him.

Relieved of immediate solicitude for the safety of the eccentric passenger, Jean hurried toward the ship's hospital. There she found the senior surgeon, Doctor Perkins, washing his hands and talking to the purser, a broad-faced, imperturbable Britisher named Huntley. Both men knew of Jean Forth's position.

"He might live; he might die," the surgeon said. "I shall operate tomorrow. The bullet pierced the right lung and is lodged among the muscles of the back."

Jean, glancing into a white-walled room, caught a glimpse of a pinched face, dead white. Her mouth tightened a trifle at the sight of the unfortunate steward.

From Huntley, the purser, she learned what details were known. Mr. Lenihan, who was traveling alone, had been entering his suite on B deck. Steward Wood, wheeling a hand truck on which he had brought in a trunk, was coming out into the short, narrow corridor.

A man who had been following Lenihan fired a shot at him. Before Lenihan could whirl around the assailant had vanished.

The steward had tottered against Lenihan and Lenihan held him up.

No one had caught a glimpse of the attacker. The interior of the ship was virtually a warren of passages. Down any of these the

gunman might have hurried to mingle with the other passengers.

"This doesn't help," Jean Forth confided to the purser, as they left the doctor. "I'm afraid the would-be killer is quite as likely to talk as that monkeylike millionaire. However——"

Briskly she took leave of Huntley. Aware that the purser was staring after her doubtfully, she went forward again.

"They're all doubtful about me," she told herself. "Well, so am I, but they'll never know it!"

Thomason, on the bridge, still seethed under a placid exterior. He took Jean at once to his sitting room. She dropped casually into an armchair. As Thomason listened to the brief and unpromising report his eyes dwelt upon the slim girl in a troubled uncertainty most unusual in him.

"We must keep Lenihan alive until we put him on the tender at Cherbourg," the master of the *Conqueror* stated grimly, swinging up and down the room with his bridge stride. "Lenihan mustn't be killed!"

Jean nodded.

"Circulate and see what you can hear among the passengers," the shipmaster suggested. "It must be a great temptation to male passengers, at least, to pour information into your little pink ear."

"Order, please!" said Jean. "And don't think you can limit me to listening. I'm a detective!"

John Thomason snorted and the tempo of his pacing increased.

"This may be all for the best," he muttered, more to himself than the girl. "At least it will show that gang of apes—the board of directors—that they can't use a delicately reared youngster as a liner cop!"

Jean sprang out of her chair, crimsoning furiously.

"And the delicately reared youngster can starve ashore like a lady!" she said, clenching her hands into small white fists. "Only she's not going to! She's going to make good—as a liner cop!"

"Jean, don't—"

But with an indignant swirl of her long chiffon evening dress, Jean Forth swept out and hurried away from the high altitude of the navigating department.

BY this time almost all the passengers had retired. Jean made her way to B-8, Mr. Lenihan's suite. Adams, propped against one side of the dimly lit corridor, was wide awake, but taking it easy. He grinned and jerked a hand toward the millionaire's door.

"Stuck 'is face out and cursed me good and proper ten minutes ago, miss," the master-at-arms reported. "Now 'e's turned in."

"I'll see that you're relieved soon," Jean promised and started away. She had not taken two steps when a sudden smash of glass stopped her dead.

The loudness of the crash told her that it could only be caused by the breaking of a heavy plate-glass window.

"Call Lenihan!" she cried to the startled Adams. "Break the door if you have to! I'll go outside!"

She ran fleetly toward the nearest passage to the deck. All her fear and doubt was gone.

Within thirty-seconds of that sudden sound in the night, Jean was out on deck beside Lenihan's window. The glass in that window was shattered, but the lattice was drawn up and intact. The deck was empty.

As Jean slid to a halt by the window, the lattice was dropped with a crash. She found herself confronted by the contorted face of the old mil-

lionaire and by a big automatic that in the first instant unwaveringly covered her.

"You! You!" Lenihan raged. "Who did it? How did you get here so soon?"

The sight of Lenihan alive, even in such a state of wrath, was reassuring to Jean Forth. She looked again, thoughtfully, at the window. Any one attempting to attack through a glass window and a lattice screen was taking a tremendous handicap.

"Just happened to be looking around, Mr. Lenihan," Jean said soothingly.

Lenihan, too, was collecting his wits. He lowered the gun and shouted a harsh command to Adams to stop battering at his door. Then he bent and picked up from the carpet just under the window a folded sheet of paper.

"There's the answer to this window smashing," Jean exclaimed, leaning in on tiptoes. "May I come in and look at that note?"

The oil man had unfolded the sheet of paper and glanced at it. His answer to Jean was to raise the lattice with a bang.

"When I want a nursemaid neither you nor that brass-bound captain will get the job," he rasped.

With puckered forehead Jean slipped away. The heads of passengers were already showing at windows; their voices were questioning.

Within the ship, Jean found more passengers congregating outside Lenihan's corridor. Huntley and several assistant pursers in various stages of dress were sending them back to their rooms with reassuring words.

Huntley managed to draw Jean Forth aside. He looked at the amateur detective with a queer mixture of curiosity and doubt in his eyes.

"Lenihan's up against something

in the line of blackmail or extortion—not straight murder,” Jean said rapidly. “His enemy just passed the little man a note. I suppose it’s a threat of some sort. But he won’t let me see it.”

“Then this assassin isn’t really trying to kill Lenihan?” the big Englishman asked, somewhat relieved.

“I think our mysterious one has meant to miss Lenihan twice, at the hotel and here on board,” Jean replied. “That makes him not less dangerous, but more dangerous. He is taking tremendous risks very coolly. In the end he’ll get Lenihan unless Lenihan gives in or we stop him. And Lenihan won’t give in!”

THE purser agreed to Jean’s request to station a man on deck and a man in the corridor to guard the millionaire. But Jean had not yet given up work for the night. She hurried back to her stateroom, slipped into a stewardess’s uniform concealed in the depth of one of her trunks, wiped the lipstick carefully from her lips, smoothed down her hair under the cap, and, after hasty facial experiments, adopted a countenance with compressed lips, sucked-in cheeks and narrowed eyes. With a dustpan and brush appropriated from a service cupboard, she made her way back to Lenihan’s suite. A knock on the door brought instant results.

“Stewardess, sir,” she said in a high lilting English accent, as Lenihan’s round hairy face stared beligerently at her through a crack in the door. “Will you ’ave me clear up the glarss, sir?”

Lenihan opened the door. Jean walked into the bedroom with head averted and knelt by the window. Some of the shattered glass had fallen through the slats in the lattice onto the floor. Getting to her

knees she began sweeping it into the dustpan. Meanwhile her eyes were busy.

Jean could see no trace of the folded note that Lenihan had picked up. On the crumpled bedclothes lay an open passenger list in which several names had been checked. On the dresser reposed a photograph, face up. Its position suggested that it had been dropped there in a hurry. Jean had just been able to make out that it was the picture of a pretty girl when she realized that Lenihan was standing over her. She glanced up under her brows. His simian face was glaring down at her.

“Get out!” the millionaire stormed. “Stewardesses don’t wear silk stockings! Get out or I’ll put you out!”

Coolly Jean picked up one more piece of glass. Her eyes widened as she examined it. There was on the fragment a distinct reddish smear of blood. She laid the bit of glass in the dustpan with great care.

“I’m going,” she said cheerfully. “I really didn’t have time to change my stockings. Go to bed, Mr. Lenihan. You haven’t a chance in the world of not waking up in the morning. I’m taking care of you.”

Quite undisturbed by the blighting retort of the millionaire, she walked out. Leaving the dustpan in her own room she went to the purser’s bureau and scribbled a radio message to the New York offices of the line, requesting information concerning the efforts of the police to uncover the man who had shot at Lenihan in the hotel. Huntley signed the radio himself and took it to the wireless room.

When he came back, the tired purser found Jean Forth perched on the desk in his office, meditating deeply. She asked him to issue a request that all passengers’ passports be left at the bureau on the pretext

that they were needed for landing-permit purposes.

"The only advantage I have is that the guilty man is somewhere on board and can't get away from me till we're inside Cherbourg break-water," Jean Forth said. "My one line is to catch him in a slip in trying to keep himself covered or in trying to get at Lenihan."

The purser shook his head doubtfully. "He hasn't done any slipping yet," he pointed out.

"I'm not so sure of that," Jean replied. "But Mr. Lenihan has disappointed me in one respect."

"What's that?"

"He doesn't know who broke his window," she explained. "Who did it?" he yelled at me, when I popped up. That means Lenihan is in the dark, too. We'll have to do our own looking. And we'll have to look fast, because if Lenihan finds him first—"

"Well, what?" asked the purser, as Jean paused.

"He has a gun this long and he's out to use it," the girl answered, with a generous indication of dimensions.

"Gun duel in the lounge of the *Conqueror!*" Huntley gasped. "I say, Miss Forth, you must stop that! It wouldn't do!"

JEAN managed to get some sleep that night, but not much. Early in the morning she arranged through the purser and the chief steward to have the crew of the ship put on the lookout for passengers who seemed or acted at all peculiar. She avoided Captain Thomason and he did not summon her to the bridge.

There was no use in attempting to conceal the situation; it was the sole topic of talk while the big liner surged along through placid seas to-

ward the fogs and blue water of the Newfoundland banks.

One feeler that Jean put out had an immediate response. This order was that bedroom stewards should report passengers who were keeping to their rooms without good reasons.

Samuel Hamby, a short, thin little cockney steward who looked after a block of rooms on C deck, aft, came to the purser's office with the report that a fat man named Morton, who insisted that he was seasick, nevertheless possessed an enormous appetite.

Jean was struck by this paradox. She found that Hamby was a shrewd observer.

"'E's frightened o' something, miss," the diminutive steward said. "As far as I know 'e 'asn't been beyond the door since we cast off. 'E sits there in 'is bunk and I catch 'im shivering. Yes, miss, shivering. A fat man, miss, in 'is late thirties, maybe, with a big broad nose something like a pig's snout, an' little eyes.

"'E's more of a glutton than I ever see, an' you see some on board ship, miss. But several times I've seen 'im drop 'is spoon and shake all over. 'E always picks up his spoon again, but 'e's scared badly, miss."

"Is he inquisitive about what is going on?"

Hamby nodded. "Keeps me talk-in', miss—rings the bell to get me in there for a bit of palaver." He lowered an eyelid confidentially. "Interested in this shooting affair, miss; drags it in where it don't rightly belong. Pumps me, you might say."

"Was he in his room at the time of the shooting of Wood?"

Hamby shook his head doubtfully. "Things were in a bit of a mess, miss. Sailing night, you know. I was up forward looking for missing lug-

gage, and I can't say where Mr. Morton was."

Captain Thomason interrupted Jean's instructions to Hamby to keep a sharp watch on the trembling fat man.

"What have you found out?" he asked, as the steward hurried away.

"Nothing?" she said.

"That makes you the equal of the New York police, anyhow, Jean," he said, handing her a radio. "They know nothing more about the attempt on Lenihan at the hotel."

Jean concealed her disappointment with an airy gesture.

"You insult me!" she said. "I omitted to say I have several clues."

"Your suspects will all fall in love with you," he predicted gloomily. "And that would be enough to throw any detective out of his stride."

"You take this very lightly!" she flared, and then read in his eyes that he did not. "Good-by," she added quickly. Quite conscious that his gaze followed her, she walked away.

Defensive as well as offensive tactics were necessary against the hidden gunman. And of these the most important was a constant, if unobtrusive watch over James Fletcher Lenihan.

The oil millionaire had arisen early in spite of his broken rest, had scowled blackly upon the steward under orders to follow him, and then had begun a tour of the sun-drenched decks and almost deserted public rooms. With a fierce disregard for appearance, Lenihan had minutely inspected every male passenger he encountered.

He demanded the names of fellow voyagers from the stewards and frequently consulted and checked his own passenger list.

Throughout the day his search continued. His peering, deep-sunken eyes leaped on from face to face. He

breakfasted and lunched in the main dining salon regardless of the stares and comments of thrilled, whispering passengers, who regarded him as a doomed man.

Jean Forth did not trail Lenihan herself. She was busy observing men whose movements seemed worthy of scrutiny. During that long day, while the *Conqueror* sped eastward through the easy swells, Jean acquired a trio of suspects in addition to Morton.

One passenger, a ponderous, genial gentleman who divided his time between his steamer chair and the library, had twice hunched his shoulders and buried his face in a book as Lenihan approached and passed by. Jean established that this man's name was Stephen Henry Brown. By occupation, according to the passport now in the purser's possession, he was an oil operator.

A second suspect, William Rucker, a cattle dealer, was a man of more than medium size with a face as weathered as if he had never been indoors in his life. It was a hard, expressionless countenance. Although his hair was grizzled he moved like a young man. It was the sight of a quick movement by Rucker—a sudden thrust of his right hand into his coat pocket as Lenihan strode into the lounge where he was sitting at a table—that attracted Jean's attention to this man. Rucker made no attempt to avert his face from Lenihan, but sat still, staring at the whisky glass in front of him.

The restless activity and furtive manner of a third man, reporting himself a Chicago manufacturer, Hector S. Billings, caught Jean's attention. Billings was tall and somewhat bent of shoulder and kept on the move. He had a way of pausing at the entrance to a room or any

alleyway leading out on deck and sweeping the people before him with a sharp uneasy gaze. Several times Jean sighted Billings in a corner regarding the steward who was unobtrusively watching over the millionaire.

The evening brought more suspects. But most of these were suspicious only in the excited minds of stewards.

As the night closed in after dinner, Jean Forth became conscious of a rising tension. Lenihan still prowled about like a hungry animal. There was nothing in his manner to indicate that he had had any success in locating the man who had twice sent a bullet humming close to his heart.

"I'm going to try again to crack his secrecy," Jean told Huntley. "He may be feeling more reasonable."

She set out to find the wandering oil man shortly after nine o'clock. Most of the seven hundred passengers had relapsed into the nightly routine of a transatlantic voyage—bridge, promenading, smoking-room confidences, and dancing.

A chill mist drifting up out of the sea made steamer chairs and decks unpopular. Jean failed to locate Lenihan. On the weather side of the promenade she ran into Adams.

The master-at-arms was upset. "Lenihan slipped me, miss," he reported. "All evening 'e's been trying to shake me—just for deviltry, so I thought, miss."

"Well?"

"'E succeeded at last. Strolled into the gymnasium where they were playing table tennis and 'ooked it out the other door. 'E must 'ave run like a good one, miss, for I wasn't slacking."

Jean Forth looked fixedly at the door of the gymnasium, which the

master-at-arms indicated with a blunt finger. Her eyes wandered from the entrance to the near-by stairs to the boat deck.

"Keep on searching," she instructed. "I'll have a look up top."

The boat deck was black and deserted. The ship was slipping along through the mist with effortless speed. A plume of curling smoke from the forward funnel traced a black billowing path in the sky to port. Behind, stretched the white and ghostly wake.

Jean, hurrying along in some apprehension, peered here and there among the ventilators and ranks of boats. She had completed a cursory search of the port side and was starting forward along the starboard, when she suddenly became aware of running steps somewhere in the darkness. They were barely audible above the hum of the exhaust fans.

She stopped and listened. Then her ears were thrilled with a faint, rasping call from a straining human throat. It came from close at hand.

Swiftly she ran into a niche between two lifeboats, with eyes and ears strained and arms groping. The place seemed to be empty, yet a louder repetition of that anguished gasping reached her.

She darted to the rail. Peering out over the side she saw a small man. He was dangling perilously over the hissing black water. His fingers gripped the lowest bar of the railing, but he was too breathless or too weak to pull himself up.

Jean leaned over and grasped the light figure by the wrists. Desperately she held on, her slim arms strained to the limit, while the man coughed and gulped in air.

"It's all right!" she called reassuringly. "I can hold on—really I can!"

Her voice seemed to spur him to a convulsive effort. He pulled him-

self up a foot and shifted one hand to a higher rail. A moment later, with Jean's help, he scrambled up over the rail onto the deck.

There the man collapsed. He fought on for his halting breath and used what breath he won to vent heartfelt words.

"Blast him!" he coughed. "Trying to—trying to scare me! I'll tear his heart out! Blast him! The——"

He relapsed into a spasm of inarticulate coughing. His voice had told Jean that the man she had rescued was Lenihan. The little millionaire was raging mad—not frightened.

"He grabbed me and swung me over before I had a chance," Lenihan snarled, at last dragging himself to his feet. "One hand on my throat—the big strangling hound! He throttled me till my lungs damn near blew up. Then he let me grab the rail and——"

"Who?" demanded Jean Forth softly.

Lenihan stopped speaking abruptly. He made a quick movement of his hands and a match flared briefly in Jean's face.

"That damned girl detective!" the oil man exclaimed.

"Herself," Jean agreed quietly. "I came to tell you that if you are looking for a fat man with a broad and piggish snout I might be able to help you find——"

Lenihan broke in, his voice vibrant with excitement:

"That's the fellow!" he snapped. "Where is the—wait a minute!"

His teeth clicked shut. He stood motionless, breathing hard, obviously thinking fast.

"How could that flabby fat hog hold me out over the side of the ship?" the millionaire muttered feverishly. "It can't be him. There

isn't one of those mangy little rats that could do it!"

He turned abruptly from the rail, heading toward the nearest stairway to the lower deck.

"How about a drop of something to ease your throat?" Jean suggested demurely.

Lenihan halted. In the darkness he stared hard at her slight, dimly seen figure.

"Come on!" he said gruffly.

AT a small table in the smoking room they faced each other. The millionaire's collar was smudged and wrinkled. His neck, red and angry-looking, showed above it. His lined, bushy-browed face was grim.

"You ought to be in boarding school," he growled. "Like——" He suddenly cut off his words. Though he ordered only ginger ale for Jean, he took four fingers of whisky at a gulp himself. Then he glared at her.

"If you think you're going to get anything out of me, young lady, you're off," he stated coldly. "That was just another warning in a private matter. He didn't mean to sling me overboard—he could have done it, easy enough."

Jean Forth nodded. "And you think that our fat friend isn't guilty?" she asked confidentially.

"I know damn well—how did you ——" Lenihan began.

Jean leaned back, much encouraged, and attempted a smile.

But the tough little oil man was not to be drawn. He stood up. "If you know so much, enjoy yourself!" he snapped.

"Wait a bit!" Jean urged, rising with him. "Do sit down! If you'll look at three suspects I've picked out I'll promise not to ask you another question. And maybe I'll let you

see the passports of every one on board."

Lenihan planted his hands on the table and studied Jean with keen eyes.

"Right," he said. "I'll take you."

Hopefully, Jean led the millionaire out. By good fortune she managed to run down the never-still Hector S. Billings as he swung around the promenade. Lenihan, after wrinkling more than ever his deeply creased countenance in thoughtful scrutiny, shook his head as the tall, stooped man went jerkily by.

"I've looked him over plenty myself," he said. "He's not got the strength or grit for this last stunt. He just fusses around and dodges like that because he's nervous and dodderly."

Stephen Henry Brown, the oil operator, could not be found, but Lenihan laughed in raucous derision when Jean named him.

"Steve Brown? Is he on board? He's one of these smiling business crooks. I jarred his spine with my foot five years ago when he tried something slick on me. Brown's out—he'd like to see me dead, but he wouldn't dare try to get me. Not him!"

Jean frowned disconsolately, and Jim Lenihan grinned at her in savage amusement.

"Hunt up a rough one if you want to get me excited," he said.

"The next one is rough enough, and I think he carries a gun," Jean retorted. They moved on together in guarded hostility. They passed Captain Thomason as they moved forward. The master did not seem to see them; he melted unobtrusively into a passageway.

William Rucker was not hard to find. He was in the small forward smoking room.

"That rough-looking weather-beaten chap with grizzled hair sitting alone with a whisky glass in his hand," Jean murmured. "His name's Rucker."

Lenihan stared hard. "Never saw him before," he declared.

"Look!" Jean whispered urgently. "He's putting his right hand in his pocket!"

Lenihan's wary eyes instantly seemed to bury themselves in his head in the intensity of his scrutiny. His body bunched up alertly; then he relaxed. "He may be carrying a gun, but there's no gun in that pocket," he stated with convincing certainty. "I can tell; I've had experience."

Jean Forth did not dispute the statement. Jim Lenihan's scornful grin scorched her. Then he swung away from the girl without a word.

Jean moved over to the rail and stared out at the black sea.

"I had hopes of Rucker," she murmured. "It seemed——"

With sudden decision she sought a thwart-ship passage and glided into the small smoking room by the starboard door.

William Rucker was still gazing quite expressionlessly at the stained-glass skylight over the center of the room. His right hand now nursed his glass of whisky. Suddenly he looked around at Jean. His hand slid instantly into his coat pocket.

But Jean had had time to see on the back of the hand a slight, partly healed cut. Instantly and vividly she recalled the blood-stained fragment of glass from Lenihan's window.

She paused at the bar to get a box of matches, then sped out the forward door.

"I have something!" she breathed jubilantly. "He's sensitive about that cut hand! I can move now and

move fast! I'll show these skeptics, including Captain John Thomason!"

She hurried down to C deck. On her way aft she encountered Hamby, the cockney steward who had reported the fat man who trembled.

Hamby was obviously desirous of telling her something.

"Sorry to say, miss, that another steward tells me 'e saw Morton in 'is room at the moment that poor Wood was shot," he reported.

Jean nodded. "Has any other passenger ever paid a call on Morton?"

Hamby reflected briefly. "One, miss," he replied. "I don't know the gentleman's name, but I saw him coming out of the room early this morning. A tall gentleman with 'air beginning to turn white, though 'e looked very fit and hearty, miss."

"Notice anything else about him?" Jean asked, with a catch in her breath. Tall—grizzled—hearty! That sounded like Rucker!

"Well, miss, 'e 'ad a tooth or two missing—I saw him smile at Morton rather nasty as 'e closed the door—and 'is face was 'ard, like a rock, miss, and brown."

It was a perfect description of William Rucker.

"Good!" said Jean briskly. "You didn't leave him any towels, did you?"

Hamby grinned. "I remembered," he replied. "No towels, miss."

"Fine!" Jean approved. "That's all, Hamby. Go to bed."

JEAN hurried back to her stateroom, unearthed the stewardess's uniform again and slipped into it. This time she changed to black cotton stockings. Then, for a moment, she paused reflectively. But only for a moment. "Indeed I won't tell John Thomason! Not till it's all over!"

Catching up a pile of towels, she returned to C deck and the corridor containing the lair of the frightened fat man with the huge appetite. Down this passage, with heels tapping briskly, she walked, then knocked casually at Morton's door.

"Stewardess, sir," she called. "'Amby forgot your towels, sir."

On the other side of the door some one muttered something and moved about. The bolt scraped.

"Come!" commanded a high voice. Jean Forth bustled in with her towels.

A plump blond man with sandy, tousled hair, clad in a brown dressing gown, was dropping back into sitting position on the bed. Jean merely glanced in his direction; then began arranging the towels on the rack by the washstand.

"Such a voyage, sir!" she exclaimed. "The ship's in a pother. That steward that was shot by accident 'as died, sir."

"Died!" Morton repeated, almost with a groan.

"Died about sunset, sir," Jean said. "And they know——"

She glanced toward the fat man. Morton was listening with head thrust eagerly forward.

With a little shriek Jean dropped the towels. She flung herself back against the door, with her arms stretched out against it. Her eyes, round with horror, stared into Morton's. She moved her lips and opened her mouth, as if she would scream if she could.

"What's the matter?" cried the round-bodied man in high alarm.

"You're the one!" Jean gasped. "A gentleman named Rucker seen you shoot Wood—a fat man with light 'air, Mr. Rucker described you."

She shuddered convincingly. "They're all looking for you—even

Rucker—and 'e 'as a gun! And me 'ere! I'll scream the ship down if you move!"

Morton's flabby lips moved like a fish's mouth. "It's a lie!" he shrilled. "Get the captain here! Get him! It's a cross! It was Rucker that killed the steward, not me. Rucker'll kill me to cover himself! Get the captain here!"

"Yes, sir," Jean quavered, feeling slow for the door handle. "Yes, indeed, sir! Only don't shoot me when my back is turned, sir!"

"He won't!" said a harsh voice at her ear. The door had opened swiftly. Fingers like metal hooks closed on her throat, paralyzing her effort to scream. She was pushed into the stateroom.

The expression on the fat man's face was twisting from fear to stark terror. Jean saw that even as her own eyes were drawn to the narrow, merciless eyes of the man who held her. Her slender body was shaking, despite herself. There was something hideously inhuman about that grip on her throat.

The man was Rucker.

Still maintaining his hold on her, the man caught up one of the towels, forced open her mouth and gagged her with it. Then he looked with cold contempt at Morton, who had scrambled off the bed and was already beginning to yammer excuses and explanations.

Jean fought hard against a horrible dizziness and fear. She knew then, crumpling up in that ruthless grip, how inadequate she was. But she must not faint. She must not!

"Lock the door, you fool!" Rucker snarled. "This girl is a dick. She's roped you into a jam. And me with you! That's what makes it so sad for you, Morton."

Morton stumbled back from the door he had bolted.

"She said——"

"I heard what *you* said," Rucker broke in, with bitter menace. "I've been watching her since she spotted this cut on my hand. And now——"

"You ain't going to kill her, too, Bill?" Morton croaked. His eyes slid fearfully from the girl's slim figure to the big round porthole overlooking the black sea.

William Rucker laughed harshly. "That steward isn't dead," he said. "I didn't aim to kill him. I don't kill without reason."

"He ain't dead?" cried Morton, wiping his wet forehead with the sleeve of his dressing gown. "He ain't? Then——"

"Then we'd be all all right if it wasn't for your bleating," Rucker said. "But we're not! We're up against it!"

Morton wilted under the rasp of his voice.

JEAN saw Rucker's eyes travel around the stateroom. He looked at Morton's steamer trunk and at an enormous two-handled leather kit bag.

She swayed a little and sagged against the wall. Her elbow moved slowly, almost imperceptibly, toward a push button beside the washstand.

When her arm was within an inch of it, Rucker jerked her away. Slowly, coldly, he smiled at her. She forced herself to meet those hard, unswerving eyes.

"Empty that kit bag," Rucker commanded Morton. "Shove your stuff out the porthole, take the labels off and cut some holes in the bag where they won't show. We'll fix her so she won't be lively and plant her in the baggage room."

"They'll search——"

"It's our one chance to get away from the ship without killing her,"

Rucker said coldly. "They may search trunks, but they'll never think of bags. I like my detectives small."

Morton's eyes, bulging in his head, studied the oblong bag intently.

"She might——" he began in a whisper.

"She might die, but we've got to risk that," Rucker said. "It's the safest play for us to get off the ship, and that's where I stop thinking."

"I'll do it, Bill!" Morton agreed. He bent over the bag.

"Yes, indeed you'll do it," Rucker said softly. "Make it——"

The door of the stateroom, without the slightest warning, cracked and flew open with a crash. Into the room plunged Captain Thomason, right shoulder forward, feet flying. His blue eyes were sparkling like sea water in the sun and his face was white with fury.

Rucker's right hand lunged toward his left armpit. He, too, moved very fast.

But Jean Forth was close to him and quite as quick. Before he could raise his blue-black automatic, her arms were around him. Though she could not match his power she did interfere with the swift precision of his movements.

"John! John!" she gasped, as the towel fell from her lips.

An instant's disarrangement was all that John Thomason needed to save his life. His right arm, ignoring the pistol, swung upward. His bunched knuckles impacted against Rucker's hard jaw with a crack that seemed to touch off the automatic. It blared tremendously.

Rucker went down and Jean with him.

Before Rucker could shake off the effect of the blow and lift his pistol for a second shot, Captain Thomason had planted a heavy foot on gun and hand.

"Move and I'll tread the life out of you!" Thomason grated. "Try it, you snake!" There was almost a pleading note in his voice.

Jean wriggled away from the prostrate Rucker and scrambled swiftly to her feet.

In the doorway appeared the scared face of Hamby, who should have been asleep. And then, abruptly, Hamby was swept aside as old Lenihan, with his wrinkled face aflame with rage, rushed in. The oil man clutched his own huge automatic, poised to return Rucker's thunderous shot.

With a spasmodic effort, Lenihan checked his charge. His gaze swept Rucker indifferently; then focused upon the agitated Morton. Viciously, Lenihan thrust his heavy pistol into the fat man's round stomach.

"This is one of them!" he cried. "What's that fellow on the floor there got to do with this, Morton? Speak up before I tighten up my fing——"

"Don't!" shrieked Morton. "You got us, but nobody's been killed. Don't shoot me! I'll tell you! Before Rucker done a stretch in stir with me his name was Belden. He's the guy that was married to your wife when she married you, Mr. Lenihan!"

"Belden?" exclaimed the little millionaire. His jaw dropped. "He's Belden? Then shut up! Shut up, I said, or I'll—Belden, is it? Belden! Shut up about him or I'll air that fat skin of yours!"

Desperately Morton clamped shut his lips.

HALF an hour later, when panic had been allayed once more, Jim Lenihan faced Captain Thomason and Jean Forth in the master's sitting room.

"I suppose you can't keep quiet,"

he said grudgingly. "This Morton and a couple of other crooks tried to hold me up for a hundred thousand. They had the marriage license and other stuff to prove that when my wife—she's dead now—married me thirty years ago back in the Oklahoma country she was already the wife of a man named Belden, a no-account cowman who had abused and deserted her. We heard that he was dead, but I wasn't too damned careful in checking up on it. Things were different then, when I was a busted derrick man and that country wasn't too civilized.

"Well, I insisted on seeing the documents before paying up, walked into the blackmailers' hotel with an automatic hidden in my hat, stuck them up and took the stuff away.

"After that I got some letters threatening death if I didn't pay that hundred thousand. Then somebody in the background with a little nerve backed up the demand with a couple of shots. I never suspected it was Belden himself."

"But why, if your wife is dead, didn't you ignore their demands?" Captain Thomason asked.

Jim Lenihan glared at him. "I don't want any scandal about my wife, dead or alive!" he snapped. "And I'm going abroad to see my daughter—who's almost grown up and coming out of school next month. Hell, man! Don't you think I would risk a little lead at my age to keep life pleasant for her?"

Captain Thomason spoke as stiffly as ever. "Wood is going to live," he said. "If Rucker is wise he'll plead guilty to assault. It should be possible to keep matters fairly quiet. Certainly Rucker and Morton won't talk."

"If you admit reluctantly to newspaper men in England that the blackmailing concerned an episode in

your own vigorous career——" Jean suggested.

The little oil man got up and walked to the door. There he paused, seemingly engaged in an internal struggle. His eyes leaped from the captain to Jean and then he spoke, reluctantly.

"Thanks," he said, and closed the door.

CAPTAIN THOMASON first broke the silence that Lenihan had left behind him.

"You handled the case all by yourself and handled it perfect, Jean," he said hastily. "But——"

"I want to know how you happened to be so close to that stateroom on C deck just when I needed lots of help," Jean Forth said firmly. "I thought you were navigating the ship, John?"

Captain Thomason fingered a pair of dividers. "You kept getting away from me, in spite of all I could do," he complained. "That's why I'm going to have you fired when we reach Southampton."

"Me? Fired?" cried Jean. "Surely you don't mean that?"

He came closer to her, moving almost as unsteadily as if the ship were driving through a heavy sea. He tried to speak and coughed instead; he raised his hands, then dropped them to his sides again.

"I see it all," said Jean slowly. "You forget I'm a detective. You think if I've no job and no prospects you might get me to marry you."

"You're a menace to me, the ship, and the people in her," John Thomason said hoarsely. "I can't think of anything but how I love you."

Suddenly he reached out and swept her into his arms and kissed her tenderly. And her responsive lips told him that he, too, had handled a delicate case successfully.

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M. and K. L., New York City: I am assuming that you are either twins or sisters near the same age. Your handwritings are very much alike, reflecting the same environment, training, and general character.

*article for quite some
and thought it very interesting
articles very much and I
read them often. I was*

M. writes a slightly smaller script showing a less assertive nature and a little more mental concentration than K., who seems to be the leader. This is generally true of twins.

Both of you are reserved, scholarly, quiet, thoughtful, careful, and fastidious.

H. P., California: Your very light, flying t-bars and airy-looking backhand script reveals a vivacious and yet self-centered person who has imagination, idealism, charm, and refinement.

*Increased fund
existing me.
analysis of my*

You need an artistic medium through which to express your personality. Try to concentrate a little more.

D. G., Colorado: You have a very artistic handwriting indicating talent for commercial art, which is evi-

dently what you have discovered already. The margins of your letter and the original letter formations are proof of your talent.

Miss Spencer:
Will you kindly send
ysis of this handwri

You are cool and restrained emotionally, yet are an emotional person with a quick temper and a highly critical mind. The heavy down strokes and tall capitals show you are stubborn and independent.

A. G., Ohio: You say there is something wrong with you somewhere, since you can't seem to make a living for yourself and family and yet desire to do so many things. Of course, health is the start of your trouble. I can see by your handwriting that you are an extremely nervous person and this makes you inconsistent and vacillating.

her span of life
then what good
d determination

You do not give sustained attention to any one thing. Your interests are too wide and varied. I do think that you could succeed along some line of scientific study—chemistry or engineering—but I think it would be unwise for you to try music or writing. You lack concentration and a firm will. The way in which your writing slants first to the left and then the right shows how easily you are swayed.

J. T. F., Kansas: I can well believe that you have tried all kinds of work, for your writing shows lack of specialization. Thirty-four isn't too late to begin, but it means that you have a poor start to learn to be a skilled workman or even go into business. The idea is to stick to one thing.

am out of a job, but
out a short time as

Your writing shows that you like to be active and that mental work would not be the solution for you. Some form of physical activity would be suitable; just what is not as important as selecting one and staying right with it. Your t-bars show that you are combative, argumentative, and obstinate, so beware that you don't hurt your prospects because of an antagonistic attitude.

A. S. M., Montreal: Your writing indicates culture and training. You have a scholarly mind and ought to find literature especially interesting.

Dear Miss Spencer,
I read your co
will interest in "
Story Magazine" and

You are well-poised and self-sufficient, have a very definite personality which leaves a favorable impression, and are capable and efficient.

P. A. H., Toronto: At forty work such as you mention is rather difficult to get unless you have been associated with it right along. Physical culture work requires that you keep fit all the time. I suggest that you try to find work which brings

you in close contact with physical training, but which does not require much active participation, for as the years roll on you will find it more and more difficult to keep in that work.

*you are out of steady
get a start at something*

You have vitality and a firm will, are thrifty and conservative, so once you get placed you ought to be able to keep going.

Mrs. P. K.: It is very hard for me to understand the women who write in to me saying they haven't enough to do. I have so many things I want to do in the short span of years left to me that I would need nine lives to get them all in!

*haven't enough to do, and
I am dissatisfied. Please to*

Your dissatisfaction comes from a deep-seated fault in your character. Your backhand, small and angular, shows that you are self-centered, reserved, narrow, critical, and a procrastinator. You need to think less about yourself and more about the people out in the world who are living full, rounded lives. You will find plenty of interests and plenty of work that needs to be done. Since you were a nurse before your marriage, I suggest you offer your services for a few hours daily or weekly to social service work. There is a great need for a person with your training among

the less fortunate, and there are always children who need care.

B. B., Ontario: After all these backhand writers it is a nice change to find a forward-leaning script like yours, for it shows that you are a friendly, warm-hearted, cordial, and sociable person without any complexes.

*think your articles
are I will surely
in your advice*

I certainly advise taking swimming seriously as a profession. You are the physical type without any doubt and I see no reason why later on you can't turn to journalism if it still interests you. Get the background of at least one thing so you have something to write about. So many young people think that to be a writer they must start in at an early age to just write. Practically every writer of note worked at many types of jobs and had all kinds of experience before they tried to write about life. So you just take your enthusiasm, physical vigor, and fine personality and character right into the sports world where you ought to succeed. There will be plenty of time to think about writing later.

Handwriting Coupon for
Complete Stories.
February Number.

This coupon must accompany each specimen of handwriting which you wish read.

Name.....

Address.....



THREE MINUTES WITH YOU

Strike Up The Band

FEBRUARY is the month of national celebrations, because it is the month in which two of our greatest national heroes were born. George Washington and Abraham Lincoln need neither flag-waving nor speech-making to impress a sense of their grandeur and great human qualities on the American people. However, in moments of national enthusiasm it is only fitting that banners should wave and that many words should be written concerning these two men, and it is well that we Americans wax

jubilant and even brag about the "Father of His Country" and the "Great Emancipator."

All this leads us to a little flag-waving of our own, an editorial celebration in which you should join if you like the best and fastest fiction to be had anywhere at any price today!

Our banners are flying proudly because we have just laid the cornerstone of a new fiction edifice, and we have the next stone all cut and ready to place. If you read the February Complete you already realize that you have read the unusual, the dramatic, the exciting.

MANY magazines publish good stories, many magazines publish stories with drama, with glamour, with mystery, with adventure; but we venture to boast that only Complete prints between its distinctive covers stories with all these hard-to-find qualities.

Of course, as in a patriotic celebration, there will be a few brickbats, a few catcalls—well, just send us those wallops in the form of letters and we'll endeavor to suit your taste, or reform you to suit a swell magazine.

Now don't get hot and bothered, we should be entitled to a few cracks at the readers' expense. And look here—read on and see what we've got in store for you.

THE March Complete starts off in a tumult of raging floods in Cole Richards's novel, "Angry Waters." Here is mystery, here is action—and just a spot of romance—all in the midst of a Colorado flood.

Then Donald Barr Chidsey continues his adventures of the college-boy dick and his hot-tempered girl friend in Hawaii. Chidsey's story has this on the first page:

"Joey Fife was, the way I said, right at my elbow—not two feet away. He was in the water, floating

on his back. And the reason why his head rocked so horribly was because his throat had been cut from ear to ear——"

If you miss the rest of this adventure on the island paradise—"The Corpse Comes In"—it's just your own fault.

And C. S. Montanye has a hard-boiled yarn about the most hard-boiled scene in America—the small-town carnival. "Tent Show" packs a genuine wallop.

We suspect Jerry Mathers—who wrote "Range Judas"—of being a real waddy who packs a pair of shooting irons with filed triggers. His novelette is packed with the hard action that is typical of our last frontiers.

YOU probably suspect the editor of being just a builder-upper for Complete—and why shouldn't he be? We give you everything: sports, westerns, detective yarns, mystery, adventure. These are just a few of the many real reasons why we are celebrating our next number in advance. We know that you—the readers—are going to wave the Complete flag, too, and not only in February, but every month of the year.

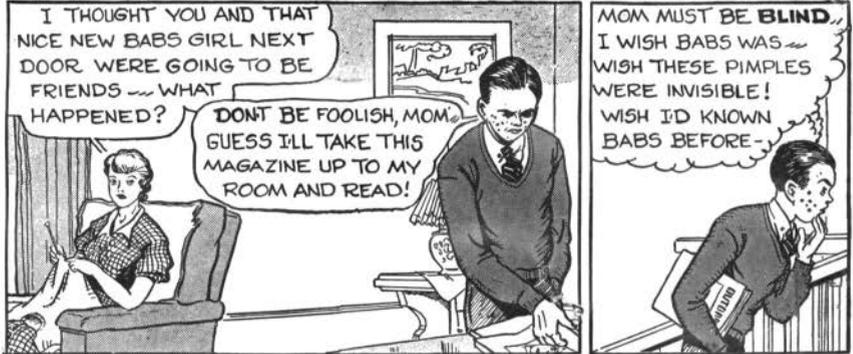
Get on the Complete bandwagon and join the biggest and best fiction show in your town!





"THE FIRST GIRL I EVER LIKED — and these Pimples had to come!"

But it wasn't too late, Ben found, to mend the trouble



Don't let adolescent pimples make YOU hide away!

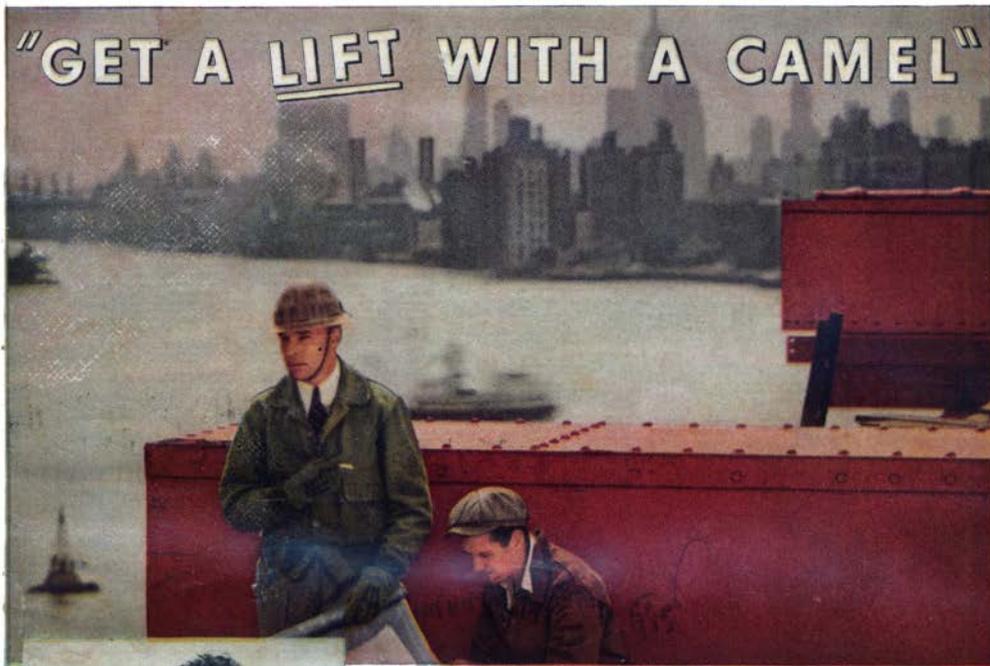
Between the ages 13 and 25, important glands develop. This causes disturbances throughout the body. Waste poisons in the blood irritate the skin, causing pimples.

In treating adolescent pimples, doctors prescribe Fleischmann's Yeast. This fresh yeast clears the blood of skin irritants that cause pimples. Then the pimples disappear. Eat Fleischmann's Yeast 3 times a day, before meals, until skin clears.



—clears the skin
by clearing skin irritants out of the blood

"GET A LIFT WITH A CAMEL"



THE TOWERS OF MANHATTAN from a new angle—New York's new Triborough Bridge. In the foreground: Howard Houglund, wearing the picturesque engineers' "hard hat." "An engineer's life is packed with action," he says. "When my pep is at low ebb, there is nothing like a Camel. I always get a 'lift' with a Camel. I also prefer Camel's good taste."



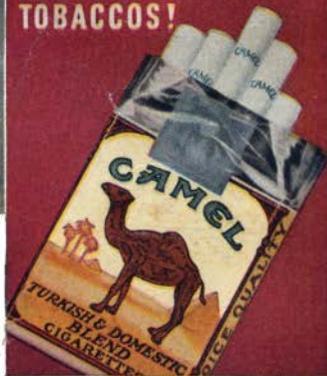
"I AM A STEEL WORKER on the Triborough Bridge," says Ben Parsons (*above*). "When tired, I get a 'lift' with a Camel."

TUNE IN! Camel Caravan with Walter O'Keefe, Deane Janis, Ted Husing, Glen Gray and the Casa Loma Orchestra. Tuesday and Thursday—9 p.m. E. S. T., 8 p.m. C. S. T., 9:30 p.m. M. S. T., 8:30 p.m. P. S. T.—over WABC-Columbia Network.



WINTER SPORTS TAKE ENERGY TOO. Says Margaret Lynam (*left*): "When I feel exhausted from a long day outdoors, Camels renew my flow of energy."

COSTLIER TOBACCOS!



- Camels are made from finer, **MORE EXPENSIVE TOBACCOS**—Turkish and Domestic—than any other popular brand.

(Signed) R. J. REYNOLDS TOBACCO CO., Winston-Salem, N. C.